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“To Know the Words to the Music”:
Spatial Circulation, Queer Discourse and the Musical

By

Robert Garner Alford

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Film and Media

in the

Graduate Division

of the

University of California, Berkeley

Committee in Charge:

Professor Kristen Whissel, Chair
Professor Mary Ann Doane
Professor Mark Sandberg
Associate Professor Abigail De Kosnik

Spring 2016

Abstract

“To Know the Words to the Music”: Spatial Circulation, Queer Discourse and the Musical

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Robert Garner Alford

Doctor of Philosophy in Film and Media

University of California, Berkeley

Professor Kristen Whissel, Chair

My dissertation historicizes and theorizes how musical cultures shaped queer identity in the US in the 20th Century. By examining a broad range of neglected texts (including cinematic musical shorts, sheet music, gay slang dictionaries and records of gay men’s choruses), I argue that gay men and lesbians used popular song both to foster sociality in private spaces such as homes and clubs and to conceal subcultural practices in public spaces such as the street, the office, concert halls and department stores. While scholarship on the musical tends to focus on its generic features, my project instead emphasizes the relation of musical culture to daily life and public visibility in the 20th Century. To highlight how associations with music remained vital in shaping queer visibility across the 20th century, my project tracks developments in the uses of musical culture by queers from the 1920s through the 2010s. By bringing histories and theories of sexuality to bear on media and vice versa, this project develops historiographic methods relevant to the study of difference in modern and contemporary society more broadly.

The first half of my dissertation argues that consumption of popular music helped queers create networks that enabled them to circulate (undetected) to and through locations where overt homosexual identity would be punished, in the US (Chapter 1) and abroad during WWII (Chapter 2). Focusing on collections of sheet music, Vitaphone musical shorts, army musicals, home magazines, gay travel guides and diaries, these chapters show how popular song acted as an affective interface for queers that disguised subcultural practices across heteronormative settings (as varied as the church, the park and the wartime canteen), and enabled fantasies of social and spatial circulation.

The second half of my dissertation demonstrates how the musical engendered queer systems of meaning from midcentury onward. Focusing on the period just before gay liberation, Chapter 3 argues that material musical culture in the form of pianos, sheet music, radios, phonographs and records fostered the development of coded, camp language in private spaces. I contend that these terms (from gay slang dictionaries) appeared innocuous to those who observed them, whether fellow consumers of music or police officers, but nonetheless contributed to popular stereotypes associating queers with musical entertainment. I go on to analyze the linguistic bind confronted by queers in the post-Stonewall 1970s and 1980s, during which they gained greater visibility by conforming to

popular stereotypes about homosexual consumption and musicality. I explore this struggle in popular and academic discourse with case studies including the growth of gay men's choruses and the contradictory rhetoric of early gay ethnomusicology. In Chapter 5 I turn to the 2010s and the viral video "Telephone Remake" (a remake of Lady Gaga's "Telephone" by US soldiers in Afghanistan) to theorize the political potential of the musical now that digital media offer new paradigms for the production and circulation of sexual identity.

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Introduction

In *Carol*, the 2015 Todd Haynes-directed adaptation of Patricia Highsmith's novel *The Price of Salt*, there is a short scene in a music store. The narrative concerns two women who fall in love with each other: Carol, the older, beautiful woman from wealth and privilege; and Therese, the younger shopgirl whose desire for Carol leads her on a difficult process of self-discovery. The scene at the music store comes midway in the film, after Therese and Carol have tentatively begun to see each other as friends, gaining mutual intimacy without explicitly acknowledging their attraction toward one another. While out with her boyfriend, Richard, Therese enters a music store to buy a record for Carol that she had previously played for her. While making her purchase, Therese turns around to see two women who stare at her. (Figure 1) Obviously coded as lesbians with their dark suits and the cropped hair and glasses that one wears, not to mention the predatory looks they direct at Therese, they offer a stark contrast to Carol, the woman who conforms to Therese's heavily classed fantasy of upward mobility and normative beauty.

Though minor, this scene speaks in important ways about homosexual life in the US at midcentury, and the possibilities that popular music offered queers to circulate in everyday life as normative consumers and also connect discreetly with other queers. While the identity of the women who cruise Therese as lesbians may be clear to her, it is also entirely believable that she could have been in the same store with them on another occasion and remained completely oblivious to their attention; it is only through exploring her own sexuality and looking with greater awareness at the world around her that she recognizes the intention of the women's looks. Therese's navigation of the physical world via her unspoken desire points to tactical practices of queers to avoid recognition as such: the deniability of actions as queer by virtue of their normality. There is nothing unusual or criminal about patronizing a music store or looking at another female customer, although the intensity of the women's looks is nonetheless striking. Likewise, although the lesbian's choice in clothing seems obvious as queer through Therese's eyes, she looks through a universe that flatters the traditionally feminine as embodied in Carol. Stated differently, in practice there was nothing unusual about women wearing suits in US cities in the 1950s; they may not have looked especially feminine, but they also didn't seem out of place either. Importantly, the music store provides a terrain on which queers might meet or recognize each other while also minimizing the threat that others would recognize them.

As a contemporary presentation of entertainment rather than the representational world pictured by *Carol*, the 2013 Academy Awards Ceremony also foregrounded the importance of musicality for queers, albeit in a drastically different fashion. Informally framed as a tribute to the movie musical, the show featured several performances by the Los Angeles Gay Men's Chorus (LAGMC) as a gag. This gag often took on absurd expression, as when the chorus sang "We Saw Your Boobs" about the nudity of several female actresses in the audience in previous films. Later in the show—after Barbra Streisand performed a musical tribute to the recently deceased Marvin Hamlisch—host Seth MacFarlane introduced the cast of the 2003 film version of *Chicago* with the quip, "We now want to bring out the stars of that game changing musical because we're concerned that tonight's show isn't gay enough yet." There is nothing particularly "gay" about *Chicago* other than that it is a musical, and thus equivalent in the contemporary American imaginary with homosexuality. Likewise, while the opening performance of the broadcast might be shrugged off, it nonetheless demonstrates the way that the discursive equivalence of homosexuality with musicality

functions to make queers legible to a mass audience. In essence, the cooperation of the LAGMC in the ceremony provided them with an exceptional platform for mass visibility at the expense of serving as the vehicle for misogynist and homophobic humor. At the same time, the participation of the LAGMC in the broadcast provided a buffer for criticism of MacFarlane's crass and often offensive jokes by embodying the "liberal" attitudes of the Academy. While apparently simple, the 2013 Oscars demonstrate the continued complexity of mainstream queer visibility, as stereotypes often provide the means to speak even though the words spoken might only rearticulate heteronormative ideas about homosexual nature and affiliation.

Carol and the 2013 Oscars broadcast may seem like an unlikely pair, but together they exemplify both sides of this project's focus: the ways popular music moved queers safely through hostile surroundings, between public, semi-public, and private spaces, for example between the office, the club, the department store, the theater, and the home; and the relation of this circulation to discourse that solidified public perceptions of queers as "musical." Likewise, it is the goal of this project not only to excavate the daily practice of queers around music in the early and mid-20th century, but also to historicize and theorize importance of queer musical pathways for conditioning language used by queers to escape close scrutiny in public, and also heteronormative language derived from surveillance and profiling that associated queers—especially gay men—with musicality. This project's title, "*To Know the Words to the Music*," is a phrase taken from a gay slang dictionary that means, "to be acquainted with the local gay slang." I have chosen this title because it elegantly indicates the (taken for granted) presence of music as a quotidian structure that conditions both specific patterns of physical circulation and also the shape and form of coded language.

The historiographic gambit of this project is in no way straightforward, and its potential pitfalls are many. Primarily, the lack of reliable records of any sort regarding the daily practice of queers before Gay Liberation in the late 1960s and early 1970s make the writing of earlier history near impossible, at least from a historical perspective that relies on empiricism. For the most part, this lack of evidence—enacted by design, as queer life persisted through public deniability for most of the 20th century—has blocked the writing of queer history or history about queers. The main exceptions are George Chauncey's *Gay New York* and Allan Berubé's *Coming Out Under Fire*, both phenomenal and impressive works that rely on personal accounts and interviews, i.e. fully normative historiographic methods. Writing on the complexity of the task of the queer historian, Mark Lynn Anderson notes the following about the preference for empirical historicism:

In other words, the reasoning goes, if there are, say, lesbian meanings or identifications detectable for a specific historical event, or generated through a particular confluence of cultural texts, then there must be lesbians somewhere in the vicinity; the historian's task, then, is to seek them out and document them. Not only is such a demand politically and ethically suspect, but it also obscures the historical force and complexity of sexuality as a popular way of knowing and living in the Western world during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.ⁱ

In his book *Twilight of the Idols*, Anderson builds from this critique of normative history to historicize and theorize the effect Valentino had on the "possibilities of understanding social relations that subtended personality, sexuality, gender and race for U.S. audiences in the

1920s.”ⁱⁱ As a historian interested in both queer objects and queer historiography, Anderson goes much farther than many and makes use of accounts in the popular press, theory on sexuality, and the close reading of films starring Valentino. For my purposes, however, such a methodology is incomplete. In bringing the importance of musical reception to bear not only the study of cinema but also queer subjectivity, my project clashes with dominant understandings in the field of cinema generally and musicals especially. In turn, there is not such a clear lineage of discourse to which I might contribute as there is for Anderson’s addition to star studies.

More importantly, my questioning of the conditions of speaking for queer subjects troubles whatever information I might glean from interviews, were they even possible to orchestrate. I especially agree with Anderson’s distrust of interviews, as an insistence on the “truth of the individual” not only limits what arguments might be considered historically valid, but also fails to consider what has structured a subject’s opinions, recollections, and beliefs. Given the status of the homosexual affiliation with musicality as a truism for queers and non-queers alike (so thoroughly displayed by the 2013 Academy Awards ceremony), I find an approach that esteems interviews as the *ne plus ultra* of historical information as lax if not negligent.

It may seem that my historical position leaves me, ironically, in the same position as queer scholars who choose to foreground close reading and theory over historical inquiry. However, I remain as historically rigorous as possible throughout this project, and I focus instead on the relations of power that animated the subjectivity of queers and the unique possibilities and potentials that media networks offered them to manage both daily alienation and, later, assimilation into the public sphere as fully speaking subjects. As such, I focus on a wide array of neglected and under-theorized texts, among them collections of sheet music, home magazines, gay travel guides, musical Vitaphone shorts, personal diaries, slang dictionaries, film and music industry records, historical periodicals, and records of gay men’s choruses, among many other sources. These texts provide me not necessarily with the accounts of queers, but rather a nuanced understanding of the way that sonic media conditioned public life as a dominant form of commercialized leisure throughout the 20th century. I use this historical background to theorize the potentials and consequences popular music held for queers who availed of its resources to manage daily repression and the threat of punishment, and, countervallently, create positive affective networks to solidify queer community in a relentlessly homophobic world. As the corpus of materials available to me on the public presence of queers expands tremendously after the late 1960s, my approach shifts to favor discourse analysis more heavily. However, this analysis remains grounded by the methods and themes established in earlier chapters.

The larger stakes of this project are historiographic, as I seek to reconcile the rigorous writing of history with queer inquiry. As previously stated, this has served as a stumbling point for the field because of the very real lack of definitive evidence of the daily practices of queers. Instead, much queer writing adopts a theoretical stance grounded by an understanding of otherness, and builds from this to develop strategies for reading texts. While the grounds and assumptions of academic inquiry shift constantly (and I don’t imagine myself to speak from a position somehow beyond them), I have found such an approach problematic because it often foregrounds assumptions about what is “queer” rather than the lived practices of queers. Likewise, I don’t believe that a lack of empirical evidence about historical queer subjects should prevent writing about them or the types of experiences they would have had in day-to-day life. Rather, the tools used to interrogate

history need to change, and my project is a step in this direction. Accordingly, I tend to use certain terms in a way that diverges from most scholars engaged in queer inquiry. Primarily, I use the word queer to refer to subjects whose sexual preferences don't conform to heteronormative standards rather than its more common usage to designate a sensibility or approach to reading. The main exception to this is the final chapter, which considers how digital networks have the potential to reshape the discursive formation of sexual identity and invert power relations.

An unfortunate side effect of my approach is that my focus on the analysis of available evidence and patterns of visibility and consumption limits the subjects on which I focus. In practice, my emphasis on popular discourse on homosexuality at midcentury promotes a focus on white gay men. Whenever possible I refer to sources that broaden this perspective, but by and large homosexuality was popularly understood in the US for much of the 20th century as specific to white middle- and upper- class men. This is as much a result of the symbolic threat of white, privileged, and male deviance for the popular American imaginary as it is an index of the ability of white men to pass inconspicuously in segregated public life as normative consumers, or to enjoy the privilege of spending discretionary income without concern. This is not to say that women did not also gain specific forms of mobility through consumption, only that the perceived threat of male homosexuality was far more present in the popular imagination than that of lesbianism. It is my sincere hope that others will contribute to historical understandings of how media networks encouraged specific forms of mobility and visibility for queer women and queers of color, and I will adapt my methods in the future to accommodate different perspectives.

I organize my project into five chapters: historic accounts of the relationships of queers to space and language constitute the first four chapters, and the final chapter addresses these themes in the present. The first two chapters address spatial circulation and argue that the rise of popular music coincident with modernity offered queers a unique opportunity to cultivate an outwardly normative identity as consumers of music. Donald Webster Cory's statement about a song that was so ubiquitous in gay bars "that to hear it on the street [was] to know that it [came] from the mouth of a gay person" gives expression to the profound potential of popular music to manage queer visibility.

In Chapter 1 I historicize Cory's statement by describing the musical networks that unified public spaces such as the street or park, semi- public spaces such as department stores and performance venues, semi-private spaces such as bars and clubs, and fully private, domestic spaces. As articulated by Cory, popular song could convey queers between all of these spaces and simultaneously foster mutual recognition between them, even as their sexual identities remained undetectable to others. In this chapter I demonstrate how music as a durable object for consumption (in the form of sheet music, records, musical instruments, and playback and broadcast technologies) fortified domestic space and also connected to other spaces where music also circulated. Importantly, popular music was a thoroughly modern invention that emerged contemporaneously with the establishment of queer kinship networks within cities, offering these subjects felicitous opportunities to circulate inconspicuously and find each other. The key texts I analyze here are a queer collection of sheet music, home magazines that demonstrate the centrality of musical performance and reception to domestic practice, and early musical (Vitaphone) shorts after the cinema's conversion to sound that demonstrate the importance of domestic space for visualizing the performance and reception of music. Grounded by theory of female spectatorship by Mary Ann Doane and Miriam Hansen and theory on sexuality from Judith

Butler, the latter sections of this chapter historicize the ability of the cinema to appeal to a queer fantasy of equitable circulation and subjecthood in cities in the 1920s and 30s. I follow this chapter with a brief section that situates this argument in relation to dominant understandings of sound cinema and musicals within the field of film studies.

The following chapter builds on the model developed in the first, and demonstrates the ways that bonds between cinema, nation and the musical enlarged patterns of queer spatial circulation during WWII. As the preferred morale booster for troops and the general public, musicals provided new ways for queers to circulate internationally as agents of the US. This chapter makes use of historic records of the distribution of film and music, queer accounts of life in the military, and gay travel guides occasioned by armed service in the 1940s that delineate patterns of circulation both within and beyond the US. While I focus on several Hollywood musicals, the most important text is 1943's *This is the Army* (Michael Curtiz), which was by far the most popular film of the year and also prominently featured drag performance in several musical numbers. I analyze not only the film itself, but also the ways in which it was promoted through official military channels, providing queers with an exceptional form of privilege and cover that distributed queer entertainment as nationalist propaganda.

The following two chapters shift perspective and consider how the musical gave rise to language and systems of meaning, both before and after gay liberation and Stonewall in the late 1960s. Chapter 3 develops the understanding of how musical networks motivated queers through urban space as outlined in the previous two chapters to theorize the relationship between musical material consumption in the home and the solidification of coded, camp language in private and semi-private spaces. Using theoretical tools provided by the field of sociolinguistics and theorists including Jacques Attali, Susan Stewart, Sara Ahmed, and others, this chapter demonstrates the interrelation of musical material culture and systems of language used by queers that could circulate undetected by prying eyes and ears in public. Gay slang dictionaries compiled such language, which often registered the presence of power in mixed spaces through musical terms, especially that of police officers. In turn, camp language had a dual register and conveyed privileged meanings between queers but also encouraged those who overheard them to type them as exceptionally preoccupied with musical entertainment and the performing arts. As demonstrated by writing in the popular press in magazines including *Time*, the 1960s saw a growing popular paranoia about homosexuality and its result in the solidification of stereotypes about gay men that associated them with music and spaces of musical performance. I argue that this stereotype derives not from any essential affiliation between queers and musical entertainment, but rather the way musical networks of circulation and language made queers vulnerable to profiling and policing in spaces of musical consumption.

Chapter 4 historicizes the ways queers rearticulated common musical stereotypes after Stonewall in order to become visible, politicized citizens. While potentially subversive, this association ultimately helped to make American queer identity mainstream. To historicize this process, I refer to a wide variety of case studies. The first part of the chapter focuses on the reception and promotion of the film *The Boys in the Band* (William Friedkin, 1970), and the aggressive promotion of camp musical taste to a popular, heteronormative audience at the Continental Baths. This section demonstrates the way that homosexuality became mainstream as a condoned and fashionable object for popular consumption, and also provided a new market for industries that could cater to homosexual tastes but resist any meaningful support for the queer community. The latter half of this chapter focuses on

queer entries into the public sphere later in the 1970s, primarily through a history of gay men's choruses and early gay ethnomusicology. Moving away from the marketing of queers and camp tastes by heteronormative industry, gay men's choruses directly marketed themselves and their musical entertainment in an attempt to profit directly from their own labor. In becoming publicly speaking subjects, these queers largely conformed to public expectations and stereotypes about gay musicality in order to conform to popular tastes. This chapter functions as a historical case study for and critique of Judith Butler's *Excitable Speech*, in which she theorizes the subversive potential of reclaiming languages of profiling and stereotyping.

The final chapter considers the themes of the first four chapters against queer experience in the 2010s, now that digital media have charted new relations to both space and discourse. Specifically, I read the reception of the video "Telephone Remake" (a viral remake of Lady Gaga's music video for "Telephone" by US soldiers) to demonstrate how musical content can engender discursive resistance to nationalist policy about sexual identity. Drawing heavily on theory developed by diverse voices including Jean-François Lyotard, David Rodowick, Jasbir Puar, Alexander Galloway, and Eugene Thacker, this chapter develops a qualified historical account of how formal content online became complicit in the repeal of the US "Don't Ask Don't Tell" policy, which severed protection for queer US soldiers if they divulged their sexual identity. Importantly, this potential operated because of a historical context that marginalized queers, and not because of a more generalized potential of formal content and formal reading.

Throughout this project I circle back to questions of the visibility and legibility of queers, both to the outside world and to their own communities. I explicitly address the larger ramifications of this approach for future scholarship in the conclusion, and propose possible forms it might take. It is my desire that an attention to the historical basis of public queer expression should provide new directions for scholarship in the humanities and the social sciences generally, and encourage self-reflection among queer scholars about the importance of moving beyond and adapting methods that derive from a legacy of oppression. While there may be no feasible alternative to using the tools of the system available to us, that does not mean that we should participate in our own marginalization or essentialization. I hope that this history moves you, and changes how you understand the past and present.

ⁱ Anderson, Mark Lynn, 74-75.

ⁱⁱ *Ibid.*, 76.

Chapter 1: Music, Modernity and Queer Identity

“The juke box plays, and a few beer bottles are still to be opened. Somewhere in the vast city lovers embrace, a lonely man makes his way to the baths, a gay bar closes, a youth yawns and asks for another drink, another says, “I’ll never get to church on time in the morning,” while around him a group sings softly, to the accompaniment of a record, something about being in love with a wonderful guy.”

Donald Webster Cory, from the chapter “Drop Another Nickel In,” *The Homosexual in America*, 1951.¹

Near the end of the partial talkie *Lonesome* (1928, Paul Fejös, Universal), the film’s main characters—John and Mary, a pair of deliberately generic New Yorkers surrounded by people but isolated nonetheless—dance together to the song “Always.” Played by a big band at Luna Park, the song solidifies the love that had been developing between the two over a single day at the beach as they enjoy the many amusements on hand. In a film well known for visual innovation, the sequence stands out as one of its most flamboyant, employing a series of multiple exposures and extended lap dissolves in colorful tints that visually layer time and space with the music. “Always” remains audiovisually present both on the soundtrack and through its visual superimposition on the film itself: a staff of music in typical waltz tempo occupies the bottom register of the film frame, providing both musical notation and lyrics to the song. (Figure 1) To illustrate the internal, affective shifts that John and Mary undergo as “Always” evinces their love for one another, the film presents them apart from the crowd, dancing in the clouds next to a golden castle. This virtual relocation spatializes (by setting them apart) and externalizes the internal, subjective terrain John and Mary occupy together, and illustrates emotions that remain otherwise imperceptible or phantasmatic. (Figure 2) John and Mary become separated from one another shortly thereafter and return home alone, both of them despondent. John plays his record of “Always” on the phonograph, a sound technology commonly found in private domestic space by 1928. The reach of the device extends beyond its intended auditor, however, when Mary overhears the music as she prepares for bed in an adjacent apartment. (Figure 3) Multiple exposures illustrate Mary’s recognition of the song (and the subsequent state of anguish into which she descends), and conflate subjective and material spaces and temporalities to visualize the personal meaning of the song to her. (Figure 4) When Mary begins to bang on the wall, John realizes that it’s actually her, and their reunion—enabled by the accumulation of meaning around a song audible through various technologies in a range of locations, urban and otherwise—provides a fitting end to a familiar story: a boy and girl who fell in love out in the world only to find that they’d always been right next door to each other.

These sequences from *Lonesome* are notable for how they narrativize the circulation, performativity, and intermedial passage of popular song through different spaces and times. *Lonesome* grounds its narrative resolution on an understanding of how music is not simply an inert object to be consumed: in its movement between and through different locations (here public sites of commercialized leisure and domestic sites of private reception) it also accumulates meaning through its circulation and consumption. This includes sites and practices linked to public forms of commercial exchange as well as more private moments of audition and performance, including through a band that plays “Always” at Luna Park, a recording of it, and musical notation. These various extra-diegetic and diegetic presentations

of music, in turn, encourage a spectatorial affinity with familiar, past experiences of performing or consuming music, both in public or semi-public settings with others as well as alone or with friends and family in domestic or private spaces. In *Lonesome* “Always” moves from Luna Park (perhaps the most iconic semi-public space of commercialized leisure of the era), to the domestic space of John and Mary’s apartments, while registering the subjective, interior space of affect that the song expresses. In this way, *Lonesome* demonstrates the potential for music to reterritorialize space, illustrated elegantly by the ability of “Always” to transcend not only the wall that separates John and Mary’s apartments but also the phantasmatic and spatial parameters of the film as a whole.

But what if John and Mary were homosexuals? The heterosexual imperative of Classical Hollywood cinema forbade homosexual romantic coupling, even if the pre-code era of *Lonesome* was more lenient with homosexual representation more generally (for example the swishy stage manager in 1929’s *The Broadway Melody*). In turn, the academic work of queer scholars interested in the period has negotiated with the absence of overt queer representation, and the spectatorial potentials of reading the repressive production code against the grain to find hidden meaning in narratives or specific stars, whether deliberately implied or not.² *Lonesome* would seem to deflect such spectatorial attention as its narrative is pointedly banal, and John and Mary demonstrate little that might be interpreted as queer. Reorienting attention to the musical spaces in which they travel, however, opens up a more production avenue for queer interpretation. *Aside* from the blunt fact that queer romance never would have been narrativized by a Hollywood film in 1928, which parts of *Lonesome* would remain plausible for the development of a romance between two queers, especially as the film relates to the reception of popular song throughout both public and private spaces? Certain settings would be changed, to be sure. For example, the profound visibility of some locations in Luna Park, such as the dance floor near the big band, would not be appropriate for the consolidation of love between a homosexual couple for whom visibility had to be negotiated to ward off the threat of corporal or juridical violence. New York City in the late 1920s, however, offered many other semi-public spaces of commercialized leisure that could have facilitated (nonetheless heteronormative) queer romance. For example, *Lonesome* could retain its parallel structure in its early segments (picturing the dull daily routines of the main characters), and then bring the two together as they go shopping on the weekend rather than to Luna Park on a holiday. Imagine: two men go into Woolworth’s separately to look for a song, “Always,” which they have both heard on the radio. They arrive at the appropriate section of phonograph records and simultaneously reach for the same copy of “Always,” smile at one another, and strike up a conversation. Or perhaps one chooses a copy of sheet music for the song while the other chooses a recording, and the two meet and recognize each other’s purchases at the checkout counter. If the narrative of *Lonesome* delayed the meeting between the main characters even longer (and heightened dramatic irony for the audience) they would still meet later in the day at a large party in Greenwich Village or the Bowery, neighborhoods in Lower Manhattan known at the time for their gay populations. The rest of the film would follow similarly, with the two separated by a raucous crowd, only to be reunited by the accidental audition of “Lonesome” through a wall of the modest apartment building in which they both live.

I have reoriented the narrative of *Lonesome* to demonstrate both how familiar the use of music is to consolidate couples generally, and also how easily (and plausibly) popular song could bring together queers in historical settings that were outwardly hostile to them. As consumers of popular song, queers like John and Mary might travel inconspicuously

across a range of spaces. As made clear in the preceding queer fantasia on heteronormative romance, this spatial network included locations of profound public visibility such as department stores. Other mixed public settings might easily include concert halls, movie theaters, parks, and, indeed, certain spaces in Luna Park or other urban realms of commercialized leisure. But popular song was integral to the spaces of countless semi-private spaces as well, such as bars and private clubs, especially queer ones that would have likely featured drag performances set to music. Furthermore, as narrativized by *Lonesome*, music was a central feature of domestic life in the first half of the 20th century in the United States. Music infused domestic settings via the radio, as well as the performance of sheet music on the piano or other instruments, and the playback of phonograph records or player piano scrolls. As a modern invention, popular song was intertwined with the experience of all walks of everyday life, and it constituted a robust network that linked time spent working and relaxing, at home and in public spaces, alone and with others. For queers this network had the added potential to offer a form of continuity between spaces that welcomed them and those that did not, providing a central source of amusement in the former and the normative identity of a consumer of music in the latter.

This chapter excavates and historicizes the potentials for mobility and the negotiation of public sexual identity that the spatial and material network created by the distribution of popular song offered to queers in the United States in the 1920s and 30s. I engage in the speculative recuperation of everyday queer life because it is impossible for this to be a predominantly empirical historical endeavor. This impossibility stems from the fact that American queer life before the dawn of gay liberation in the late 60s largely functioned through the denial, spectrality, and illegibility of sexual preference in public, semi-public, and sometimes semi-private spaces. In turn, the already scant archival resources for spectatorship during the Classical Hollywood period (such as feedback from pre-release test audiences and letters from readers in popular film journals) become legible only through speculation and reading such materials “against the grain,” which furthermore encourages an attention to narrative representation rather than the conditions of queer spectatorship. The period before Stonewall remains a blind spot for archives that are dedicated to queers as well—such as the ONE Archives in Los Angeles—simply because the physical traces that exist and can be preserved from this period are extremely limited, comprising mostly the private papers of queer individuals.

To historicize this queer relationship to popular song, I develop my methodology from a range of theoretical approaches toward history, space, and gender and sexuality. I am guided especially by Mark Lynn Anderson’s work in *Twilight of the Idols* to historicize the Hollywood star system as a generative matrix that spoke to the “force and complexity of sexuality as a popular way of knowing and living in the Western world during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.”³ In the interest of considering queer spectatorship despite the lack of empirical evidence, I wish to turn my attention instead to how the circumcinematic arrangement of the musical across media conditioned a queer “way of knowing” and navigating the world. My use of “circumcinematic” here highlights the centrality of the cinema in providing audiovisual expression for the complex network of spaces that popular song joined together through different technologies (inclusive of the human voice), for example the radio in the office or department store, the neighborhood chorus, the jukebox in the gay bar, and the performance of the piano in the home with the aid of sheet music. This circumcinematic network is important because it remained a consistent presence throughout all walks of queer life, and provided a form of continuity between public and

private, hostile and welcoming spaces. This theoretical approach focuses attention on the system that subtends subjective queer experience, and circumvents an epistemic reliance on personal narratives and historical artifacts that might record queer experience were they more readily available for analysis. Much like the star system, popular song offered a diverse array of objects that queers might consume as apparently normative subjects. This consumption was not, however, neutral, and I draw upon Henri Lefebvre and Michel de Certeau to theorize the political stakes of the spaces in which such consumption took place. I consult Lefebvre to establish the ways that social practice and space are mutually constitutive of one another, and de Certeau to frame queer practices of consumption during this period as tactical, or predicated on a lack of power and compensatory of this lack. Judith Butler and Mary Ann Doane provide me with models to consider the interactions of constrained subjects with the systems that structure their daily lives. Butler's work on performativity offers a productive means to frame the open address of popular song as an invitation to engage in a publicly condoned identity that was available to queers. Mary Ann Doane's feminist work, on the other hand, provides a model to consider the fleeting pleasures that queers might find in forms of musical consumption that offered modes of mobility and symbolic power that were typically unavailable to them.

In this chapter I analyze either objects that document the consumption of popular song by queers, or filmic texts that demonstrate the ways that music in the 1920s and 1930s forged links between public and private spaces and identities. Central to my analysis is a vast collection of sheet music contained at the ONE Archives as part of the Judd Collection on Cross Dressing. What is notable about the collection, I argue, is that it is a material index of a wide range of queer practices of the consumption of music. These tactical approaches to consumption sometimes imply performance, but more often provide insight into the use of sheet music as a popular commodity that might give expression to queer sensibility. Such consumption presented queers with an opportunity to circulate publicly as apparently normative subjects, and simultaneously contributed to the tactical use of popular culture by socially marginalized queers. To return to the reoriented narrative of *Lonesome*, this continuity finds expression in the ability of queers to appear (safely) heteronormative in their purchase of music, while later allowing the same song to sonorize the consolidation of their love for one another in the semi-private space of the queer party and the domestic territory of their apartment building. I also consider early Vitaphone shorts that bring representations of musical entertainment in fictional domestic spaces into the cinema. This representational practice layers domestic space within the cinema as a context for direct address and musical performance. For queers, Vitaphones bridged public and private, domestic and commercial spheres, and in so doing provided an interface through which the tensions of everyday life were negated and turned into entertainment. Furthermore, the rhetorical address of these shorts would have offered queers a fantasy of equitable subjecthood, wherein they had unimpeded purchase upon the public sphere and might move without anxiety between public and private spaces and identities.

This chapter is guided by my contention that in its potentials for queer consumption and spatial circulation, the circumcinematic network of popular song spoke to a queer fantasy of circulating with the same agency and power as heteronormative subjects. The uses of music as distributed across divergent spaces had the potential to satisfy a queer desire to exist—if only momentarily—in an alternate economy of speaking and begin seen. The cinema is integral to this argument, as it solidified a diffuse sonorous, material, and spatial network through representational strategies that hinged on the use of popular song,

something queers consistently had access to as consumers. Likewise, the cinema situated queer viewers in a relatively egalitarian space of audiovisual reception that inverted looking relations and arranged audiovisual entertainment for their senses. Within the cinema queers were invited to look freely at narratives and presentational shorts, and they were also temporarily liberated from the regime of scrutiny and surveillance that they were forced to internalize in their daily lives. The illusion of mastery offered by the cinema was predicated on the circumcinematic network of popular song, and it only achieved its full rhetorical force for queers who had experienced both marginalization beyond the cinema, and also the palliative pleasure offered by the consumption of music to manage such alienation in day-to-day life. Thus, due to the motion picture industry's strategic business relationships with music publishing and popular song, the cinema brought focus to (and temporarily ameliorated) a range of queer anxieties about the maintenance of divisions between public and private life.

Music, Circulation, and Performativity

Popular song was a thoroughly modern invention, and exposure to it was deeply intertwined with the daily routines of city life. First properly emerging with Charles K. Harris's "After the Ball" in 1892-93, popular song is distinguished from earlier forms of music in that it had the potential to reach national popularity through modern channels of distribution and new forms of mechanized musical playback.⁴ Unlike earlier music that became popular in specific regions of the United States, songs promoted by the aggressive, modern business strategies of "Tin Pan Alley" were promoted relentlessly in public spaces in major urban centers across the United States. Indeed, Harris asserted in 1926 autobiography: "A New song must be sung, played, hummed, and drummed into the ears of the public, not in one city alone, but in every city, town, and village, before it ever becomes popular."⁵ Before radio became a feasible option in the 1920s, this distribution largely took place by the live performance of song, both in the theater by touring musicians and by the unwavering presence of "song pluggers" in the streets. Song pluggers were hired by music publishing houses to saturate public spaces in cities with new songs in an effort to weed out weak ones and promote more aggressively the ones people enjoyed. For city dwellers in the United States in the early twentieth century, it would have been remarkably difficult to leave one's home without confronting ambient music in public spaces, or, indeed, across a range of semi-public and private spaces such as offices, schools, and homes. As described by Suisman, this integration of music into the quotidian "signified the alteration of 'a whole way of life,' in which music was now a presence in schools, in magazines, on the streets, and in commercial spaces as never before."⁶

The conditions of modernity that enabled the successful diffusion of popular song throughout cities and towns across the nation also gave rise to robust (although often clandestine) homosexual populations in cities. As argued by John D'Emilio in *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities*, "in America's cities from the 1870s through the 1930s, there emerged a class of people who recognized their erotic interest in members of their own sex...and sought others like themselves."⁷ D'Emilio explicitly links the rise of these urban, homosexual subcultures with the concurrent breakdown in traditional family structures caused by "the interlocking processes of urbanization and industrialization [that] created a social context in which an autonomous personal life could develop," and in turn the proximity of queers to one another that urbanization yielded. Although D'Emilio is interested primarily in the public, discursive elaboration of the homophile movement and how it gained momentum in the

period from the 1940s to the 1970s (and subtended the dynamics of gay liberation in the late 60s), he nonetheless couches the development of this nascent political orientation in the ability of queers to consume, develop personal identities therefrom, and seek out and consolidate networks of affiliation according to interests as a social outlet. He argues:

Meeting places for urban liaisons, institutions such as bars, and friendship networks dotted the urban landscape. During the 1920s and the 1930s, they acquired a measure of stability, slowly grew in number, and differentiated themselves to allow for specialization by social background and styles. Gradually a subculture of gay men and lesbians was evolving in American cities that would help to create a collective consciousness among its participants and strengthen their sense of identification with a group.⁸

Stated differently, the urban experience of modernity offered a wide range of spaces and identities based on practices of consumption that allowed for an accordingly diverse network of queer groups of affiliation.

I argue that the potentials offered by popular song to consolidate and differentiate spatial (the office, the home, the street, etc.), material (sheet music, pianos, radios, records, etc.), and sonorous (songs and music sung or heard purposefully or by chance) networks resulted in specific pathways and orientations that enabled the passage of queers between different urban spaces, and allowed these queers to identify themselves and others by personal tastes and musical interests. Central to this idea is that popular song was often heard, and was even central to, activities taking place in many of the spaces of affiliation mentioned by D'Emilio (bars, drag balls, parks, educational institutions, professional organizations). Moreover, popular song also extended to private spaces where queer practices of performance and reception might take place under safer cover, and its popularity hinged on the ability of song to appeal to a generalized consumer, and, in turn, allowed queers to marshal it to queer uses while appearing outwardly (hetero)normative.

Over the course of the first three decades of the twentieth century, music and musical playback technologies became ubiquitous in American homes and semi-public spaces of commercialized leisure. The piano had already become a stalwart of middle class interiors in the nineteenth century, where its presence was tied to an ideological agenda of moral uplift and national identity.⁹ In the twentieth century the home became musical through newer technologies including player pianos, the phonograph, and the radio. All of these technologies also imply the circulation of their owners through spaces of commercialized leisure to make use of them. Printed and recorded music was a popular commodity and an affordable luxury, and competing department stores often engaged in price wars to lure consumers. In permeating wide range of public, semi-public, and private spaces, popular song provided queers (and modern subjects more generally) with a means both to conform to and differentiate oneself from popular tastes through consumption in practically all walks of life.

The ubiquity of popular song was due not only to its relentless promotion and availability as a commodity, but also the ways in which it addressed and appealed to a deliberately generalized consumer. A song's success on a massive scale hinged on the ability of an average person to perform the song with minimal effort and insert him- or herself into the song's lyrics. Indeed, famous songwriter Irving Berlin offered the following necessary conditions (among others) for a song's success:

1. The melody must musically be within the range of the *average voice* of the average public singer...
2. The title, which must be simple and easily remembered, must be “*planted*” effectively in the song. It must be emphasized, accented again and again, throughout the verses and chorus...
3. The ideas and the wording must be [appropriate for] either a male or a female singer... so that both sexes will want to buy and sing it...
4. The song should contain *heart interest* [pathos], even if it is a comic song...
6. Your lyric must have to do with ideas, emotions, or objects known to everyone...
7. The lyric must be *euphonius*—written in easily singable words and phrases, in which there are many open vowels...
8. Our song must be perfectly *simple*... [emphases in original]¹⁰

Significantly, Berlin recommends writing songs that are as generic as possible, that will sound alike even at the level of vowel sounds, and that concern topics vague enough that they could potentially appeal to anyone. In other words, popular song should function as a generic structure for the articulation of identity. Returning to the narrative of *Lonesome*, this generic quality of popular song is precisely that on which the climactic scene of *Lonesome* relies and capitalizes. When John and Mary find each other again, their reunion is affecting both in spite and because of its banality: it is difficult not relate one’s own experiences of the personal and cultural meanings built around song in public and private to the decidedly generic action on screen. If the genius of *Lonesome* extends beyond its visuals, it resides in its strategic deployment of popular song as a generic structure through which to encourage spectatorial recognition.

Drawing from the narrative of *Lonesome*, it is important to understand popular music not only as a reality of modern life that might be either pleasurable or oppressive, but also as a constitutive part of a media network that influenced social practices, the ways in which people navigated public and private space, and the potential means that subjects had at their disposal to articulate identity to themselves and others. A modern city-dweller might shape the trajectory of his or her day around music in a number of ways. She might deliberately avoid certain intersections with obnoxious song pluggers on her way to work in the morning, overhear the radio while working at a department store, and in the evening attend a concert featuring a popular singer alone, with friends, or on a date. Another might plan his day around specific radio programs and a rehearsal with a neighborhood chorus to which he belongs. Someone else entirely might eschew the sound of Tin Pan Alley and only purchase, listen to, and play classical music, and seek out interest groups for fellow classical music aficionados. All the preceding examples demonstrate the ways that popular reception of music and song emerged in the early twentieth century as a spatial, material, and ideological network that dictated behaviors and orientations in daily life, both in terms one’s movement through adjacent and contrasting spaces and also how one was visible to others through affiliations with and preferences for specific types of music.

The inevitability of popular song in daily life as both a network that required negotiation as well as a means to make oneself legible (or illegible) to certain groups of people demands that it should be considered in terms of its performative potentials. As argued by Judith Butler, subjectivity is not so much something that is self-willed as much as “the result of a diffuse and active structuring of the social field,” that “effects a social space

for and of the body within certain regulatory grids of intelligibility.”¹¹ Instead of subjectivity, Butler focuses on performativity as that which guides one’s behavior as a social being:

In other words, acts, gestures, and desire produce the effect of an internal core or substance, but produce this *on the surface* of the body... but never reveal, the organizing principle of identity as a cause. Such acts, gestures, enactments, generally construed, are *performative* in the sense that the essence or identity that they otherwise purport to express are *fabrications* manufactured and sustained through corporeal signs and other discursive means. (emphasis in original)¹²

The material, sonorous and spatial network of popular song constitutes a “regulatory [grid] of intelligibility” that makes one legible as a consumer of music, not only through actual purchases of recordings in stores or tickets for concerts, but by how one traverses, dwells in, and avoids certain spaces associated with different types of music. As illustrated by the previous examples of how period subjects might organize their days according to music, such performativity manifests in a range of expressions. For example, the man’s affiliation with a neighborhood chorus publicly associates him with a specific geographical area within the city, makes him visible as a normative and engaged citizen to others in his community with whom he might interact, and makes him intelligible to those beyond this community by his association with the chorus. From a different perspective, the consumer who only listens to classical music actively chooses to develop a public identity based on musical taste rather than geographical surroundings, and seeks out visibility and recognition from others in spaces (such as concert halls, stores that specialize in classical music, and private meeting places for clubs) that are likely less proximate to him or her. In other words, the types of visible and intelligible affiliation available through music are manifold and imply a range of attitudes toward such locations and consumption. Furthermore, popular song itself can only become popular by acting as a basic grid of intelligibility and invitation to performance, as given expression by Irving Berlin’s rules that stress the status of song as a vessel to accommodate as many types of subjects as possible rather than an occasion for musical innovation or differentiation.

The attention that I have drawn to the spatially articulated, performative potentials of popular song needs further elaboration in order to consider the unique constraints endured by queers in the first half of the 20th century. In the 1920s through the 1960s, gay social practices were divided sharply between those that took place in private with other homosexuals and those that took place in public, where homosexuality was a form of vice that was readily punished. As documented by George Chauncey in *Gay New York*, “most queer men led a double life” that was split between private, predominantly homosexual spaces (such as clubs, restaurants, bars, and especially apartments) and public settings (most typically one’s workplace) in which homosexuality could be persecuted in a variety of ways.¹³ As recounted by one gay man who lived in New York from the 30s through the 60s:

All my life I had to wear a rigid mask, a stiff armor of protection, not necessarily to pretend to be what I was not—heterosexual—but not to be identified as homosexual. Not that I was ashamed of so being, but to defend against insults, humiliations and mockery, [and] also to make a living and do the sort of work I wasn’t wanted to do.¹⁴

Gay house parties in which homosexual preferences could be flaunted were common and (at least in the 20s) escaped close scrutiny from the police, although isolated incidents of jail sentences given out at such parties were enough to lead some to close the blinds and encourage guests to leave in mixed pairs so as to appear normatively coupled.¹⁵ Such punitive measures forced gays either to self-segregate entirely and circulate only among queer spaces so as to avoid pressure to appear straight, or, more commonly, to internalize regimes of punishment in order to anticipate and fend off their deployment, and in so doing perform as heterosexual or asexual in day-to-day life beyond safe spaces. In other words, historic queer models for performativity hinged on the adherence of subjects to contrasting performative models that were overtly queer in private, apparently heterosexual in public, or that tread a delicate line between the two in mixed settings where one might wish to outwardly appear normative while simultaneously remaining visible to other queers.

The public, semi-public, and semi-private spaces in which queers might socialize with other queers were remarkably constrained during this period. The police cultivated the disenfranchisement of homosexuals in public life systematically through spatial disparity, not only through informal understandings or expectations about proper conduct, but also by the rigorous surveillance and policing of potentially gay spaces to eliminate homosexual activity. As chronicled by Chauncey, the New York City police began a sustained campaign against gay bars that featured female impersonators—or more general “pansy acts”—in 1931 that shuttered several establishments on the basis of the entertainment they provided.¹⁶ The repeal of prohibition in 1933 provided an opportunity for the even stricter policing of gay gathering places, as manifest in the New York State Liquor Authority’s ability to revoke a liquor license for any establishment that openly served homosexuals. This privilege wasn’t enforced casually, but instead actively and with punitive zeal. Plainclothes cops regularly frequented bars in order to assess the sexual preferences of their patrons and entrap them via sexual overtures, and the effect of these strategies was so drastic that by 1954 courts became concerned that they could jeopardize the retail liquor business entirely.¹⁷ Gay bars adapted by actively policing the behavior of their clientele or by anticipating closure, and they would often only remain open for a few months at a time. Indeed, gay bars didn’t necessarily decrease in number from the early 30s through the 60s, they only moved around more frequently. While some, more marginal locations within New York City (such as Greenwich Village and Harlem) remained less effected by the new forms of policing than many bars in mid-Manhattan, New York City became a terrain that was openly hostile to homosexuals in public. In other words, legal measures operated through the creation of spatial disparity as a way of life for gay men and women in early and mid-20th century America, and this persecution necessitated the consolidation of tactics to ameliorate such a fractured existence.

Under such a regime, popular song remained a sonorous and material presence that transcended such policing and scrutiny but nonetheless forged social networks between queers and spatial networks between a range of locations (public and private) where queers were (relatively) safe. The centrality of song to gay sociality and circulation is the subject of a chapter in *The Homosexual in America*, a historically important book written by Donald Webster Cory (later revealed to be sociologist Edward Sagarin) and published in 1951, contemporaneous with the beginnings of the American homophile movement. The book was meant to reach an educated, liberal readership in its appeal for the tolerance of homosexuals, and as such it provides an overview of discourse on homosexuality as well as social practices by queers. The chapter “Drop Another Nickel In” describes the importance of

music to life within and beyond the gay bar (specifically with the jukebox), and includes the following paragraph:

The music starts, and some songs seem to be extremely popular that evening. If one were able to obtain a report on the music at the other gay bars, the similarity of taste would be striking. Everywhere the same song seems to have taken hold. The youths are humming and singing it as if it were the craze. It has been captured by the group and considered its own. So thoroughly is the air filled with a line from a popular song that to hear it on the street is to know that it comes from the mouth of a gay person. Then the song disappears, not as quickly as from general popularity, and its place of preeminence in every gay bar is assumed by another.¹⁸

What is striking about this passage is the status of song as a type of *lingua franca* that could effect recognition between queers in public urban spaces that would punish homosexuality were the presence of such a marginal sexual identity evident rather than veiled. The assertion that “to hear [the song] on the street is to know that it comes from the mouth of a gay person” is especially provocative, demonstrating both the performative potential of song to fit into a normative public identity while simultaneously indicating homosexual preferences, and also the spatial mobility of song. Indeed, the song described here is virtually contagious, and its ubiquity in gay bars might be best understood as an epidemiological index of the movement of queers and the music that they carry with them and access easily through a corresponding network of musical reception that includes technologies of audition such as the jukebox, the radio, and, of course, the human voice.¹⁹ Similarly, Donald Vining’s diaries that chronicle his life from 1933 to 1946 return repeatedly to his preferences for popular classical music as it intersects with his social and sexual practices with other queers and alone, not unlike the hypothetical consumer of classical music previously discussed. His taste was nurtured as a student at Yale, where he regularly attended meetings of the Phonograph Club and listened to works such as Brahms’s First Symphony and Ravel’s arrangement of Mussorgsky’s Pictures at an Exhibition in 1938.²⁰ By 1943 as a 25-year-old gay man living in New York, his entries about music included sentences such as “The radio was playing The Swan of Tuonela, Ravel’s Introduction and Allegro for Harp and Orchestra and such things, which made a wonderful accompaniment to sex,” on the occasion of an amorous liaison with a young actor named Apollo whom he ran into at the Selwyn Theater.²¹

I have drawn attention to the preceding quotes as well as this chapter’s epigraph because they link music to urban networks and spatial mobility rather than to any single location, even as some of these nodes (such as the gay bar) play a heightened role in establishing the circulation of popular song. While queer historians have remarked upon the centrality of music to historic homosexual culture, the ability of music to establish and facilitate physical circulation within hostile urban settings has not been adequately theorized. For example, John D’Emilio has described how drag acts in the 1940s and 50s at San Francisco’s historic Black Cat bar adapted torch songs and opera to humorous effect. However, D’Emilio links such practice to discursive histories of later fights for gay rights rather than the ways it facilitated queer dispositions to spatial mobility via musical consumption. Rather than consider the specificities of individual sites, I focus instead on the way that musical reception necessitates and facilitates the circulation of queers and provides an identity that appears normative but might also convey queer sentiment.

The relationship that I have described between music and space should be understood as reciprocal. In *The Production of Space* Henri Lefebvre confronts the relationship between space and its uses to argue that they are mutually constitutive, and frequently returns to music as an example. Lefebvre's illustrative use of sound and music to demonstrate how space is produced is sometimes literal, as in his description of the constitution of sacred space via "the sounds, voices, and singing" that reverberate within its walls, and sometimes metaphorical, as with his concept of "rhythm analysis" to interrogate the relationship between subjective and material spaces.²² While music is material and occupies space in the sense that sound waves become audible as they move through space (and that the acoustic qualities of spaces either enhance or dampen these frequencies), it is also material in that it physically occupies a range of social spaces through which people move daily. This includes the many locations I have described so far, among them the gay bar, the home, the street, the private club, the department store, a concert hall, or the cinema, where music might manifest as sheet music, a piano, a radio, a human voice, an orchestra, phonograph records and players, a jukebox, or a film, and potentially many other configurations. What is difficult to say with certainty about any of these spaces, however, is whether music conditions the uses of space or vice versa. For example, the gay man overheard singing on the street: for another queer this would effect a sense of kinship in a hostile place, but at the same time the highly visible conditions of the street do not permit the overt display and performance of homosexuality simply because the song is heard. In a more general sense, the reciprocal relationship between song and social practice is demonstrated by the ending of *Lonesome*, in which repeated exposure to the song "Always" in a range of places culminates in the romantic reunion of John and Mary as their desire for one another transcends the wall that separates their apartments, a reunion that is only facilitated by the sonorous passage of "Always" between apartments.

One of Lefebvre's later points, however, is that the mutually constitutive nature of space and social practice is often shaped by constrained desire. In the following excerpt, Lefebvre theorizes the relationship between sexuality and dispositions toward spaces that normally foreclose sexual expression:

Spatial practice is neither determined by an existing system...nor adapted to a system...On the contrary, thanks to the potential energies of a variety of groups capable of diverting homogenized space to their own purposes, a theatricalized or dramatized space is liable to arise. Space is liable to be eroticized and restored to ambiguity, to the common birthplace of needs and desires, by means of music, by means of differential systems and valorizations which overwhelm the strict localization of needs and desires in spaces specialized either physiologically (sexuality) or socially (places set aside, supposedly, for pleasure).²³

While this is a particularly dense passage that signifies both literally and metaphorically (with music meant here as a philosophy of the use of space), it nonetheless applies to music in its familiar sense and the spatial and performative constraints of early and mid-20th century homosexuality. The presence of music in and across a range of spaces had the potential to alter subjective relationships of homosexuals to one another and to specific places. The previous example of the gay song heard on the street in turn might shift social relationships in a controlled setting more dramatically, where actual connection between queers might be imminent. For instance, if a gay man heard another man singing this song

in his office, it might actually alter relationships (at least between the two men) in the office, and might even serve as a beacon to other queers should they overhear the song. In this way, music could act as a palimpsest that overlaid the affective dimensions of one space onto another (here bringing memories of time spent in the semi-private gay bar to bear on public experience), and “eroticize” it to compensate for the alienation and disenfranchisement queers experienced in everyday life, and expand kinship networks even as private sexual identity remains hidden. Stated differently, in its ability to transform the affective experience of spaces of profiling and policing, music had the potential to make the “rigid mask” that queers were forced to adopt more bearable.

While I argue that the appeal and availability of music may have driven queers to create specific pathways between spaces of policing and spaces of queer sociality by way of musical consumption and reception, I also want to make clear that I am not suggesting that there is an essential affinity between queer subjectivity and the enjoyment of music. I draw my thinking here from the work of W. Brian Arthur and his concept of Path-Dependence. As stated in his article “Urban Systems and Historical Path-Dependence”:

We cannot explain the observed pattern of cities by economic determinism alone, without reference to chance events, coincidences, and circumstances in the past. And without knowledge of chance events, coincidences, and circumstances yet to come, we cannot predict with accuracy the shape of urban systems in the future.²⁴

In this quote Arthur is commenting on his proposed model for the arrangement of industries to one another within specific regions, not about specific populations within urban systems. What is useful about his model, however, is that it demonstrates that spatial relations are contingent on specific historical circumstances rather than self-evident truths or logic. To make use of Arthur’s model, I contend that the historical affinity between queers and popular song emerged not because queers were drawn “naturally” or especially to music, but instead that homosexual populations and popular song were both symptoms of urban modernity, and the latter offered the former an unprecedented means to manage discrimination and punishment. The emergence of popular song in the first decades of the 20th century as a mass medium and a complex spatial, material, and performative network offered queers new ways to navigate the pressures of daily life as they concerned public identity, mobility, and consumption. In turn, the association between song and queers should be understood not only according to the pleasures of affinity music afforded, but also by the ways that the obligatory and repeated purchase, reception, and performance of music enabled practices of queer belonging at a specific point in history.

Sheet Music and the Erotics of Musical Consumption

The pathways that musical consumption and reception offered period queers were enormously varied, both in terms of the range of spaces it annexed as well as the variety of normative roles it allowed queers to play. As a consumer of popular song, a lesbian might buy a range of musical objects that would indicate different roles to those who interacted with her, and fit into a range of performative “grids of intelligibility.” To buy a radio, phonograph or piano would make her legible to shopkeepers and other consumers as someone associated with household dynamics and maintenance. If she were to buy records, on the other hand, others would still likely associate her purchase with domestic practices of audition, but they might regard her as more of a fan of music or a specific musician rather

than a matriarch. A gay man who purchases tickets to a concert or film only makes him visible as someone who desires to see or hear what is being offered. A member of a club based on musical affiliation (for example, the Yale Phonograph Club, which acted as a de facto society of classical music appreciation) is intelligible to others as someone who prefers a specific style of music, and who furthermore grounds part of his public identity in this preference. None of these identities are overtly queer, and might only become intelligible as such were the specific tastes of such groups or spaces known to others.

This section focuses specifically on sheet music because of the variety of pathways it offered queers between stigmatized and normative sexual identities, and within a wide range of public and private spaces. Sheet music is unlike other products of musical consumption because it implies a broader range of acts. It requires purchase in a public store, but then this purchase might be used wherever musical performance happens. Sheet music might be played at a piano at home, at a private club or musical society, at a concert, or the knowledge it conveys might be used at a sing along to music in a public space such a park or sport stadium, or within in gay bar, as with Cory's description of gay men singing along to the *South Pacific* standard "I'm in Love with a Wonderful Guy." Sheet music also links various technologies of audition. For example, someone might hear a song on a radio or a musical film, and then seek out the music for this song in order to play it him- or herself. Moreover, sheet music forges pathways between all of these locations and identities where the same song might be sought out, heard, or performed: the consumer in a public store; the average musical enthusiast at a concert or ball game; the performer of music at home; the spectator at the cinema; and the social queer in the space of the gay bar.

Sheet music was an enormously popular commodity and an affordable luxury, and its purchase in public and presence within domestic and other private spaces was entirely banal. From a contemporary perspective it is easy to forget that most middle class people in the first half of the twentieth century were able to play the piano, and also that almost all of them engaged in the performance of popular song. As recounted by David Suisman in *Selling Sounds: The Commercial Revolution in American Music*, "by 1907, price-cutting of sheet music became an urgent problem for publishers," as stores such as Macy's and Siegel-Cooper's drove prices as low as a penny per copy and Woolworth's reliably charged ten cents per copy (and sometimes as little as a nickel).²⁵ In the 1940s, as fewer Americans regularly performed music on instruments, a range of associated publications that supplied the lyrics of popular song appeared to capitalize on an appetite for musical performance despite a lack of expertise among the populace. By 1942, the publications *Sing Songs*, *American Song Magazine* and *Broadcast Songs*—the latter two of which advertised on their covers songs from "Radio, Stage, Screen"—circulated the printed lyrics of popular songs absent of the notational representation of music, which opened a space for performance despite lack of musical knowledge.²⁶ (Figure 5) The pleasure inherent in contributing to the production of music without technical expertise, however, had been capitalized on for decades within the theater via illustrated song slides that facilitated group singing.²⁷ In the space of the home, automated player pianos were popular during the teens and 20s, and these devices sometimes encouraged the participation of their owners even if they lacked musical expertise. For example, an ad from the Aeolian Company for one such piano that enabled the user to shape the instrument's musical output via pedal controls reads as follows: "The Aeolian is not an automatic instrument. It does not play itself. The instrument is responsive to [its operator's] every mood and he controls its playing with the same precision and rapidity as the conductor does that of his well-drilled orchestra."²⁸ The

necessity of scrolls for player piano operation demonstrates the sustained presence of forms of sheet music in the home and other private spaces, even if the owner thereof lacked musical skill.

To be clear, the links between the sheet music industry and the cinema were substantive, and sheet music was often an integral component of the circumcinematic musical network that supported cinematic reception. The first important connection between the film and music publishing industries occurred in 1929 when Warner Bros. acquired M. Witmark and Sons, and shortly thereafter seven other music publishing houses. The aim of Warners in this costly maneuver was to control all of the music used in its own films, and potentially profit from other producers as well. These sweeping purchases were motivated by a desire to minimize fees and royalties for the use of music in films, and they even enabled greater profit for Warners through the sale of ancillary products in 1930 when the purchase of Brunswick-Balke-Collender allowed them to press their own records, both for in-house use and public consumption.²⁹ As detailed by Katherine Spring, Warner Bros. was also a leader in leveraging film to market these other media to consumers. Spring delineates the mechanics of this intermedial promotion as follows:

The columns [in *Film Daily* and *Billboard*] reveal a range of strategies... [that] included securing a “tie-up” with music recording companies, whereby the company would provide a free phonograph player and records to the exhibitor; placing sheet music in the windows of phonograph record dealers; holding contests for aspiring songwriters; distributing records of a movie theme song to audience members who subscribed to a local newspaper; and playing theme songs on the radio for a week in advance of a film’s release.³⁰

These various means of cross-promotion take place beyond the cinema, predominantly other spaces of commercialized leisure such as music and department stores, and within the home through audition or performance via the radio, phonograph, or piano. Many of these cross-promotions—such as advance radio play of theme songs—actually preceded the viewing of a film itself and would have shaped spectatorial recognition in the space of the cinema. To illustrate, a full page “Picture of the Month” advertisement in *Photoplay* for *Gold Diggers of 1935* (1935, Busby Berkeley, First National) commands “a low, sweeping bow to Warren & Dubin for authoring the widely radioed songs that have made ‘Gold Diggers of 1935’ famous long before it reaches your favorite theatre.”³¹ This music was not only broadcast over the radio, but also offered for sale in the form of records and sheet music. (Figure 6) A spectatorial familiarity with physical qualities of sheet music was furthermore often assumed by Hollywood musicals, for example the Technicolor animated sequence in *Hollywood Party* (1934, no credited director, MGM) featuring the song “Hot Chocolate Soldiers” by Arthur Freed and Nacio Herb Brown that begins with an illustrated cover of the sheet music itself. (Figure 7) The superimposition of lines of musical notation on the image in the previously cited example of *Lonesome* achieves the same effect, and similarly relies on audience familiarity with the performance of sheet music, likely at the piano in the home, or potentially in institutions such as schools where music education was part of the curriculum. (Figure 1)

Although material collections of sheet music constitute an important part of historical queer collections, the dynamics of consumption and circulation that sheet music imply have not yet been adequately considered. Indeed, At the ONE National Gay & Lesbian Archives in

Los Angeles there is a large collection of sheet music as a part of the Ralph W. Judd Collection on Cross-Dressing in the Performing Arts, but if one searches for “sheet music” in the database there are no tags that even mark the collection as such, which in effect forecloses attention on the medium and redirects it to the representations that circulated via sheet music. The holdings in this collection ostensibly document what its name suggests: popular representations of men impersonating women and women impersonating men. The vast collection is subdivided amongst several oversized binders and boxes according to a few themes including “Gay Love,” “Camp,” “Military/Patriotic,” and “Vodvil/Stage/Radio/Movies” (sic). As an example of the drag performance documented by the collection, it includes several different copies of music from *This is the Army* (Michael Curtiz, 1943, Warner Bros.), which presented male soldiers in drag throughout several different numbers in both the stage and film versions. (Figure 8).

What is striking about the collection is that it ostensibly functions not to document the performance of music by queers, but instead the consumption of music that showcased potentially queer representations. Discussion of consumption in film studies has centered on gendered, feminized practice, most iconically through the emergent class of desirous female spectators in the late teens and 20s—subjects who are both similar to and different from queers who faced constant pressure to remain invisible in public.³² While it is difficult to characterize the compulsive consumption of sheet music as resistant given the close ties between consumption and the perpetuation of prevailing forms of power, it is nevertheless helpful to compare and contrast such consumers to Miriam Hansen’s description of the cult of Valentino, a group of fans “who most strongly felt the effects—freedom as well as frustration—of transition and liminality, the precariousness of a social mobility predicated on consumerist ideology,” and whose desire “might articulate a utopian claim: that the hollow promises of screen happiness be released into the mutuality of erotic practice.”³³ As with the cult of Valentino, it is important to consider queer relationships with capitalism according to the affective charges they might engender in those who made such purchases, the factors that motivated such spending, and how these material goods informed historic queer approaches to the movement between spaces that were public and private, dangerous and safe, homophobic and queer-friendly. It is also important to distinguish such queer consumption in opposition to the cult of Valentino—famous for disturbingly visible displays of desire for Valentino’s body and touch as commodities themselves, most famously in the necrophilic overtures made at his funeral—in that queer desire had to be deniable and remain hidden from public view. Such desire might also, however, find expression in the apparently normative consumption of Rudolph Valentino sheet music. (Figure 9) The potential of queer desire as expressed through consumption to disrupt or disorder discourse and power was therefore minimal, and the ability of queer consumption to make daily life pleasurable hinged on invisibility and the maintenance of hegemony rather than the destabilizing thereof. Although consumption may not be subversive or revolutionary, there is a reassuring pleasure in buying something to express a sensibility that would be punished if given voice by other means.

Given such compensatory consumption, de Certeau’s formation of tactics is crucial in addressing the dynamics that animated the collection of sheet music by queers. As a response to his earlier question, “The thousands of people who buy a health magazine, the customers in a supermarket, the practitioners of urban space, the consumers of newspaper stories and legends—what do they make of what they “absorb,” receive, and pay for?” de Certeau later posits:

They metaphorized the dominant order: they made it function in another register. They remained other within the system which they assimilated and which assimilated them externally. They diverted it without leaving it. Procedures of consumption maintained their difference in the very space that the occupier was organizing.³⁴

Although de Certeau is not considering here the specifics of historical queer experience, the way in which he frames consumption as a means to maintain difference “in the very space that the occupier was organizing” is entirely relevant to the spatial and performative dilemmas faced by queers in the first half of the 20th century and beyond. De Certeau frames such consumption as tactical: “A *tactic* is a calculated action determined by the absence of a proper locus [...] it is a maneuver [...] within enemy territory.”³⁵ More succinctly, “a tactic is an art of the weak,” a position of spatial and juridical vulnerability in which queers found themselves historically. As a commodity that was commonly available and ideologically inevitable, popular song could be used tactically by queers in that it would remain consistent yet inconspicuous as it moved between and across spaces, for example from the office, to the semi-public concert, to the street, to the gay bar, and to the home.

Patricia White’s concept of representability provides a complimentary means to think through the queer pleasures involved in the tactical consumption of sheet music. In her book *unInvited*, White grapples with the problem of theorizing the lesbian spectatorship of classical Hollywood cinema. In the absence of the possibility of lesbian representation due to the Hays Code, White develops the idea of representability (via Freud) as a mode of representation and reception that enables or promotes legibility, or has the ability to turn “abstract ideas into picture form;” this can be understood in other terms as “reading the code.”³⁶ Stated differently, the cultivation of representability through consumption can be read as a historical, tactical way to ameliorate the spatial marginalization and forced invisibility imposed upon queers. Although the majority of her book concerns the myriad ways in which Classical Hollywood narratives and stars might promote a mode of viewing that esteems representability more highly than representation, White formulates the idea of representability by considering it in relation to performative modes of consumption, and specifically her own adolescent consumption of cinematic forms of femininity. Upon reflecting on her viewing of *The Member of the Wedding*, and how the sight of Frankie’s filthy elbows led to her “obsessively scrubbing [her] own elbows,” as well as memories of how she and her best friend “modeled outfits on the schoolgirl dresses worn by Joan Fontaine” in *Letter From an Unknown Woman*, White insists that such texts allow viewers “to construct the conditions of [their] own representability.”³⁷ Although White addresses such consumption only in passing, representability implies both consumption and its marshaling to meaning and, in turn, its selective performative use to convey personal tastes and desire to others and oneself. It is this appropriative and relational aspect of representability as consumption with which I wish to frame the acquisition of sheet music as a commodity rather than as an interface for musical performance.

Returning to the Judd Collection at the ONE Archives, the queer consumption of sheet music itself is framed thematically: it documents musical performers who cross-dressed, and in turn the queer purchase of a musical commodity that highlighted these entertainers. This is not to say that such consumption precluded the use of sheet music for musical performance. For example, the collection includes a copy of “Secret Love” from *Calamity Jane* (David Butler, 1953, Warner Bros.). (Figure 10) *Calamity Jane*, which narrativizes the historical figure, is a celebrated object of lesbian spectatorship, and the

song “Secret Love” functions centrally within the film. The narrative follows Jane’s assimilation to normative models for gender performance, and her movement from aggressively masculine to feminine is accomplished by her cohabitation with an entertainer named Katie who is new to the area. They move into a small cabin together, and Katie domesticates both the space and Jane. At the point that “Secret Love” is sung in the narrative, Jane has already moved in with Katie and her romantic interest in Wild Bill Hickok, her future lover, has been minimally developed. The object of Jane’s “Secret Love” is thus ambiguous when read from a queer point of view. Beyond becoming a popular hit, “Secret Love” remains a standard at queer piano bars, and was featured in many early performances of gay men’s choruses in the late 70s.³⁸ From an enlarged view, the ostensible subject at hand (cross-gender impersonation) belongs to a rich history of queer representability, both in terms of strategies of self-representation and also sanctioned forms of entertainment that encouraged consumption by queers.

Most of the collection, however, doesn’t successfully perform its purported function to picture gender impersonation. While it is difficult to say with certainty how popular some of these songs were to queers at the time of purchase, many of them lack the legacy of performance that songs such as “Secret Love” left after their initial popular circulation. Instead, many of them appear to function more simply as an index of the elaboration of queer codes of representability. What appears to be queer about many objects in the collection is, precisely, their appearance. Such items often juxtapose pictures of men in close proximity with one another, for example “Do You, Don’t You, Will You, Won’t You,” which features the Howard Brothers on the cover, the projection of sexual meaning thereupon a transgression of both queer and incestuous taboos. (Figure 11) In a similar vein—yet more perverse in its reading of pedophilia into the scene pictured—is the copy of “One Sweet Kiss” from the Al Jolson vehicle *Say It With Songs* (Lloyd Bacon, 1929, Warner Bros.), which features Jolson holding Davey Lee, who plays his son in the film. (Figure 12) Unlike “Secret Love,” these songs lack the narrative frame that might encourage the projection of queer sentiment or desire upon them. Instead, these copies speak more plainly to the articulation of queer representability exclusively through commerce, rather than a coincident involvement in the machinations of narrative.

This development of queer sensibility through the covers of sheet music rather than its musical content finds expression in many forms throughout the collection. There are several copies of sheet music that feature famous stars about whom rumors of non-normative sexual preference circulated. For example, the copy of “Into My Heart” from the Ramon Novarro vehicle *In Gay Madrid* (Robert Z. Leonard, 1930, MGM) prominently features the actor in close-up on the cover, even though the song hasn’t survived as an important queer text. (Figure 13) This song has the double advantage of also exhibiting language that covertly signified queer sexual desire (through the use of “gay,” which didn’t designate homosexual desire in common parlance at the time), a tactic that informs other texts in the collection. Along these lines, the copy of “Japansy,” which appears to be a simple waltz, albeit covered in illustrations of violet pansies, plays on the use of the word “pansy” to designate a homosexual man. (Figure 14)

Most of the covers, however, work along the lines of the previously cited “One Sweet Kiss” and “Do You, Don’t You, Will You, Won’t You” and encourage the reading of queer meaning into the way the figures pictured relate to one another. For example, the copy of “Down Our Way” pictures a drawing of a strikingly pretty dandy looking into space. (Figure 15) He appears to be lost in thought, as designated by the cloud to the left of him, which

pictures an illustrated city intersection complete with children dancing near an organ grinder and two men speaking to each other in silhouette. When read queerly, the song's title might frame the intersection pictured as a sexual cruising area (with a potential assignation between the silhouetted men), or it might also promote a romantic association between the illustrated dandy and the photograph of the singer Fred Hughes, which occupies the lower left register of the cover. The copy of "I'm Gonna Love That Guy (Like He's Never Been Loved Before)" from the "Military/Patriotic" file also works at the level of queer inference about the figures pictured. (Figure 16) This cover features performer Eddie Stone in a round photograph at the center, surrounded by illustrated men involved in the armed forces. There is a profound dissonance between the title of the song and the figures that are pictured, as one would expect a more normative heterosexual scenario and, indeed, a female singer. The song was a popular hit and was covered by both male and female singers with the shift from "guy" to "gal," so it may have appeared less incongruous in its original context, but this does nothing to diminish the cover's capacity to be read queerly according to the potential sexual identities of the figures that populate it.

The potential offered by sheet music as an object to be consumed (and its coincident use for the tactical elaboration of representability) expand the ways in which music encouraged the circulation of queers through different types of space. Not only did music compel queers through spaces in which music could be received or performed (ranging from public and semi-public concert venues such as parks and theaters, to semi-private and private spaces such as clubs, bars, and homes), but it also encouraged the development of queer patterns of material consumption. Setting aside for a moment the relationship between material culture and the development of language (which will be considered deeply in the third chapter) it is important to note that the status of music as a material good adds additional layers of complexity to historical queer spatial circulation. Venues for the purchase of goods such as department and music stores, news stands, pharmacies, and grocery markets are especially important to consider as integral to the network of queer spatial mobility and circulation. These spaces function not only as an environment in which the aleatory audition of ambient popular song was likely to occur, but also as a privileged space that enabled active, purposeful, and tactical processes of representability. While this nonetheless relates to and informs the performance and reception of music in varying grades of public and private space, it also reorients the affective charge of such consumption and performance. Rather than only conforming to the demands of heteronormative juridical and generalized social pressure, it provides (via de Certeau) a means to maintain queer difference "in the very space that the occupier was organizing" through resistant modes of circulation and consumption. And again, although these practices may have ultimately reinforced prevailing models for power, they also offered a means to make livable the spatial and performative policing that characterized queer life in the US in the first half of the 20th century.

Vitaphone Shorts, and the Cinematic Consolidation of Queer Musical Reception

Despite beginning this chapter with the cinematic example of *Lonesome*, I have devoted much of my attention since to the circumcinematic network of musical reception and consumption. My desire with this shift in focus is not to marginalize the cinema; rather, I seek to contextualize the medium's use of popular song and music within a larger range of social spaces and practices that were integral to public and private identities and daily life.

Such musical configurations might include listening to radio alone or with others at home, singing along to a song on the jukebox at a gay bar, seeing a concert after work with colleagues, attending private meetings of musical societies based on specialized musical interest, or coming across musicians or song pluggers in the street. Music was an inevitable aspect of daily life that had to be negotiated, both in terms of how it shaped movement between different spaces and also its performative potentials for making oneself legible (or selectively illegible) to others. When the audiovisual parameters of the cinema began to accommodate recorded, synchronized sound in the late 1920s, this cinematic “revolution” seized upon patterns of musical reception and consumption in a wide range of spaces and social contexts that were already well established. By building upon this spatial, material, and performative network, the architects of cinema’s conversion to sound were able to capitalize on an extant desire for musical entertainment; in so doing they offered the public an unprecedented form of audiovisual entertainment that had the capacity to visualize and narrativize musical practices in cinematic settings that were analogous to those that were traversed by cinemagoers in everyday life.

Although they are seldom addressed in a sustained fashion, early Vitaphone shorts that pictured famous entertainers in a style similar to vaudeville are remarkable in how they foreground the circumcinematic spaces and practices that sustained the cinematic reception of music. Vitaphone shorts, were, as their name implies, temporally brief, ranging from a few minutes in length to up to ten. Vitaphones also presented a range of subjects, including musical performers, comedians, and short narratives that were either comedic or dramatic. These short films ran between feature length films as a sort of interstitial programming, and in many ways fulfilled the same function as live acts in the space of the theater between films before the conversion to sound. Vitaphone shorts always begin with a title card that introduces the performer or narrative about to appear, as with the card for Fred Ardath in *These Dry Days* (1929). (Figure 17) After the title card, the viewer is typically presented with a performer or group of performers on a set that might be modeled after a domestic room, a theatrical proscenium, or a public space such as a park. *The Gotham Rhythm Boys* (1929) typifies the framing conventions of Vitaphone shorts, whereby the performer or group is located centrally within the frame, and the shorts cut between different stationary cameras to capture the performance in either full or close up shots. (Figure 18) In musical or comedy shorts, the entertainers consistently address the audience directly, rather than maintain the illusionism of a closed diegetic world.

Warner Brothers first showcased Vitaphone technology to the American public in 1926 through its use in the film *Don Juan* (Alan Crosland), in the process gaining distinction as the first filmic synchronized sound technology and filling the cinema with types of sound that had been a part of daily life spaces such as homes, offices, and stores for years. Vitaphone technology—which operated via a disc with recorded sound that played in tandem with the film projector—was attached to films from Warner Bros. (the chief shareholder in the Western Electric developed Vitaphone Company) and its sister company First National (acquired by Warners in 1928) that used this technology before it was phased out in favor of a sound-on-film system beginning in 1930.³⁹ As previously implied, Vitaphone was also the name for the shorts (later “Vitaphone Varieties” from 1929 on, even after Warners had transitioned to a sound-on-film system), and the short films remain commonly associated with the Vitaphone recording technology.⁴⁰⁴¹ I focus on shorts from 1926 to 1930 in this section to illustrate ways that they respond to the circumcinematic network of music and

popular song in order to solidify the audition of recorded sound within the space of the theater.

Vitaphone shorts occupy a curious position in film studies, situated predominantly within a period of industrial flux and lacking the sufficient length, formal variety, or narrative complication to encourage sustained inquiry, at least from a perspective that is attuned to narrative and stylistic unity. As such, most analyses of Vitaphone shorts frame them predominantly as an expression of industry tensions or relate their formal characteristics to the development of sound cinema conventions. This evolutionary, teleological approach provides a lucid history of sound technology, but in the process it also sacrifices consideration of the complexity of circumcinematic musical reception for the sake of temporal clarity. Charles Wolfe's "Vitaphone Shorts and *The Jazz Singer*" (perhaps the best-known article on the subject) exemplifies these tendencies. From an industry standpoint, Wolfe argues that the formal and technological qualities of Vitaphone shorts "heightened selected features of a performance (amplified the sound, enlarged the body of the photographed and projected performer) yet attenuated the social relations that [were] obtained between performer and spectator in a theatrical setting." From a formal perspective Wolfe offers that Vitaphones are defined by their preference for presentation over representation, functioning to offer the authentic performer in a sort of "virtual Broadway."⁴² This was facilitated by a preference for long, unedited takes and an emphasis on sonic fidelity that substituted easily for the live, theatrical entertainment that was rapidly disappearing from the cinema. In his book *Perception, Representation, Modernity: Sound Technology and the American Cinema*, James Lastra argues, similar to Wolfe, that Vitaphone shorts offer an extreme example of the drive to preserve the spatiotemporal and sonic integrity of that which was recorded. Contrasting the shorts to the later conventions of Classical Hollywood sound film, which prioritized narrative integrity and continuity between spaces and times, Lastra claims that Vitaphones are "dedicated to the absolutely faithful duplication of real acoustic perceptions."⁴³ When analyzing one Vitaphone that featured opera diva Marian Talley, Lastra highlights the "spatial and temporal literalism" as expressed by the position of the microphone at the center of the frame (though out of view), an arrangement that created an effect similar to what would be experienced by an audience member in a theater whereby Talley's movement toward the center of the stage resulted in greater volume and reverberation. Lastra insists that the absolutism of sonic and spatial fidelity defines Vitaphone shorts, and furthermore distinguishes them from classical films (which he argues encourage spectatorial absorption in the narrative by diminishing the sonic legibility of space) by foregrounding for the viewer his or her place within a theatrical audience for the duration of the recorded performance.

If an emphasis on sonic, spatial, and temporal fidelity defines Vitaphones, however, it is also of crucial importance to examine thoroughly the settings in which these performances are executed. Despite the presentational form of most Vitaphones, I argue that the shorts are also deeply *representational* in how they visualize the space of performance through setting and *mise-en-scène*. The representational character of these shorts is twofold. First, Vitaphone shorts are often set in private spaces (typically parlors and drawing rooms in the home, offices, and clubs) or remote, comparatively exotic terrains specific to American icons such as cowboys and soldiers. Second, they often imagine how famous performers might behave in settings *beyond* the stage. In other words, while the formal sonic qualities of these shorts may emphasize spatiotemporal unity and replicate the spatial arrangements of the theater (or, more properly, the spatial conventions of sound

technicians who operated before the codification of Classical Hollywood sound) the theater should be understood as one among many spaces in which musical performance was common, and, in turn, which Vitaphone shorts represented.

Viewed from a queer, historicizing perspective attuned to performative potentials of the circumcinematic network of musical consumption, early Vitaphone musical shorts are remarkable for how they layer private spaces of performance onto the semi-public space of reception in the cinema and in the process reject spatial homogeneity. This forced continuity between spectatorial habits in public and musical practice in private—for queers between an outwardly hostile environment and one that was relatively safe—encouraged queers and other marginalized spectators to regard the cinema as a context in which contrasting models for self-presentation, performativity, and identity could be negotiated and momentarily reconciled. The cinema as such a site, in which the conditions of the outside world might be reflected upon, fits into Miriam Hansen’s formulation of the cinema according to Foucault’s concept of the heterotopia, or one of the “places [that] are absolutely different from all the sites that they reflect and speak about... something like counter-sites... in which the real sites that can be found within culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted.”⁴⁴ Hansen elaborates the idea of the cinema as heterotopia in *Babel & Babylon*, and it is necessary to develop her earlier recognition that *The Corbett-Fitzsimmons Fight*, a Veriscope “illustration” from 1897 that “unlike live prizefights with their all-male clientele,” gave women cinematic “access to a spectacle from which they traditionally had been excluded.”⁴⁵ I argue that in much the same way, the cinema as heterotopia offered queers an opportunity to transcend the restricted patterns of spatial mobility that they endured in day-to-day life and to participate more freely in the public sphere. While access to homosocial spaces such as the boxing match might not have been especially exciting for gay men in the way it was to heterosexual women, I argue that queers nonetheless found pleasure in the rhetorical ease with which Vitaphones pictured private musical spaces in the theatrical context of cinematic reception. Vitaphones not only put on display the kind of circumcinematic entertainment to which queers had access, effectively centering them as agents within the public sphere (even if the content pictured on screen wasn’t homosexual), but also addressed them as privileged viewers who had unimpeded access to a range of locations that might be difficult to access in day-to-day life, such as the private homes and clubs of others.

The departure of early Vitaphones from the re-presentation of theatrical space is demonstrated especially by the near ubiquitous presence of a piano in most of these shorts. Shortly after the radio became a common feature in American homes in the mid-1920s it was marked as a threat to the ideological and financial stability of musical performance in everyday life, and the Vitaphone emerged from and responded to this moment of domestic upheaval. This tension was felt dramatically within a range of publications (especially *Better Homes and Gardens* and *House Beautiful*, both of which targeted a middle class audience) that focused on life in the home where the radio contended with the piano, a longtime stalwart of domestic interiors, for privileged placement in the parlor. By the late 1920s pianos had been a necessary fixture in the home for decades, and they operated ideologically as integral to American identity. As described by David Suisman:

In the home, the epicenter of this musical ideal was a keyboard instrument, either a piano or an organ. Over the course of the century, these instruments became a shibboleth of middle-class identity... By century’s end, a large-scale industry

producing instruments at every level of price and quality extended ownership to all stations of American society, from the White House, which boasted no fewer than four pianos in the late 1890s, to a family in rural Alabama visited by Booker T. Washington, which was too poor to have a complete set of eating utensils but which owned an organ. In 1894, a writer in the *Leavenworth (Kansas) Herald* could report, “It’s a mighty poor colored family that hasn’t got some kind of tin pan called piano nowadays.”⁴⁶

To preserve the popular demand for their products in the face of the threat of radio, piano manufacturers exerted consistent control over the contents of domestic magazines in the second half of the 1920s, through both advertisements and editorial content. As an expression of these financial relationships, articles in home magazines promoted the piano aggressively during the period in which commercial radio broadcast began to saturate American homes. Although some magazines directly acknowledged the impact of radio, such as the article “Better Music in the Home: The Problem of Taste and Appreciation is Greatly Intensified by Radio” from the October 1928 issue of *Better Homes and Gardens*, most of focused on the virtues of the piano and how best to integrate it into the home. Starting in 1927, articles began to appear in *Better Homes and Gardens* that showcased the piano, inaugurated by “The Piano: a Vital Factor in American Home Life” in March 1927, and followed by a sustained campaign with “How Music Grew by Way of Instruments,” which traces the lineage of written music to keyboard instruments, “The Piano’s Evolution,” and, “The Modernized Piano,” in March, April, and May of 1928 respectively. Many of these articles appeared side-by-side with advertisements for pianos themselves, either from specific manufacturers or from the National Piano Manufacturers’ Association, which ran large monthly ads promoting the piano as “The Basic Musical Instrument.” (Figure 19) These articles often ran in excess of the monthly general interest features on music in *Better Homes and Gardens*, which were located between a recurring column on how to cook different roasts of meat and advice on raising vegetables in the garden.

In contradistinction to the presentation of a “virtual Broadway” suggested by Wolfe and Lastra, Vitaphones picture musical performances in domestic spaces—usually with or near a Baldwin piano—with remarkable frequency. In the process, Vitaphone shorts participated in cultural debates and social changes taking place around the piano as a central feature of the family home, and also served as advertorials for the Baldwin Piano Company. For example, in the early short *Van and Schenck* (1927), featuring famous vaudeville stars Gus Van and Joe Schenck, the duo sings songs in the parlor of a simple, American colonial home. (Figure 20) Facing stiff competition from advertising in home magazines, which were dominated by ads from competing brands and manufacturing associations, the Baldwin Piano Company adopted a parallel strategy to align itself with famous entertainers in order to differentiate their brand. This practice was in force via other avenues earlier in the 20s, for example the brand’s repeated naming in *Variety* in association with the celebrities who endorsed them. Will Rogers was one such star, and he regularly stated on stage that “The Baldwin Piano is the best I ever learned on.”⁴⁷ In addition to plugs for the brand both in print and on the air, Baldwin pianos enjoyed unprecedented exposure through the new audiovisual potentials of Vitaphone shorts. The title cards of many shorts made highly visible the relationship between the Vitaphone Corporation and the Baldwin Piano Company, which routinely stated, “*Vitaphone Studios use the BALDWIN Exclusively*” beneath the names of the performers. (Figure 17) By 1928 print

advertisements also linked the two companies (according to ad copy because their instruments were the best out of five brands tested in the studio “by delicate electrical instruments, far more sensitive than the human ear”) which allowed Baldwin to build on their reputation as the manufacturer of sonically superior pianos while also moving their product visually into domestic spaces.

The relationship between Baldwin and Vitaphone was mutually beneficial in that it buttressed the reputation of the Vitaphone as the arbiter of high-quality sound reproduction through its association with the much-heralded tone of Baldwin pianos. Reciprocally, Vitaphone shorts provided the Baldwin Company an unparalleled means of advertising its instruments. The national exposure of the relationship between the two companies was reinforced by local advertisements for the piano as a material good for sale. Regional piano dealers in both the United States and Canada often exploited the connection between Vitaphone and Baldwin in order to sell pianos to locals. These advertisements often took the form of a local concert that featured a notable performer on the Baldwin, adhering to the marketing strategies of Baldwin as previously established by famous performers on stage and via broadcast. (Figures 21 and 22) Beyond these live performances, the ubiquity of both Baldwin dealerships and cinemas that had been newly wired for recorded sound across the US also ensured that pianos could be sold in tandem with the theatrical exhibition of Vitaphones. At a local level this physically moved pianos into homes in lockstep with the representation of such at the theater. *The Film Daily* reported on one such instance of cross-promotion on the occasion of the arrival of Vitaphone exhibition equipment at Milwaukee’s Garden Theater, and the event’s tie-in with a display advertising Vitaphone technology at the nearby Baldwin store.⁴⁸

Vitaphones that feature Baldwin pianos often visualize the advice of contemporary magazine articles on the best ways to integrate the piano into the spatial constraints of the home.⁴⁹ The short *Song Impressions* (1929), which features pianist “Jerry Williams at the Baldwin” and Dora Maughan and Walter Fehl performing a brief selection of songs in an elegant drawing room, is typical of the representation of the piano in these shorts: the piano occupies the center of the frame and sits in the middle of the room that serves as a setting for the performance. (Figure 23) In Vitaphone shorts, the piano sits most of the time in an intimate (if ornate) parlor, and usually in the corner or against a wall, such as the Vitaphone *A Cycle of Songs* (date uncertain, likely 1928 or 1929) which features Florence Brady singing a brief selection of popular songs in a well appointed parlor. (Figure 24) This short replicates the advice given through floor plans in articles on the integration of the piano into the home, such as “The Story of the Piano: Concerning the Choice, Location and Care of This Instrument” from *Better Homes and Gardens* in April 1927 and “The Piano: How to Determine its Place in the Room” from the February 1928 issue of *House Beautiful*. (Figure 25) Advice on the domestic placement of the piano was also provided in more general articles on arranging furniture that include a range of possible options for situating the piano in the parlor, including “The Home Decorator’s Working Plan” and “Building From the Inside Out,” from February 1927 and April 1928 issues, respectively, of *Better Homes and Gardens*. (Figure 26) The Baldwin sometimes appears in grander settings, as in the short *Songology* (1929) featuring Coletta Ryan and Duke Yellman that features the performers engaged in song and places the piano in the middle of a grand hall. Despite the difference in milieu, the represented space of this short remains clearly domestic (but likely from a mansion rather than a middle class home) and showcases the instrument using similar conventions of display as *Song Impressions*. (Figures 27 and 28) The piano in these shorts

always remains visible despite shot length: consistently integral to the image, the space it pictures, and the depiction of the performers who gather near it, when the camera moves between full, medium, and close up. (Figure 29)

It is not simply the placement of the piano, however, that underlines the association of Vitaphones with period home magazines and the performance and reception of music in the home, but also how the instrument is reconciled to domestic decorating schemes. Homes in the late 1920s embraced a wide array of worldly influences for their decoration, and also began adopt “modern” art deco styles in the final years of the decade. This stylistic multiplicity is articulated by a series of articles that ran in *House Beautiful* throughout 1928 on “Internationalism in Furnishings,” inaugurated by a February feature that delineates the differences between styles from Italy, Spain, France, England, New England, and Virginia. (Figure 30) All of these styles are manifest in Vitaphone shorts, including such representative samples as the following: *The Revelers* (1927) which features five men (“Well Known Victor Recording Artists and Radio Entertainers”) performing traditional songs while wearing tuxedos in what appears to be a private, English club; *I Thank You* (likely 1928) presents comedian Eddie White singing a few comic tunes in a French parlor; and the short *Songs and Impressions* that displays the duo Marlowe and Jordan in a more ornate parlor that expresses both French and Italian styles. (Figures 31, 32, and 33) As decorating styles modernized in the final years of the 20s, deco style predominated later shorts, such as the *Dooley’s the Name* (1929) featuring duo Dooley & Sales engaged in comic repartee in what might be a private club other semi-private space. (Figure 34) The interior style often appears arbitrary, but at times it also seems offer a counterpoint to the entertainment at hand: for example, the shorts *The Prince of Wails* (1929) featuring blackface entertainer Mel Klee and *The Gotham Rhythm Boys* (an instrumental trio that includes a steel guitar) performing standard routines both place vernacular, American forms of entertainment within elegant French parlor settings, perhaps elevating them in the process. (Figures 35 and 18) The pianos themselves often conform to the domestic style pictured, either through their physical decoration or their covering. Returning to *A Cycle of Songs* featuring Florence Brady, both tendencies are in evidence: the piano bears not only French-style panels on the body of the instrument, but also a decorative shawl beyond its keyboard. (Figure 36) Home magazines at the time heavily advertised pianos that suited specific period and national decorating schemes, such as those from Wurlitzer and Kranich & Bach. (Figure 37) In lieu of the purchase of a new piano to conform to changes in décor, some articles advised piano owners either to cover a stylistically neutral piano with an appropriate shawl or to actually paint it. The November 1928 issue of *Arts & Decoration* provides readers this advice, and, indeed, the corner of the room photographed for the magazine is difficult to distinguish from a Vitaphone set. (Figure 38)

The visualization or promotion of the Baldwin piano in domestic settings in these shorts often superseded the relevance of a piano to the entertainment pictured, leaving the Baldwin either omnipresent but invisible, or visible but extraneous. In *A Cycle of Songs*, Florence Brady enters the space and stands in front of a grand piano. Despite the Baldwin stamp on the title card, however, she proceeds to sing rather than play the piano, and most of the short lingers on a close up of her in which the piano remains visible. (See Figure 24) No one else is pictured, but piano music accompanies her singing at times, presumably (and conspicuously) from offscreen despite the piano visible behind her. The title card of *Carlana Diamond “Harpist Supreme”* (1929) announces the studio’s “use of the BALDWIN exclusively” but the short pictures only the performer with two different types of harps, at

one point dancing while playing a smaller harp that hangs from her neck, and piano music ceases to be audible once the performance actually begins. (Figure 39) The association between Baldwin and these shorts seems to rely on their depiction of music made in domestic spaces, and the centrality of pianos in the home parlor, even if they are not necessary for all forms of entertainment that would have taken place in that space.⁵⁰

For queers especially, the advertorial function of Vitaphone shorts would have spoken to an unimpeded realm of urban mobility: their circulation as consumers. As previously argued, musical consumption offered queers a range of pathways by which they could act as agents in the public sphere and momentarily transcend their precarious status as marginalized others who were subject to rigorous forms of spatial and juridical policing. Vitaphone musical shorts not only represented domestic and other private and semi-private spaces such as clubs where queers might behave more freely and temporarily lift the “rigid mask” of heteronormative performativity they had to wear in everyday life in public and semi-public spaces, such as the street, the bank, or the office; they also implied circulation as musical consumers in spaces such as stores where they might buy a piano, phonograph or radio. This tactical operation “within enemy territory” held the added performative potential to offer an opportunity to appear as a heteronormative consumer even as the musical goods being purchased would later be put to homosexual social uses. By closely knotting together patterns of consumption and urban mobility with theatrical entertainment, Vitaphone shorts would have spoken to everyday queer tactical practices centered on music. In so doing, Vitaphones would have strengthened the queer appeal of cinematic reception by reference to circumcinematic practices that eased circulation in day-to-day life.

Implicit in the previous discussion of consumption is the fact that for queers and non-queers, Vitaphone shorts inverted the theatrical relations to which viewers had become accustomed during the silent period. Rather than traveling to the theater to see live performers on stage in tandem with the projection of films, they now saw recordings of famous performers in domestic spaces similar to those in which they lived, or that conformed to popular trends in home décor. To be clear, while these shorts may have replicated theatrical acoustic relations as argued by Wolfe and Lastra, I argue in contradistinction that early musical Vitaphones were often meant to be read by spectators as representations of domestic and private rather than theatrical space, and that these cinemagoers in turn understood the Vitaphone by imagining themselves within domestic settings when they heard it. This inversion of contexts of performance and reception (indeed, both the domestic parlor and the cinema regularly occasioned both live performance and the reception of recorded or broadcast entertainment) strengthened business for both the Baldwin Piano Company and the Vitaphone Corporation in a number of ways. As previously asserted, the representation of Baldwin pianos in spaces of domestic leisure helped to move the brand’s instruments into American homes. For Vitaphone, this association not only helped to build the reputation of their technology as sonically superior, it also normalized it for period spectators who were unaccustomed to recorded sound within the cinema. As described by Robert Spadoni in *Uncanny Bodies*, the conversion to sound provided ample opportunities to alienate viewers, famously given voice by the *Variety* review of *Tenderloin* (Michael Curtiz, 1928, Warner Bros.), which described the narrativized sound facilitated by Vitaphone technology as “a thing apart, albeit synchronizing.”⁵¹ Indeed, Vitaphone technology sounded strange to many cinemagoers at the time, in part because they were only familiar with electrical sound in spaces beyond the cinema: extant technologies of audition including the radio, jukebox, phonograph, and telephone, were

common to other semi-public spaces of commercialized leisure such as department and music stores, semi-private settings such as the office, bar, or club, and domestic spaces such as the parlor. In these spaces beyond the cinema, recorded sound was linked not to filmic narrative, but to practices of audition or communication that were either social or solitary. Thus it is not surprising that many period sources described the qualities of the Vitaphone by analogy to more familiar technologies of audition. For example, the *Chicago Herald-Examiner* reported that the Vitaphone sounded like “a telephone plus a phonograph plus a radio.”⁵² Furthermore, new cinematic technologies of audition were explained to the public at the time by recourse to analogy, and normalized film sound by comparison to acoustic technologies common to domestic and semi-private spaces. In relating cinematic technology to private spaces, publicity material for Fox’s Movietone newsreel hardware explained that the technology worked because it had “vacuum tubes somewhat like those you have in your radio receiver [that] do the amplifying,” and one editor offered in a trade journal that, “the radio tube, such as is found in the ordinary home receiving set, figures prominently in the development [of talking machines].”⁵³ In shirking the demands of narrative to *present* famous entertainers, most Vitaphone shorts diminished the potential for uncanny spectatorial perception through the *representation* of domestic and semi-private spaces. Instead of routinely creating narrative space to showcase the new technology, Vitaphone shorts encouraged receivers of cinematic entertainment to reflect on their own perceptual experiences in familiar settings such as the parlor, the private club or the office by picturing those spaces. In other words, the representation of domestic and other private and semi-private spaces by early Vitaphone musical shorts helped to familiarize cinemagoers with a technology that sounded like a radio or a telephone by visually associating this technology with spaces in which radios and telephones were common.⁵⁴

The short *A Breath of Broadway* (likely 1928) exemplifies the ways that early Vitaphone shorts transposed domestic practices of audition onto audiovisual reception that took place within the cinema. The comedic, musical short features famous radio persona Jack Waldron, and despite the geographically specific title of the short, Waldron appears in a modest parlor and reminds the viewer of his radio program by saying “you’ve evidently heard me on the radio many, many times,” before telling jokes and singing songs. (Figure 40) While Waldron wouldn’t necessarily have broadcasted from a live stage, his presentation in the space of a diegetic home replicates the site of reception rather than production, and gestures to the reality that for many listeners “Broadway” was accessible virtually via a form of sonic reception that was situated in the home. Returning to Wolfe and Lastra’s insistence on the ability of the Vitaphone to replicate theatrical relations between performer and audience, it is important to remember that in the late 20s the form of sonic address that was cultivated on stage in the theater had already been adapted to recording and broadcast technologies that were common in spaces such as homes, offices, and bars. In turn, the average person was more likely to consume such entertainment in private and semi-private spaces where it would be mediated by a radio or recording rather than live in the space of the theater.

The tendency of early Vitaphone musical shorts to layer domestic and private spaces of audition onto the theatrical space of audiovisual reception would have resonated especially for queers in the audience, who turned to musical pathways between hostile spaces beyond the cinema in order manage the alienation and homophobia they experienced in everyday life. In the cinema, not only was Vitaphone musical entertainment

arranged indifferently for the senses of both queer and non-queer spectators, but it also offered virtual mobility to diegetic, yet mimetic spaces with which they weren't familiar and might not be welcome in everyday life, such as the homes and private clubs of others. The queer appeal of these shorts, in part, derives from the manner in which they effectively multiplied the musical pathways that queers might traverse, if only phantasmatically. The cinematic fantasy that Vitaphones offered to queers of unrestricted access to other sonorous spaces [such as the private club of *The Revelers*, the opulent interior occupied by Coletta Ryan and Duke Yellman in *Songology*, or the office of *The Police Quartette* (likely 1927) which pictures a singing group of policemen preparing for an upcoming benefit show in a private office] was predicated both on their reliance on musical pathways in daily life, in addition to their repeated patronage of the cinema to access virtual pathways of diegetic mobility. (Figure 41) Stated differently, cinematic spectatorship allowed queers to equate their own everyday experiences with those of others, their own private spaces with those of non-queers, and to enjoy an egalitarian fantasy of equitable subjecthood in a relentlessly homophobic environment.

I argue that early musical Vitaphones offered queers not the means to circulate more freely in daily life, but instead a fantasy of circulation that might be enjoyed by heterosexual subjects. My thinking here follows Mary Ann Doane's in *The Desire to Desire*, wherein she contends that the woman's film of the 1940s appealed to a female desire for access to the position of desiring subject rather than more simply to extant desires.⁵⁵ While Doane and I both work from a similar position grounded in the consolidation of subjectivity through language, the historic differences between women and queers as marginalized groups leads us to different approaches to our objects of study. Crucially, Doane draws from a Lacanian perspective to position woman as consistently subject to discourse rather than subject of discourse, whereas I consider queer subjectivity as predicated on the historical impossibility of self-expression or representation without punishment. In turn, while we frame both women and queers as subjects who relied on cinematic consumption to compensate for a conditional lack, we approach the cinema in different ways. Doane performs close analyses of narratives of a robust corpus of films directed to women and the representations of women therein. As there is no comparable legacy of queer narratives or representations from this period (which were forbidden under the Hays Code), I consider instead the spectatorial conditions that might satisfy a queer desire to move beyond a highly constrained speaking position—if only momentarily—and exist in an alternate economy of speaking, seeing, and being seen.

The phantasmatic purchase upon the public sphere as normative subjects that Vitaphone shorts offered queers relied not only on the way these films layered circumcinematic spaces of musical reception and performance onto the cinema, but also on the direct, relational address that typifies the majority of these shorts. In all of the Vitaphones I have analyzed, the performers address the camera that records them directly, and, in turn, the spectator in the theater. This relational address and implied spatial copresence is even joked about by comedic duo Burns and Allen in their short, *Lambchops* (1929) the title card of which bears the Baldwin stamp as a marker of domesticity. The skit begins with the entertainers entering and searching an elegant parlor, peering under cushions and beneath magazines, until Burns looks directly into the camera to say, "there they are right there, that's them." Burn's joke takes for granted the virtual presence of the audience in his space, and provides humor with the absurd implication that its members could have been hidden in such unlikely and small places. (Figure 42) While this co-

presence and direct address conforms to what Wolfe and Lastra frame as a theatrical form of address, it isn't unique to the theater—it might also be found in performance common to the home, bars and clubs. In turn, shorts such as *Lambchops* that address viewers directly as though they share the same domestic space would have indulged a queer fantasy that the rigid boundaries of “safe” spaces such as homes and bars might be relaxed and made more porous to the outside world, and furthermore that queers might circulate more freely in the private spaces of others that would normally be hostile to them.

The fantasy of eased spatial mobility and relaxed performative roles offered by early Vitaphone musical shorts—of not having to fear punishment for queer desires and sensibilities based on where one was, or of being defensively selective about whom one occupied intimate spaces with—would have created a strong affinity between queers and the cinema at the very moment that the medium incorporated recorded sound and became the point of convergence for the complex spatial, performative, and material network of musical consumption. The electronically sonorized cinema focalized and gave visual expression to the many sites and practices that constituted the circumcinematic network of popular song, for example singing along with the jukebox at a private club or bar, entertaining friends by playing the piano at home, or purchasing musical goods at a department store in order to sustain such modes of sociality. In so doing, Vitaphones offered a simplified vision of everyday life as it pertained to music, personal space, mobility and performativity, and, crucially, centered the cinema as the location for the reception of such entertainment. The cinema not only pictured musical entertainment that offered queers a fantasy of circulating with heterosexual ease, it also facilitated this equitable mobility and address by placing queers and non-queers intimately beside one another within the theater and organizing such entertainment for the senses of both groups. In a sense, this may have “immobilized” queers as subjects to phallogentric order in their consumption of the cinema, in much the same way that Mary Ann Doane has characterized the effect the woman's film had on female viewers.⁵⁶ I would like to qualify the freighted nature of queer cinematic consumption, however, to point out that for queers, the occupation of space within the film theater (and other semi-public venues of musical entertainment) was not passive or neutral, but instead active and tactical. This appropriation of the space of exhibition is given expression by prominent role movie theaters played in facilitating gay sexual liaisons, as documented by early gay travel guides and as recounted by camp language.⁵⁷ For example, the entry “Saturday night at the movies” (particular to Southern California in the 40s) in the gay slang dictionary *The Queen's Lexicon* means, “cocksucking session in the men's washroom of a movie theater,” and the entry for “musical chairs” reads, “cruising in a movie theater by moving from seat to seat until what is desired is found.”⁵⁸ The brazen nature of such sexual encounters might be productively thought as the performative effect the cinema had on queers in its implication of a life lived without the threat of constant surveillance or punishment.

At this point I would like to return to the queer fantasia on the film *Lonesome* with which I began this chapter. Considering the central role of the cinema in queer experience, and in facilitating a fantasy of heterosexual mobility within the public sphere, it is amusing to speculate on the narrative possibilities of *Lonesome* were it to reference cinema. If *Lonesome* were more self-reflexive about its status as a film, the main characters might also find themselves in a movie theater to see a picture that featured the song “Always.” They could see this movie (a romance that narrativizes the love of its protagonists via “Always”) at the same time but be unaware of each other's presence in the theater, only to meet later

when they both purchase the song at a department store. Or they might see the film together after they've already met; perhaps they choose this activity together, or maybe they discover that they had both planned to see it independent of each other. With any of these possibilities, the film would picture them seated side-by-side in the theater, with their eyes fixed on the screen before them. As the narrative unfolds, so would their desire for one another, this longing strengthened by the musical narrative (and the heteronormative fantasy of effortless love and mobility it thematizes) that they both receive.

Coda: A Reconsideration of Integration

Despite the many ways in which cinematic musical entertainment is deeply imbricated in a range of practices around popular song in adjacent spaces of musical consumption and reception (such as attending concerts at live theaters, purchasing music in stores, hearing songs on the street, singing along at a ball game, playing the piano at home, hearing the jukebox at one's favorite bar, etc.) theorization of the musical genre within the field of film studies has not addressed this intermedial, trans-spatial, and multimodal complexity. To be clear, Vitaphone shorts were only the beginning of the relationship between film studios and popular music. While Vitaphones are the most evident exemplars of the cinema's reference of domestic and semi-private spaces of musical reception and performance, this strategic reference of spaces such as the parlor or club only became implicit with the solidification of narrative and representational conventions as sound technology was normalized by the film industry in the early 1930s. Even before the emergence of Vitaphone and synchronized, recorded sound in the cinema, Harry Warner had already predicted the potentials for profit from the union of film and radio. In 1925 Warner speculated about the radio, "Artists could talk into the microphone and reach directly millions of people who have seen them on the screen," in turn fostering the desire, "to see the persons they have heard and the pictures they are appearing in."⁵⁹ While Warner considers this intermedial relationship primarily from a point of view that seeks to maximize profits (relying on listeners to go to films "to see the persons they have heard" on the radio), he also understands that there is a certain curiosity or drive that can be satisfied by moving pictures of vocal performances that previously had been only heard. And while this business proposition is also informed by the era in which it was made (before synchronized sound film existed and simultaneous, spatially consistent forms of audio-vision could be mechanized entirely) it also speaks to an understanding of spatial and social dynamics that would remain consistent for spectators in the future, whereby filmic spectatorship extends to practices of musical audition and performance that take place in the home, on the street, at the office, in department stores, at bars and private clubs of musical affiliation, and so forth.

Despite the heterogeneity of the various spaces in which musical reception takes place, theorization of the spectatorship of movie musicals—which are defined by the presence of diegetic song and its alternation with narrative segments—privileges the cinema as the primary site of the reception of those songs. The few efforts to interrogate musical spectatorship (among them Brett Farmer's *Spectacular Passions*, Amy Herzog's *Dreams of Difference*, *Songs of the Same*, Rick Altman's *The American Film Musical*, and Jane Feuer's *The Hollywood Musical*) only consider the cinema, rather than spaces such as the home or the bar where musical reception and casual performance were ubiquitous. Instead of turning outward, these methods of reading the musical turn inward to consider the formal strategies of musical films. Central to this formal endeavor is the consideration of the clashing temporalities of narrative and number and the ability for them to be formally

reconciled under the aegis of “integration.”⁶⁰ The basic conceit of musical integration is that well-integrated musical numbers find an equilibrium and smooth transition between narrative time and musical spectacle. In keeping with arguments on the genre advanced by Rick Altman, Jane Feuer, and others, examples of well-integrated musicals include *Oklahoma!* (Fred Zinnemann, 1955, Magna), and *Meet Me In St. Louis* (Vincente Minnelli, 1944, MGM), while poorly integrated musicals (which often foreground spectacle over narrative meaning) include many early film musicals, *The Pirate* (Vincente Minnelli, 1948, MGM), and *Ziegfeld Follies* (multiple directors, 1945, MGM), the latter of which contains only the slightest of frame narratives to present a series of unrelated musical and comedy numbers. This tendency by film scholars to focus on aesthetic integration has led to the neglect of the myriad circumcinematic spaces and practices in which musical reception and consumption take place, that, in turn, promote the spectatorship of film musicals. The end effect of discourse on integration is that it creates a standard for passing aesthetic judgment based on whether an object is “good” or “bad” depending on its stylistic unity.

These approaches to the musical that make use of integration as an aesthetic criterion overlook the term’s emergence in the early 1930s to qualify films that differentiated themselves from other spaces and media. As described by Donald Crafton, 1930 was a turning point in film production that saw a movement away from film musicals. Crafton characterizes this shift in terms of the development of an aesthetic of integration, noting of reviews of *Children of Pleasure* (Harry Beaumont, 1930, MGM), a musical that performed poorly at the box office, that, “Reviews like these clearly demonstrate the pressure which studios were receiving to integrate music within a narrative—or omit it.”⁶¹ The pushback from critics and moviegoers was not necessarily just about aesthetic integration, however, as much feedback concerned the cinema’s reliance on the audiovisual conventions of live entertainment. The rhetoric of integration emerged from a sense of musical fatigue on the part of film viewers who desired films that exploited cinematic specificity, rather than those that remediated performances that could be accessed in the live theater, or used theatrical presentational conventions to illustrate performance that could be heard via radio broadcast or musical recording at home. This fatigue was often figured in relation to the live theater, as given voice by an editorial by Lawrence Schwab in the “Timely Topics” section of *The Film Daily* from February 23, 1930.⁶² In the article Schwab insists, “I don’t think that the screen musicals so far, with one exception, have been very entertaining. They’ve been too often just pictures of the stage productions,” and continues, “Musical comedies shouldn’t be ‘transferred’ to the screen, as several of them have been; they should be ‘uprooted’ and made over.” The critical press consistently reiterated Schwab’s cry for cinematic specificity during the same period, as in a review of *The Vagabond King* (Ludwig Berger, 1930, Paramount) that praised the film for its uniquely filmic presentation of music:

In spite of the elaborateness of the story manages [sic] to keep itself always in evidence, and even when the picture succumbs, as it occasionally does, to the conventions of the operatic stage the sudden intrusion of solos and duets does not clutter up the action as so often happens when a stage musical show is transcribed to the screen.⁶³

In other words, what spectators desired from a well-integrated musical film was not necessarily one that integrated the plot and narrative, as much as one that presented

musical spectacle in a fashion that didn't rely too heavily on the types of entertainment that they regularly encountered in the circumcinematic network of popular song. Indeed, audiences were often exposed to songs from films well before their theatrical release via radio broadcast, sheet music, and recordings. For example, the *Variety* reviewer of *The Broadway Melody of 1938* even remarked on this sonic saturation: "Music and lyrics by Nacio Herb Brown and Arthur Freed are first rate, and will go right from the film to the air. Already they're enjoying wide etherization."⁶⁴ Given the sonic saturation of the circumcinematic network of popular song, viewers desired a product from the cinema that presented music in uniquely filmic ways.

Returning to a queer perspective, what is striking about theorizations of the musical is that films that are poorly integrated are often framed as queer. Rick Altman's *The American Film Musical*, which argues generally that in the musical, "the [heteronormative] couple is the plot," expresses this position latently through a structuralist paradigm that rigorously maps out the musical in terms of narrative binary oppositions.⁶⁵ In the second edition of her *The Hollywood Musical*, Jane Feuer sexualizes stylistic excess in her addendum on "Gay Readings," to offer the following:

Above all, a gay subcultural reading would elevate [*The Pirate* and *Yolanda and the Thief*] above the currently more esteemed Freed Unit musicals of the 1950s—*Singin' in the Rain* and *The Band Wagon*, whose sophistication stems more from their smart Comden and Green scripts than from elements of excess in their *mise-en-scene*.⁶⁶

Matthew Tinkcom takes up and expands Feuer's assertion in *Working Like a Homosexual* to shift critical attention to another structuralist paradigm—that of authorship and labor—to position a non-adherence to normative standards of musical integration as queer in that it gives expression to the tastes of MGM's largely gay Freed Unit under the guidance of Vincente Minnelli. In hewing to discourse on aesthetic integration, Tinkcom reframes what might be called "bad" or "failed" aesthetic objects as queer and, indeed, resistant, given economic expression by the poor performance of *Ziegfeld Follies* and *Yolanda and the Thief* at the box office.⁶⁷

While excessive displays of musical spectacle may have given expression to contemporary queer sensibilities, I argue that any historicization of the queer appeal of musicals must take into account the ways the circumcinematic network of popular music shaped patterns of circulation and performativity in everyday life, and also how these pathways would have shaped queer perceptions of musical films within the space of the theater. I have critiqued Tinkcom elsewhere by demonstrating the queer appeal of *The Band Wagon* (Vincente Minnelli, MGM, 1953) despite the film's lack of visual excess, precisely because it gave visual expression to lived and imagined queer social practices and patterns of mobility in New York at the time of the film's release.⁶⁸ Inherent in the frame of stylistic excess and "poor" integration as queerness is a fixation on the preferences of the individual as author, in this case Vincente Minnelli and his penchant for visual display. Such an attention to the individual fixes queerness and essentializes queer sensibilities in the body of queer subjects and what they produce, and overlooks the historical hermeneutic structures that enabled certain texts (and I argue musicals generally) to resonate with queer audiences. To return to an earlier assertion, I am interested in moving beyond the truth of the individual to consider instead how the network of musical consumption and reception was generative of a queer "way of knowing" the world. In everyday life for queers, the

network of popular song cultivated such a “way of knowing” in several ways: it facilitated tactical processes of consumption to articulate queer sensibilities discreetly, such as the purchase of sheet music; it charted pathways between public and private, hostile and safe spaces due to the ubiquity of popular song via the radio, recordings, and live performance in spaces such as the concert hall, the office, the bar or club, and the home; it fostered a sense of safety or familiarity in hostile, public settings, as with the aleatory audition of someone on the street singing a song that was especially popular to queers; and within the cinema it provided a privileged viewing position that offered queers a fantasy of circulating in everyday life with the same ease, and with the same privileges within the public sphere, as heterosexuals.

Rather than do away with the association between integration and sexuality, I contend that it requires an inversion. Musical integration should instead be thought instead through the ways that the musical genre referenced a wide range of circumcinematic spaces and practices, rather than how musical numbers conform to the internal logic and formal demands of narrative film. While this shift in focus doesn’t necessarily do away with considerations of aesthetics, it recalibrates such analysis to consider the other practices and spaces of reception and consumption beyond the cinema that inform the spectatorship of movie musicals. From a queer perspective, this places emphasis on how musical films resonated with queer audiences due to their experiences in everyday life that concerned music, and furthermore implies that many queers were drawn to both the spectatorship and production of musicals due to the ways that the genre facilitated a queer way of knowing the world. In other words, the spatial, performative and material network of musical consumption and reception that the cinema brought into focus spoke to queers, and might be framed as queer in and of itself in how it implicitly disrupts narrative unity to refer to lived experiences of musical consumption, reception, and performance beyond the cinema, in spaces such as department stores, bars, the home, and the office. The inversion of integration continues to provide the potential to consider the queer producers of musical entertainment, such as Vincente Minnelli and the Freed Unit at MGM, but it frames these actors within a system that was already a fertile ground for the popular queer imagination.

As the syntax of the musical genre developed in the 1930s and moved away from the straightforward presentational aesthetics of Vitaphones, the same pleasures that queers found therein remained. To use the examples that Jane Feuer cites as exemplary of heteronormativity—*Singin’ in the Rain* (Stanely Donen and Gene Kelly, MGM, 1952) and *The Band Wagon*—the pleasure that both films offer hinges on the cinemagoer’s familiarity with the songs they feature. For *Singin’ in the Rain*, all but two songs [“Moses Supposes” and “Make ‘Em Laugh,” the latter of which was a near copy of “Be A Clown” from *The Pirate* (1948, MGM, Vincente Minnelli)] had been featured in many earlier films from MGM. Similarly, *The Band Wagon* makes use of many songs written by Howard Dietz and Arthur Schwartz that had been featured in several different Broadway shows and covered numerous times by popular entertainers. Although these films may integrate songs with the narrative more successfully than more flamboyant, poorly integrated musicals, they nonetheless rely on the viewer’s integration of his or her previous experiences with popular song. The most elegant example of this between the two is the “Dancing in the Dark” sequence from *The Band Wagon*, in which Fred Astaire and Cyd Charisse dance together and reconcile their differences in a stylized Central Park. The film’s soundtrack plays only the instrumental music from the song, an invitation to the viewer to fill in the words and

reflect on time spent listening to the song alone at home, with others at a concert or another film, from a jukebox in a neighborhood bar, or, indeed, while dancing in the dark.

Chapter 2: WWII and the “Ladies of the Chorus”

The Second World War occasioned several forms of social upheaval, perhaps the most celebrated being the introduction of women into the workforce en masse (given iconic representation by Rosie the Riveter), and the accompanying social changes that occurred as a generation of young men was mobilized to defend American interests abroad. While less visible—and certainly not promoted via nationalistic propaganda—American queers also enjoyed new forms of mobility as a direct result of wartime mobilization. Despite increasingly pervasive public discursive constructions of homosexuality as a threat within the general population, many gay men and lesbians served in the military during the war and after, and benefited from the nationalistic public identity that armed service provided. Due to the global scale of the war, these queers also enjoyed new forms of spatial mobility within and beyond the nation; wartime mobilization expanded the spatial networks profiled in the first chapter to international locations, and also expanded these networks within the nation in lockstep with war relief efforts. Within the nation and abroad, music remained central in forging this denser, more complex network for queers, and it also persisted after the war as a means for queers to orient themselves in unfamiliar surroundings.

While the centrality of music to wartime mobilization may appear innocuous or inconsequential, the specific forms it took during this period spoke uniquely to queer social practice. The US Government coopted the musical as its preferred means for rallying support for the war, both within and beyond the military. The musical functioned as wartime *matériel*, and provided a central social outlet for officers through live and cinematic entertainment performed and projected on military bases. Perhaps most strikingly, musical performance provided the springboard for drag entertainment—which drew most recently from subversive forms of queer entertainment—on military bases. As made clear by the most popular film of 1943, *This is the Army* [(Michael Curtiz, Warner Bros.) hereafter *TITA*], a filmic adaptation of a stage musical by Irving Berlin that featured drag in several numbers, drag performance in the military was understood as a form of nationalistic service. For civilians, the musical and popular song more generally functioned as wartime propaganda to encourage popular support of the war, the purchase of war bonds, and contributions to the war relief effort. In this way, the musical was a propagandistic tool that mobilized the entire nation, both officers on active duty as well as civilians supporting the war effort on the homefront. In a sense, musicals were mobilized as during the war both within and beyond the nation. In turn, this mobilization dramatically shifted social patterns for queers during the war, whether they were civilians or enlisted in the military.

While the mobilization of the musical took place throughout the nation in spaces such as film theaters, transit centers, professional offices, neighborhood musical clubs, and public parks and municipal buildings in lockstep with war rallies, the Stage Door Canteen in New York City, New York, and the Hollywood Canteen in Los Angeles, California, provide crystalline expression for how the musical became an instrumental component of the war effort for both officers and civilians. Immortalized on celluloid in 1943 with *Stage Door Canteen* (Frank Borzage, Principal Artists Productions) and 1944 with *Hollywood Canteen* (Delmer Daves, Warner Bros.), the Canteens were founded as locations for free entertainment and food for soldiers on leave in New York and Los Angeles, and they became famous among the general population because celebrities served the officers therein. In turn, these sites (especially the Hollywood Canteen, which privileged the collision of stars with officers over the display of the more polished entertainment readily accessible from the

large pool of Broadway performers adjacent to the Stage Door Canteen) conflated actual life and the imaginary realm charted by the cinema, and, thereby, helped to transcend the lived, deleterious effects of the war.⁶⁹ While only officers were allowed to patronize the Canteens, civilians could volunteer at them and also glimpse the goings on inside them via the films made about them. The mediated presence of the Canteens in film, print and radio centered them as sites that the entire nation might visit even if they did not volunteer on site, whether audiences were civilians in cinemas across the US, or officers on military bases both locally and abroad. These films narrate the lives of soldiers on leave in New York and Los Angeles, respectively, and the romantic relationships that are cultivated through patronage at the Canteens. For soldiers serving in the military, these films depicted actual wartime locations that they might have already visited or which they would visit in the future. In the process, these films documented the experience of wartime mobilization and functioned as virtual tour guides for service men and women. For civilians, these films connected war relief efforts centered on popular song and musical entertainment throughout the nation to central sites, and as such ideologically linked canteens to the metropolis and the war relief effort more broadly.

Donald Vining, whose diaries are cited in the first chapter, serves as a paradigmatic example for how musical entertainment provided queers with new forms of mobility during the war.⁷⁰ Vining was recognized as homosexual by the draft examiner when he hesitated before answering the question, “Do you get along with women all right?” Vining was classified as 4-F, or unfit for service, with the tag “homosexuality-overt.”⁷¹ Although Vining was prevented from serving in the military, he nonetheless found work aiding the men and women currently in the armed forces through service to the war relief effort. Vining lived in New York City in the 30s and early 40s, and volunteered at the Stage Door Canteen during his time there. In 1943, however, he moved to Los Angeles to pursue dreams of becoming a writer, and supported himself by working as a janitor at Paramount Studios; in the evening he also volunteered at the Hollywood Canteen as a bus boy. As the films make abundantly clear, these locations were highly charged sites for heterosexual romance; however, they were also most certainly hotspots for queer sexual tourism. The canteens not only functioned as sites where queers might meet one another discreetly and then proceed to homosexual bars and clubs in the vicinity, but canteens also staged meetings between queer volunteers and the officers who patronized them. This is not to say, however, that there weren’t conspicuous homoerotic displays at the Hollywood Canteen: in an entry from Valentine’s Day, 1944, Vining noted in his diary that “during one of the jitterbug numbers at the canteen, a soldier and a marine began to dance together, and very well, too. The spotlight was turned on them and they went to town, whirling around in each other’s arms, legs flying every whichway,” although he proceeded to qualify the display by noting that, “Somehow it looks perfectly all right for two men to jitterbug together, since it’s a very strenuous dance and one that minimizes bodily contact.”⁷² Both the theater district in New York (the Stage Door Canteen was located in the basement of the 44th Street Theater) and Hollywood housed sizable corps of queer laborers who produced stage and film entertainment, and although press materials highlighted the service of famous stars, the canteens were more properly run by unknown members of the entertainment industry, like Vining.⁷³ While he was largely discreet while volunteering at the Canteen, he nonetheless took advantage of its potentials as a site for gay libidinal investment. On his first night there (December 17, 1943) he noted that “there was a window from which I could observe the

floor and as my eye lit on a gorgeous sailor...I could just have sat and looked at him for at least 48 hours without tiring,"⁷⁴ and in an entry dated March 12, 1944, Vining notes:

Whereas there were no attractive men last week, I was blinded by a surfeit of them today... Max tried to dissuade me from going overseas with the Red Cross or anybody else, saying he knew how I felt but that I should thank my lucky stars that I was 4F and let it go at that. Again, in spite of the sight of so many wounded boys at the canteen, and talking to so many who were unable to get sleeping accommodations last nite, I have a feeling that I wish I were in service.⁷⁵

While Vining may have felt an earnest desire to provide service in the name of the war effort, this entry makes clear that this desire was nonetheless inseparable from his sexual desire for men in service; indeed, it is difficult to tell if he regrets not serving his country or the missed opportunities for sexual liaisons armed service might have provided. In turn, the peculiar fusion of homosexual desire and national service that characterized WWII for the many gay servicemen and –women who defended the nation also informed the appeals of the war relief effort for queers, particularly because musical venues like canteens provided a cover for queers volunteers. And while Vining may have been quite careful not to make overt sexual advances in the Canteen, he nonetheless slept with many sailors and soldiers who were on leave in Los Angeles. Vining's entries throughout 1944 detail his sexual exploits with servicemen, such his entry from June 17 which notes that "[a]fter about three hours sleep I ate and went downtown, I had luck for the third week in four. The most remarkable thing about it was that it was a marine." In turn, an entry on June 25 that describes how "[n]o one had a sweeter smell than my sergeant, 'Jack,'" and an entry from June 30 that begins, "My sailor's name was Earl and I have seldom had more fun."⁷⁶ While the Hollywood Canteen itself might not have allowed gay sexual liaisons, it nonetheless acted as a literal and phantasmatic point of convergence for many other spaces where queer desires might be satisfied, both locally in Los Angeles and as a privileged node within an international network of musical venues linked to the war.

While the Hollywood Canteen itself may have made queer fantasies into reality, this space of potential only existed as a means to compensate for and disavow the trauma and uncertainty of war, and also to transcend the limitations of a life lived under the unceasing heteronormative performative pressure that typified daily life. Casualties were common, friends and loved ones regularly lost their lives, and there was little certainty about the temporal or spatial boundaries of the conflict. In his diaries, Vining registers the varying expressions of such a melancholy existence. These range from the unpredictable deployment of officers, which Vining notes in entries reading, "What started out as a good day was entirely ruined when, about an hour after I got to work, I learned that my adored sergeant had been shipped abroad" and, "Those I love always go away—Charles, A, and now Fred." His entries comment upon the ennui of connections lost due to the forces of war ("my recent depression about going to California became aggravated and I sank to terrific depths... I felt I just couldn't face the loneliness of going someplace where I know no one and won't be staying long enuf [sic] to make any acquaintances") and feature reflections on mortality and the fragility of life ("Earlier in the day a plane dove at this house and brought everybody around here out (except me)...It's quite a sensation to be under that. The feeling would lessen if one felt bombs were to be dropped, I daresay.").⁷⁷ While musicals could not compensate for the intense losses suffered during the war that Vining and others registered,

or the unique performative pressure such loss placed on queers, they nonetheless provided an important, affirmative basis for queer social practice either on the home front or in unfamiliar and treacherous surroundings across the globe.

Wartime musicals, especially Canteen films, confront the affective realities of such a precarious existence for both officers and the civilians close to them. While *Stage Door Canteen* is more melancholic (to be explored later in this chapter), *Hollywood Canteen* achieves a more ambiguous relationship to the shifting temporal and spatial terrain of war. The film concerns “Slim,” a young officer on leave in Los Angeles and his brief romance with the popular actress Joan Leslie. At the end of the film, Slim is about to depart for a tour of duty but can’t find Leslie to wish her farewell. As the song “Sweet Dreams, Sweetheart” swells on the soundtrack, the viewer sees Leslie through a crane shot that pulls slowly away as she looks after the train with an expression that mixes longing, grief, and resignation. (Figure 1) Thereafter comes a quick dissolve to a long shot of the exterior of the Hollywood Canteen, the titular entertainment venue for officers narrativized by the film. As soldiers leave the Canteen, an extended lap dissolve superimposes a close up of Bette Davis (President and co-founder of the Canteen) over the building. In contrast to Leslie, Davis wears a relaxed, blissful expression as she slowly says, “You’ve given us something we’ll never forget. Wherever you go, our hearts go with you.” (Figure 2) Davis dissolves out, replaced a few seconds later by text reading “The End.”

This final sequence of the film stands out as unusual because it refuses normative models for closure, both in terms of narrative and affect. The shifting dynamics and unpredictability of war prevents the formation of a heterosexual dyad between Slim and Leslie, which otherwise would have provided an end to a popular musical during the Classical Hollywood period. Even more glaring is the ironic knowledge that a romance between a famous actress and a typical officer would likely never happen beyond the war, and that despite Slim and Leslie’s promises to one another to stay in touch they likely have no future together (tacitly acknowledged by the finality of Davis’s statement). In turn, the film compensates for this narrative openness by magnifying Davis to show the viewer her calm, assured expression as she ends the film with words that find affective satisfaction and equilibrium within the constant circulation and temporal indeterminacy of war. While it is clear that the statement is meant to close the film, it also undeniably open, subject to the uncertain forces of war, and dwells in the present (“our hearts go with you”) rather than speculating on the promise of a specific future. This temporal liminality is given further visual expression by the ghostly double exposure of Davis’s head over the Canteen and the sequence’s repeated dissolves. Not only does the film acknowledge the reality of WWII and how it made normative romance impossible, it also provides the viewer with the beginnings of an erotics for finding pleasure within the uncertain temporal and spatial terrain of the war. Such a closing is only fitting for a film about a venue that over its life entertained over two million guests (officers on leave in Los Angeles from 1942 to 1945), both for those officers themselves as well as those who knew them and were uncertain about when, or in what state, they might return from service.⁷⁸

While the ability to find pleasure within the uncertainty of war may have been a necessity for all, such an arrangement of desire was especially relevant to queers for whom the war provided an unprecedented array of opportunities to transcend the rigorous policing of sexual desire and identity that typified public life (as discussed in Chapter 1), and the musical remained a consistent affective interface by which they might negotiate such pressure. Under the aegis of the US Military, homosexual men and women became agents of

national power and authority and thereby enjoyed new and radically expanded forms of social and spatial freedom through wartime mobilization. This chapter examines the same themes as the first—how queers moved from place to place and appeared as outwardly normative citizens—but expands the context of geographic circulation from quotidian, urban settings to an expansive network between US cities and military bases throughout the world. Even as queers in armed service may have enjoyed an expanded sense of liberty brought about by such militarized mobilization, this enjoyment remained contingent on the continuation of the war and the coincident, oppressive threat of unexpected death. Queers, perhaps more than any other group in armed service, felt acutely the contradictory affective ramifications of the war, and, in turn, adopted strategies to compensate the moribund potentials of war with new forms of pleasure and freedom enabled by WWII's expansion of musical networks. This military mobilization of the musical set the stage for expanded patterns of travel that would later characterize post-war, demobilized life for many queers.

This chapter explores the ability of music to embolden patterns of queer circulation through its ubiquity and centrality to the war effort, and transform the liminality of life during wartime into a form of fugitive pleasure. I examine popular musicals from the time and draw out the relationship of musical entertainment to the liminality, pleasure, mobilization, and the precarity associated with military service. I historicize the circulatory networks established by music during the war, and theorize how they created new forms of touristic mobility for queers through demobilization after the war. By mobilizing the musical as a form of wartime propaganda, the war expanded the network of musical venues available to queers into new locations around the globe and provided a phantasmatic tether to familiar locations within the US, both metropolitan and more rural. In turn, the connectedness that such venues and the wartime distribution of music achieved between officers and civilians, around the globe and throughout the nation, allowed queers to expand patterns of circulation and develop new fantasies of equitable subjecthood that resisted the constraints of an outwardly heteronormative public identity. Indeed, the centrality of musical entertainment and (para-)military service during the war fostered a transient existence among some queers after the war; fueled by a utopian fantasy to transcend the constraints of daily life, queers took up a life of perpetual movement (effectively living in a “no place”), that, in turn, enabled them to transcend the attendant forms of surveillance and social pressure that characterize a stable grounding in a specific location. I base this analysis both on the novel patterns for film and musical distribution that the military and Hollywood established during this period, as well as period accounts from queers who served in official and para-military capacities. To consider the effects of these new networks and patterns of circulation in the post-war era, I also analyze a series of gay travel guides that circulated amongst queers through connections established during military mobilization, and discuss the articulation within these guides of an emergent discursive resistance to the guise of normalcy offered by musical affiliation. Throughout, I focus on the peculiar affective tension between the constraints and the potential pleasures offered by a life lived in perpetual mobility that the closing of *Hollywood Canteen* and Donald Vining's diaries both express, and locate this tension in the filmic and written texts I explore.

Popular Music, and Queer Entertainment as Wartime Propaganda

In the decades leading to America's entry into the Second World War, popular song became intimately entwined with national identity. David Suisman argues in *Selling Sounds*, that music industry insiders endeavored to “[embed] the music business in institutions of

public and civic life—school, community, nation.”⁷⁹ This intertwining of national identity with music is given expression through a range of relationships that were established during the First World War between the industry and the armed forces. These included the Victor Company’s pressure on distributors to buy war bonds, the centrality of music to war relief efforts such as benefit shows, and the use of phonographs as war *matériel* to alleviate the boredom of soldiers engaged in trench warfare.⁸⁰ By the 1920s, popular song and the music industry had attained invisibility and pervasiveness in everyday life, a position achieved through canny marketing strategy and the ideological integration of music into personal and collective praxis.⁸¹ As an example of these links, in 1923 Calvin Coolidge presented a speech (written for him almost entirely by the American Piano Company) that included statements such as, “We cannot imagine a model New England home without the family Bible on the table and the family piano in the corner,” and, “for a hundred years, [the piano] has had an effect on the political and military life of the nation.”⁸² In effect, official organs of the US Government advanced ideological propaganda that benefitted the music business, and the industry responded in kind by selling the war effort to US citizens through patriotic song, either directly through lyrics or contextually through the sale of song hand-in-hand with war relief efforts.

Nationalistic practices that advanced patriotic military agendas through song only became stronger by America’s entry into the Second World War. Beyond previous iterations of musical presence in public and private spaces (radio, film, sheet music, pianos, juke boxes), the war years witnessed an even greater diffusion of popular song throughout daily life with the distribution of “Soundies,” short films set to a song that played on a jukebox-like technology equipped with a 16mm rear-projection screen. Soundie machines (the device was known as the “Panoram”) were manufactured from 1940 through 1947, and were quickly co-opted by the war effort with public service announcements that would play immediately after a song.⁸³ Already imbued with a patriotic aura by virtue of being produced by Jimmy Roosevelt, the son of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Soundies were often exhibited at war bond rallies and other war relief efforts, and many of the technology’s programmed shorts were designed to promote nationalistic propaganda, including the shorts *Rosie the Riveter* (1943) and *We’ll Slap the Japs Right into the Laps of the Nazis* (Josef Berne, 1942).⁸⁴

In turn, the ideological bonds between popular song and national identity rendered the spatial network territorialized through music both denser at the local level and exponentially more expansive at the level of international military mobilization, providing queers with an expanded patriotic identity by which they might “pass” as normative citizens through service in and support of the military. Beyond the (audible) connections between spaces that music created between the home, private and semi-private spaces (such as bars, private clubs, or the office), semi-public locations (including department stores, the cinema, and the concert hall) or fully public sites (for example the street or the park), the affiliation between music and national identity allowed queer officers to travel between cities, states, and countries with greater freedom. In *Coming Out Under Fire*, Allan Berubé charts the history of gay men and women who served in the military during the period directly thereafter, and therein he stresses the ability of musical performance to provide a normative cover for queers. Due to the exclusion of women from service in the early years of the war, female impersonation was ubiquitous in live entertainment shows on bases, which provided an opportunity for queers to draw from drag culture as a means to support the war effort and serve the nation:

From Broadway to Guadalcanal, on the backs of trucks, makeshift platforms, and elegant theater stages, American GIs did put on all-male shows for each other that almost always featured female impersonation routines. Generally overshadowed in histories of the war by coverage of the USO shows and their more famous stars, these shows produced by and for soldiers were as vital to the war effort, incidentally providing gay male GIs a temporary refuge where they could let their hair down to entertain their fellows... They sometimes integrated their gay culture into military life through these shows, bring it onto center stage in disguise. Military officials used soldier shows and drag routines for their own purposes—to boost soldier morale by allowing soldiers without women to entertain each other and affirm their heterosexuality.⁸⁵

As I have written elsewhere, female impersonation held conflicting meanings during the Second World War, referring both to anachronistic forms of popular entertainment as well as more temporally proximate queer practices that were heavily associated with vice.⁸⁶ For example, the most popular female impersonator of the early Twentieth Century, Julian Eltinge (who at his height of popularity had a magazine that proffered beauty advice to women) descended into poverty in the 1930s as female impersonation became illegal in most urban areas in the US, and was found dead in a shabby apartment building in 1941.⁸⁷ Thus, when the military legitimated drag as a nationalistic practice by tying it to historic forms of militaristic entertainment (accomplished explicitly by the early segments of *TITA*), it walked a fine and treacherous line that could not neatly separate popular and subcultural forms of entertainment.

Within the army, musical performance provided queers with a crucial opportunity to conform to expectations about proper military service *and* to express queer identity in sites beyond the homefront?. For heterosexual civilians, such queers in the military were outwardly legible (within the US and abroad) as agents of US power, but they often signified differently to other queers, such as those who awaited the arrival of the sailors and soldiers on leave in major US cities such as New York and Los Angeles. For example, George Chauncey describes the iconic function of the sailor in *Gay New York*:

The sailor, seen as young and manly, unattached, and unconstrained by conventional morality, epitomized the bachelor in the gay cultural imagination...his role in the gay subculture was not simply as an object of fantasy. He was a central figure in the subculture, and his haunts became the haunts of gay men as well.⁸⁸

While Chauncey speaks here about sailors specifically and not queer men and women within the military more broadly, the rhythms of national service nonetheless shaped the spatial circulation of queers, both those who worked within the military and those who did not.

The conspicuous visibility of queers engaged in drag performance and in other capacities within the armed forces did not take place, however, in a culture absent of threat or surveillance. Instead, the tacit acknowledgement and disavowal of the presence of queers was necessary for the military to operate during a time of crisis. Prior to WWII, the screening procedures used to exclude homosexuals from military service were underdeveloped and based on flawed medical assumptions, including that gay men displayed “the general body conformation of the opposite sex, with sloping narrow

shoulders, broad hips, excessive pectoral and pubic adipose deposits, with lack of masculine hirsute and muscular markings.”⁸⁹ From 1940-1941, however, the military revised these guidelines to emphasize psychological rather than physical traits.⁹⁰ As a matter of routine, new draftees were questioned on their sexual preferences and histories, though in some cases interviewers were uncomfortable asking such questions and simply didn’t.⁹¹ Beyond discomfort on the part of examiners, however, the new discussion of homosexuality as a category of perversion created other problems for the army, primarily a growing suspicion that draftees would escape military service by openly proclaiming to be homosexual.⁹² While this fear may have been legitimate (in a limited sense), the social repercussions from being disqualified from service due to homosexuality were great enough to prevent the vast majority of queers from openly proclaiming their sexual preferences. Within the examination room, the performative tensions between the examiner and the draftee manifested in a number of ways: some gay recruits simply lied to protect their reputations or because they didn’t want to be prevented from serving their country; others answered honestly that they weren’t gay because they didn’t identify as such (even if they engaged in coitus more often with members of the same sex than the opposite); and sometimes examiners themselves were gay and allowed queers to enter into service.⁹³ Notably, screening for women (once they were allowed) tended to be more relaxed because the procedures weren’t revised from those to detect male homosexuality (which rendered the qualifications about effeminacy in appearance and manner useless).⁹⁴ A group of Marine Corps examiners even insisted “that women showing a masculine manner may be perfectly normal sexually and excellent military material,” a far cry from standards for gauging gender expression that were supposed to be applied to men.⁹⁵ For women, homosexual tendencies (rather than masculine gender expression) were sometimes even framed as productive for the military; as recounted by Berubé:

Lesbian tendencies, WAC [Women’s Army Corps] officers were told, if rechanneled into admiration for a woman officer, could sometimes motivate a trainee to become an exemplary soldier. An officer, “by the strength of her influence,” could “bring out in the woman who had previously exhibited homosexual tendencies a definite type of leadership which can then be guided into normal fields of expression, making her a valued member of the corps.”⁹⁶

Despite the new screening procedures, many gay men and women were admitted to service in the army after war was declared in December of 1941 because boots were needed on the ground.⁹⁷ In essence, the needs of the war collided with a culture in which discussion and awareness of homosexuality was greater than ever before. As a result, homosexuality became an openly acknowledged source of public anxiety even as it was also disavowed; the most striking expression of this dynamic is the central role of female musical and comedic impersonation as a celebrated practice that might even reinforce the public identity of an officer as straight.

Queers acted not only as entertainers, but they also filled a number of other positions throughout the military. Self-identified gay recruits were often wary of betraying their sexual desire during the early stages of service, but would explore available options for its expression later on. As recalled by Jim Warren, a gay man who enlisted in the army in 1941, “nothing happened in the military until after our thirteen weeks basic training.”⁹⁸ Thereafter, however, homosexual practice could escape close scrutiny and was often acknowledged and

subsequently overlooked. For example, certain types of military service were known for attracting homosexuals (or at the very least were subject to substantial rumors), including male office workers, intelligence officers, and nurses; they were nonetheless understood as instrumental to the war effort despite their perceived effeminacy.⁹⁹ To be clear, many homosexuals were attracted to these professions: Charles Rowland, who worked as a clerk in the induction station at Fort Snelling, Minnesota, remembered that most of the other workers in the office were gay men, and they referred to the office itself in camp style as the “Seduction Station.”¹⁰⁰ There were also ample opportunities for sexual liaisons with queer and straight men, the latter of whom were often more open to homosexual contact due to the absence of women than they might have been otherwise.¹⁰¹ Regardless of their actual duty within the military, however, queers (and heterosexuals) consistently converged at musical and comedic drag shows that functioned as the primary social outlet on any given military base. Queer life in the armed forces during World War II flourished through a number of different avenues and venues in the military, with queer entertainment providing the most visible expression of this presence.

Beyond the centrality of popular song and drag performance, popular classical music also offered opportunities for queers to find one another in the armed forces around the globe. For example, the personal papers of John Horne Burns—author of the acclaimed 1947 novel *The Gallery*, largely about American soldiers stationed in Naples during WWII—describe a number of queer social events that revolve around music. While serving in an intelligence unit (populated predominantly by queers) on a tour of duty in Fedhala, Morocco, a beach resort not far from Casablanca, Burns routinely produced public concerts with other homosexuals.¹⁰² For example, a program from the “Fifth Musical Evening” on December 2, 1943, details the performance of several popular classical standards including a number of Chopin Preludes, Schubert’s *Der Erlkönig*, Debussy’s *Claire de Lune*, *Hungarian Dances* by Brahms, and other works by Ravel and Mendelssohn.¹⁰³ Burns also took part in private concerts exclusively with other queers. From a letter he wrote in January 1944:

If General Patton ever got wind of some of our evenings here...somebody’s mother sent him two volumes of the Harvard University Glee Club Collection, and tonight after dinner four of us...gathered for no good reason to sing the entire two folios through at sight. This went on for two solid hours over rappings of protest on the walls from adjoining rooms...We simply knocked ourselves out with the close concentration of sight-reading and that bright close joy that comes of making music together...I can’t explain the odd mad fatigue except that we’d worked hard all today, that it struck us funny to be creating lovely music in a theater of war, that we’d enjoyed ourselves to the bursting point.¹⁰⁴

In both popular and more rarefied (if nonetheless popular) forms, music had the capacity to perform important affective work for queers so that they might transcend virtually the ennui or dreariness of service, all while under the normative cover of musical performance and reception. In the preceding passage, the “odd mad fatigue” described by Burns is especially revealing of the transformative social power of music for queers, and it points to the ability of musical consumption to help queers disavow the material, physical and social realities of an estranged life engendered by both wartime service and heteronormative performative pressure.

The queer joy of musical entertainment and performance found its place, however, in a spatial and temporal terrain that shifted constantly as the war advanced and tours of duty mobilized troops between locations. In many ways, the newfound mobility and spatio-temporal indeterminacy of by war allowed homosexuality to effloresce within the military. Indeed, the movement of troops between locations placed queer officers in liminal spaces of transit that lacked regulated forms of control and surveillance. As described by Bérubé:

But as men progressed through basic, they found themselves, often unexpectedly, in intimate situations with each other. These included the two-man pup tents during bivouacs, the [two to a berth] sleeping accommodations on Pullman train cars during troop movements and the hotel and private home accommodations in towns during overnight passes. In each of these situations, pairs of men could be in bed together with no direct supervision. While the shower rooms and barracks were the public places where homosexual tensions were acted out socially, tents, train berths, and hotel rooms were some of the private places where trainees could act sexually despite or even in response to the military's homosexual taboos.¹⁰⁵

Such en route rendezvous were often planned in advance, as given voice by Bob Thompson's first sexual experience in the Navy on a troop train from San Diego, California to Madison, Wisconsin: "At the end of some of the cars there were little compartments... I think four of us had the same idea when we got on the train. We just rushed for one of those compartments and all of us were gay. So it was something at night when we closed that door."¹⁰⁶ In effect, the shifting spatial and temporal boundaries of the war created new potentials for queers to find each other, socialize, and have sex via their regular movements between bases and countries.

Countervallently, the unprecedented sexual potentials of military mobilization existed only within a context in which continued life itself was uncertain. Death was a lingering threat, and presented unique problems for queers within the military who couldn't mourn lost loved ones publicly. Berubé recounts that:

When [Navy officer] Burt Miller received a message on board ship after the invasion of Okinawa that his lover Jack had been killed in Germany, he "couldn't talk to anybody for the rest of the day, I couldn't cry and I couldn't tell anybody. Just alone. No way that I could release any of the emotion or express any of it. It was the most terrible day I've spent [in my life]."¹⁰⁷

Beyond such loss, queers (like all military officers) didn't know if they would survive the war themselves or ever see those they left at home before joining the war. For queers, the war created both unprecedented sexual potential and also the virtual guarantee of death, whether or not it was one's own. This moribund uncertainty was precisely the condition that allowed queer forms of musical performance to become vital and normative within the armed forces, so that drag might foster belonging and high spirits among officers despite the lingering potential for death.

Although it concerns a remarkably different set of historical relations, Dana Luciano's *Arranging Grief* provides an instructive set of tools to consider the ambivalent role temporal and spatial liminality played in forging queer networks through time and space during the war. Luciano's subject, rather than World War II, is nineteenth-century mourning culture,

which resisted emergent discourses on the nature of time and appropriate modes of timeliness:

The pronounced nineteenth-century attention to grief and mourning, I contend, responds to anxiety over the new shape of time by insisting that emotional attachment had its own pace... the enticements associated with what nineteenth-century mourning manuals referred to as the “luxury of grief” in this period offered, if not a way of stopping time, a means of altering the shape and textures of its flow. Grief’s pain, then, appeared as tolerable, even as desirable, in the face of a new order of time frequently described as mechanical and impersonal, precisely because the time of grief—the slow time of deep feeling—could be experienced (and thus embraced) as personal, human, intimate.¹⁰⁸

Although contextually different, there is a striking resonance between the way grief, in Luciano’s account, might become pleasurable through its transcendence of and resistance to normative, linear models for time, and the way that the oppressive spatiotemporal uncertainty of war (and the grief associated with it) provided a queers with a vital means to forge kinship networks that would have been impossible beyond such a crisis. Indeed, Elizabeth Freeman relates such dynamics between the temporal and the affective (crystallized by Luciano as “chronobiopolitics, or the sexual arrangement of the time of life”) to explicitly queer relationships to textual time. Freeman explains, “I track the ways that nonsequential forms of time (in the poem, unconsciousness, haunting, reverie, and the afterlife) can also fold subjects into structures of belonging and duration that may be invisible to the historicist eye.”¹⁰⁹ Taking these arguments into account, I frame the Second World War as a rupture from normative time that allowed queers to forge new kinship networks within an exceptional and apparently borderless temporal terrain.

I contend, however, that the temporal crisis of WWII and its connection to queer culture must be thought through the ubiquity of musical performance in the armed forces and the reception and dissemination of musical films and products for consumption throughout unprecedentedly vast and dense spatial networks. As will be described shortly, war musicals provided a ubiquitous affective interface by which one might manage and even transform grief into more utile, nationalist affects that buoyed the war effort. These popular texts served remarkably different functions for queers in the military and normative citizens at home: for queers such films provided a consistent affective thread that tethered them to one another and provided a means to reconcile spaces and times fractured by the war. This mobility allowed them to transcend the rigors of identitarian policing that characterized civilian life, albeit through perpetual circulation and the impossibility of lasting connections. For those at home, these films provided a virtual means to transcend the distances that separated them from friends and loved ones in service. To queers and non-queers, those abroad as well as those at home, the movie musical became such a popular affective interface through its unprecedented physical distribution, both at the local level within the nation and to new locations around the globe as nationalist *matériel* for the war. In relation to the urban musical networks profiled in the first chapter (that united spaces such as the home, the office, the gay bar, and the cinema), the Second World War extended the reach of the musical through barracks, bunkers, train cars, ships, submarines and other means of conveyance throughout the world. Indeed, the ubiquitous presence of Soundie machines in transportation centers (such as train, ferry and bus stations) and nearby locations attests to

the strong associations between nationalistic service, song, and circulation. As noted by Andrea Kelley in her article “‘A Revolution in the Atmosphere’: The Dynamics of Site and Screen in 1940s Soundies”:

It is fitting, then, that [a] rare firsthand account of a Soundie exhibition site is a soldier’s memoir of a transit locale. The figure of the traveling soldier-as-tourist circulated widely in war-era discourses, journalistic and theatrical alike... To further this connection between touring soldiers and Soundies, several Soundies films circulated similar images of the traveling soldier, such as *Heaven Help a Sailor* (1941) and *Russian Peasant Dance* (1945), which stages sailors looking at women through binoculars from the back of their boat. The discourses that frame these temporary leisure sites as liminal spaces, featuring brief encounters with various ethnicities... indicate particular ways that Soundies’ screen presences could have participated in their sites of consumption, perpetuating fantasies of mobility for the male viewer—at least this particular version of the white soldier.¹¹⁰

While I diverge from Kelley in how she limits possible spectatorial identification to a model that relies on direct analogy (which was never possible for queers during the Classical Hollywood period), she nonetheless describes the fantasies of social and spatial mobility that wartime song had the potential to foster in those on tours of duty, heterosexual or not. In turn, the war and its affiliation with musical entertainment established new pathways for queers through time and space that managed the stress and alienation of daily life by opening up new forms travel and circulation (via the distribution and coincident ubiquity of the musical) and annexing far flung locations around the globe.

Musical Films, Travel, and Narrative Ruptures

Musical films that addressed the Second World War were tasked with contradictory functions: they had to support the war effort while also providing a sense of relief its debilitating effects, whether exhibited at the military base or the hometown. In turn, the affective ambivalence of life and love during wartime found clear expression through narrative. Very few musicals of the period avoided mention of the war, as the government exerted strong influence over the motion picture industry through the Office of War Information (OWI). The government understood the motion picture industry as a propagandistic tool for strengthening popular support for the war effort (most blatantly through the exhortations to viewers to “buy war bonds” that were ubiquitous in credit sequences during this period), and the OWI policed scripts to ensure they conformed to the patriotic image the United States wished to project.¹¹¹ To illustrate this prohibition against entertainment that failed to express a patriotic message, Dorothy Jones, OWI’s chief film analyst, criticized the effervescent, screwball comedy about socialites with marital difficulties, *The Palm Beach Story* (Preston Sturges, Paramount, 1942), as, “a fine example of what should *not* be made the way of escape pictures,” and, “a libel on America at war.”¹¹² Jones’s colleague Marjorie Thorsen was more specific in her critiques of the film on a range of accounts, including the inappropriate behavior of wealthy citizens “who should, by virtue of wealth and position, be the economic leaders of a nation at war,” and the ways such behavior might appear to foreign audiences.¹¹³ Thorsen’s comments were especially voluminous, however, as they concern the forms of transportation depicted in the film. Regarding the destruction of a private railway car in *The Palm Beach Story*, Thorsen wrote,

“this is 1942, we are at war, there is an acute rolling stock shortage, and there’s nothing funny about the misuse or destruction of a war essential...[f]urthermore, useless civilian travel has presumably been abandoned for the duration [of the war].” She also objects to the depiction of a 300-foot yacht she stressed that would be put to better use by the navy rather than the “joyless sail” on which its owner takes it.¹¹⁴ While *The Palm Beach Story* is not a musical, its harsh assessment nonetheless demonstrates the difficulty that an escapist, backstage musical such as *Footlight Parade* (Lloyd Bacon, Warner Bros., 1933) or *Swing Time* (George Stevens, RKO, 1936) might face when assessed by the OWI.

To fulfill the imperative to address the war, the musical seized upon the theme of mobilization that was central to the war effort, and built narratives around specific nodes annexed through military mobilization that were largely inaccessible to those who weren’t engaged in military service, such as army bases and entertainment venues for officers. Themes of luxurious travel and leisure predominated in the Depression-stricken 1930s, and the emphasis that many of military musicals place on location inverts the escapist tropes of the genre (and conflates travel and leisure with mobilization and tours of duty) that had been established in the prior decade with films such as *Flying Down to Rio* (Thornton Freeland, RKO, 1933), *Top Hat* (Mark Sandrich, RKO, 1935), *Gold Diggers of 1935* (Busby Berkeley, First National) and *The Big Broadcast of 1938* (Mitchell Leisen, Paramount) which thematize, respectively, travel by plane to Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, resort life in Venice, Italy, activities at a grand, lakeside hotel in the United States, and an ocean voyage upon the ultra modern cruise ship the S.S. Gigantic. Many musical films from this time thematize mobilization generally, and all of them narrativize activities on army bases or other areas to which the average citizen lacked access, especially the real life Stage Door Canteen in New York City, and the Hollywood Canteen in Los Angeles. Among these films, *Stage Door Canteen* (Frank Borzage, Sol Lesser Productions, 1943) and *Hollywood Canteen* (Delmer Daves, Warner Bros., 1944) represented the spaces with some fidelity to reality, whereas others, including *The Gang’s All Here* (Busby Berkeley, Fox, 1943) and *Something for the Boys* (Lewis Seiler, Fox, 1944), visualize spectacular locations and palatial homes that housed entertainment in support of the war effort as well as officers themselves. Other musicals, including *Four Jills in a Jeep* (William A. Seiter, Fox, 1944), *Private Buckaroo* (Edward F. Kline, Universal, 1942) and *This Is the Army* (Michael Curtiz, Warner Bros, 1943; hereafter *TITA*), primarily picture military bases and thematize musical entertainment and performance as military mobilization. All of these films provided virtual access to the spaces commonly occupied by military officers during the war, and, in turn, provided audiences at home with a form of phantasmatic proximity to loved ones in service to whom they lacked reliable access.

Wartime musicals tend to foreground the spatial circulation required by tours of duty in a number of ways through narrative, and they often establish characters as metonymic indices of their own mobilization. A prime example of this is *Stage Door Canteen*, set at the famous venue for American soldiers on leave in New York City. The central characters are a group of officers who are introduced to the viewer early in the film on a train, itself a marker of circulation and wartime mobilization. Rather than birth names, the spectator meets these characters through nicknames based on their origins, the most prominent among them being “California,” “Tex,” “Dakota” and “Jersey;” these locations are given further expression through regionally specific accents appropriate to their respective homes. When they arrive at the Canteen they proceed to couple off with willing female dance partners and companions who reinforce their geographical diversity; i.e., a young woman who speaks in a

heavy southern drawl and refers to New Yorkers as “Yankees” quickly pairs with “Tex” and remains a counterpart and romantic interest for him for the rest of the film. Likewise, in *Hollywood Canteen*, the central characters are “Slim” and “Brooklyn,” who both establish romantic relationships at the Canteen. Origin and displacement furthermore plays a similar, coupling function in *Anchors Aweigh* (George Stevens, MGM, 1945), a late war musical about two sailors (Gene Kelley and Frank Sinatra) on shore leave in Los Angeles. Although Sinatra’s character is named Clarence Doolittle rather than “Brooklyn,” his birthplace forms the basis for his romance with a waitress in a club when they realize that they both hail from the same borough. Throughout these films, the characters’ origins and their displacement from them due to the forces of war form the basis for spectatorial recognition for those who were mobilized by the war, distanced from friends and loved ones, and those who regularly encountered officers on tours of duty or on leave.

Almost all army musicals feature a travel sequence, usually in the form of a brief montage that represents the trajectory of officers being mobilized, or the movements of others in lockstep with war relief efforts. *Four Jills in a Jeep* begins at a CBS radio stage where it is announced that the four female stars (Kay Francis, Carole Landis, Martha Raye, and Mitzi Mayfair) are about to embark on a virtual tour of duty on which they will entertain deployed troops at various stations in Europe (something these stars actually did); the film visualizes the early legs of their tour by recourse to a map with double exposures of plane propellers in motion that tracks their movement from Hollywood to New York to Lisbon. (Figure 3) By citing audiovisual precedents for the depiction of travel generally, *Four Jills and a Jeep* draws from musical conventions to conflate tourism and leisure travel with military duty, and in so doing reinforce the status of the musical as war *matériel*. Once they land, Phil Silvers picks them up and transports them to the local base by jeep, and visualizes a more quotidian means of movement typical to the military, and also gives visual expression to the film’s title. (Figure 4) In *Private Buckaroo*, circulation via jeep gets its own song: “Six Jerks in a Jeep,” performed by The Andrews Sisters as they begin a tour of duty. (Figure 5) *The Gang’s All Here*, which follows the romance between Edie Allen (Alice Faye) and Sgt. Andy Mason (James Ellison), tends instead toward a more oblique representation of “mobilization,” tours of duty, and the specificities of the war. The romance between Edie and Andy begins in the “Broadway Canteen,” a stylized fantasia of the real-life Stage Door Canteen. After the romantic leads fall in love, Mason leaves for an unnamed, Pacific location that is revealed via a montage that shows him in the jungle with double-exposed newspapers that flash across the screen. (Figure 6) The papers presumably report on Mason’s maneuvers abroad, but the mobilization montage can also be read with the relations reversed: the images of the sergeant might be a phantasmatic projection of Mason by Edie or other loved ones that attempts to map his actions in a location across the globe from them. Sonorously, the film’s central song is “A Journey to a Star,” which reconfigures the mobilization that narratively structures the film as romantic and celestial. Although the song assumes metaphoric value early in the film (Edie sings it to Andy on the eve before his tour of duty), its lyrics are given strikingly literal expression by the film’s final image: matted heads of the film’s key performers sing the song against a neutral blue background, as though they themselves have become stars in the firmament. (Figure 7) Whether literal or figurative, military mobilization remained a central concern of these films over the duration of the war, which implies both the reality of the wartime circulation of *matériel* and officers around the globe, as well as the concerns of American citizens (read: spectators) who had friends, loved ones, and relatives in service in far flung places.

Technologies of audition, especially the radio, often facilitate montages that link space and time in these films. As documented by Susan Douglas in *Listening In*, radio was the preferred means of news transmission during the war among the US population, which revolutionized broadcast journalism and at times displaced the newspaper as the standard for war coverage.¹¹⁵ One of the best examples of the use of the radio to imply and unite spaces across vast distances comes about 30 minutes into *TITA*. The film begins with the history of “Yip, Yip, Yaphank,” the WWI army benefit show written by Irving Berlin. The film then moves to WWII, and follows the grown children of the original cast and crew as they produce *TITA* on the stage. When *TITA* moves to the contemporary, WWII period it displays a map depicting the encroachment of German forces into Poland (illustrated vividly by burning flames) before dissolving directly to the interior of a radio set where Germany’s territorial ambitions are reported. (Figures 8 and 9) The film then cuts to a different location within the radio station, where Kate Smith performs the song “God Bless America” to a live audience. The song itself delineates the varied terrain of the nation, “from the mountains, to the prairies, to the oceans, white with foam,” and the film visualizes and joins together different locations within the US, the various figures involved in the production of *Yip, Yip, Yaphank* (recalling earlier segments of the film), and then dissolves to Hickam Field (in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii) where a young officer listens to the song. (Figure 10) The film then dissolves back to his family in the interior of an apartment (their relation revealed by the inscription “To Mom With Love, Blake” on his photograph) where they also listen to the song, leading his brother to remark, “Kind of makes you think of Blake, doesn’t it?” effectively uniting different locations and forging affective networks amongst far-flung family members. (Figure 11) While this short sequence illustrates the ability of music and the radio to appeal to subjective experience and tether together disparate spaces (both discussed in the first chapter), the geographical distance visualized here is remarkably vast, stretching nearly 5000 miles between New York City and Oahu, Hawaii. This distance implies the potential physical and psychic estrangement or displacement caused by military service, especially as the film proceeds to visualize the December 7, 1941 attack on Pearl Harbor and the presumed death of Blake shortly thereafter.

Not all uses of the radio in these films are developed in conjunction with such heavy narrative themes. In *Something for the Boys*—which follows unlikely cousins Blossom Hart (Vivian Blaine), Harry Hart (Phil Silvers), and Chiquita Hart (Carmen Miranda), and represents the conscription of their inherited estate for army training purposes—Chiquita herself has the ability to hear radio broadcasts without external mediation, and her body acts as a conduit that facilitates military communication and stabilizes spatial networks through a common musical technology. This talent is used periodically throughout the film to humorous effect, such as when her machinery (i.e. dental work) is tweaked to allow her to amplify radio broadcasts through her mouth, which also confuses those around when she projects voices that aren’t her own (but that sometimes sound like Vivian Blaine’s) into the surroundings. The technologized status of Miranda becomes important to the narrative, however, toward the end of the film when she is turned into a radio—with the aid of light bulbs, electrical wires, and a tin pie plate that is beat over her head—that can broadcast important messages to the army through Morse code.¹¹⁶ (Figure 12) The conflation of Miranda with the radio, however, should also be considered directly in terms of her overdetermined status as Other, and the ways in which this identity implies geographical distance and displacement. Chiquita is the only character in *Something for the Boys* who, at least in part, originates from elsewhere (she offers that the “family trees, he’s a little bit shady, baby” before enunciating

a string of indecipherable words that supposedly reveal her mother's name), and as such might be allied with the radio and receive and amplify ethereal transmissions from near and far. Much like characters named after their own homes, such as *Stage Door Canteen's* "Tex" and "Dakota," Miranda's status as radio in this film gives expression to the tendency of the musical in this period to define characters as indices of their own circulation and their connection to other places. Of course, for Miranda this means of characterization only built on the US "Good Neighbor Policy" that facilitated her stardom.¹¹⁷

While my analysis of these films so far has lingered on their narrative foregrounding of military mobilization and tours of duty via music and their appeal to presumably heterosexual audiences at home in towns and cities across the nation, they nonetheless also appealed in different ways to queer and heterosexual soldiers in the military. As suggested by an early sequence in *Hollywood Canteen* set at a makeshift theater on a base in the South Pacific, Hollywood films were deployed as war *matériel* to keep troops happy. Indeed, military bases were typically equipped with a cinema (that ran films every night), as well as service clubs for enlisted personnel that had dance halls and music rooms equipped with a jukebox.¹¹⁸ In turn, these musicals (and the songs they conveyed) were popular texts that served as an interface to manage both the displacement of loved ones from home, but also the experiences of soldiers who found themselves in completely unfamiliar locations around the globe in shifting social, material, and temporal settings. While many heterosexual soldiers may have used the films more simply to manage desire for female companionship (fueled no doubt by the reliable presence of Joan Leslie in several films of this era as the quintessential "girl next door"), queers drew models for drag performance from the films. Carmen Miranda, whose ostentatious dress and brilliant (yet often obtuse) wordplay flout the convincing performance of identity (Brazilian or female), offered queers in the military an over-the-top persona that was practically a form of drag already. As recounted by Bérubé:

The female character most impersonated by GIs...was also the campiest movie star of the early 1940s—Carmen Miranda... "If you've got a lot of signal flags around," explained Tom Reddy, "lots of pins—and Marines always carry needles and threads to repair things, so you have a lot of help on board ship—eventually you turn into Carmen Miranda. Because you've got multicolors, you can make the big flouncy skirt, and you've got the tropical fruit everywhere."... The Carmen Miranda drag routine was so common in GI shows that it became a tired cliché and the subject of parody...In April 1944 a writer for *Theatre Arts* magazine in New York reported that "cries of anguish can still be heard from harried Special Services officers" who were tired of "impersonations of Carmen Miranda" and who saw a "desperate need" for more variety."¹¹⁹

The Andrews Sisters were also enormously popular subjects for drag performance, especially their song "Three Little Sisters" from *Private Buckaroo*. What is especially striking about drag performance in the military during war years, however, was that it persisted well beyond its necessity: it was ostensibly allowed due to the lack of available women, yet it persisted after women entered the armed forces in a fuller capacity beginning in 1942.¹²⁰ That drag endured is a testament to the close affiliation between homosexuals and music as a means for effecting recognition and sociality between each other, even as it created an apparent aura of normative, condoned behavior within a highly regulated environment.

I contend, however, that the queer appeals of these wartime musicals existed not only in their potential for appropriation and drag performance, but also in how they refuse the normative narrative closure typically provided by heterosexual coupling, and as a result resonate with queer experiences of the difficulty of heteronormative performance as well as the near impossibility of establishing lasting connections during the war. A necessary precondition to romance during the war was its uncertain consummation, as men were drafted and women largely left to await their return (or news of their death). While many heterosexual women lived more independently without men during the war, there are few musicals that address such experience, in part because it rails against the musical's generic conventions, summarized by Rick Altman as "*the couple is the plot.*"¹²¹ Altman argues that the genre rigidly structures a series of dualisms that contrast male and female before such disharmony is overcome to reach marriage. In other words, marriage functions as a panacea in these films that resolves both the problems faced by the couple, as well as other forms of tension within the narrative world (i.e. contextual diegetic problems such as a labor dispute—thematized by *The Pajama Game* [George Abbott and Stanley Donen, Warner Bros., 1957]—or the dissolution of an entertainment duo and the establishment of a new one, as in *Easter Parade* [Charles Walters, MGM, 1948]).¹²² While Altman's model is partial to a specific corpus of films and tends to overlook both musicals that don't conform to such couplings as well diegetic problems that supersede the couple, it nonetheless holds for the films that army musicals emulated during WWII. As such, marriage functions centrally within these films, even though the date at which it might happen is unknown and reliable communication between lovers can't be guaranteed. To compensate for the spatial dislocations and temporal indeterminacy of the war, marriage remained a driving narrative force within these films but also a central problem that was often left unresolved. For queers, these films would have offered pleasure not necessarily from the derailment of marriage generally, but in related narrative aberrations such non-normative closure necessitates and the potentials these aporias offered them to relate their own experiences of transience and forms of social mobility that could not persist after the war. Stated in reference to Luciano, these films might speak to the chronobiopolitical stakes upon which queers in military service found affective satisfaction during WWII. In turn, this queering of narrative and musical entertainment might give expression to the enjoyment homosexuals found in the new forms of queer kinship engendered by the war, as well as the ennui caused by the indeterminacy of wartime mobilization.

This queer relationship to time, place and sociality is evident in the analysis of *Hollywood Canteen*'s closing shot that opened this chapter, but it is one among several examples from musicals during the war that locate pleasure and meaning in the uncertain spatial and temporal terrain of perpetual combat. While many musicals of the era address the uncertainty of the war obliquely by acknowledging it as a basic condition of everyday life, a handful of them confront the war directly to present a deeply melancholic relationship to it and the forms of subjectivity it had the potential to engender in those affected by it. Chief among these is *Stage Door Canteen*: the drama of the film centers on the potential romances that a group of officers might develop there (indeed, they are advised by a superior while preparing for leave to "store up a few memories to take with you wherever you're going"), and the various forces that discourage such connections, among them strict guidelines that outlaw female workers in the Canteen to meet with soldiers outside its walls, and, ultimately, the immanent and unpredictable threat of redeployment. The film focuses on Dakota, an earnest if unworldly soldier, and his relationship with Eileen, a young, initially

shallow starlet who works in the Canteen. At first Eileen has no interest in Dakota, and demonstrates only scorn or annoyance at his romantic overtures. Only after being chided by some of her colleagues who work there who attest to his bravery in battle and his willingness to risk his own life for the sake of his fellow soldiers does Eileen begin to warm to Dakota's advances. The romance between Eileen and Dakota develops not by a generic development of attraction over time (using Altman's model, via the staging of a range of dualities and their reframing as complementarities), but instead by a change in how Eileen relates to the war, the world at large, and her position within it, shifting from a desire for self-promotion to a drive towards self-sacrifice. The change in Eileen's behavior is jarring, and is framed better as a form of religious conversion and ecstatic pleasure rather than romantic realization. Viewed against generic conventions, the film narrativizes not the remapping of the outside world in lockstep with the union of the couple, but rather an inversion of Altman's model whereby the world changes the lives and purposes of its characters.

Stage Door Canteen proceeds normatively to join man and woman in matrimony, but its narrative drive is queered when Eileen—who waits for Dakota outside the Canteen in anticipation of their immanent marriage—learns that he was called to duty in the brief interval since their last meeting. The news is delivered by a worker at the Canteen, who reads a message that delivers Dakota's "dearest love" and hope that she would "still be his Mrs., if... when he comes back." As Eileen despairs, muttering to herself that "he's got to come back.., Dear God, if you love someone as much as I love him, he's just about got to, it isn't fair," Katherine Hepburn intervenes, to offer Eileen consolation and to admonish her to return to service by saying the following:

You bet it isn't fair but it's happening... Why'd you volunteer for this work?... Why do you think your country needs your help?... We're in a war and we've got to win, and we're going to win, and that's why the boy you love is going overseas. And isn't that maybe why you're going to go back in there and get on your job? ... He's fighting for the kind of world where you and he can live together in peace, in love. Don't ever think about quitting. Don't ever stop for a minute working, praying, until we've got that kind of a world, for you, for him, for your children, for the whole human race, days without end, amen.

Eileen kisses her, and then returns to service in the Canteen, where a voiceover offers:

Tonight, every night until victory, thousands, millions of lads like California, Tex, and Dakota, will find momentary escape from the war, from homesickness. Tonight, every night until victory, this light will be gleaming, offering them laughter, music, friendship, beauty, and something to remember.

Hepburn's monologue and the following voiceover are striking in how they stress the temporal unpredictability of the war (especially in the repetition of "tonight, every night until victory") and also the contingency of a life worth living on the positive outcome of the war. (Figure 13) And while both of these statements assert the inevitability of victory (an absolute position that addresses the likelihood of Dakota's death through its outright denial, as well as heteronormative narrative closure), this is clearly a means to justify and reconcile the conditions and practices that the war demanded, similar to a form of religious subjection to higher powers that is articulated explicitly by the "amen" at the end of Hepburn's statement.

For queer viewers in armed service, such narrative selflessness in the name of the war was inevitably tied to the new outlets for homosexuality opened up by military service. Furthermore, as the striking kiss between Eileen and Hepburn visualizes how the homosocial arenas engendered by the war made such closeness between members of the same sex easier to rationalize as a matter of duty and service rather than homosexuality (even if it was, in reality, the latter).

The rearrangement of romance and duty to benefit the war effort is a central concern of *Hollywood Canteen* as well, which was written by the same screenwriter (Delmer Daves) as *Stage Door Canteen*. The film opens on a “a quiet, peaceful little island in the South Pacific” that has been taken over by the US (presumably New Guinea, though this is never made explicit), which visualizes by its relation to other places via an unlikely signpost that points to locations as diverse as Manila, Brooklyn, and Berlin. (Figure 14) The main protagonist is Corporal “Slim” Green, who hasn’t heard from his girlfriend at home in 14 months. In her absence, Slim has begun to fantasize about wholesome movie star Joan Leslie, and even conflate her with his actual girlfriend in his memories. This is given vivid expression by the following sequence in which Slim watches a film starring Leslie (*The Hard Way* [Vincent Sherman, Warner Bros. 1943], an unlikely choice for romantic projection), and remarks to his friend “Brooklyn” that “Joan Leslie’s my kind of girl.” The projection equipment shorts out due to rain, and cuts off Leslie’s singing voice to facilitate her fetishistic consumption more readily—Slim begins to list the physical attributes he finds appealing about her, and confirms that he’s been dreaming of Leslie rather than his girl back home. Slim and Brooklyn are then transferred to Los Angeles for medical leave, where they are directed to the Hollywood Canteen. Slim inquires about whether or not Joan Leslie is there, and Bette Davis and John Garfield (the Canteen’s founders) inexplicably take pity on him to set him up for a kiss with her. The following night Slim wins an actual contest for a weekend with the star of his choice (and, of course, he chooses Leslie), during which she appears to return his affections.

While the tone of *Hollywood Canteen* is somewhat light throughout (at least compared to *Stage Door Canteen*) what remains troubling is that Slim’s obsession with Leslie is quite plainly arbitrary—contingent on whomever starred in the films projected to troops abroad—and impossible to satisfy either during or after the war. Much like *Stage Door Canteen*, the film inverts models for characterization and narrative typical to the musical. If anything, Slim’s luck at the Canteen only serves to perpetuate a fantasy nurtured in carnivalesque wartime settings (indeed, at what other time would famous stars serve common officers?), but a fantasy that may also be necessary to make bearable the temporal indeterminacy and spatial variability of the war. In turn, Leslie’s growing interest in him appears to be stoked by the impossible romantic expectations, idealization and objectification she receives from Slim, as well as a redirected sense of duty to the war effort. As the film comes to an end, Slim receives new orders and must depart immediately; Leslie, however, is nowhere to be found. In her absence, Kitty Carlisle sings “Sweet Dreams, Sweetheart,” which Leslie sang to Slim earlier in the narrative. Meanwhile, the film cuts to Leslie via dissolve, who hears Carlisle singing on the radio as she pushes her broken down car to a gas station, clearly distressed that she’s unable to keep her date with Slim. The film’s penultimate scene is a dramatic goodbye at the train station, where Leslie arrives just in time to kiss Slim as the train departs. As the train pulls away he offers “Maybe, if I get back,” to which she immediately responds, “oh, you will, you’ll get back,” displacing both the likelihood that he would be killed in duty, as well as the *unlikelihood* that their romance

would be tenable after the war. This sequence (culminating in the film's penultimate shot) narrativizes the profound seduction offered by service in the name of the war, its appeal to desire, and its tenuous relation of these affective experiences to the unpredictable (spatial, temporal, mortal) consequences of combat. While the object of desire chosen by queers may not have conformed to the heteronormative imperative of the cinema, *Hollywood Canteen* would nonetheless have appealed to queer experiences of the desirous potentials of military service, as well as the knowledge that such unprecedented (in many ways liberatory) modes of sociality would inevitably come to an end, either by the conclusion of the war or death.

The most overstated narrativization of marriage and the pressures the war places against it is found in *TITA*, in which matrimony assumes almost farcical ability to bring stasis to the chaos of war, and also reaffirm nationalist values. Although the film's second half functions to set off filmed sequences from *TITA*'s stage run (which are largely presentational), it nonetheless frames these numbers within a narrative driven by the compulsion to marry and the difficulties of reconciling such desire to participation in the war. The frame narrative revolves around Johnny (Ronald Reagan), the son of the man who led the production of *Yip Yip Yaphank* during WWI, and his relationship with Eileen (Joan Leslie), who pressures Johnny to get married at every chance she gets. Johnny enlists in the army, only to be assigned to work on the stage production of *TITA*. The film offers no development of the relationship between Johnny and Eileen and the first scene in which they are paired culminates in a discussion about marriage. Eileen wishes to marry before Johnny is deployed the following day, but he refuses and remains reticent about his reasons; the opacity of Johnny's reasons for refusing is amplified by the lack of chemistry between Leslie and Reagan, which only becomes more apparent as the film moves on. The two part ways only to be reunited when Eileen visits him during basic training, presumably a few weeks later, and reintroduces the topic of marriage. In every scene in which they are paired in the film (which includes two additional instances beyond these), Eileen attempts to force Johnny into marriage, and it is only upon their penultimate meeting that Johnny provides his reasons. At this point in the film, Johnny is in the midst of running a stage performance of *TITA*, and Eileen meets him (in uniform) and reveals that she has joined the war effort to provide medical aid and argues, again, that they should be married. Johnny discloses that he doesn't want Eileen to become a widow directly after their marriage, and urges her to wait until after the war. Before the show ends she accosts him, this time with the company of a military chaplain. Desperate and on the verge of tears, she delivers the following monologue that reconciles marriage with national duty and participation in the war:

I've decided that you don't know what the war is all about. We're free people fighting for the right to remain free. To work, to be married, and to raise a family in a fine, decent country... Open your heart Johnny, we're all in this fight together, women as well as men, let's share our responsibilities. I want to be a part of you Johnny, a part that goes with you on the battlefield, someone to come back to. This is a free United States, doggone it if we wanna get married let's get married.

Although Johnny and Eileen proceed to marry, the scene comes across as a bald-faced demonstration of the imperative of marriage that Altman theorizes as the *sine qua non* of the musical. Although *TITA*'s emphasis on successful marriage is completely conventional

when viewed within the musical genre more broadly, it is exceptional among war musicals, and matrimony succeeds only by subjugating personal desire to nationalist imperatives.

Despite the conservatism of *TITA* in relation to both national duty and heterosexual romance, the film's narrative offered queers a range of entry points through which they could find pleasure. As previously described, military service was understood—even among authorities—as an avenue through which homosexuals might contribute to the nation. This was true both in terms of the need for different forms of labor within the military (i.e., soldiers in addition to entertainers and clerical personnel) and the ways homosexuality might be productive for the military (as with the lesbian who might be “a valued member of the corps” were her desire rechanneled into avenues for female leadership). The idea that service in the military might be the most contextually appropriate path to romantic and sexual fulfillment, which is the only way in which Eileen is able to wed Johnny, was nothing new to queers who found each other in the military.

Service in the military brought with it abundant opportunities for the expression of queer sensibility through drag performance, socialization either through employment or at social clubs on base, as well as sexual liaisons in discreet locations or in transit. Furthermore, three of the film's major sequences, “Ladies of the Chorus,” “What the Well Dressed Man in Harlem Will Wear,” and an extended act in which an officer sings “I Left My Heart at the Stage Door Canteen,” feature drag performance, although some numbers are more queer than others. (Figures 15, 16 and 17) “Ladies of the Chorus” makes drag performance its subject, and as such offers a parody of female impersonation performed by men who appear excessively masculine (and sing about the difficulties of appearing feminine) despite wearing pastel dresses, heavy makeup and blond, sausage curl wigs. This incongruity, both visual and verbal, effectively frames the performers as more masculine than they would seem were they out of drag, and in turn, evidently heterosexual. “What the Well Dressed Man in Harlem Will Wear” mobilizes drag as an apparent recourse to the dearth of women in armed service, as it features a single man dressed as a woman who dances vigorously with another man. While not especially queer, the number nonetheless leaves more room for spectatorial interpretation than “Ladies of the Chorus.” The “I Left My Heart at the Stage Door Canteen” number, however, owes a substantive debt to queer drag performance. The number opens with a handful of tap dancing officers entering the canteen, where they discover and dance with a large group of “hostesses” in drag, and although they don't appear especially feminine, they roll with the joke rather than call attention to their own masculinity. They then present their glamorous “hostess,” named “Jane Cow” (a joke on Jane Powell, who often appeared at the Hollywood Canteen), who comports herself in an overly ceremonious manner and instructs the hostesses to follow the rules. The hostesses proceed to sing about how they “could do more for the boys, and greatly add to their joys,” referring to sexual contact that was expressly forbidden between hostess and patron, but the number inherently camps on the suggested homosexual contact between men in drag and male officers. “Lynn Fontanne” (a man in drag impersonating real stage actress of the same name) then appears, betrays her ladylike demeanor by shouting loudly, and converses with her husband Alfred Lunt (again impersonating the actual figure) who proceeds to impersonate stage stars Ethel Barrymore, Charles Boyer, and Herbert Marshall. The number then closes on an incongruous melancholy note with an officer singing the titular song. In its blending of musical performance, parody, and celebrity impersonation, the number replicates recent traditions of drag performance that called attention to incongruous gender impersonation to find humor in heteronormative performativity, and as such it stands as the

most queer number of the film. However, other drag numbers were cut from the stage show in its adaptation to film, perhaps most notably “That Russian Winter,” which did little to mock female impersonation and presented men in drag in a more glamorous style, perhaps the largest threat to the construction of heteronormative masculinity during WWII. (Figure 18) Given the film’s presentation of entertainment that relies heavily on queer humor, homosexuals in the military would have found pleasure not only in the depiction of such entertainment or a narrative that queers romance, but also in the ways such content circulated throughout the nation and was popular among the general public, mirroring their own ability to “pass” as heterosexual through military service.

This is the Army and Musical Networks, During and After the War

From a perspective attuned to box office performance, what is most striking about *TITA* is that it was by far the highest grossing film of 1943. While this may be surprising from a contemporary perspective for which drag performance is understood as an overtly queer practice, female impersonation had a more ambivalent history in 1943. As I have described elsewhere, in the 1930s female impersonation ceased to be a form of popular entertainment (as it had been in the century’s earlier decades) and developed associations with homosexuality and vice. By 1943, drag’s more contemporary connotations were queer rather than normative, and as such *TITA* tread a thin line between nostalgia and subversive subcultural practices.¹²³ The nationwide popularity and success of *TITA* despite these meanings demonstrates the way the musical genre became an officially sanctioned vehicle for war boosterism, and the resulting distribution and promotion of the film through official organs of military communication.

While conflicting meanings for drag circulated at the time, and drag might be recuperated as a morale-booster for the war, it is nonetheless surprising that such content made it to theaters and was also tremendously popular. In addition to the OWI, which policed scripts of films for content that might somehow call into question the war effort, the Production Code office under the direction of Joseph Breen zealously restricted any narrative content that might signify homosexuality. The fanaticism of the Breen office was only amplified by the war, as demonstrated by the bowdlerization of *Lady in the Dark* (Mitchell Leisen, Paramount), a musical released in February of 1944. To be fair, *TITA* and *Lady in the Dark* are quite different films even if they are both musicals; *Lady in the Dark* follows Liza Elliott (Ginger Rogers), the editor-in-chief of *Allure* (a fashion magazine modeled on *Vogue* or *Harper’s Bazaar*), as she undergoes psychoanalysis to address the indecision that has plagued her personal and professional life. With a score by Kurt Weill and lyrics by Ira Gershwin, the show was a phenomenal success on Broadway, where it ran for 550 performances between 1941 through 1943.¹²⁴ While the OWI may have balked at the luxury of certain narrative elements, the film suffered more directly at the hands of the Breen office, which took offense with the portrayal of Liza’s Art Director, Russell Paxton. This character (the stage musical’s book introduces him as the “Cecil Beaton of *Allure*,” and indicates that he is “mildly effeminate in a rather charming fashion”) was played by Danny Kaye on Broadway, which launched both his stardom and a coincident career typified by the performance of swishy, crypto-queers.¹²⁵ Already familiar with Kaye’s performance as Paxton, script readers at the Breen office looked to root out forms of “pansy” intimation wherever it might be hiding. From a memo dated August 8, 1942:

The present version, however, contains certain elements which are unacceptable, and which would have to be corrected in the finished picture, before we could approve it. The first of these is the “pansy” characterization of the photographer Russell. This character will have to be changed completely, as any suggestion whatever of a “pansy” or “nance” flavor about this portrayal will render the whole picture unacceptable.¹²⁶

Accordingly, the character was altered substantially, mostly by including him minimally in the final film, but also by the incongruous casting of Russian comic Mischa Auer in the role; the film’s producers assured censors that this would change dialogue “which is highly censorable” to something that isn’t “when read by Mischa Auer in his inimitable style.”¹²⁷ The censors were unsatisfied by this casting, and began to pick at specific lines that they deemed overtly homosexual, eventually fixating on Paxton’s exclamation, “I am so mad I could spit!” After encountering resistance to altering the script from the film’s producers, Albert Deane from the Breen office invoked the war effort and wrote the following:

Relating to the characterization of the photographer in this picture. It seems to me that with every new script I read, this character emerges as more and more of a pansy. The fact that every once in a while he says “I am so mad I could spit” more or less indicates the type of character that the script writer had in mind. I believe very sincerely that this sort of character is wholly foreign to the war spirit of today and would really be offensive in the picture.¹²⁸

That the line “I am so mad I could spit” was so gay as to warrant censorship when the Breen office screened *Lady in the Dark* in 1943 only demonstrates how surprising it is that *TITA*, replete drag performance across several numbers, made it to theaters and was the most popular film of the same year.

The clear difference between the two films is that *TITA* was an official product of the War Relief Effort, and as such had the full backing of the US Military and was a product of military labor. As heavily publicized, the officers who appeared in *TITA* on stage and screen were active recruits who were pulled from across the nation to serve their country through the production of the show. Promotional materials for the film visualized this intra-national tour via rays that connected the names of individual officers to a memo, ostensibly from the War Department, that demands they report for duty at the Broadway Theater in New York City.¹²⁹ (Figure 19) If the clear statement that the performance of an officer in *TITA* was serving active duty was not enough, the memo is overburdened with nationalist signifiers, including that it is “Special Order No. 1776,” and was sent out on July 4, 1942. Many of the numbers that made it to the film from *TITA*’s theatrical run furthermore reinforce the equation of musical performance with national duty, especially “Ladies of the Chorus” and the show’s opening chorus.

The deployment of officers for the production, however, was only part of what guaranteed *TITA*’s success: the film was promoted through official organs of military communication, both locally (through the extensive use of the Army Emergency Relief network) and nationally. The film’s promotional campaign was the brainchild of Marty Weiser of Warner Bros., who launched a range of plugs for the film across several media and effectively saturated the American market as never before. Indicative of the potentials offered by an alliance with the military for this media saturation is a letter from Weiser to

Alex Evelove, who also worked to promote films for Warner Bros. Weiser describes the value of military connections for plugging *TITA* before emphasizing their net effect:

We have been very fortunate here in having men of the Army assigned to work on the Premiere who have held key spots in radio, newspaper and promotion deals in civilian life. For example, the man in charge of radio for the Denver campaign is Sergeant Irving Berlin Cahn, formerly National Radio Director of Twentieth Century Fox... We now have a special 15 minute broadcast from a Denver Army Field each day until the 24th over station KOA-NBC... I believe never before in radio history has a motion picture received so much free space. The Post and the News are giving us good cooperation and I am positive we will have a complete sell-out within a few days.¹³⁰

While this memo regarding Denver is exceptional due to the talent behind the premiere there, it gestures toward the impact Weiser was able to have in many cities throughout the US. Another document from Weiser's promotion files for 1943 reveals that specialized premiere campaigns for the western US were also launched in San Diego, Phoenix, Long Beach, San Francisco, Salt Lake City, Seattle, Portland, Oakland, San Jose, Aberdeen, Olympia, Tacoma, Spokane, Everett, Bellingham, and Bremerton.¹³¹ In smaller towns and cities that did not receive a specialized campaign, someone in the Army Emergency Relief network who was local received a diagram demonstrating how to launch a sustained promotional campaign. This document visualizes both how to establish a local committee, and also the relation of this committee to potential local branches of the campaign including newspapers, radio, speakers, shops, schools, and special events such as parades and announcements at ball games.¹³² (Figure 20) Furthermore, the exhibitor booklet for *TITA* instructed theater owners to launch a similar campaign themselves, and exhorted them to contact "department stores, chain stores, restaurants, banks, insurance companies, etc." to request free promotion and to "be sure to add that window cards, stills and posters, imprinted 'Blanktown Welcomes...' will be made available FREE by you for display purposes."¹³³

Due to the unparalleled promotion of *TITA* as a cultural event of national importance in practically every locale across the nation, the film became a ubiquitous social phenomenon that showcased queer entertainment and expanded domains of queer experience. The musical network established by *TITA* that connected virtually all cities and towns across the nation reconciled near and far, and unified the war effort both locally and abroad. I argue that for queers (who were especially sensitive to the performative dynamics of a range of spaces), the sense of spatial connection offered by musical films such as *TITA* may have offered a phantasmatic means by which to introduce new nodes into their musical network while remaining tethered to "home" by song. This phantasmatic musical network thus provided an opportunity for queers to avoid spaces that were overdetermined by daily surveillance and internalized norms for heteronormative performance, while nonetheless maintaining a tenuous relationship with these spaces of demobilized life. For example, the engagement of Donald Vining in paramilitary service provided him a legitimate excuse to distance himself from his family in New Jersey, and this time resulted in the most harmonious relationship with his mother that he ever experienced, and which, thereafter, quickly deteriorated as he ended this service and became more physically proximate to his family in the Northeast.¹³⁴ Much in the same way that music was a consistent presence

throughout urban life, popular song provided a reassuring horizon of social experience for queers that allowed them safe passage to and through the increasingly diverse locations annexed by the war, linking the hyper-local to the cosmopolitan.

While *TITA*'s widespread popularity (both nationally and abroad) is exceptional, it should be understood as a militarized extension of the genre's programmatic bridging of different locations through music. The connecting of sites of production and reception is of vital importance for the musical genre, as many of its films narrativize the creation of musical entertainment (i.e. "backstage musicals") in areas such as New York City and Los Angeles but are then exhibited in locales far removed from these entertainment hubs. Popular song provided an effective way to promote and publicize these films in all markets via radio, recordings, print and television, and simultaneously emphasize the specificity of the music to sites of both production and reception. For example, the exhibitor booklet for 1953's *The Band Wagon* (Vincente Minnelli) describes a song contest used to generate buzz for the film in anticipation of its theatrical release:

Song Contest: A big National Contest tied in to local level. Blankets America with 80 top radio stations (*with some TV promotion*). One week of playing records from "Band Wagon" album. Contest with listeners writing in their favorite song and in 25 words or less why they want to see the picture. Prizes for disc jockeys, station managers, public. One of the most complete contests ever staged by films, with special promotional platters, star and song-writer interviews.¹³⁵

This song contest was in addition to the dissemination of 10,000 display covers of the soundtrack album to record stores, contests for the album launched at these stores, and 250 albums sent to disc jockeys around the nation.¹³⁶ Exhibitor booklets also offered guidelines for advertising musical films in local papers through mock ads that heavily promote songs from films. For example, a sample ad for *The Broadway Melody of 1936* (Roy Del Ruth, 1935) reads "Broadway Melody has become the Omaha Melody...because all Omaha is singing...whistling and humming its tunes and praises!"¹³⁷ As these promotional materials from different decades make clear, the musical consistently made local connections through music to drive the purchase of movie tickets throughout the Classical Hollywood period.

What is noteworthy about several WWII musicals, however, is not only how they opened new opportunities for promotion throughout the US, but also their relation to specific locations and the way they emphasize mobilization to these locations. Despite foregrounding temporal uncertainty and the circulation of officers and *matériel* in lockstep with the war, *Stage Door Canteen* and *Hollywood Canteen* (as well as *TITA* in a more limited sense) visualize and narrativize musical drama in the sites that remained consistent for these officers. Although these films provided a vicarious glimpse inside these establishments for civilians, they also literally documented the spaces in which military officers had been or might travel to while on leave from the army or navy.

In highlighting both the circulation of bodies and the specificities of venues on opposite sides of the nation that were known to soldiers, sailors, and queers, *Stage Door Canteen* and *Hollywood Canteen* serve as audiovisual predecessors to the gay travel guides that emerged as a result of homosexual military service (and para-service) during WWII. The earliest known gay travel guide dates to the postwar year of 1949 and it found distribution through clandestine queer networks in the armed forces. The debt of the guides to queer

mobilization is made explicit by the foreword of the revised guide to world travel from 1950—called the *Gay Girl's Guide to The U.S. & The Western World*—which warns owners of the book that “because of the survival of various archaic laws, it might be just as well if you didn't leave it around to be studied by your mother (the other one), your landlady, your Sgt. or CPO [Chief Petty Officer, a naval rank], as the case may be.”¹³⁸ In turn, it is important to understand these guides both in terms of their connection to military mobilization, and also the way that such national and global circulation conditioned forms of tourism via demobilization after the war, especially for queers who sought to perpetuate the freedom of movement offered to them by the military. The guides loosely followed the structure of the first one (*Gaedicker's Sodom-On-Hudson*), which delineates the main cruising locations in New York City, both indoor and outdoor, as well as venues for queer entertainment inclusive of drag show night clubs, dance halls, movie theaters, etc.¹³⁹ A fuller gay travel guide appeared later the same year as *The Gay Girl's Guide*, and it included a “Gayese-English Dictionary, a guide to sexual techniques, and a primer for identifying gay types in public before listing locations in the US (later editions also profiled locations abroad).¹⁴⁰ As stated in the closing notes of the first edition of *The Gay Girl's Guide*, subsequent guides would be necessary to address the periodic geographical and linguistic shifts of urban gay culture:

The very nature of the material makes any dogmatic finality impossible. Many definitions and concepts are subject to different impressions and interpretations. Words, phrases and places are constantly passing out of circulation and being replaced by new words, phrases and places. Today's realities are tomorrow's memories.¹⁴¹

Furthermore, the guide placed this uncertainty about future locations for queer meeting places directly in tension with the shifts in circulation that another war might bring. From the closing notes of the 1950 version of the guide:

The authors are not at present certain as to whether there will be future editions. The possibility of a new War, although it may bring a great increase of activity and many changes (which would justify a new edition), might also affect the lives of the authors in such a way as to make another impossible.¹⁴²

This note again underlines the ways the experience of war, and the uncertainty of physical safety or life thereafter, was tied directly to the efflorescence of queer sociality.

Although intra- and international travel became more common after the war as queers demobilized, the many cities queers frequented remained unstable and subject to rapid changes to coded language as well as physical locations where queers might meet one another. The spatial instability of the post-war travel for queers is similar to the regular shifting of gay bars at a local level as a result of urban vice squads as discussed in the first chapter. Just as in New York City, the travel guides make clear that locations for queer sociality were always in flux throughout the US and internationally. Perhaps more importantly, the guides demonstrate that militarized service jumpstarted the expansion of American queer spatial and social networks from ones that existed in specific cities, and joined disparate places into an international network of circulation. Although queers would still be subject to the same performative rigors of self-policing as the cities they might call their homes, the extensive network provided by the travel guides offered queers a means to

transcend the “rigid mask” particular to their daily lives and take pleasure in new patterns of mobility and travel that had been easier for heterosexuals before this point.¹⁴³

Music, crucially, remained a consistent presence by which to organize queer experience in cities other than those in which homosexuals lived. This is not to say that all aspects of musical recognition described in the first chapter remained—indeed, as the guide makes clear, queer hermeneutics shifted constantly, which likely nullified the ability of a specific song heard on the street to signal the presence of another queer in different cities. Specific venues of musical performance and reception, however, were reliable queer meeting places throughout the cities profiled in the guides. For example, movie theaters acted as meeting spots for gay men throughout the US. According to *The Gay Girl’s Guide*, “[a]lthough less basic than parks, since they are subject to change, the right movie house can be deduced logically,” continuing on:

The gay movie will be one that does not have first-run features, yet present a fairly attractive appearance inside and out. It will generally show pairs of new features just off the first-run, or revivals, or in rare cases, westerns or all-comic shows. It will be located in the downtown area or near the heart of town.¹⁴⁴

An expanded international edition of the guide from the mid-1950s clarifies, however, that movie houses abroad were “rendered useless by excess of attendants.”¹⁴⁵ This does not, however, mean that music ceased to signify between queers in public locations internationally. Cited in *The Gay Girl’s Guide* as a “splendid story about a gay bar in war time Italy, with superb dialogue and portraits,” John Horne Burns’s *The Gallery* demonstrates the viability of musical reference to communicate between queers in settings beyond the US. The central “portrait” of the book (it is a collection of vignettes linked together by the people who populate locations in a famous gallery in Naples) concerns “Momma,” the proprietress of a bar frequented by gay male expats and a single WAC named Rhoda who is coded as a lesbian. The chapter describes a day in the life of Momma and her experience at the bar that evening. After the regular patrons of the bar have convened at Momma’s for the night, a respected Italian count enters and states his fondness for an incredibly attractive German officer. The German leaves and the rest of the patrons begin to discuss what has just transpired; notably, an African American soldier begins to sing “Strange Fruit” as commentary.¹⁴⁶ Also present at the bar are a pair of British officers who largely keep to themselves, but at a certain point Momma overhears them discussing “the effect of Mozart coming over a loudspeaker at the edge of the desert,” a likely reference to Burns’s own experiences programming and performing classical music in Morocco.¹⁴⁷

Much of the presence of music in the guides remains implicit rather than explicit, and is taken for granted as a means to effect recognition between queers. In *Gaedicker’s Guide to Sodom-on-Hudson*, the author describes “Bitches’ Beach (or, Queens’ Beach)” near Point Lookout, Long Island, and notes that:

On some occasions, a gay vaudeville show is put on by some of the more talented of the patrons. This, however, tends to draw a considerable number of tourists as well as queens, and inevitably, someone doesn’t like something and complains to the local police, with unfortunate results.¹⁴⁸

This passage demonstrates not only the consistency of music as a *lingua franca* to unify queers, but also the enduring legacy of time spent in the military in shaping the use of music for such purposes. The vaudeville show mentioned is reminiscent of the military drag shows that typified leisure time in the armed forces, but the presence of repressive force on the beach to quash such entertainment also demonstrates limited viability of queer musical performance in public after the war. Indeed, this passage further demonstrates the conspicuous centrality of queer musical entertainment to the war effort, as well as its rapid anachronism and unacceptability as popular entertainment after the war. In turn, resources such as *The Gay Girl's Guide* that specified reliable locations for queer assignations when travelling became necessary to transition from life in the military to life as a civilian.

While delineating a specific gay male milieu (white, artistic, and aspirational of higher socioeconomic classes), Donald Vining's diaries nonetheless make clear the importance of demobilized travel for queers after WWII. The second volume of Vining's diaries, which covers 1946-1954, begins with a hitchhiking trip across New England with his friend Jim, a former officer. While guided by a few destinations in particular (chief among them gay mecca Provincetown, Massachusetts), the trip also functions as a way for Jim to make contact with former friends from the Army whom he seeks out in Rhode Island and Vermont.¹⁴⁹ Vining later makes shorter trips with his lover, Ken, to other gay locations, including Long Beach, Long Island, where "The belles were flagrant and unashamed. Some had dresses to wear, or bolts of cloth to wrap around themselves in weird ways. False breasts were in evidence and the hairdos were out of this world."¹⁵⁰ Extended travel assumes greater importance for Vining, however, as much of the remaining years of the 1940s are structured by a trip to Europe scheduled years in advance, the planning of which brings Vining and Ken closer together. As a former Sergeant, Ken yearns to travel again to replicate his time spent in the military, as noted in an entry from October 21, 1946, occasioned by the docking a ship that had been used for military purposes during the war:

I got up early and went down to see if Ken had left for breakfast. There was a welcome home note telling me he'd gotten up at seven to go see the Queer Elizabeth dock on this, her maiden trip as a passenger liner after having served as a troop ship... Ken got home latish and wanted me to walk over and see the Queen Elizabeth, which really is an impressive sign and gives us both itchy feet.¹⁵¹

As the two develop a closer relationship it is inextricably tied to travel abroad and away from their close network of gay male friends (who consistently socialize over classical recordings), but simultaneously mark them more clearly as gay to those beyond this domestic circle. For example, an entry from May 16, 1947, describes Vining's experience at a straight party where he attempts to pass as straight, mostly successfully although someone he meets there tells him, "You're a real nice guy. A little fairyish, but nice," leading Vining to later consider on his "rather depressed way home" whether he had "so lost contact with the normal world that [he] would be the target for remarks if [he] mingled with normal people at parties."¹⁵² For Vining, travel assumed central importance in transcending the omnipresent surveillance that haunted his interactions with others, even as his gay male network became more closely knit, and as such it offered himself and his lover the promise of a more whole and egalitarian existence that came, countervallently, at the expense of consistent relationships beyond the one they shared. Stated differently, the promise of demobilized travel for Vining was to recreate the potentials of life during WWII, but to offset its attendant

ennui by being “alone” with someone close and escaping the strain of quotidian, heteronormative encounters.

Upon closer inspection, it becomes clear that the implicit ideological agenda of the travel guides is to promote a more radicalized queer culture than that which musical consumption (and its appearance of normality) effected. In the section “Gay Life in the U.S.A.” from the first edition of *The Gay Girl’s Guide*, an extended section critiques the links between music, consumption, and queer identity:

In coming to an end of this discussion of American Gay Life, it seems worth noting that in no other country in the world is the homosexual population less subversive and a more ardent supporter of the prevailing culture. Without doubt this is due to the fact that American culture is a female culture, in which the norms are determined by female sentiments rather than male sentiments. The worship of youth, beauty and fine clothing, the gaudy advertising, the cult of the theatrical world of Broadway and Hollywood, the juke boxes [sic], are but a few examples.¹⁵³

The linking of musical consumption to consumption generally, as well as femininity and “the prevailing culture,” typifies a dynamic that has consistently divided queer populations between radical and normalizing factions throughout the 20th and into the 21st Century. The guide’s misogynist critique takes for granted the quotidian realities of repression and internalized policing that typified queer life at midcentury in the US, and, in turn, frames musical consumption negatively as a capitulation to heterosexual norms rather than a tactical means to cultivate a queer life “in enemy territory.” Earlier in the section on gay life before reaching this critique, the author even describes the reality of legal force but frames it against the potentials for its transcendence enabled by travel and mobility:

Conditions prevailing in the U.S. represent a compromise between two opposing forces. On the one hand, we have a maximum of personal and social liberty and freedom of movement available to all individuals and groups in the U.S. as nowhere else in the world. On the other hand, we have a very definite legal repression of homosexuality as severe in Anglo-Saxon law as in any legal system derived from Judeo-Christian taboos.¹⁵⁴

Given this tension, and the function of these documents to promote gay sexual liaisons in public and semi-public locations such as parks, beaches, and movie theaters, the travel guides advocate for a more radicalized gay life than that which was cultivated through consumption, musical and otherwise. Importantly, this critique argues for a change to the performative regimes that queers internalized to appear heteronormative, rather than any substantive change in homosexual urban practice *per se*: the guides document actual gay sexual practice, but frame it from a subject position located beyond any specific location and the daily forces that might encourage queers to appear outwardly normative. In turn, I argue for an understanding of these guides in part as an idealistic manifesto for enlarged patterns for travel and circulation that would help to unsettle the status quo, despite their reluctance to address head-on the legal conditions that made queers vulnerable. Indeed, the guides are utopian in that they promote an attitude divorced from juridical reality in a state of perpetual circulation, a literal “no place” in its continuous movement between locations. What is ironic, however, is the guides’ disavowal of musical consumption and performance as a means for

establishing such mobility and patterns of travel in the first place, or, indeed, the circulation of these guides through apparently heteronormative kinship networks in the military. This tension between music as a marker of normality and its refusal in the name of queer radicalism would come to a head during the decades following gay liberation when queers became more visible in daily life and began to articulate publicly their own (divergent) political agendas; this era will be analyzed in the fourth chapter. In context, this guide speaks more profoundly to the performative pressures that bound queers to an outwardly heteronormative identity through musical consumption, and to the relation of this consumption to the fantasies of uninhibited circulation conditioned by the mobilization of the musical during WWII.

In its close affiliation to both national duty and enlarged circulatory networks annexed by WWII, music opened a number of unexpected and historically exceptional pathways for queers. In no other era in American history has queer entertainment in the form of drag performance been as central to the war effort, or, in turn, provided such a common means for queers to advance homosexual entertainment as normative or patriotic (even if its currency remained confined to the war years). For queers, these new pathways forged through musical reception and consumption within the nation and abroad disrupted daily praxis, spatial coherency, temporal certainty, and performative models for heteronormative behavior in productive ways. As the war came to an end, however, the new models for performativity and circulation engendered by mobilization left contrasting legacies within queer populations. As intimated by the gay travel guides that emerged post-war, the following decades would see a growing division between queers who returned to previous models for heteronormative performativity and those who sought to perpetuate the more liberated life that existed during the war. It is during the coming period that an affiliation with music would begin to signify differently and lose its aura of heteronormativity, due to both shifts in popular culture and the growing visibility of more resistant queer populations.

Chapter 3: “To Know the Words to the Music:” Camp Language and Social Space

In October of 1979, the Gay Men’s Chorus of Los Angeles (hereafter GMCLA) put on its first concert. Founded only three months prior, the chorus showcased a range of popular songs that had been featured in Hollywood movie musicals, among them “Stouthearted Men.”¹⁵⁵ With the lyrics “give me some men who are stouthearted men/who will fight for the right they adore,” and “there’s nothing in the world can halt or mar a plan/When stouthearted men can stick together man to man,” the song promoted an outwardly political message for gay visibility, acceptance and strength on the tenth anniversary of the Stonewall Riots in 1969, regularly cited as the dawn of the gay liberation movement in the United States. The rhetorical force of “Stouthearted Men” for queers in the audience that night who knew the song, however, was not a result of the lyrics alone, but rather the contemporary recontextualization of “Stouthearted Men” from past social contexts and spaces in which it had been performed or played over the previous 50 years.

The earlier history of “Stouthearted Men” covers a remarkably varied spatiotemporal terrain. The song originated in the 1929 operetta *The New Moon*, and premiered on Broadway at the Imperial Theater. The operetta ran for 509 performances (its closing hastened by the stock market crash) and introduced the public to other songs that became popular as well, among them “One Kiss” and “Lover, Come back to Me.”¹⁵⁶ Even though the show closed later that year, “Stouthearted Men” became a national hit and was etherized by the radio, printed on records, and reproduced for instrumental play via sheet music. The song’s popularity reached new heights when the operetta was adapted for film in 1930 (starring Grace Moore and Lawrence Tibbett) and 1940 (with the more famous pairing of Jeanette MacDonald and Nelson Eddy). The latter film’s close proximity to American involvement in the Second World War led to the conscription of “Stouthearted Men” to the war effort at countless USO shows nationally and abroad. While the live theater and the cinema were certainly hotspots for homosexual sociality and musical reception within cities in the late 1920s through the 1930s, the USO show might nonetheless occasion a more saturated queer environment. Imagine one of these shows, if you will, filtered through the haze of inebriation and the stench of cigarette smoke and sweat. A man dressed as a woman (albeit unconvincingly) stands on stage in an overcrowded room full of male officers, and commands the boisterous crowd to offer up “some men who are stouthearted men.” The performer focalizes—and temporarily relieves—the tensions felt by many gay male officers in the crowd who discreetly have sex with one another when supervision is lax. These queer soldiers might then carry this song with them and sing it to themselves either aloud or in their heads in the barracks, on duty, and in the field, where it could pass as a normative morale booster to fellow heterosexual officers and simultaneously express sexual preference to other queers. Stated differently, “Stouthearted Men” became an affective interface to manage queer sentiment and longing in an often repressive environment.

In the years following the war the song remained a well-known standard even if it wasn’t exceptionally popular. In 1967, however, Barbra Streisand covered “Stouthearted Men” on her album *Simply Streisand*. Imagine now the different contexts through which the newly covered song might have circulated and held meaning. Younger gay men who were fans of Streisand may have been exposed to the song for the first time through this record. Such men may have listened to this recording in private, domestic spaces, either in homes with their parents or as adults living alone in a house or apartment. To queers who lacked

regular access to urban spaces of homosexual circulation, “Stouthearted Men” may have provided a form of virtual belonging when actual contact wasn’t possible; this fits into the trope of the “sad young man” common to queer representations in the 1950s and 1960s (not to forget Radclyffe Hall’s earlier lesbian touchstone *The Well of Loneliness* from 1928).¹⁵⁷ In domestic settings, *Simply Streisand* also would have found a home within larger collections of records by popular singers and original cast recordings. Younger gay men in urban areas, however, may have sung the song in piano bars frequented by queers. In such gathering places, these fans of Streisand may have encountered older queers who knew the song from their involvement in World War II (or even before). Although such encounters might stage intergenerational friendships, it is also quite likely that they made queers living in the closet aware that they were different from one another, and older queers may have perceived more contemporary appropriations of the song as impoverished or foolish.

The performance of “Stouthearted Men” at the GMCLA concert potentially would have spoken to queers familiar with the song from its original popularity, its use in the military, and its renewed circulation in the 1960s. The currency of the song in 1979 hinged on the entirety of its circulation in varied historical and social contexts, and transformed and united men familiar with the song from different walks of life in the interest of a new mission: the political promotion of gay male identity. The use of “Stouthearted Men” in 1979 did not negate these former contexts; rather, it drew from and transformed them so that the song might resonate with renewed political vigor. After the HIV epidemic (which began in the 1980s), however, the chorus no longer performed the song as regularly, because (to provide one of many potential reasons) there were not enough living queers for whom the song would have held meaning and stirred freighted memories of closeted kinship.

I have narrated the history of “Stouthearted Men” to demonstrate that popular song allowed queers to build identities and linguistic systems in historical contexts that were overdetermined by repression. This historical and theoretical approach builds on the first chapter’s understanding of the ways in which song charted pathways through urban spatial networks and provided queers with an opportunity pass as normative consumers and also give expression to queer sensibilities.¹⁵⁸ While this chapter continues this line of thought, it pivots to consider the affective dimensions of the collection of popular song and the relation of such material culture to sociality, identity and language, especially in the 1950s and 1960s. As such, I work with many of the same objects of study, such as sheet music, records, pianos, jukeboxes, and other technologies of musical audition and performance, but consider instead how such material objects construct social spaces, and in turn how the dynamics of sonic spaces shape the formation of language that might both denote normatively and connote queerly. In addition to the sources I consulted in the first chapter, I also analyze historical, queer accounts of social interactions around music that relate to language and subjectivity, specific material collections of music, *The Queen’s Vernacular* (a gay slang dictionary) and accounts of queers in spaces of musical reception in the popular press from the 1960s in order to consider the impact social practices around popular song had on both queer and hegemonic language.¹⁵⁹

Just as this chapter returns to concepts developed in the first chapter, it also looks ahead to the following two chapters on the interrelation of musical consumption, linguistic circulation and political agency. This chapter functions as a pivot point, both thematically and historically, for the project as a whole. From a historical perspective, the 1950s and 1960s stand in opposition to the period from the 1970s onward because queer experience

in the former two decades was overdetermined by “the closet,” or the imperative to keep sexual identity hidden from public view for fear of punishment. In the decades following 1969’s Stonewall Riots, however, queers began to elaborate their sexual identities publicly and police popular representations of homosexuals in order to gain political power and legitimacy. This chapter considers the limits and unintended effects of queer language during the period that preceded gay liberation, in which a growing popular awareness (and suspicion) of homosexuality made queers newly visible to non-queers in mixed settings as diverse as the church, the office, and the cinema, and in turn engendered in dominant discourse an essentialist affiliation between homosexuality and musical reception.

Central to this chapter is the idea of “camp,” and its relation to popular song, practices of meaning making, and the negotiation of identitarian visibility by queers in public and semi-public settings. Although camp is commonly understood as a style of reading that is irreverent (often apolitical) and humorous, I historicize it instead as a tactical form of language that might compensate for the repressive power structures queers encountered in everyday life. I frame camp in this way in order to call attention not to the styles of camp itself (considerations of which consolidate the bulk of discourse on camp, given iconic expression by Susan Sontag’s early “Notes on Camp”), but rather the historical forces that conditioned queer uses of camp as a means to negotiate an outwardly hostile world.¹⁶⁰ These two aspects of camp should not be considered as polar opposites, but instead as a basic condition and the expression it engendered among queers. To illustrate, a camp reading of the 1959 film *The Best of Everything* (Jean Negulesco, Fox) would yield jokes about the overly serious acting style and glamorous presentation of an aging Joan Crawford, or the questionable ability of model Suzy Parker to convey the inner turmoil of a woman named Gregg whose obsession with a former lover leads to her demise when she falls from a fire escape while stalking him. Such humor only resonates, however, through a subject position that finds friction with heteronormative discourse on Crawford and Parker as beautiful, ideal women, and the films of Jean Negulesco as serious and elegant. To relate camp to speech, camp humor relies on the active use of language to divide normative and queer populations from one another; the joke might only work if not everyone gets it. Accordingly, I frame camp humor as a result of the passage by queers through mixed public and semi-public settings (such as the workplace, the street, restaurants, the movie theater, or the concert hall) where queer identity might be punished were its presence overt, but might nonetheless provide opportunities for queer humor that attacks the normal. Indeed, the point of camp is to reinforce divisions between populations through the creation of discursive inequality.

While camp discourse may have emerged from queer culture generally as a hermeneutic means to manage oppressive expectations about heteronormative behavior in everyday life, one should not assume that camp had totalizing or unifying effects within this culture. Instead, camp often divided queers from one another. As the sonic and performative history of “Stouthearted Men” demonstrates, queer understandings and associations with the song depended on the historical and social contexts in which they were fostered. For example, queers who knew “Stouthearted Men” from the time of its original circulation in the late 1920s and early 1930s (who would have heard the song broadcast over the radio in department stores, the office, in homes, or on the jukebox in the gay bar) would have different associations with the song than the younger generation that associated the song with time spent in the military during WWII. While the differences between these two contexts are vast, they are not as extreme as the differences between these generational

contexts and the yet younger generation in the 1960s that knew the song primarily through *Simply Streisand*. All of these historical subjects engaged in the solidification of camp language and social practices around “Stouthearted Men” at different point in time to manage the presence of power (variously policemen, supervising military officers, and parents) and foster group identity and belonging. Nonetheless, the commonality of “Stouthearted Men” between these groups did not guarantee friendship among them, but might accomplish the opposite and reinforce differences instead.

The double bind of camp language, however, is that it will always denote specific meanings normatively even as it connotes queerly. Stated differently, non-queers who overhear camp language might not understand the joke (whether it’s about drag performance in the army, the masculinity of late Joan Crawford, etc.), but they might nonetheless recognize discourse about musical entertainment or female stars between people who appear to behave according to heteronormative standards but are nonetheless different from the others. Camp language should be understood in relation to Judith Butler’s work on performativity as working within “grids of intelligibility” that allowed queers to pass unnoticed in mixed settings, similar to the way musical consumption operated as a normative cover for queers as described in the first chapter.¹⁶¹ Such intelligibility stands in contrast to the general performative role fulfilled by more solitary acts of musical consumption (for example, the purchase of sheet music, which denotes only that a person sings or plays music), and might instead lead to essentializing, homophobic discourse when others observe and overhear queer men and women as they patronize venues of commercialized leisure such as the concert hall or cinema. Thus the dilemma of camp language is that the division it creates between individuals in social settings is not neutral enough for it to pass unnoticed altogether as normative speech, consumption or spectatorship. Thus despite the function of camp to allow queers to function “within enemy territory,” it could also animate popular discourse about homosexuals as being obsessed with the musical arts and popular female performers, precisely because those who overheard them were not able to comprehend the hidden meaning of such speech. Furthermore, camp sediments and preserves inequality within language, and effectively ensures that queers (so long as they are in the closet) might never publicly correct or clarify homophobic discourse. The essentialist stereotype that gay men love musicals and the arts more generally may be based on observation, but it is a biased observation by homophobic subjects who took part in the same forms of commercialized leisure as queers.

The aim of this chapter is not to reinforce the historical links between queers and musicals, but rather to shed greater light on the ways such discursive associations were formed. Indeed, the relationship between queers, popular song and the musical arts was not one predicated on essentialism, but rather the result of a complex history of oppression and the resulting strategies queers adopted to navigate daily life and public performativity without social, juridical or corporal punishment. “Stouthearted Men’s” circulation and queer popularity over time demonstrates not only that homosexuals made use of music to facilitate social relations in spaces overdetermined by surveillance and repression, but also that such use was predicated on the quotidian, reliable presence of song generally from the 1930s through the 1970s. As this chapter elaborates, however, in the 1950s and 1960s the performative potential that popular song offered queers to appear normal in spaces of commercialized leisure would diminish as homosexuality became a popular subject for discussion and analysis.

Sociolinguistics and Camp Discourse

One of the key tactics employed by homosexuals to avoid unwanted attention in the first two thirds of the 20th century was the appropriation and coding of language. Queers conscripted language that could signify polyvalently, as contingent on one's own history and socialization, as a means to pass unnoticed to overhearing ears. Much of gay speech comprised a form of argot that signified sexual meaning in code, and hid innuendo behind common meanings for words. This sometimes took the form of direct substitution, for example the ubiquitous use of female pronouns to signify men, which allowed a public discussion of "her" to signify "him" between gay men but appear heteronormative when overheard. Gay slang that was deployed in public and semi-public spaces was far more involved, however, as recounted by Donald Vining about his life as a gay man in the 40s:

"I adore seafood. Gorge myself whenever the fleet's in. But I can't abide fish," [a gay man] might say, and any gay man would instantly know that the speaker was turned on by sailors and turned off by women, while the puzzled Mr. and Mrs. Readers Digest, listening in, would assume this was a discussion about food preferences.¹⁶²

Vining's quote demonstrates that camp language might effectively defray unwanted attention in public or semi-public spaces, such as the park or a restaurant. To be clear, however, other aspects of camp communication beyond speech also conveyed meaning between queers. For example, in *Gay New York* George Chauncey describes the way a red tie (and many other modes of dress and grooming) could indicate sexual preference between queers.¹⁶³ Likewise, the song heard on the street that the queer auditor knows "comes from the mouth of a gay person" described by Donald Webster Cory in the first chapter, demonstrates that a song itself rather than its embedded linguistic meaning (as was true at times for "Stouthearted Men") could safely effect recognition between queers in public.¹⁶⁴ By expanding what is considered language to include music, its circulation, and performance, it becomes evident how music might function much in the same way to signify different meanings to those familiar with a song in certain contexts. I want to be careful, however, not to oversimplify or conflate music with speech. While popular song may include language, it is more important to consider its effect in line with that which could also be achieved via speech: the formation of a heterotopic space in which the forces of hegemony are acknowledged or mitigated if not overturned.

To consider the ways language both enables resistance and also maintains ubiquitous power structures, I turn to sociolinguistics. Briefly, sociolinguistics investigates from an "activity-centered" viewpoint how language circulates between different social contexts, how the distribution of power between subjects affects and reshapes the meaning of language, and, in turn, how disparities in power between populations condition subjects via language. Sociolinguistics is useful for the study of the musical because it foregrounds the circulation of texts between different contexts, and how these contexts come to bear on privileged meanings of these texts. Such attention to the intermedial circulation and signifying capacity of popular song diverges productively from dominant approaches to the musical genre that focus primarily on the industrial conditions of the production of musical films or their formal features.¹⁶⁵ Although sociolinguistics generally favors spoken or written language as an object of study, Jan Blommaert argues to expand "discourse" and include objects that "could be called fully 'non-linguistic,'" but are nonetheless "forms of meaningful semiotic human activity seen in connection with social, cultural, and historical patterns of

developments of use.”¹⁶⁶ Popular music fits clearly within this schema, and the preceding quote furthermore resonates with Henri Lefebvre’s assertion that, “everything—music, painting, architecture—is language.”¹⁶⁷ As this expansion of discourse relates to musicals, “meaningful semiotic human activity” encompasses any form of musical performance and reception, either alone or within a group, in spaces of commercialized leisure, the street, the office or the home. Examples of this activity might include singing along to a song on the jukebox at a gay bar, playing the sheet music for “Secret Love” alone or with a friend on the piano at home, or seeing a performer beloved by queers in concert. Furthermore, as popular song was the primary vehicle at midcentury for the intermedial circulation and consumption of music, the lyrics of songs (while not necessarily meaningful or profound in isolation) might also accrue meaning for a particular group of people within a specific context, as was the case with “Stouthearted Men.”

To describe the ways a song like “Stouthearted Men” both resonated and came to resonate among queers, two sociolinguistic concepts are crucial: “layered simultaneity” and “entextualization.” Layered simultaneity assumes that individuals, based on their own histories, impose conflicting meanings for the same object to privilege certain experiences over others in a given context. Expressed more fully:

[Layered simultaneity] occurs in a real-time, synchronic event, but it is simultaneously encapsulated in several layers of historicity, some of which are within the grasp of the participants while others remain invisible but are nonetheless present... An awareness of layered simultaneity in texts turns discourse into a complex, historically layered, and overdetermined object. The different layers of historicity to which people can orient, and from which they can speak, create enormous amounts of tension between continuity and discontinuity in meanings, between coherence and incoherence in discourses.¹⁶⁸

To return to the history of “Stouthearted Men,” the culminating performance of the song by the GMCLA in 1979 for certain queer in the audience could have summoned layered memories of the song’s performance in the military in WWII, the song’s broadcast over the radio before the war and the performance of the song in piano bars in the 1950s and 1960s. Layered simultaneity allows for textual complexity, heterochronicity, and contextual discontinuity for objects of historical study. For “Stouthearted Men,” layered simultaneity provides a conceptual tool for understanding how a song might signify differently to members of the same audience, both within queer populations and between groups of queers and heterosexual consumers of musical entertainment. Central to the operation of layered simultaneity is entextualization, a term that “refers to the process by... which discourses are successively or simultaneously decontextualized and metadiscursively recontextualized, so that they become a new discourse associated to a new context... which provides a sort of ‘preferred reading’ for the discourse.”¹⁶⁹ Entextualization is the process whereby new, privileged meanings are made for a discrete discursive object in a given context; entextualization in a post-Stonewall context was crucial for “Stouthearted Men” to gain political meaning in 1979. An awareness of entextualization expands analytical, hermeneutic attention directed at texts to include the contexts in which they are produced or consumed. They become rich sites for the making of meaning and the conditioning of subjective, affective attachments. I want to assert clearly at this point that I am not insisting that music necessarily acts as a language, or that it is always carries meaning with it.

Following Jacques Attali in *Noise*, I maintain that music has the power to be disruptive and irruptive, and its origin “should not be sought in linguistic communication.”¹⁷⁰ It is nonetheless important to point out that music has the potential to operate as an extension of language in certain contexts where more readily legible forms of communication fail, are subject to legal punishment, or reinforce repressive forms of power.

I frame discursive analysis through sociolinguistics because the latter considers language as the expression of, vehicle for, and enforcer of inequality. Blommaert asserts that, “part of linguistic inequality... depends on the inability of speakers accurately to perform certain discourse functions on the basis of available and accessible resources.”¹⁷¹ From a historical perspective, Blommaert’s position takes into account the impossibility for queers to express homosexual desire in a straightforward fashion without punishment, and, in turn, the unavailability of language as a tool that might be used by queers to effect change. Blommaert critiques the assumption that language is dialogical in its ability to effect change by noting that dialogue “does not presuppose co-operativity... does not presuppose sharedness... [and] does not presuppose symmetry in contextualizing power.”¹⁷² In other words, the use of language by marginalized subjects is not necessarily resistant, as language is complicit in the creation of the inequality experienced by these subjects in the first place. Blommaert also critiques a strictly linguistic bias because it “implies an emphasis on *available* discourse, discourse which is there.”¹⁷³ Queer discourse prior to gay liberation is limited, and this lack would otherwise render the decades that predated liberation unavailable for analysis. Instead, sociolinguistics allows for the social practices of meaning-making themselves to be analyzed productively.

If historical records of discourse by queers have largely (by design) escaped historical documentation and archives, camp nonetheless survives as discourse and as a sensibility. Camp remains a debated term that is difficult to define authoritatively, but its linguistic uses (including music) are by definition exclusionary, and they function predominantly to allay repressive conditions rather than overturn them. In opposition to Benedict Anderson’s claim that, “Language is not an instrument of exclusion: in principle, any one can learn any language... it is fundamentally inclusive,” camp creates inequality between groups of people by reinforcing conflicting meanings within a given context.¹⁷⁴ As stated earlier, camp isn’t necessarily progressive or resistant, and, historically, it has had divisive and depoliticizing effects *within* gay communities. As Richard Dyer argues in his 1977 essay “It’s Being so Camp as Keeps Us Going,” camp creates effects that are deeply contradictory, in respect to both gay subcultures themselves as well as how those subcultures negotiate confrontations with hegemonic power:

[Camp] is just about the only style, language and culture that is distinctively and unambiguously gay male... Identity and togetherness, fun and wit, self-protection and thorns in the flesh of straight society—these are the pluses of camp. Unfortunately there are also minuses, and they are precisely the opposite side of those positive features... The fun, the wit, has its drawbacks too. It tends to lead to an attitude that you can’t take anything seriously, everything has to be turned into a witticism or a joke. Camp finds [the Campaign for Homosexual Equality] too dull, [the Gay Liberation Front] too political, all the movement activities just not fun enough... Camp can help us from letting the social, cultural situation of gays getting us down: but it is the situation that’s wrong, not ourselves. Camp sometimes stops us seeing that.¹⁷⁵

Dyer's essay emerged from a very different historical moment than that which I have analyzed in this chapter; by the late 1970s, a retrospective view on the dynamics of camp would be possible, so it requires qualification. Such retrospection will be investigated further in the following chapter, but Dyer's quote is useful for analysis here because it highlights how camp can have an antithetical relationship to activism, and how its palliative effect can reinforce historic divisions within society rather than question them.

Viewed from a sociolinguistic perspective, Dyer's claims about camp relate to Jan Blommaert's assertion that "critical approaches to discourse should be concerned with power... [but] must also be concerned with invisible, hegemonic, structural, and normalized power sedimented *in* language and not only *through* language... language itself is an *object* of inequality and hegemony."¹⁷⁶ To be clear, when I refer to camp or describe something as camp, I mean to imply its stylistic overtones. But more importantly, I claim that camp is an expression conditioned by oppression and is not a progressive, dialectical act that attempts to restructure power. Camp is instead an expression and result of historic forms of disenfranchisement that attempts to manage and combat the localized effects of this power, and also—crucially—maintain inequality within prevailing power structures. When thought in relation to the first chapter's analysis of the spatial dynamics of gender and sexuality, camp fits Michel de Certeau's definition of a tactic, or "an art of the weak."¹⁷⁷ For queers who were disenfranchised from unimpeded participation in the public sphere, camp linguistic strategies had the potential to mitigate the stress of such an existence through the creation of camp codes that could find articulation in public and simultaneously convey privileged meaning. Camp, in other words, emerged as a tactic to make the best out of a bad situation, finding humor in and within the very conditions of sexual and linguistic marginalization. De Certeau himself compares tactics to humor, and cites Freud on the machinations of wit as a manifestation of psychic discord: "Cross-cuts, fragments, cracks and lucky hits in the framework of a system, consumers' ways of operating are the practical equivalents of wit."¹⁷⁸

De Certeau's use of the word "cross-cuts" to characterize the practices of "consumers" relates to queer camp appropriations of music, as popular song quite literally provided a range of objects for consumption that encouraged the consolidation of camp discourse across fractured and divergent spaces. As elaborated in the first chapter, this spatial and sonorous musical network was constituted by the arrangement of sound technologies (such as the jukebox, radio, phonograph, piano, sheet music, and the human voice) within spaces that were fully public (the street, the park), semi-public (the office, the department store, the concert hall), semi-private (neighborhood choruses, bars, private clubs) and fully private (the home). And music, while undertheorized, has been discussed more generally as an opportunity for the consolidation of camp sensibilities and spectatorships. In his description of the covert queer occupation of performance venues, Chauncey notes:

Some performers were so well known for the gay-tinged double entendre of their lyrics that their performances drew large audiences of gay men. Whether or not the other members of the audience noticed them, *they* were aware of their numbers in the audience and often shared in the collective excitement of transforming such a public gathering into a "gay space," no matter how covertly. Judy Garland's concerts would take on this character in later years; Beatrice Lillie's concerts were among the most famous such events in the early 1930s. "The Palace was just packed with

queers, for weeks at a time, when Lillie performed,” remembered one man who had been in the audience. One of her signature songs, “There Are Fairies at the Bottom of Our Garden,” was a camp classic in the gay world, and twenty years later Lillie noted that she still “always” got requests for it from her audience.¹⁷⁹

While it may be tempting to linger on the specifics and erotics of theatrical space or the performers therein as sites for gay libidinal investment (as has been typical in queer scholarly inquiry), such an approach overlooks the circulation of song and the practices of queer socialization around music in other spaces that condition such occasions to be so highly charged.

Collections, Stockpiles, and Affective *Matériel*

There is little left to document the tactical uses of popular song by queers beyond traces of their consumption. In a very real way, this remains true as historic gay neighborhoods disappear in metropolitan areas, and the generations of gays who gentrified now trendy neighborhoods pass away. Situated in a spatial terrain that is constantly shifting around them (albeit now more directly due to the market-driven forces of late capitalism and rising property values, rather than overtly homophobic law), the queer presences that persist in certain neighborhoods are stores whose very purpose is the liquidation of these material traces. In San Francisco such sites include the vintage pornography store, The Magazine, located in the Polk Gulch neighborhood (a historic gay area, the legacy of which is being erased deliberately by an enterprising, heteronormative neighborhood association), and Community Thrift in the Mission (adjacent to the Castro, the city’s current “historic” gay neighborhood). Within the latter, a seemingly endless supply of original cast recordings, operas, and symphonies on vinyl take up a substantial amount of floor space and confront the casual shopper aggressively with its volume. (Figure 1) Situated adjacent to the LGBT book section, the records play to queer stereotypes about musical taste even though definitive traces of gay ownership and use (apart from the occasional inscription from one man to another) are lacking. It is precisely this queer deniability of music and its status as a commodity intended for diverse populations that perpetuated its camp use by queers historically.

To consider the potentials for music to engender camp expression, it is important to compare and contrast it with other, more evident expressions of camp that are also rooted in material culture. The files of Christian William Miller (a famous photographer who worked in New York City in the 1930s, 40s and 50s) at the ONE Archives contain several folders dedicated to camp interventions into advertisements. Most typically, these take the form of collage or simply disassembly, whereby adspeak is decontextualized to appear queer or perverse. One such example is an advertisement for Chesterfield cigarettes in which the words “Like Your Pleasure BIG?” have been ripped from the rest of the ad to isolate and amplify their phallic implications. (Figure 2) Miller sometimes altered these ads via illustration, as in one for Formfit girdles upon which he seamlessly drew penile bulges onto the variety of female forms at the top. By doing so, Miller introduced camp humor through the recontextualization of the copy used to classify the various models (including “Junior,” “Stout,” and “Full Hip”) to imply differences in penis size and shape. (Figure 3) Despite the facile and crass sense of humor that these altered ads convey, it is important to note that such humor is fundamentally the same as some of the ways in which queers appropriated popular songs to articulate a homosexual representability (i.e. a gay man in military drag

who performs “Stouthearted Men”). The advertisements are only more visibly queer because their humor relies upon language and representation, unlike the camp potential of music which generally resides in how queers might perform or consume it. Indeed, the wit of the girdle ad is fundamentally the same as that which subtends much drag performance, and which often relies on music to convey the joke: that gender is a construction that can be exploited for humor. As a testament to this camp affinity, Miller’s papers also include song lyrics, such as a typewritten sheet of the lyrics to the Johnny Mercer/Harry Warren song “It’s a Great Big World” from the 1946 musical *The Harvey Girls* (George Sidney, MGM). The song chronicles the activities of a hyper-feminized woman who sings about bonnets, lace, and angel food cakes. Despite Miller’s tendency toward visual and textual intervention, however, the sheet of lyrics hasn’t been acted upon. The reluctance of Miller to alter the sheet implies that the camp value of music resides primarily in its reading, performance and consumption, rather than its appearance and visual rhetoric.

Specific songs and pieces of music, however, may resist singular acts of appropriation: songs are situated in relation to others from a show or on a recording; sheet music and recordings are typically grouped by composer or performer; and most consumption of music happens in relation to one’s previous exposure to it under the aegis of a personal collection. Even if it is small, most people who listen to or play music have a collection of it that acts as a material record of previous and current patterns of consumption, taste, and relational practice. Within the context of American gay history, in which the expression of “gay” taste has been both celebrated indirectly and punished mercilessly, such a collection is neither neutral nor transparent; instead it is a highly charged and politicized document that comments on the limited mobility of queers through time and space.

In *Noise: The Political Economy of Music*, Jacques Attali offers some avenues for thinking through the relationship between collections, popular music, and time. *Noise* considers the ways that sound has been conscripted to the reinforcement of hegemonic forms of power, and furthermore how capitalism perpetuates this relationship by offering for sale a collection of time that is impossible to experience fully, yet is also compelling in its ideological weight. Characterizing the consumption of recorded music as a shift from the production of music to its sale, Attali notes:

It is a fundamental change in the relation between man and history, because it makes the stockpiling of time possible... with the stockpiling of music, a radically new economic process got under way... For we must not forget that music remains a very unique commodity; to take on meaning, it requires an incompressible lapse of time, that of its own duration... *people must devote their time to producing the means to buy recordings of other people’s time...* Stockpiling then becomes a substitute, not a preliminary condition, for use. *People buy more records that they can listen to. They stockpile what they want to find the time to hear.* (emphasis in original)¹⁸⁰

Attali’s characterization of collections of music as stockpiles is important: it highlights the temporal reality of recorded music and the ideological implications of its collection and organization. However, Attali is quick to jump to conclusions here about the use of musical recordings because he considers them from a perspective attuned to the operation of systems of power, rather than the ways persons living within such systems might consume music tactically. Attali’s critique of musical consumption is not unlike Adorno’s critique of

commercial music in “On the Fetish Character in Music and the Regression of Listening,” in that both scholars frame their respective problems as the result of the impoverished nature of existence conditioned by capitalism. Adorno offers an answer to this problem only obliquely in statements such as, “the reactions of the listeners appear to have no relation to the playing of the music,” which suggests that the border between consumer and producer should be transgressed to address the problem of “degenerate” and “superficial” listening.¹⁸¹ Attali is more direct than Adorno in his advocacy for musical composition to liberate time “so that it can be lived, not stockpiled.”¹⁸²

In the quotations above, however, Attali makes too absolute both the incompatibility of producers and consumers and also the relationship of subjects living within this power to music. Attali compares subjects conditioned by “socialization through identity of consumption” to children “fascinated by the Pied Piper of Hamelin.”¹⁸³ This model doesn’t allow consideration of a queer consumer for whom the purchase of music could be an active process that articulates a homosexual sensibility that is both public and veiled according to camp systems of meaning, which furthermore produce difference and are by nature exclusionary.¹⁸⁴ For queer consumers, musical consumption and reception did not simply reinforce their adherence to prevailing models of power; rather, they made a space for the covert management of queer desire.

Given the spatial and temporal constraints forced onto queers via legislative means in the early 20th century, the ideological ramifications of the stockpile are especially resonant here, as they offer a symbolic means to master, order, and contain a spatiotemporal terrain that was unavoidably fractured or hostile beyond the home. Bob Grimes, a famous, recently deceased collector of sheet music, provides an exceptional example of the tactical and palliative power of collecting. Before his death, Grimes was the preeminent expert on sheet music in the United States, one of the unofficial stewards of the “Great American Songbook,” and a consultant and source for those who were interested in the history of sheet music related to films and especially rare publications. What is striking, however, is that Grimes lacked the ability to play or sing music; rather, he was obsessed with music as something to consume and master through comprehensive collection. His interest in sheet music began by accident, after his family responded negatively to his prior collection of photographs of film stars. From an interview in 2002, he explains:

When I was young, I started collecting movie star photographs... I used to go out and sell old books and coat hangers and bottles to get money to buy movie star photos... I was in a store and saw a piece of sheet music with a movie star’s picture on it. I always liked the song, which was “All My Life,” so I bought it. I didn’t know it would start an obsession that would last all my life! ... When Mother found out [about the collection of photographs], she gave me hell and told me never to do it again. She hated my collection of photographs... everybody did. She didn’t know what ‘gay’ was, but figured it was something like that. My brothers were all athletic, and here I am collecting! And I still am. And everybody thought I was an idiot for collecting music since I can’t play an instrument or sing.¹⁸⁵

While Grimes is an exceptional case, his reasons for collecting and his turn to popular song as a preferred object can provide a more general model for the appeal of collecting music for queers. Grimes’s collection of film star photographs received negative attention from his mother, likely because it included many pictures of men about whom it could be surmised

Grimes was drawn to sexually. Sheet music, by contrast, provided a related form of collecting that was less legible as a manifestation of non-normative, queer desire: its apparent use is to perform music, even though it also often pictured famous stars and offered an adjacent avenue for the charged expression of taste via material consumption. It is striking that Grimes characterizes collecting itself as ‘gay’ (if indirectly through his narration of his mother’s reaction to his photos) and contrasts it to the athletic tendencies of his presumably straight brothers. For Grimes, and I argue for other queers, collecting offered a means to manage desire within the context of heteronormative pressure. The intensity of his obsession (and the degree to which it could offer a means to master a specific form of discourse and time) was perhaps proportionate to the intrusion of this pressure into his daily life.

As discussed earlier in relation to the records for sale at Community Thrift, the articulation of such queer non-compliance or non-utility with heteronormative sensibilities or uses isn’t manifest fully in the stockpiled, collected objects themselves. Instead, outside narration is required to draw out such meanings and potentials. The ambiguous use of the collection, indeed, was the linchpin to the early management of Grimes’s collection of sheet music: it read more broadly as “lunacy” in the absence of queer narration in contradistinction to the all-too-legible nature of his collection of film star photos. Susan Stewart considers the relation of collections to narrative in *On Longing*, and suggests that souvenirs operate within the collection not to document “events that are repeatable,” but instead to give material expression to “events that are reportable, events whose materiality has escaped us, events that exist only through the invention of narrative.”¹⁸⁶ In contrast to Attali’s stockpile, Stewart sees the collection not as a self-evident expression of time, but instead as a repository of partial objects that require supplementation by narrative in order to draw out their significance. Indeed, Stewart later insists, “the souvenir must remain impoverished and partial so that it can be supplemented by a narrative discourse,” and that, “like all curiosities, these souvenirs function to generate narrative.”¹⁸⁷ This partial nature of the collection, which is assembled of souvenirs, is of crucial importance to queers because it describes the mechanics that allowed the expression of queer sensibilities through commerce. Were the queer subtexts and appeals of certain musical objects for consumption explicit and legible to everyone, they would never have been offered for consumption at all. Music furthermore offered many objects and “tie-ups” for this consumption: recordings by a specific performer who was known among queers; sheet music for recordings of songs that featured heavily in drag reviews or other forms of homosexual activity centered on music; or musical paraphernalia that simply looked “gay,” (as discussed regarding the contents of the Judd Collection of sheet music in the first chapter).¹⁸⁸ Camp insists on the unequal distribution of such information about queer sensibility amongst individuals, and, furthermore, on the narration of this sensibility that made the meaning of queer objects legible. Camp valences of meaning (and the coincident divisions within language between subjects) could not exist if souvenirs and collections were *not* partial and potentially random when removed from the collection and an appropriate curatorial sensibility. For example, if one considers the records for sale at Community Thrift, there is nothing particularly queer about an original cast recording of *Oklahoma!* when it is decontextualized; when it is found amongst other records from Barbra Streisand and The Village People at a thrift store near a gay neighborhood, the recording assumes a greater symbolic and historical weight.¹⁸⁹

I diverge from Stewart, however, in her characterization of the souvenir and the collection as an accumulation of objects that bear little meaning beyond the internal,

nostalgic sensibilities of their owners. When describing the limited signifying capacity of the collected physical objects, Stewart insists:

The souvenir speaks to a context of origin through a language of longing, for it is not an object arising out of need or use value; it is an object arising out of the necessarily insatiable demands of nostalgia. The souvenir generates a narrative which reaches only “behind,” spiraling in a continually inward movement rather than outward toward the future. Here we find the structure of Freud’s description of the genesis of the fetish: a part of the body is substituted for the whole, or an object is substituted for the part, until finally, and inversely, the whole boy can become object, substituting for the whole.¹⁹⁰

Although Stewart describes the souvenir here rather than the collection, the collection can be composed of souvenirs. Stewart’s concept of souvenirs and the collection derives from a psychoanalytic model that relies on a form of space that is an outward expression of internal drives, and an understanding of its time as always in relation to the past, with the material expression of the collection in the present serving as a means to allay the personal trauma of prior events. For queers living in the mid-20th century, the potential for such trauma was great: it might come in the form of familial disenfranchisement, general ennui from social isolation, being fired from one’s job, physical abuse, or incarceration (and likely many of these possibilities). Stewart’s reliance on Freud’s model for the fetish is useful in its tethering of desire to objects, but not in the way it circumscribes the circulation of this desire between object and owner. That is, this limited relationship does not address the potential for objects and entire collections to resonate with other collectors shaped by similar circumstances, either at an individual level or as a member of a historically marginalized group.

From a queer perspective, the collection exists according to different models for space and time, and speaks to personal desire even as it speaks to and with the desires of others. In D.A. Miller’s *Place for Us*, collections of musical recordings function both to spatialize personal desire shaped by the past, and also to communicate such desire to other queers in the present. *Place for Us* is a semi-autobiographical account of Miller’s intimacies, both personally with music and with other gay men as facilitated by music. The book is often cited for its queer reading of the musical *Gypsy*, in which Miller identifies perversely with Mama Rose; Miller contextualizes this reading, however, by a childhood spent abjectly in his parents’ basement listening to original cast recordings, and adult social and sexual connections that remain tethered to popular song. The ability of musical collections to convey queer identity and even imply specific patterns of social practice and circulation (in effect, to function as camp language) is implicit in Miller’s account of the discovery of an early lover’s collection of original cast recordings:

As soon as I walked into his apartment, I saw them: several were just lying there on the floor, most with their jackets on, but a few in only those little white slips. As on the trail of a treasure hunt... my eye was led by the density of their distribution to the *étagère* where they assumed a form that was still more disturbing to me than all this overrunning chaos... namely, the abiding form of a *collection*. Overwhelmed... I found myself exclaiming: ‘My God, you really *are* gay.’ By which I must have been expressing... my suddenly alerted sense of his standing *within* the gay milieu, as in a strange sort of swimming pool where such acts of grown-up sex as we had been

intending to perform took place at the shallow end... while the kid stuff like listening to Broadway albums (arranged, as I later discovered, in a charmingly idiosyncratic order) had required him to submit to a nearly total immersion in what my first phobic ejaculation confirmed was pretty deep water. [emphases in original]¹⁹¹

Miller's self-reflexive recounting of this discovery is illuminating in how it limns the various meanings and weights of music to gay men at mid-century in the US: it speaks to personal experiences with personal song as much as it communicates a homosexual's circulation in, and understanding of, a prevailing gay milieu. Indeed, even though his lover's collection as a *collection* signifies 'gay' irrefutably, its particularities, its "charmingly idiosyncratic order," speak to a deeply resonant connection between men in the present that is predicated, *crucially*, on countless hours spent alone exposing oneself to, absorbing, and interacting with popular music. The collection of music signifies "homosexual" not through a confirmation of sexual preference, but rather as evidence of the drive to compensate for a lack that was so common to gay men that its compulsive and fetishistic organization could be read by others. While a collection is an expression of the past—the material manifestation of prior purchases and participation in certain events—in a queer setting, the collection remains legible to others and continues to function socially within the present. Articulated in relation to both Stewart and Attali, the queer collection is private and public, a material record of personal history and a legible expression of an attempt to master time and space. The sociolinguistic concept of entextualization provides a way to think through how material and sonic musical objects might function communicatively to generate specific meanings between queers in private and semi-private spaces (such as the home where records are played, or the piano bar where the same songs are sung), which could then circulate in other spaces that are more public where the same songs are heard (as in the concert hall, the cinema, the street, or the office).

To consider the function of music as something that might encourage queer practices of meaning-making that persist over time, one can turn to the distinctions Henri Lefebvre makes between material and *matériel* as they relate to activities that both shape and are shaped by space. "Materials," offers Lefebvre, "are indispensable and durable: stone, brick and concrete, for example," whereas *matériel* "is quickly used up; it must be replaced often; it is comprised of tools and directions for their use; and its adaptive capability is limited: when new needs arise, new *matériel* must be invented to meet them."¹⁹² Popular song acted as a sort of *matériel* that provided queers with a means to combat their own vulnerability as minoritarian subjects in everyday life, acting as both a rhetorical shield from potential violence and a vehicle that could reconcile private, affective practices with a public persona that belied one's sexual identity. At the same time, the reliable presence of popular song in everyday life implies its status as material. Indeed, queers would not have been able to make use of songs as *matériel* were they not "indispensable" to heteronormative models of performativity, or if the consumption, reception, and performance of popular song aroused suspicion about sexual orientation. The use of music by queers as *matériel* was enabled by the status of music as a ubiquitous material commodity that could be purchased, appropriated, and used to shape both private spaces (through the arrangement of musical collections and playback and performance technologies) and the social activities that took place in these spaces. Furthermore, it was within these guarded spaces that queer dispositions to popular song might be consolidated

so that privileged meanings derived therefrom might inform and ease circulation to and throughout hostile public and semi-public spaces.

The duality of music (especially popular song) as both material and *matériel* becomes more evident when one considers the lifespan of a song. As “Stouthearted Men” demonstrates, the same song might act in different ways over time and continue to be useful in the present (albeit with different dimensions) by conjuring historic associations; the political dimensions of the song in 1979 only resulted from its popularity among queers in contexts as diverse as piano bars and USO shows over nearly 50 years before. This genealogical point of view troubles the distinction Lefebvre makes between material and *matériel*, the fixed and the transient. This durability of popular song furthermore demonstrates why material and sonorous, physical and social musical collections grow over time: in doing so, musical collections continue to interact with culture and articulate contemporary forms of camp sensibility. New records and sheet music are purchased as queer *matériel* to continue to “make do” and endure unyielding forms of marginalization, to reaffirm the ability to consume as a private (and privately shared) expression of queer representability. While the sociolinguistic currency of a particular song may wane over time as its status as *matériel* fades, it isn’t really ever “used up” as Lefebvre claims; it may simply become more esoteric or speak to a specific gay milieu. This social division through musical taste and personal history is evident, for example, in Miller’s reflection that he is less fluent in “Barbra Streisand” than Broadway.¹⁹³ As described by Lefebvre, “materials are indispensable and durable: stone, brick, cement and concrete, for example—or, in the musical sphere, scales, modes and tones.” The musical collection functioned historically for queers as both material and *matériel*: its specific texts (songs, performers, etc.) functioned as *matériel* at different times, and the collection itself as the material—a basic context and reality of everyday life. Without the material collection as a reference and touchstone, it would be impossible for specific songs within it to resonate meaningfully. This distinction and relation of individual texts to the collection as a whole is articulated in Miller’s quote about his lover’s collection: the collection itself constitutes the basis for functioning as a gay man, and the music within it speaks to the unique, accumulated times of the collector.

Music as Material, Space and Social Practice

While I have spoken conceptually about the status of music as material, it is equally important to think of music materially, as something that takes up, shapes, and solidifies space in a very literal way. Many of the objects associated with popular music and its performance or playback such as pianos, collections of records or sheet music, record players, and radios demand a considerable amount of space. As discussed in the first chapter, musical equipment was an ideologically important component of domestic space, and its accommodation within the home was the subject of numerous articles and advertisements in home magazines. Beyond the home, music shaped social relations in public and semi-private spaces in a variety of ways: the spatial organization of concert halls and theaters and the attenuation of specific forms of vision, audition, and sociality that they compel; the ubiquity of music in public spaces; the organization of certain types of bars or semi-private gathering places around pianos, jukeboxes, radios, and other forms of musical entertainment. Although I have discussed the functions of music in public and private space separately, it is important to remember that these various conduits facilitated the circulation of popular song between spaces, and in turn helped constitute and condition specific pathways for queers through outwardly hostile spaces.

From a queer perspective, there has been a consistent, if spatially ambiguous, association between material objects and camp. The fourth item in Susan Sontag's canonical "Notes on 'Camp'" is a list of "[r]andom examples of items which are part of the canon of Camp." A few of these can actually be considered "items," such as "Tiffany lamps" and "women's clothes of the twenties (feather boas, fringed and beaded dresses, etc.)," although the camp dimension of the latter would seem to hinge on its invitation to performance. Many of the items on the list speak more properly to a camp sensibility of reading based on the unequal distribution of knowledge rather than the objects themselves, including "stag movies seen without lust," "the novels of Ronald Firbank and Ivy Compton-Burnett," "Swan Lake," and "Visconti's direction of *Salome* and *'Tis a Pity She's a Whore*." One item conflates objecthood and performativity entirely: "the Cuban pop singer La Lupe."¹⁹⁴ Similarly, the tweaked list offered by Richard Dyer in "It's Being so Camp as Keeps Us Going" includes some of the same items, but creates a more confusing relationship between objects and people, listing only "Ronald Firbank" rather than his extravagantly decorative novels alongside "velvet and brocade curtains," "Little Richard and Sylvester," and "the Queen Mother."¹⁹⁵ What is curious about these lists is not only their conflation of objecthood, personhood, and performativity, but also that the continuity of camp between the items on the lists exists across a range of spaces. "Velvet and brocade curtains" and "Tiffany lamps" bring to mind opulent Victorian or Edwardian domestic (or at least semi-private) spaces. Other figures, especially the racially marked performers Sylvester, La Lupe, and Little Richard were known for the larger-than-life personae they performed on stage and in public. Indeed, the openly gay performer Sylvester was famous not only for the disco music he created and performed, but also for parading around the Castro with his borzoi hounds, and the meticulously decorative and androgynous approach he took to his own appearance.¹⁹⁶

The continued ambiguity of camp is a symptom of its purposefully limited sociolinguistic circulation: as camp depends on inequality, it can proliferate as many interpretations as there are social contexts. Despite this polyvalence I argue that the interchangeability of objects, styles of performance, and persons advanced by the lists in Sontag and Dyer's articles suggests that camp sensibility was cultivated historically through specific approaches to material culture, space, and sociality. Such social practice would take place in a heterotopic space that creates an incongruous continuity between public and private, object and performance. Such a space is precisely that which the cinema created via Vitaphone shorts at the conversion to sound, as elaborated in the first chapter.¹⁹⁷ At the sociolinguistic level this is more or less given: camp depends on the bringing of privileged and unequally distributed knowledge to bear on larger forms of discourse that circulate unequally within a variety of places and spaces, such as between the gay bar and the theater. I argue, however, that such linguistic circulation was developed in tandem with material consumption and the development of collections in the home and other private, queer locations. Such consumption physically brings the outside world into private settings so that it might be negotiated through its queer, domestic recontextualization.

Several fields within the humanities and social sciences (especially sociology, anthropology, and geography) interrogate the development of tastes and dispositions in the home, and the circulation of these sensibilities throughout other spaces. In his *Outline of the Theory of Practice*, Pierre Bourdieu delineates the function and mechanics of the habitus, a site for acculturation that is developed further in his later *Distinction*. Bourdieu considers the habitus as a "durably installed generative principle of regulated improvisations," that

produces practices that “can be accounted for only by relating the objective *structure* defining the social conditions of the production of the habitus which engendered them to the conditions in which this habitus is operating.”¹⁹⁸ Bourdieu’s circular approach is much like Lefebvre’s, which insists that space both shapes and is shaped by social practice. The habitus, however, concerns specifically that which is “durably installed,” presumably by one who is subject to repressive social forces, and for whom such forces might be managed and negotiated via material consumption and the arrangement of goods within personal space.

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Despite the prevalence of stereotypes and anecdotes about gay men buying antiques, salvaging detritus, and being more generally acquisitive, there is scant academic work about queer forms of material culture. Some of these stereotypes and observations are manifest in Sontag’s “Notes on ‘Camp.’” For example, note 57 argues that “camp taste nourishes itself on the love that has gone into certain objects and personal styles,” while the more problematic, essentializing, and ahistorical note 52 claims, “Homosexuals have pinned their integration into society on promoting the aesthetic sense.” Clearly Sontag doesn’t consider fully the historical conditions that might encourage such an attention to the material among queers.²⁰⁰ In *Queer Phenomenology*, Sara Ahmed considers the ways that queers have depended on material objects for sociality through the frame of “orientation,” which refers both to sexual preference and one’s relation to the world:

What is “present” or near to us is not casual: we do not acquire our orientations just because we find things here or there. Rather certain objects are available to us because of lines that we have already taken: our “life courses” follow a certain sequence, which is also a matter of following a direction or of “being directed” in a certain way...²⁰¹

Ahmed’s approach to phenomenology is informed by the idea that perception hinges on orientation, which leads to a deconstruction of Husserl and Heidegger as they both relate to and obfuscate the object itself (the table is her preferred object for this reading) by focusing either on the uses it can be put to (writing for the former) or the properties and potentials inherent to the object’s materials rather than its space, time, and context (the latter).²⁰² Ahmed’s intervention is to note the markedly different status an attention to objects has in gendered discourse, and that many of the basic terms of sexuality imply space and directional movement through it (among them orientation, perversion, and queer).²⁰³ Through a close reading of Hannah Arendt on the sociality of the kitchen table, Ahmed redirects phenomenological inquiry focused on the relationship of the object to the social practices it compels.²⁰⁴ Inherent in this reading is that while a subjectivity at ease with forms of hegemonic power may take the material world (indeed, the world in general) as something to be used and as something over which one possesses agency, more marginal positions are attuned differently to the material world and the ways in which they might constitute forms of space and sociality around it. Ahmed’s model provides a useful frame through which to elucidate the status that material objects (and specifically those related to music and musicals) have had for queers historically, as a marginalized group subject to rigorous forms of spatial policing. Viewed against Lefebvre, Ahmed’s reading of Arendt demonstrates that for marginalized populations more generally, the material (the table) overlaps with *matériel* (the social uses to which it can be put).

There is a deeply social element to historical queer acquisition, especially of music. While meticulous attention to objects themselves may have informed queer practices of consumption and representability, the relational, camp aspect of the latter—for example, the way a Tiffany lamp signifies when juxtaposed incongruously against other objects within a queer interior—would have happened in domestic, private, and semi-private spaces that collectively might consolidate an enlarged habitus. Returning to Chauncey, it bears repeating that while the threat of police surveillance and juridical punishment was omnipresent, it was far safer to behave openly queer in private, domestic settings rather than beyond them.²⁰⁵ In the first half of the twentieth century, private space necessarily had to foster the social interactions that could shape camp aesthetics and coded forms of language so that they could be readily legible to queers in public and also escape the scrutiny of others. Thus private space and the social interactions that took place therein functioned to provide a respite from the hostility of the world beyond, but also to develop a means to manage this marginalization; this is why music is especially important. Unlike a collection of, say, kimonos or ostrich feather fans, music travels inconspicuously between public and private spaces.

While a broader range of public and semi-public musical spaces will be considered shortly, I wish to linger a moment on the specificities of queer material culture within the home. Referring back to Attali and Stewart, the drive of collecting is compensatory, either to offset the effects of capitalism by symbolically stockpiling time and space, or to allay previous forms of trauma. Following these models, when collecting functions queerly it is often to ameliorate the adversity one encounters in every day life, even if this is only a lack of visibility or compelling forms of representation. Material consumption encourages such compensation to deflect the pressures of everyday life, both through the intellectual mastery offered by the stockpile, as well as the development of collections to articulate personal forms of narration within the home. Although queer collecting doesn't necessarily assert explicit genealogical significance (as argued by Whitney Davis about art collector William Beckford), it often does function as part of an effort to establish forms of kinship that look to the past in the absence of support in the present (as discussed by Heather Love in *Feeling Backward*).²⁰⁶ In an anecdotal, quotidian sense, such backward-looking behavior is given materiality by the propensity of many queers to frequent antique or thrift stores. The result of such compensatory consumption is sometimes a space that functions poorly, in which the externalizing, territorializing demands of unmet desire overwhelm interior dimensions, and the line between collecting and hoarding becomes blurred. When describing Bob Grimes's small, three-room apartment and its accommodation of his massive collection of sheet music, Michael Feinstein said the following: "Overwhelming is to put it mildly. There was music everywhere. There was music under the bed."²⁰⁷ Similarly, the queer filmmaker, photographer, and notorious recluse James Bidgood lives in an overly cramped, spatially dysfunctional apartment about which he commented, "No one lives in squalor out of caprice." Bidgood, however, is loathe to leave such squalor, even on the event of a revival screening of his film *Pink Narcissus* at IFC in 2011.²⁰⁸ While such acquisitive behavior may read as pathological, it also fortifies space by intervening in it beyond the social component of representability, and secures one's home from the perils of the world beyond by materially thickening its walls to create an interior that is alternately claustrophobic and cossetting.

Music on the other hand (at least that which is meant to be heard or performed, in contradistinction to Grimes's use of it) fosters a domestic space that encourages sociality and the circulation of subjects through both private and public space. While a piano might

be played alone, it also reaches sonorously beyond the player to an auditor. This relational potential of the piano is why home magazines consistently advocated for the placement of baby grands within the parlor, despite awkward physical dimensions that impeded movement unless the instrument occupied a corner.²⁰⁹ Radios and record players would often reside in the same space, facilitating the willful porousness of the interior to the sounds of the world beyond. These musical apparatuses as well as collections of music materially shape the social space of the home, and constitute the domestic setting wherein music would be received, metabolized, and entexualized. Such processes of consumption marshaled language to develop (counter)meaning that would later circulate discreetly in public.

Beyond the home, music provided an intermedial, trans-spatial network that assisted the conveyance of camp discourse throughout a wide range of public and private spaces and sometimes served as a camp signifier that might designate the presence of queers. Although it may have occupied space sonically more than physically, in some ways music was one of the only things that remained consistent across the varied terrain queers frequented in the first half of the twentieth century, both welcoming and hostile. Gay bars often featured musical entertainment, either live in the form of musicians or drag acts, or via the presence of recorded or broadcast music playing in the background. While records of gay bars in the first half of the twentieth century are scant, what remains is nonetheless insightful. The ONE Archive maintains a list of the names of pre-Stonewall (1969) gay and lesbian bars in Los Angeles, which is updated periodically as more materials and ephemera surface from personal collections. Although this list is limited only to names rather than any sort of description, many of them (such as The Interlude, Melody Room, and Music Inn) imply through their names that music is their main attraction.²¹⁰ Like New York, gay bars in Los Angeles were routinely closed by police and forced to move around, often staying open for only a few months at a time. The ambiguous, musical naming of these may have been an effort to avoid attention from the police by eschewing more suggestive names such as The Mineshaft (also on the list).

The explicit naming of musical entertainment in a bar's name was not, of course, the only measure of the presence of music. Joanie Hannon (a lesbian musician who enjoyed a degree of celebrity due to her appearance as the lead drummer in *Some Like It Hot* for the band "Sweet Sue and Her Society Syncopaters") ran a series of nightclubs with her partner beginning in the 1950s. One of the few surviving ads for such an establishment promotes one of her early clubs, Joanie's Valli Haus, and describes it as both a "cocktail lounge" and "piano bar." Handwritten notes to the left and right of the ad read "'Girls' by day...w/Joani" and "'Boys' by nite...w/Brother David Waldor," the different hosts presumably also performed at the piano.²¹¹ (Figure 4) The ad is striking, not only because it indicates when cruising would have been possible according to sexual preference, but also because it implies that there is a specific corpus of music that is appropriate for accompanying such activities based on gender and sexual object choice. Such differentiation corresponds to the development of specific camp practices around music by different queer groups, and further demonstrates that music functioned not necessarily to unify populations. Stated differently, the development of discursive inequality to manage homophobic oppression divided queers from one another, despite the fact that they ultimately suffered together as a result of the same acts of discrimination and punishment.

The presence of music in queer gathering places should not suggest that it was a sort of universal form of discourse amongst homosexuals, only that it was a consistent social

presence. Piano bars were quite common mid-century, and provided an environment in which sociality was based on the performance and reception of popular song. Although it takes place significantly later, much of *Place for Us* concerns Miller's memories of J.J.'s, a piano bar at which he began to understand not only the depth of emotion that he and others carried with popular song, but also the sharp divide between those who possessed different stores of melodic knowledge. His disidentification was so great at times when others would gleefully sing something with which he wasn't familiar he would retreat to a remote table so as to avoid unwanted attention or pressure. In a similar vein, Miller also recounts how conversations with friends that revealed contrasting tastes in musicals often resulted in a deep-seated conviction that they were fundamentally different.²¹² For Miller, as much as music and taste in musicals can speak to shared experience, it can also point to the precise ways in which gays were different from one another due to the formation of their tastes in divergent, private settings.

Other musical settings in bars were often more casual, where music would occupy the background via play over a radio or jukebox and remain in greater relation to other spaces. By the sixties, such musical technologies in bars also included Scopitone machines, a French jukebox-like technology that also played short films specific to each song.²¹³ (Figure 5) Scopitones occupy a place on Sontag's previously cited list of "items which are part of the canon of Camp" from "Notes on Camp." Listed as "Scopitone Films," it seems that Sontag wishes to highlight the absurd formal (and, indeed, campy) qualities of many of these films, which have been investigated further for their obtuse narrative and representational strategies.²¹⁴ What I wish to point out here, however, is that such camp strategies of reading were necessarily cultivated in specific semi-private spaces that would have housed these machines. The presence of Scopitones within "the canon of Camp" in turn gestures towards the way that the circulation of music and its material effects within semi-private social spaces enabled the development of musical forms as queer *matériel*.

Music also functioned as *matériel* in spaces beyond bars and the social settings I have described so far, and could also provide a cover for political organization among queers. Although only mentioned in passing before this point, the Homophile movement (which was generally dedicated to the promotion of rights for homosexuals) began in November of 1950 with the formation of the Mattachine Society.²¹⁵ Although the Mattachine Society was geared to gay men in particular, it allied with other organizations such as the Daughters of Bilitis, which represented lesbian interests.²¹⁶ In its early days (it would become more moderate over time), the Mattachine Society was a politically radical organization founded on the communist ideals of its founding members, the most prominent among them being Henry "Harry" Hay. In many ways, Hay was the linchpin for the founding of the Mattachine Society, not only through his political convictions, but also as a result of his work teaching as a musicologist. As described by John D'Emilio in *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities*, a history of the homophile movement:

Active in the Los Angeles chapter of People's Songs, a leftist organization of songwriters and musicians, Hay represented the group at the People's Education Center, a workers' education project... Early in 1948 he began teaching a class there on the history of popular music... in August he attended a social gathering where he was expecting to meet another musicologist. When he arrived, he found that all of the guests were gay. Hay began talking about the Wallace campaign, and before long he and several others were jokingly spinning out the design of an organization to

mobilize gay men behind the Progressive party... Almost two years elapsed before Hay elicited any glimmers of enthusiasm about his idea for a homosexual organization... Finally, in the spring of 1950, he spoke to Bob Hull and Chuck Rowland about his idea. Hull was a student in Hay's music class; Rowland was Hull's roommate and closest friend. The three men met one evening at a concert; and Hay, who suspected that the pair might be gay, decided to broach the subject of a homosexual rights organization.²¹⁷

Hull had a background as a pianist, and he and Hay quickly hit it off, although further time was needed before the Mattachine Society was founded: "Hull, meanwhile, had enrolled in another of Hay's music classes, and Hay decided to show him to prospectus. Hull and Rowland passed it on to another gay friend..."²¹⁸ In November of 1950, the meeting of these men with others found through the musical and political network led to the initial meetings of what would become the Mattachine Society.²¹⁹ What is striking about the early history of the Mattachine Society is that music as a subject for discourse (within the pedagogical frame of the music history class) subtended the formation of clandestine queer social networks, the extent of which surprised even Hay, as when he discovered that his rendezvous with another gay musicologist was at gathering composed entirely of gay men. The early history of the Mattachine Society demonstrates not only that the spatial and discursive network of popular sing might also annex established institutions such as places of learning, but also that such locations might furthermore confer upon the meetings that took place therein a layer of apparent legitimacy. In effect, music itself as a subject for discussion had the capacity to act as a camp signifier that hailed queers.

Music, Discourse and Essentialization

Mixed public settings, according to historical accounts, were by far the most charged of any of spaces of queer musical consumption, as they offered the potential for public space to be claimed or made queer, if only for the duration of a concert. This spatial transgression, however, brought with it a greater threat to safety or of exposure, and threatened the invisibility that queers cultivated for themselves in day-to-day life. Unlike the intractable but slow-moving threat of police intervention at bars, the potential for the recognition of gay members of the audience by heterosexuals was imminent. For queers, this proximity necessitated a heightened attention to the codes of representability and their efficacious deployment so that pleasure might be taken in the covert annexation of specific realms of the public sphere such as concert halls and the cinema. To restate part of the earlier quote from Chauncey, "Whether or not the other members noticed them, [queers] were aware of their numbers in the audience and often shared in the collective excitement of transforming such a public gathering into a 'gay space,' no matter how covertly."²²⁰ In a different musical context, the queer penetration of semi-public space has also informed the appeal of opera for queers. Wayne Koestenbaum recounts in *The Queen's Throat*, "two quintessentially queer sites at the opera are the line, and the standing room: spaces of mobility, cruising... spaces where one meets other fanatics; spaces of rumor, dish, cabal." And though such a rendezvous would probably be unlikely (or extremely rare) in practice, there persists nonetheless "an old gay joke about getting fucked while leaning against the rail" in the standing room.²²¹

Regardless of the likelihood of queer sexual encounters in shared spaces of either the concert hall or the cinema, queer spectatorial excitement nonetheless would have been

perceptible to those beyond queer circles: it was not a matter of “whether of not the other members noticed them,” but instead when, to what degree, and in what number. Such visibility would have, in turn, engendered in hegemonic discourse associations between queers, music, musicality, and musicals that had little to do with the ways queers effected recognition between each other, as with the use of camp systems of language. Stated differently, queer visibility in semi-public spaces of musical consumption occasioned both tactical uses of language by queers to remain invisible, and also the strategic development of language by those who circulate comfortably within the public sphere to render queers visible. As an expression of this double-bind of linguistic and spatial circulation, discursive links between queers and music are extensive and far-reaching, articulated both by queers themselves as well as those who reside more comfortably within prevailing regimes of power.

In the 1950s and 1960s, the public exposure of homosexuals and the development of systems of surveillance to root them out became popular preoccupations. In many ways this may have been a result of the homophile movement, and its drive toward visibility, public recognition and moderately equitable rights. As the homophile movement matured in the 1950s, it split into divergent directions: more radical members founded ONE, Inc., and sought to effect political unrest among queers; the Mattachine Society and the Daughters of Bilitis took a more moderate approach that encouraged queers to adapt to a society that punished them and also reached out to heterosexuals to encourage homosexual tolerance.²²² All of these groups published magazines (*One*, the *Mattachine Review*, and the *Ladder*, respectively) that were frequently intercepted on grounds of obscenity by the US Postal Service, which operated with other government organizations (particularly the FBI and local vice squads) in order to surveil and stem homosexual activity.²²³ While this intervention sometimes led to news coverage of homosexuality as a form of vice, it also largely silenced coverage of queers in mainstream publications. However, when obscenity laws were overturned gradually in the 1960s through a number of cases before the Supreme Court, among them *Manual Enterprises v. Day* and *Redrup v. New York*.²²⁴ The ultimate result of this shift in censorship was that there was far more sexualized popular discourse in the United States, and particularly about homosexuality. As D’Emilio asserts, “[n]owhere, perhaps, were changes more evident than in the proliferation of material about male and female homosexuality.”²²⁵

While much of the newly accessible material on homosexuality in the 1960s was found in the form of pulp novels and pornography, it also populated the pages of many mass publications that sensationalized the presence of homosexuals in everyday life, even as they often failed to provide reliable descriptions of queers. Such publications included newspapers such as the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*, and magazines including *Life*, *Look*, and *Time*.²²⁶ These publications generally offered essays that either described the presence of homosexuals in apparently normal locations in cities (such as bars or the office) or that advanced opinions about the validity of a homosexual lifestyle: both strategies built upon (and strengthened) suspicions and fears in the average American that homosexuals were everywhere and might be organizing for an unknown purpose. The paranoia provoked by such publications was furthermore stoked by the sketchy descriptions of the activities and appearances of queers. *Time*’s famous “The Homosexual in America” from January 21, 1966 is exemplary in this regard. The article asserts that “[h]omosexuals are present in every walk of life, on any social level, often anxiously camouflaged; the

camouflage will sometimes even include a wife and children,” and continues on to dwell on the presence of queers in the arts:

On Broadway, it would be difficult to find a production without homosexuals playing important parts, either onstage or off. And in Hollywood, says Broadway Producer David Merrick, “you have to scrape them off the ceiling.” The notion that the arts are dominated by a kind of homosexual mafia—or “Homintern,” as it has been called—is sometimes exaggerated... But in the theater, dance and music world, deviates are so widespread that they sometimes seem to be running a kind of closed shop.²²⁷

Despite the article’s impassioned, xenophobic tone (which also asserts that homosexuality “is a pathetic little second-rate substitute for reality”), it is also remarkably vague about how the average, heterosexual person might go about perceiving such queers in the spaces that they regularly traverse.²²⁸ *Time*’s post-Stonewall October 1969 feature (more moderate in tone), “The Homosexual: Newly Visible, Newly Understood,” offers only that “around 10% of all homosexuals are immediately recognizable” (through blatantly effeminate or overly masculine behavior for men and women, respectively), and that:

The other 90% of the nation’s committed inverts are hidden from all but their friends, lovers, and occasionally psychiatrists. Their wrists are rigid, the “s’s” well formed; they prefer subdued clothes and close-cropped hair, and these days may dress more conservatively than flamboyant straights.²²⁹

In effect, the magazine’s efforts to expose homosexuals through physical characteristics might only increase paranoia about the presence of homosexuals everywhere, but especially in the arts, where “the music world is a closed [homosexual] circle.” In turn, rather than type queers by appearance these articles framed queers by the spaces through which they regularly circulated, which would have encouraged heterosexuals to be hyper-vigilant of those who might be queer when they visited the cinema, the concert hall, or the theater. In other words, the locations commonly frequented by queers themselves became a common “grid of intelligibility” used by heterosexuals to unearth the presence of queers through visual and aural observation.

The 1960s, viewed more broadly, saw the ability of camp language to chart a safe passage for queers through mixed social spaces diminish, if only because more and more heterosexuals began to seek actively for the presence of queers in the office, bars, the cinema, and other spaces commonly associated with music and the arts. What is striking, however, is the scant overlap between hegemonic discourse that posits an association with music as essential to queer identity and self-articulations by queers that relate to music. While such queer discursive traces are few, *The Queen’s Vernacular: A Gay Lexicon*, a dictionary of pre-Stonewall camp language (published in 1972 in the wake of gay liberation), provides a substantive overview of queer camp slang. The volume is small but extensive, and refers mostly to code words for gay male sexual practices from throughout the twentieth century, occasionally from countries other than the US. References to musical practices and spaces abound throughout the text, but they also fall into specific patterns of use that concern spaces of queer spectatorship, reflexive considerations of the centrality of music to communication between queers, and relations to forms of power (especially the police). *The Queen’s Vernacular* demonstrates that the circulation of popular song and the possibilities

for spatial circulation it occasioned were central to the development of queer camp discourse, and furthermore that such mobility necessitated greater forms of self-policing through language in order to remain illegible as queer to those who were not, even as hostile forms of force intruded to a greater degree in everyday life in the 1960s.

Musical words and camp meaning collaborate most frequently in *The Queen's Vernacular* to describe sexual acts. Many of these are fairly obvious, for example the use of "flute player" to mean "cocksucker," and similarly "to play a tune" to signify fellatio.²³⁰ Along such lines, "upright grand" refers to an erection, and "music lessons" refers to the acquisition of sexual skills.²³¹ What is implicit in these terms is that they might pass inconspicuously in mixed settings such as the theater or concert hall. The use of "flute player" in a context of musical performance would appear completely normal to those uninitiated to camp discourse, and at the same time signify queerly to those familiar with the term's polyvalent meanings. Such language demonstrates the bind in which queers were placed at midcentury, when spaces of homosexual circulation were heavily policed and queers had few options for sociality beyond the appropriation of semi-public spaces that appealed to both queers and non-queers.

The necessity of musical consumption to queer relationality is made evident by several terms in *The Queen's Vernacular* that reflexively acknowledge the importance of music for the circulation of queers through language and differently visible forms of space. Originating from the 1940s, the most striking of these is to "know the words and [to] the music" to indicate that one is "acquainted with the local gay slang." Although it is easy to rationalize "to know the words to the music" as a simple (and apt) metaphor for linguistic familiarity, I want to stress the particularity of the term to practices of musical consumption that the phrase itself takes for granted. The term furthermore relates to circulation through space by specifying a familiarity with "local gay slang," requiring an orientation to queer relational practices within one's enlarged habitus. Perhaps more expressive of this contextual familiarity is to "read the music" (also from the 1940s), which means "to know the ropes—gaywise."²³² While "to know the words to the music" allies musical consumption with spatial and linguistic circulation generally, other musical terms within *The Queen's Vernacular* describe a more freighted affective relationship between music and expression. To "sing it out" means "to complain, condemn at length; to express an opinion, especially if true. Feelings are often hurt when one sings [it out]." The related term "singing" suggests more simply a "long verbal assault; stinging lecture."²³³ These terms inherently acknowledge the historic ties between music and linguistic expression for queers, and move beyond such acknowledgement to express frustration. In stark contrast to many other musical terms that might appear pleasing (the numerous sexual acts), "sing it out" suggests anger directed at the conditions of homosexuality that the consumption of music might ameliorate: the internalized regime of censorship required to manage the perpetual threat of legal and corporal violence. The term also points out the partial nature of this satisfaction; "to complain" or "condemn at length" provides only a release valve for frustration rather than any change to that which aggrieves. The further irony is, of course, that the satisfaction derived from such an act might only be partial due to the incompatibility of camp language with straightforward expression. In other words, "to sing out" implies that even when one speaks something that is "true," such self-evident or liberatory expression might only take place within the internalized structure of limited signification that camp instantiates.

Several terms that recast operatic and balletic parlance imply the inevitability of encounters between agents of hegemonic power and queers in semi-public spaces of

musical consumption. According to *The Queen's Vernacular*, “royal ballet” refers to “police sent on a raid,” and “blue ballerina” signifies a policeman on a raid “because they *dance* in, *ie* break down the door.” In a similar vein, “royal opera” and “opera house” refer to “a courtroom,” and “top tenor” means “police sergeant.”²³⁴ While these terms offer a form of pleasure by reframing the police and spaces of control in less threatening, performative language, they also suggest the spatial constraints of camp language. It is easy to imagine queers referring to proximate agents of power in contexts of performance according to musical terms so that they might go unnoticed by those agents. Furthermore, such language would appear to be about musical consumption to those who don’t “know the words to the music,” whether such discourse between queers took place in a performance venue, a jail, or a courtroom. In spaces of power where queers were rendered more visible and vulnerable, camp language that appeared to be about music would have signified nothing more or less: an affiliation between homosexuals and musical consumption. It is precisely this multivalence of camp musical language, I argue, that helped to create strong hegemonic associations between queers and the musical arts.

What is striking about the musical terms in *The Queen's Vernacular* is that they position musical consumption as a condition for queer relationality rather than as an essential aspect of identity, unlike normative associations articulated from beyond queer culture. To be clear, there are many terms within the dictionary that assert an analogical connection between a gay subject and that which he consumes—the many variations of “queen” rely on metonymy to characterize an individual based on habits of consumption or sexual preferences. For example, a “store queen” is “one who likes and is good at shopping,” a “car queen” is “a status-conscious gay whose life centers around owning prestige automobiles,” and a “face queen” is “one whose head is turned by a pretty face,” or a “homosexual who equates sexual ability with the handsomeness of his partner.”²³⁵ There are seemingly endless variations of “queen” within the pages of *The Queen's Vernacular*. There is not, however, an entry for “queen” that is qualified by “music,” “musical,” or “song.” Given the presence of other musical terms in the dictionary (and other habits of queer musical consumption that have been discussed previously), it can be assumed that this lack results not from queer apathy towards music, but instead from the reality that such consumption was necessary for queer spatial and linguistic circulation and was, in turn, taken for granted as a necessary part of daily life. In other words, getting “to know the words to the music” was likely facilitated through a wide range of practices related to musical consumption: the purchase of sheet music and records in spaces of commercialized leisure and their playback or performance at home, either alone or with others; the presence of jukeboxes, scotchone machines or musicians at gay bars and other semi-private spaces; a patronage of movie theaters that regularly played musical films and that acted as gay cruising grounds; or the spectatorship of live musical entertainment at the theater and other semi-public spaces. The assumed presence of music in queer social spaces is implied by the term “ballad bar,” which signifies “a gay bar whose jukebox selections are primarily slow love-songs.”²³⁶ “Ballad bar” exists as a camp term to qualify what type of popular song is common to a specific bar, not to make clear that the bar has a jukebox that plays music; the latter meaning would have been redundant.

Given the conspicuous lack of terms in *The Queen's Vernacular* that position an affiliation with music as essential to queer identity, I argue that the essentializing strains of discourse that assert such a relationship emerged from those spaces in which queers came into contact with forms of hegemonic power. Encounters with power would have in turn

yielded discursive associations that characterized queers by their musical habits, as it was in such spaces that queers would have been routinely visible and audible to heteronormative subjects. The stereotypical association between gays and musicals likely originates from the surveillance and typing of queers by agents of repressive power that took place in theaters, jails, courtrooms, and other spaces in which privileged, normative subjects also circulated. Such surveillance would have latched onto either the reliable presence of queers in musical venues, or from the queer use of camp discourse that appeared to be about music in semi-public spaces and spaces of juridical power.

Historical associations between queers, the musical, and musicality abound, and come quite clearly from a non-queer speaking position as part an effort to render queers visibly other through an affiliation with music. In drawing out the discursive marginality of the midcentury British gay composer Benjamin Britten, Philip Brett dwells on the specificity of the academy as a mixed setting that encouraged the profiling of Britten, which allied his work with his sexual preferences. Brett notes that “musicality and gay identity exist in an uneasy relation one to the other,” which for Britten in particular allowed public and scholarly discussions of his music and private life to be addressed obliquely, tapping in to “a peculiar characteristic of British society that allows any kind of social deviance and ambiguity so long as it is not named.”²³⁷ Musicality and a weakness for musicals eventually solidified into more direct correspondence between homosexuality and taste, which was only expedited post-Stonewall and eclipsed camp discourse (as noted by Brett, “‘musical’... ranked with others such as ‘friend of Dorothy,’ as safe insider euphemisms” before liberation).²³⁸ Anecdotally, this turn is given voice by Koestenbaum, who describes his childhood paranoia that he would end up gay due to his taste in musical theater:

Predictive sign: a fondness for musical comedy. I worried, listening to records of *Darling Lili*, *Oklahoma!*, *The Music Man*, *Company*, and *No, No, Nanette*, that I would end up gay: I didn’t know the word “gay,” I knew about homosexuality only from *Time* feature stories about liberation, but I had a clear impression (picked up where?) that gays liked musical comedy.²³⁹

That Koestenbaum believed as a child “that gays like musical comedy” even without fully understanding who or what gays were demonstrates the tenacity of this affiliation as somehow revelatory and indicative of an essential aspect of gay male identity.

The 1950s and 1960s saw the net result of the double bind of a “grid of intelligibility” as it related to the musical’s ability to grant passage into mixed public settings and simultaneously render queers invisible in such spaces. By the dawn of gay liberation, the capacity of camp language to render queers invisible in spaces such as concert halls and the cinema (predicated on the historic, circumcinematic availability of popular song as a commodity that shaped private, social space) effectively collapsed, as hegemonic discourse preoccupied itself with the exposure of queers in the very same spaces. While articles such as those that appeared in *Time* in 1966 and 1969 may have correctly registered the presence of queers in musical spaces, they nonetheless missed the point: that queers gravitated toward these spaces in order to circulate more freely, not that there is an essential affinity between homosexuality and the musical arts. What is striking here is that in many ways the lingering associations between homosexuals and the musical (as described by Koestenbaum) result from the legacy of camp discourse that sediments an asymmetrical power relationship within language, whereby the deeper meaning of camp speech escapes

popular comprehension *and also* appears to untrained ears to reinforce hegemonic associations. That those who overheard queers speaking about “blue ballerinas” would presume that those speaking espouse a fondness for ballet and other musical arts (rather than the presence of policemen nearby) was the design of camp: to maintain inequality within language.

The inability of camp to transcend speaking positions is manifest in this chapter’s opening narrative about “Stouthearted Men.” While heterosexuals in the audience at the GMCLA concert (assuming any were present) might have understood that the song acquired political dimensions in 1979, the full force of the song would have been lost on them. Those who hadn’t used the song as a means to effect recognition between friends in the past wouldn’t remember the song’s use as *matériel* in the military during WWII, time spent in piano bars singing or hearing it, or the way a physical copy of the song in the form of a recording or sheet music within one’s collection communicated a specific affective and social history to others familiar with the song. This linguistic inability of “Stouthearted Men” to transcend subject positions and personal histories fully was always the intention of camp language, even among queers who used taste in music to differentiate themselves from one another. The task for queers post-Stonewall would be to enter into a different relationship with speech, wherein they became subject to language as a fully visible speaker rather than one who remained hidden in plain view by using coded language; in other words, to destroy the power imbalances that subtend camp discourse. As explored in the following chapter, the would be to assume this new position by accepting, rearticulating, and sometimes reinflecting the hegemonic truisms about gay identity that resulted in part from camp language, among them an essentialist affiliation with popular song and the musical.

Chapter 4: Bette, the Baths and Being “Gay”

In the summer of 1978, musician Dusty Springfield performed a benefit concert at London’s Royal Albert Hall. The singer (who had openly discussed her bisexuality in the past) was a favorite performer amongst queers, and many of them, some in drag, were at the concert.²⁴⁰ Also in attendance was Princess Margaret, the sister of Queen Elizabeth II. At one point that evening Springfield acknowledged the many drag queens in the audience by saying, “I am glad to see that the royalty isn’t confined to the box,” using camp language to joke about the copresence of monarchal and subcultural “royalty.” Princess Margaret (herself one of the more controversial figures of the British Monarchy) was deeply offended; after the concert she sent Springfield a letter demanding that she offer an official apology to the queen, a draft of which had been included. Springfield—who felt acutely the tensions of living a public life that didn’t conform to heteronormative standards, and felt ambivalently about public declarations of sexuality—complied and signed the letter.²⁴¹

I open this chapter with this brief anecdote, despite its emergence in a British rather than an American context, because it calls attention to the ways that camp language changed from something with subcultural recognition to popular discourse subject in new ways to hegemonic power. Indeed, there is little that symbolizes hegemony more overtly than the British Monarchy, and the fact that Princess Margaret understood Springfield’s joke despite its ostensible coding demonstrates that by the late 1970s, camp language no longer fulfilled its original function: to pass unnoticed to those beyond queer subcultures when used in public and semi-public settings. Instead, queer language, whether it used traditional camp forms or not, now had to speak both to queer audiences as well as to heteronormative ones, or at least contend with the reality that camp circulated publicly as language and commodity. Furthermore, the anecdote demonstrates the ways in which the consumption of popular music continued to provide opportunities to construct public queer identity. This extended life of camp beyond its original purpose now placed queers in a curious bind: camp language only made them more visible *as queers*, and presented a different set of opportunities to create a public persona through the stereotypes already well-known amongst the general population.

Following Chapter 3’s interest in the formation of camp language and the social forces that engendered it, this chapter proceeds to investigate queer language and the articulation of a public queer identity in the era after gay liberation. Similarly, while I may explore the nature of queer sociality during this period, my larger interest is to trace the ways in which queer sociality was shaped by the performative binds of language. The 1970s was a period of dramatic upheaval for queers, and the decade presented them with a new array of opportunities to exist publicly *as queer*. This emergence of queer culture from “the closet” after liberation in the late 1960s occasioned a paradigmatic shift in which homosexuals, en masse, began to shape their public identity and carve out a political niche for their interests. The conditions of this visibility (the normalizing effects of language), however, were the same that engendered camp codes in the previous decades: it is only that queers were now on the opposite side, strategizing to gain public territory rather than, in the words of Michel de Certeau, maneuvering “within enemy territory.”²⁴²

Despite such a historical rupture within queer culture, many conflicts among queers (between political conservatism and radicalism, and between different social groups) remained strikingly consistent. This continuity is unsurprising given the persistence of hegemonic force as a structuring agent for language and sociality: it is only that queers now

employed “strategies” for gaining territory rather than “tactics” for existing within it (to use de Certeau’s terminology), and moved from the “illocutionary” position of being spoken about to the “perlocutionary” one of speaking about themselves (following J. L. Austin and Judith Butler).²⁴³ While there are many conflicting accounts of queer life during the seventies, articulated at the time as well as retrospectively, a common thread that runs throughout is a concern about the assimilation of queers to heteronormative complacency, and the association of this with consumerism. While queers certainly became visible as a new market for advertisers during this period, this is nonetheless the same concern expressed within queer culture in gay travel guides of the late 1940s as analyzed in Chapter 2. Queers remained divided between conservative and radical factions; this internal conflict only played out on an altered terrain on which homosexuals might publicly articulate their own identities.²⁴⁴

Given the task of speaking about themselves, queers had little choice but to recast stereotypes developed via surveillance in the previous decades, and the associations between queers and music offered fertile ground for charting this new visibility. Using Judith Butler’s terminology, this was a new explication of a well-recognized aspect of the queer “grid of intelligibility.”²⁴⁵ Indeed, the association between homosexual men and the musical remained consistent and, if anything, became more prevalent during this period, although within gay culture it assumed associations with “the closet” and life before liberation. Queers and those who sought to capitalize on them used music to expand queer visibility in the 1970s and into the 80s in a range of ways: to publicly explain homosexuality from a queer perspective; to sell products to queers; and, ultimately, to sell homosexuality to heterosexuals and thereby normalize it and solidify its value. While this latter result might be framed as a sort of failure or capitulation by queers to normative interests, I argue instead that this was an inevitable result of the binds of language and the necessary hollowing out of camp forms as queers gained public territory.

Unlike the subject matter of the previous chapters, queer culture in the 1970s onward is documented by an overabundant corpus of materials, generated from within and beyond queer culture. In turn, my aim in this chapter is not necessarily to excavate a portrait of daily life as in the earlier chapters, as much as to argue for the importance of discourse about music in making queers public and to expose the unique ways in which this discourse normalized queers as recognizable subjects, established them as a potential market and made queerness marketable. To this end I focus on examples from early and late in the decade in order to track the development of public declarations that associated queers with music, as well as a few important articulations of this identity in the late 1960s, and after in the first years of the 1980s. These contexts range from films, music clubs, bathhouses, department stores, popular magazines, political rants, and choruses, and together they provide a cohesive picture of how music provided a generative means for explicating queer identity and, ultimately, normalizing it.

Judy Garland and the Stereotype of Gay Men

The Stonewall Riots are perhaps the most canonized queer event in history, providing the context for subsequent Gay Pride celebrations every year since their occurrence on June 28th (and beyond), 1969. On this fateful night the police raided the Stonewall Inn, a homosexual bar in the historic queer neighborhood of Greenwich Village in New York City. As described in Chapters 1 and 3, police raids at gay bars were common from the 1930s to the 1960s in the US, but what might have been a routine raid changed into something else as

the patrons of the bar fought back, and the site became a site of protest over the following week. Despite its preeminence in dominant narratives of queer history, protest and resistance, the Stonewall Riots were not exceptional in American History. As described by Elizabeth A. Armstrong and Suzanna M. Crage in their article “Movements and Memory: The Making of the Stonewall Myth,” Stonewall came after several notable confrontations between queers and the police in other locations, specifically the police raid of a New Year’s ball in San Francisco on January 1, 1965, riots at Compton’s Cafeteria in the same city in August 1966, and raids at the Black Cat Bar in Los Angeles on January 1, 1967.²⁴⁶ So what set Stonewall apart? Armstrong and Crage argue that (unlike the other events listed) Stonewall had high potentials for both commemorability (due to its dramatic, newsworthy nature) as well as mnemonic capacity, or the sufficient organization of the homosexual community around Stonewall to memorialize the riots through commemorative activities.²⁴⁷ These conditions are manifest in both the forceful nature of the confrontation and following protests at the Stonewall Inn, the largely sympathetic coverage of the conflict in the press and the timely work of gay activists in commemorating the event. This commemoration occurred both immediately following the riots as well as in the future through annual liberation celebrations beginning the following year in cities with more liberal queer populations (Los Angeles, Chicago and New York), and later as it became clear the event had lasting meaning (San Francisco held off on commemorating the Stonewall Riots until 1972).²⁴⁸

In considering what made Stonewall memorable, however, it is important to also consider how it was perceived and understood by those beyond the queer community. While Crage and Armstrong present a wealth of research, they do not mention one of the most persistent popular associations with Stonewall: the possibility that Judy Garland’s funeral earlier that day at the Frank E. Campbell Funeral Home in the city’s Upper East Side animated revolutionary queer sentiment later that night at the Stonewall Inn. In all likelihood Armstrong and Crage do not mention this possibility because there is no evidence to support it. This association between the event and the singer has been resisted and debated for decades from within homosexual culture, and with good reason. As recounted by David Carter, there were no queer accounts from that time that mention Garland, and the only association in the press was in an article published in the *Village Voice* after the riots on July 10 by Walter Troy Spencer. The article begins with, “the combination of a full moon and Judy Garland’s funeral was too much for them.”²⁴⁹ While Spencer’s sexual orientation is not entirely clear from the article, the latter makes considerable use of camp humor and demonstrates a familiarity with and sympathy for queer culture, and it describes the confrontations with the police as violent and depressing albeit from a rather distanced point of view. Furthermore, there is also the reality that those protesting at Stonewall were of a younger generation and social background than the generation that had lived with Garland as a premier popular performer; whether or not this means that they actually listened to or cared about Garland, however, is neither knowable nor especially important.

Despite the ambivalence of much popular writing at the time of Stonewall regarding the connection of the Stonewall Riots to Judy Garland’s funeral, it is nonetheless important that the retrospective reportage that does forge a connection—however tenuous—speaks to a mixed, predominantly heterosexual audience and emerges from a generation older than the one that sustained the riots. This split address (which is beyond the scope of Armstrong and Crage’s argument and methodology) requires attention because it takes into account the ways in which power is sedimented into language, specifically the use of stereotypes

associating gay men with musical culture to render queers visible and intelligible to a heteronormative audience. And these associations were especially strong between gay men and Judy Garland, as exemplified by the 1967 article in *Time Magazine* described at the close of Chapter 3 that remarked upon the conspicuous presence of stereotypically feminine homosexuals at Garland's concerts. While these associations may be understood as derogatory or overly simplistic, as well as a product of a history of repression and surveillance, they also constituted the "grid of intelligibility" that allowed queers to be recognized and understood by a broader audience. While elements of Spencer and Burke's coverage of Stonewall may read as essentialist or offensive from a contemporary point of view, at the time the association of queers with musical culture allowed them to be written about and understood by a popular audience at all. Stated simply, the coincidence of Judy Garland's funeral with the riots provided a more general audience with a handle by which they might make sense of the event and commemorate it according to popular perceptions of gay men. What is especially striking in the case of Stonewall, however, is that the stereotype was used to describe a (predominantly) younger generation of queers that tended to disidentify from older queers who worshipped Garland.

Further illustrating the importance of the Garland stereotype in making (older) homosexuality visible, the promotional campaign for the film version of *The Boys in the Band* relies heavily on the association of queers with Garland. *The Boys in the Band* is a play by Mart Crowley that was first produced at Theatre Four in New York on April 14, 1968. The play is about a group of gay friends who come together at the apartment of one (Michael) on the occasion of another's birthday (Harold). The dramatic impact of the play lies in the revelation of the ambitions and desires of the group over the course of an evening, as interactions between the characters vacillate between humorous, defensive, malicious and humane. The main character Michael is catty and judgmental, which provides a cover for his deep insecurity and self-loathing. The play's anagnorisis comes via a game that Michael suggests that requires every member of the party to telephone the one person he has truly loved and reveal his feelings for him. The dramatic tension is heightened by the visit of Michael's roommate from college (who is unaware of Michael's sexual orientation), who denounces Michael's lifestyle despite the prominent likelihood that he, too, is gay and has suppressed his desires for a normative life with his wife and two children.

The play was a hit in New York, resulting in its production as a film released in 1970 directed by William Friedkin. The production of the film version of *The Boys in the Band* stands as a milestone in popular gay representation, as it was the first film released to a broad audience that presented extensive interactions between openly gay male characters. With the gradual breakdown of the Hays Code during the sixties, previous films had been released that narrativized homosexuality, but these films—inclusive of *The Children's Hour* (William Wyler, Mirish-World Wide Productions, 1961) and *The Killing of Sister George* (Robert Aldrich, Associates & Aldrich Co., Inc., 1968)—largely concerned lesbianism, which posed less of a concern and threat in popular discourse than male homosexuality. Writers in *Look*, *Time* and *Vogue* praised the film for its ostensibly accurate and authentic window into gay life, and how it provided a sympathetic (if also depressing) depiction of gay subjectivity.²⁵⁰ In opposition, queer voices in the press (at the time of release and afterward) tended to criticize the film for its use of popular stereotypes about gay men being miserable, self-loathing, promiscuous, narcissistic and effeminate.²⁵¹

The heavy prominence of stereotypes in *The Boys in the Band*, however, was necessary for the film's depiction of homosexuality to be intelligible broadly, and the film's

advertising campaign primed a national audience to approach and question the film through stereotypes of gay male identity. Magazine ads, posters and lobby cards for the film all stated, “Mart Crowley’s *The Boys in the Band*... is not a Musical,” adjacent to a serious group shot of the cast. (Figure 1) As described in Chapter 3, the spatial network consolidated by musical spectatorship rendered queers visible in mixed public and semi-public settings such as concert halls where they confronted most directly agents of hegemonic force. This spatial confrontation and the surveillance and policing of queers it facilitated resulted in the stereotypical affiliation of gay men with musical performance and spectatorship. This stereotype was especially important because gay men were difficult to identify by physical attributes, and the idea that they could be found in musical venues allowed popular paranoia to assume spatial dimensions when vision alone remained unreliable. The wit of the advertising campaign’s assertion that “*The Boys in the Band*... is not a Musical,” is that it communicates polyvalently to both queer and heteronormative audiences. Quite literally, the statement denotes that the film is not a musical. For a heteronormative audience, however, it negates one of the most prominent stereotypes about gay identity, thereby opening a space *through* stereotypical language that might allow such stereotypes to be questioned. For queers, the campaign [as well as the title itself, which refers to a line in *A Star is Born* (George Cukor, Warner Bros., 1954) when James Mason instructs Judy Garland to sing as though “It’s three o’clock in the morning at the Downbeat Club and you’re singing for yourself and for the boys in the band”] retains a camp sensibility by pointing to the layers of meaning beneath popular discourse via coded meaning and allusion. To be clear, while the film certainly isn’t a musical, it nonetheless reinforces the centrality of music in facilitating queer sociality. Among others, examples of this social context include: an impromptu dance number and Michael’s quotation of the Judy Garland song “Get Happy” followed by the line, “what’s more boring than a queen doing a Judy Garland imitation?” with Donald’s response, “a queen doing a Bette Davis imitation.” While such references might be stereotypical, they provide greater nuance to the ways in which musical consumption yielded language and forms of belonging amongst queers in the prior decade.

Given the film’s simultaneous deconstruction and use of camp language, it is important to understand *The Boys in the Band* as a transitional text that engaged in the process of rendering queers visible; central to this process, however, was how the film denatured camp language and its ability to pass unnoticed or understood in heteronormative settings. These stereotypes extend beyond the citation of Garland, and inform the types that populate the drama. I would like to point out, however that the play and film only follow in the tradition of midcentury American drama and fiction by reworking recognizable types and milieux, as in the Southern Gothic environs of Tennessee Williams and William Faulkner, the pastoral settings of Harold Pinter and William Inge, or the predominance of New England WASP culture in the work of John Cheever and (especially) Edward Albee. For example, the stereotypes also build on the association of gay men with commodity fetishism, given essentialist expression by Susan Sontag in her “Notes on Camp” in 1964 as well as elsewhere in the popular press.²⁵² Taken together, these popular stereotypes constituted the public “grid of intelligibility” for discerning homosexuality, and they serve as an index of the various forms of policing and surveillance in public spaces endured by a very specific group of urban, male queers in the previous decades.

The Boys in the Band was received in different ways within the homosexual community, with many younger queers criticizing the film for its anachronistic stereotypes. With Stonewall came a growing awareness of the homosexual populations that didn’t

adhere to older stereotypes about musical taste, decorative sensibilities, etc., and the article “The New Homosexuality” by Tom Burke in the December 1969 issue of *Esquire* is among the first to contribute to this expanded popular awareness. The article follows several young gay men in their early twenties and describes the parties they go to. In stark contrast to the stereotypical dinner parties in tony interiors evoked by *The Boys in the Band*, these men drew their sensibilities from hippie culture and its celebration of free love and recreational drug use. The article’s second paragraph directly attacks the film for its outmoded stereotypes:

That the public’s information vis-à-vis the new deviate is now hopelessly outdated is not the public’s fault. It cannot examine him on its own because, from a polite distance, he is indistinguishable from the heterosexual hippie... Which leaves movies and the stage, the principal purveyors of a homosexual image that is at least five years behind reality. The worst current offender is, of course, the play *The Boys in the Band* (anyone who doubts that the heartland has embraced deviation may ponder the fact that the play recently enjoyed a successful run at Caesar’s Palace, Las Vegas). Its characters are touted as representative contemporary homosexuals... when actually they are about as pertinent to our time as the snood.²⁵³

In this passage Burke makes a clear (if nonetheless sensationalist) distinction between younger and older queers in the interest of “discovering” and publicly revealing heretofore misrecognized queers, simultaneously playing to a popular culture of queer surveillance and a less malicious fascination and curiosity with the newly visible culture of queers. Later in the article Burke directly questions one of the men about the play to argue for its irrelevance:

I ask Jim if he knows any homosexuals of the type depicted in *The Boys in the Band* and similar efforts. He shrugs and shakes his head. “If those queens are still around, you don’t see them. If you do, they’re *really* older, like in their sixties. The summer I was eighteen—six years ago—I worked as a waiter in a gay bar. There were plenty of younger ones like that in those days... One of them asked me up to his place for dinner. Christ, that apartment. It looked like the Castro showroom on Times Square, only not as masculine... I remember that The Beatles were still new then, but very big, and—you won’t believe this—*he had never heard of The Beatles!* He had this old Ethel Merman record. And Judy Garland—everything of Judy Garland. She was interesting, but I mean, who wants to *listen* to that stuff?”²⁵⁴

While the article traces a very clear generational divide, it is nonetheless notable that the temporal gap it suggests is overstated. Jim’s assertion that the only queers similar to those in *The Boys in the Band* are “in their sixties” doesn’t make sense alongside his narrative regarding younger gays only six years prior, or Burke’s suggestion that the characterization of the drama is outdated by five years.

The discrepancies of the article ultimately point to the ways in which the prominent stereotypes about homosexual identity elaborated by the popular media only created divisions within homosexual culture and perpetuated the development of other stereotypes. While there may be truth in Jim’s recollection of the older man’s musical collection, he nonetheless fixes on it because of its linguistic currency with Burke (and Burke highlights it

due to its coincident legibility to a popular audience), and the way it functions as shorthand for an entire lifestyle. Jim's disidentification with such a picture stands as evidence of the way that language reinforces divisions within populations, especially those that have historically been punished for legible, public self-expression. Importantly, the primary distinction here is that due to the lack of a history of surveillance and punishment, Jim's younger culture never needed to adopt camp language; Jim even says, "I think camp was a way for queens to distract themselves from their guilt, and today, who needs it?"²⁵⁵ The coincident irony is that were Jim's subculture more readily distinguishable from the average "heterosexual hippie," the resulting surveillance of him and his friends in public places would have likely also found expression in a popular drama legible to a broad audience. In a sense, "The New Homosexuality" intends to be a corrective to this "oversight," and it attempts to establish a new stereotype about a more "masculine" homosexual that would gain prominence over the following decade. Taken fully, the article (and its sensationalist and bombastic tone) attempts to displace one totalizing stereotype with another, rather than draw a more holistic picture of the various and contrasting populations within queer culture. This is given expression late in the article by one of the men profiled who says, "You know what was the best bit of irony was? The riots started the night Judy Garland was buried," suggesting a changing of the guard rather than the copresence of different queer populations.²⁵⁶ In sum, "The New Homosexuality" demonstrates how even after "Gay Liberation," queers were not freed from the repressive effects of hegemony as much as subject to it in different ways, and were profiled through open inquiry rather than surreptitious surveillance.

Upon closer examination, the greater irony of the article is the extent to which consumerism provides a conspicuous continuity between the older, outmoded generation of effete queens and the younger, more masculine one as paramount for public identity and recognition. It is not that "The New Homosexual" resists capitalism; he only has different tastes. A narrative about an older gay man adopting newer trendier habits describes these tastes:

Homosexual senior citizens—anybody over twenty-nine—embrace psychedelia for an even simpler reason: the well-known homosexual compulsion to postpone old age... The middle-aged deviate merely grows what is left of his hair very long, wears beads, body shirts, Western vests and peace emblems... He already owns some denim bells, perhaps a string of beads, but now his building superintendent receives the stacks of collegiate chinos, the elbow-patched J. Press jackets and bleeding Madras shorts, as he buys whole new wardrobes in little shops with silver walls and Mick Jagger on the stereo... He buys new books; *Astrology*, *the Space-Age Science*, *The Little Prince*, the I Ching, Kierkegaard, and composes little private exercises in Kierkegaardian freedom... Lists are made, new records purchased: Blood, Sweat & Tears, The Rotary Connection, the *2001* soundtrack, and *Hair*, the new deviate's only acceptable cast album."²⁵⁷

While the preceding narrative describes a supposed convert (read: impostor) to the new lifestyle, Burke's description of Jim suggests a nonetheless contrived approach to personal appearance and taste:

He tosses his long hair once... It tosses minimally, because it is secured by a Cherokee beaded headband. His necklace is made of Navaho talismans. His white body-shirt looks beige, shaded by his resolutely tanned chest. A chain belt and tapestry-look bell-bottoms hang at his bony hips; a suede pouch hangs from the belt.²⁵⁸

While Burke may perceive Jim as a member of the counterculture, his grooming and spending habits nonetheless open themselves to criticism similar to that leveled at “feminine” homosexuals in *The Gay Girl's Guide* as described in Chapter 3.²⁵⁹ The distinction here, however, is that Jim's generation did not endure the same types of punishment and policing as earlier generations of gay men for their sexuality, and Jim instead saw himself as part of a larger movement against staid sexual and social mores. In turn, Jim's generation of queers wasn't subject to internal divisions between “revolutionary” and “conformist” gays (at this point, in any case) in the same way as earlier generations, as progress was forthcoming rather non-existent and the current generation did not collectively endure oppression in the same way. In turn, capitalism and consumerism largely evaded criticism within queer populations as queers first became more visible post-Stonewall, and this relationship informed how queers expressed themselves in the following decade.

The uncritical culture of queer consumption among the “revolutionary” generation became more notable as the 1970s progressed, and Australian Marxist academic Dennis Altman memorably critiqued this culture toward the end of the decade. While Altman had been hopeful of the revolutionary potentials of the generation behind Stonewall, by 1977 his tone had changed dramatically. In his essay “Fear and Loathing and Hepatitis,” Altman details his disillusionment with radical queer sensibility in the US:

America has become truly decadent, not in the sex-obsessed connotation of the word, but in its true denotation: a decline in moral and spiritual vigor. Consequently, it is not surprising that much of the impetus has gone out of the gay movement, for in its early gay liberation days it was, after all, a child of the broader socio-political radicalization of the late sixties... The first and most important [factor in this decadence] is the proliferation of the commercial (male) gay world. Comparative relaxation of the taboos against homosexuality has led to a blossoming of bars, saunas, restaurants, and theaters which hold out the promise of endless gang bangs available across the country... What it represents however is the emergence of a luxury-oriented, commercial gay world, where instant sex is provided in surrounding of some opulence—the bath house in Chicago that offers a choice of six types of Twinjigs tea—or, in some cases, expensive squalor.²⁶⁰

What is striking about Altman's assessment of queer culture in the US toward the end of the 1970s is that, in some ways, it doesn't diverge markedly from the description of the individuals profiled in 1969 in “The New Homosexuality” who argued that “group-groping” was “much more prevalent” than for previous generations.²⁶¹ What did change more substantively over the course of the decade (registered by Altman) was not necessarily the attitudes of queers, but the presence of business and brands that courted queer dollars.

Returning to the sentiment that animated political resistance among younger queers, I argue that it must be thought through the substantially different role that camp played for younger queers. The generation of queers described in “The New Homosexual” had no real

reason to develop camp systems of language: they were perceived as hippies by culture at large, and accepted within that subculture as part of a range of liberated sexual expression. In turn, the social pressure that compelled earlier generations of queers to develop camp as a linguistic system did not exist in the same way. This is not to say that the “flower generation” was not discriminated against, only that such discrimination conformed to more generalized conflict between older and younger generations, and that the same system of juridical punishment and force (vice squads that targeted gay bars, etc.) did not exist and, in turn, did not necessitate the development of a “rigid mask” to manage daily disenfranchisement. Indeed, the only times at which these younger queers and those of the older generation overlapped was in public discourse about homosexuality where they were bunched together by virtue of sexual object choice, despite the fact that they were completely separate populations with different social traditions. Or, of course, when younger queers frequented gay bars that were subject to the same laws as those that catered to a different generation. In turn, when younger queers rioted, such sentiment was in engendered by a disidentification not only with older, camp queers, but also camp itself and its function to make life livable under repression and punishment.

The Continental Baths

Opened in 1968, the Continental Baths would in the following decade assume an important role in shaping the popular image of the “new” homosexual, and selling this image to the public at large. The savvy management of the Baths rode the wave of sexual freedom that came from hippie culture, and created and marketed an image of the new homosexual to a larger audience through music. Although ostensibly a gay sex club, the Baths sold the space to heterosexuals through musical performances that took place there, merchandise that was sold by mail and at high profile department stores including Bloomingdales, and at record stores and performance venues beyond the Baths.²⁶² In selling homosexual culture through music and fashion, the Continental Baths were instrumental in shaping popular perceptions of queer life, and, ultimately, introducing this homosexuality as a form of commodity that both conformed to and updated popular associations between queers and material goods.

While there is much that requires interpretation about what compelled the establishment of the Continental Baths, it remains undeniable that the club came to be because it presented a savvy business opportunity. Steve Ostrow, the manager of and principle investor in the Baths, originally had the idea to open a gay bathhouse after seeing an ad in the business section of the *New York Times* seeking investors.²⁶³ Ostrow, who at the time identified as heterosexual and was married to his wife, Joanne, had been looking for possible investment opportunities after losing his job in finance amidst a legal scandal.²⁶⁴ Before investing in the club, Ostrow determined the necessity for a new venue both by visiting the existing gay bathhouses in New York in the late 1960s (the derelict Everard’s Baths in Midtown and St. Mark’s in the Village) where he reportedly dabbled in gay sex for the first time, and by standing watch outside Everard’s with his wife for a full week while they timed how many men entered and exited the club over the course of a night.²⁶⁵ While Ostrow’s desire to open a gay bathhouse may have been informed by his own, latent homosexual inclinations, it is nonetheless important that the Continental Baths were first and foremost a sound investment that promised a substantial ROI. While this did not preclude the Baths from becoming a site of potential for queer sexuality, it remains

important that the space itself was founded to generate income from gays rather than to benefit the community in less tangible ways.

At first, the Continental Baths targeted a gay male clientele, and the space quickly expanded as it became clear that more money could be made. Situated in the basement of the Ansonia Hotel (a venerable Beaux-Arts monument) at 73rd St and Broadway in the Upper West Side, the venue benefitted from the revitalization of the neighborhood spurred by the opening of Lincoln Center nearby in 1966, and the environs contrasted sharply with those of the competing, dilapidated gay bathhouses. The club originally opened with 50 private rooms and 200 lockers, and on opening night on September 16, 1968 (advertised through the gay press) it became clear that these facilities were far too little for the demand, as over 400 men had entered within six hours of opening.²⁶⁶ Men continued to show up in even greater numbers and Ostrow quickly upgraded the facilities to accommodate more men as capital became available. The range of upgrades was vast, as Ostrow endeavored to turn the baths into an all-purpose homosexual social space rather than only a sex club, and over time these upgrades spanned adjacent floors and included more rooms and lockers (at its peak 2000 lockers, 500 minilockers, and 400 rooms), a gymnasium, a pool, an orgy room, a buffet, a faux-beach roof deck with imported sand, and (perhaps most memorably) New York City's first lighted dancing floor [like the one featured in *Saturday Night Fever* (John Badham, RSO, 1977)] and a stage for musical performers.²⁶⁷ Additionally, Ostrow opened an ancillary clothing store nearby on 72nd Street targeted to fashionable men (if predominantly homosexual) called the Uptight Boutique that sold a variety of high-end, contemporary men's fashion.²⁶⁸ (Figure 2)

Although phenomenally successful in targeting a gay male audience, the baths hit their peak popularity when Ostrow began to sell musical entertainment at the club (and, implicitly, the spectacle of gay homosexuality) to a mixed, heterosexual audience. Ostrow's promotion of Bette Midler, especially, catapulted the Baths to fame. Ostrow "discovered" Bette singing at another club and offered her a contract to sing at the Baths after seeing her perform. Midler quickly became popular amongst the clientele, and Ostrow characterized her as having, "the makings of an icon, a Judy Garland, or a Streisand, but a more down-to-earth one, one who could step off the stage and dish with them, an idol they could touch and camp with."²⁶⁹ The preceding quote is striking not only because of the parallel to Garland (which essentially updates the stereotype to make a new generation of gay men visible and intelligible by analogy), but also because of Ostrow's citation of Midler's prominent camp sensibility. With the increased exposure of gay culture, newly permissive attitudes about sex, and curiosity amongst heterosexuals, Ostrow recognized the market potential of Midler's camp performance style and began to promote musical events to a mixed audience in the popular press.²⁷⁰ While general advertisements for the club never included the words "gay" or "homosexual" (allowing the club to deny homosexual affiliation for legal reasons), the clientele of the club was well known and Ostrow found it necessary to include the words "Ladies Invited," though the ads also specified that women should leave after the show. (Figure 3) While the Baths most famously promoted Bette to stardom (and aided the career of Barry Manilow, who was eventually hired to accompany her at the piano), the space also saw performances by Patti La Belle, Cab Calloway, Melba Moore, the Andrews Sisters, Sarah Vaughn, and Lesley Gore that were covered by the mainstream entertainment press including *Variety*.²⁷¹ Ostrow also orchestrated a concert given by Josephine Baker at the Beacon Theater with the help of UNESCO, and organized the recording of a concert given at the Baths by opera diva Eleanor Streber in 1973 and its release on vinyl the following year

by RCA.²⁷² (Figure 4) In short, Ostrow cannily capitalized on the popular association of gay men with musical entertainment and profited by selling it to a heterosexual audience.

The promotion of music at the Baths to a straight audience made homosexuality palatable to a mixed crowd, and also provided opportunities for heterosexuals to act as tourists to/voyeurs of a gay sexual milieu that was tempered to conform to public tastes. Richard Goldstein described this heterosexual tourism in detail in a feature he wrote on the Baths for *New York Magazine* published on January 8, 1973:

The Baths is one of New York's more ingenious hustles: a gay club during the week, and a discothèque on Saturday nights, when you can rent a cabana for \$15, or roam the grounds for \$5, to mingle or just to watch... But the floor is crowded nightly, and at show time you are likely to find some of the most unusual entertainment anywhere—Lillian Roth singing “You Must Have Been a Beautiful Baby” while Mick Jagger looks on. Scenes like that began to attract the curiosity of many straights. In response (and sensing, perhaps, that its gay clientele might provide just the draw a New York pop audience requires these days), the Baths began admitting straights on Saturday nights. It was a sure-fire formula for notoriety: and in the past year, the Baths has emerged as New York's most Weimarian nightspot, a sort of City of Night à gogo, where straights may move among gay people without necessarily feeling gay.²⁷³

Goldstein's prescient commentary on the commodification of gay identity highlights the novelty of homosexuality shortly after liberation, and how it could translate to increased profit for a savvy businessman. But the spectacle of homosexuals roaming their assumed native habitat formed only one component of the appeal of such voyeuristic tourism. Most of the article concerns more directly how Goldstein's movement within the Baths related to his own self-image as a heterosexual male:

I'm sucked in, absorbed by the crowd... How exciting to be here tonight, to see without touching, stealing glances but feeling insulated by my own identity. This is 1973... It is okay to visit a gay bar now and then, just to see how the other tenth lives... Something inexplicably blasé about this audience makes me feel like a proper tourist, 6 a.m. in the peasant markets of La Paz, they're bringing in freshly slaughtered llamas and you stand there, breathless from the altitude, feeling exotically out of touch... I for one am circling the floor with a growing desire to be noticed, feeling like a stray body to whom nobody is offering any amyl nitrite. I want to be appreciated if not aroused. A friend of mine told me he was felt up at the Baths, and he said it with a faint tone of satisfaction which I can understand. You want to be acknowledged, especially by those who are presumed to be refined in the arts of masculine acknowledgment. Tell me with a glance that my boots are clunky and my jeans are baggy and my shirt is too tapered, exposing pockets of belly between the buttons...but you think I'm sexy anyhow... I find myself cruising for approval...²⁷⁴

While Goldstein is especially self-reflexive in this article (in a droll style one might expect to find in *New York Magazine*), he nonetheless describes with precision the appeal of the Baths to many heterosexuals who visited it: to reaffirm one's own value in a new arena that could be entered and left safely without any threat of punishment or harm. And as Goldstein

describes in the article, even if there were no appreciative glances or gropes a man could reassure himself that he “was being ignored because they knew [he] was straight.”²⁷⁵ If one’s ego was not quite as resilient as Goldstein suggests, the cover of musical entertainment offered an adequate excuse to explore the Baths, and Goldstein’s own visit was occasioned by the opportunity to see Bette Midler perform there.

To be sure, Ostrow was keenly aware of the potential for homosexuality to buttress heterosexual ego ideal, and he cultivated a public persona that allied gay sex with family values and platitudes about free love to sell the Baths through his own image. Throughout the operation of the Baths, Ostrow remained married to his wife, Joanne, even as he slept primarily with men who worked at and frequented the Baths. Beyond hosting his own radio show, *Steve Ostrow Presents, Live from the Continental*, in which he interviewed performers who were currently at the Baths and made sexually provocative comments, Ostrow also appeared on TV personality Pat Collins’s interview show in a segment titled “A Man, His Wife, and His Lover” (with his then boyfriend Jess) that was broadcast nationwide on NBC.²⁷⁶ When Collins asked Ostrow about his sexual identity (gay or straight), Ostrow refused to choose a fixed identity and eventually replied, “my philosophy is, why give up 50 percent of the population?”²⁷⁷ Ostrow’s response, as well as the title of the program, frames his life at the Baths as an expansion of the heterosexual domain rather than any substantive interest in providing a service for homosexuals. In a similar way, a film featuring Ostrow shot in part at the Baths called *Saturday Night at the Baths* (David Buckley, *The Bath Company*, 1975) focalizes the space through a heterosexual point of view. The film concerns Michael, a young man from the Midwest in search of work in New York, and his relationship with his photographer girlfriend, Tracy. Michael finds a job as a musician at the Baths where he meets Ostrow (who swims across the pool to meet him), and a gay employee named Scotti who takes an interest in him. The film first features a sex scene between Michael and Tracy and then later one between Michael and Scotti. After sleeping with Scotti, Michael returns to Tracy and tells her what happen. She asks, “How does this affect us?” and he responds, “I don’t know. I hope it doesn’t.” The film frames homosexual sex as a potentially new realm for heterosexual experience that also lacks any real consequence, insulating the film and the Baths from the associations of homosexuality with vice or corporal and juridical punishment that were ubiquitous throughout the prior decade. In his introduction for Eleanor Steber on the RCA recording, Ostrow also framed the space as a “House of Love,” an appeal to a broader audience (read: market) influenced by hippie culture rather than a homosexual crowd. Overall, the Baths became a space that was not only safe for a straight crowd, but actually geared to heterosexual interests in homosexuality as a form of entertainment or pleasure. This appeal to a heterosexual audience was stated in no uncertain terms by Dennis Altman, who noted:

That baths feed off homosexual oppression is clear; they are highly priced, they rely on the fact that even today most homosexuals are closeted and need institutionalized means to make contact, they encourage a sensual yet depersonalized sex that fits the needs of those men unable to integrate their sexuality with their total life... Part of the Continental’s attraction for the straight female and male is that nothing in their world offers the same opportunity to fuck with large numbers of bodies (not people) without the need for either conversation or even “somewhere to go”... the Continental baths are ultimately another version of Tom Wolfe’s “radical chic,” with sexual voyeurism replacing racial.²⁷⁸

While Altman's tone is hyperbolic and overtly political, his real target with these words is a homosexual audience he seeks to disabuse of the false consciousness facilitated by the veneer of glossy, commercialized sex at venues like the Continental.

While Ostrow certainly understood the marketability of homosexual sex, he also took pains to temper the image of homosexuality that the club projected and made more symbolic gestures to associate the space with heteronormative interests. Paramount among these overtures was the annual Christmas benefits Ostrow staged at the club. While Ostrow's children frequented the Baths on a regular basis ("a much-appreciated touch of normalcy in our never-never land," in Ostrow's words), he began to organize toy and clothing drives for orphaned children in the early 1970s.²⁷⁹ Beyond the inherent heteronormative associations of children and an interest in their future, the event staged a symbolic display of the homosexual as beneficent surrogate father. Furthermore, Ostrow organized the benefits as community events, placing the gay patrons alongside firemen, policemen, shopkeepers, and others from the area as community guardians. Such events helped to tame the public image of the Baths, and facilitated closer relationships with politicians, notably mayor John Lindsay and Harlem assemblyman Carl McCall.²⁸⁰ The alliance between the Baths and politicians was mutually beneficial, in that it offered an expanded voter base in exchange for legal progress for homosexual interests: early in the club's life these interests specifically concerned the enticement and entrapment of homosexuals by the police and, more generally, the legality of homosexual acts in New York City.²⁸¹ While Ostrow certainly had an interest in queer rights, his primary stake in the issue concerned the \$4,000 a week the police extorted from him so that they wouldn't interfere in the operation of the club.²⁸² It may be no surprise that economic interests and political maneuvering go hand-in-hand, but what is notable here is that early legal progress was made for queers post-Stonewall both by taming the public image of homosexuality and by selling it to a heteronormative audience in the guise of musical entertainment. Thus, a marketable affiliation with music—one of the most widely known and familiar stereotypes about gay men before liberation—became instrumental in making queer subjects visible as political subjects *after* liberation due to business interests.

While the Continental is striking in the ambiguity of its allegiance to its homosexual patrons, it was not at all unusual post-Stonewall for businesses to cater to queer interests while maintaining a symbolic distance from its customer base. One of the clearest examples of this tendency is the magazine *After Dark*. Rebranded from *Ballroom Dance Magazine* in May of 1968, *After Dark* covered the performing arts, and especially theater, music and ballet. More evident to anyone who has perused the magazine, however, is its clear catering to homosexual interests. The magazine regularly ran male nudes throughout the late 1960s and 70s, and also ran pieces on gay icons and persons of interest including Bette Midler, Liza Minnelli, Gore Vidal, Tony Randall, Candy Darling, and so on. Despite such content, the publication never explicitly revealed that its target audience was queer, virtually perpetuating the association of theatrical entertainment with closeted homosexuality. In a sense, this lack of explicit articulation of queer affiliation perpetuated camp sensibilities that sought to divide audiences and cloak sexual identity, but in a post-liberation era when camp codes were beginning to break down in favor of explicit articulations of sexuality. Perhaps most memorable from the magazine are the ads that populated its back section. In its early days, ads for venues like the Continental (which regularly advertised in the magazine, at first for the baths themselves, and later for musical events and branded towels) were common,

as well as silver lambda necklaces, unlikely garments that index sexual tastes at the time (for example, a one-piece combination turtleneck brief garment called “The Turtlesuit”), and books of male physique photography. Within a few years time, however, the advertising became more sophisticated as the viability of a gay market became clear to entrepreneurs. The pages of *After Dark* facilitated the burgeoning of an entire industry of male beauty products from brands such as Baxter of California. While men’s toiletries were not new, a comparison to contemporaneous issues of men’s consumer magazines such as *Esquire* reveal that this was a radical expansion of goods that were typically marketed to men, which, more traditionally, included fragrance, cigarettes, watches, cars and alcohol. The deniability of the sexuality of *After Dark*’s target audience, however, allowed such brands to avoid a confining association with only queer audiences. This deniable address effectively created an entire new field of products for popular consumption that were sustained through queer dollars and profited from selling homosexual tastes to heterosexuals, but without any real loyalty to queers. And much like the Continental Baths, *After Dark* provided an opportunity for curious heterosexuals to explore gay culture in a way that was safe and didn’t necessarily designate a clear affiliation with homosexuality.

What is ultimately ironic about Ostrow’s management of the Continental Baths is that the space began to lose money by the mid 1970s and closed in 1975.²⁸³ While this is certainly due in part to poor money management on Ostrow’s part, it resulted more generally from his neglect of (and de facto selling of) the gay demographic that had sustained the club in its early days. This queer discontent was registered as early as 1973 in Richard Goldstein’s article in *New York Magazine*, where he notes about the club, “I can think of less exploitative entertainments, and many gay people have come to spurn the Baths for its ambience as well as its cost.”²⁸⁴ What is more, the very visible success of the Baths had inspired similar establishments throughout New York and elsewhere, both in the form of discos as well as sex clubs. For example, in the January 1974 issue of *After Dark* is an advertisement for Le Club Menage headlined by the following: “If you dig Bette Midler, wear Guccis, and read *After Dark*... Le Club Menage will blow your mind!”²⁸⁵ (Figure 5) The ad features a large image of a man dressed in white trousers (revealing a very visible bulge) and a button-down shirt patterned with rainbows and clouds, alongside smaller images of what is on offer at the club, including (much like the Continental) rooms for rent, a disco, a café, a pool and a spa. In keeping with the general address of *After Dark* the ad trades in camp codes through the homosexual connotations of Bette Midler, rainbows, and so forth, even though there remains little doubt that gay men were its target audience despite the lack of explicit articulation. While Le Club Menage may have targeted a gay demographic that remained uncritical of consumption, the difference is that it actually appeared to appeal to gay men directly rather than those who were curious to see them “in the wild,” so to speak, much in the way that the Continental did. Appropriately, the Continental Baths reopened in 1977 as Plato’s Retreat, a heterosexual swingers club, and thus finally openly courted the demographic it had appealed to for years.²⁸⁶

What is striking about the marketing strategies of both Ostrow at the Continental Baths and *After Dark* is that they both prevailed upon shifting popular attitudes to commodify camp objects and attitudes. Popular accounts of Bette Midler frame her as a camp icon, for example a 1973 article on her in *Rolling Stone* titled “The Gold Lamé Dream of Bette Midler” that notes, “It is [her] ability to move inside idioms made available to us by the assimilation of the camp sensibility into the popular culture that will make Bette Midler the first major entertainer to fully explore the rich resources of the camp genre.”²⁸⁷ While

this article focuses on Bette Midler herself, the same generalization about the canny marketing of camp could be made about the remaining programming featured at the Continental Baths. While such programming ostensibly appealed to a queer audience, many viewed it unfavorably because they perceived it appealed to curious heterosexuals and conformed to anachronistic stereotypes about queer taste. In reality, the “camp” entertainment staged at the Continental only allowed heterosexuals to encroach upon a space that was otherwise designed for their own, ostensibly private, use.

If camp continued to operate as *camp* in the 70s, it did so in an inverted way on the side of marketers. Rather than cloaking homosexual identity in public, “camp” cloaked the intention of marketers to reach both gays and straights by targeting both with the same ads. Much in the way that camp in the 1960s and before allowed multiple populations to exist side by side in the same space without bilateral recognition, advertisers in the 1970s created new markets for consumables by targeting homosexuals with advertisements that could also function for a straight male population, even though queers were the driving force behind such consumption.

Queer Visibility and the Death of Camp Language

Marketers took advantage of both new queer markets for consumption as well as the marketability of homosexuality to a straight population with remarkable speed after gay liberation and, given this newfound public visibility, queers themselves found it important to take measures early on to speak as political citizens. Although previous efforts had been made to promote queer rights and the foster positive popular attitudes towards homosexuals (via efforts of the Mattachine Society, etc.), these took place in a different political era in which queer populations were present yet nonetheless spectral. The profound visibility of queerness after liberation through the popular press and advertising necessitated a different approach toward cultivating political presence. Returning to Michel de Certeau’s work, I wish to characterize this change in address from one that was inward toward other queers to one that outwardly addressed the public as a paradigmatic shift from “tactics” to “strategies.” As described by de Certeau, “a tactic is a calculated action determined by the absence of a proper locus,” whereas strategies rely on the calculated use of space and power:

A strategy [is] the calculation (or manipulation) of power relationships that becomes possible as soon as a subject with will and power (a business, an army, a city, a scientific institution) can be isolated. It postulates a *place* that can be delimited as its *own* and serve as the base from which relations with an *exteriority* compose of targets or threats (customers or competitors, enemies, the country surrounding the city, objectives and objects of research, etc.) can be managed. As in management, every “strategic” rationalization seeks first of all to distinguish its “own” place, that is, the place of its own power and will, from an “environment.”²⁸⁸

To be clear, not only space was at stake in the queer shift from tactics to strategies, but also language. Becoming visible as queer in day-to-day life necessitated both the disruption of “safe” patterns of mobility between urban locations (such as the network created through popular song between the home and various semi-public spaces of consumption and affiliation) and the deliberate enunciation of one’s sexual identity to make evident one’s presence and claim the territory that queers regularly traversed.

It remains important to think of this shift in queer visibility in spatial terms as the queer public personas faced new forms of pressure during the 1970s. As previously described, the Stonewall Riots and the larger efforts of “Gay Liberation” did not emerge from a unified queer front (indeed, queer populations had never been unified), and instead arose largely from a younger generation that tended to disidentify with older, “camp” generations. Although this younger generation, who associated themselves more with “free love” than Judy Garland, might have had less of a problem publicly identifying as homosexuals, the situation was not the same for older generations. It remained a liability to be “out” in many walks of life, and many homosexual men remained married to women and maintained a separate, private queer existence to maintain appearances at both home and work, especially in more conservative industries. Despite the popular visibility of queers in the early 1970s, “the closet” remained a reality for a large subpopulation of homosexuals who did not wish to completely alter their lives. In a sense, for these men daily life in public and semi-public spaces was more difficult during this period, as homosexuality came on scene in popular consciousness.

The difficulty of coming on scene as subjects who spoke about themselves, however, was that queers could not enter language anew—they were bound to the terms that had facilitated their own visibility in the public conscious; i.e. stereotypes that were developed through surveillance, profiling, and the marketing of queerness to a general audience. Judith Butler considers the conditions of this process of both conforming to and resisting stereotypes in *Excitable Speech*, in which she notes:

To be called a name is one of the first forms of linguistic injury that one learns. But not all name-calling is injurious. Being called a name is also one of the conditions by which a subject is constituted in language; indeed, it is one of the examples Althusser supplies for an understanding of “interpellation.”... One is not simply fixed by the name that one is called. In being called an injurious name, one is derogated and demeaned. But the name holds out another possibility as well: by being called a name, one is also, paradoxically, given a certain possibility for social existence, initiated into a temporal life of language that exceeds the prior purposes that animate that call.²⁸⁹

In this passage, Butler insists not only that names (and stereotypes) enable social existence, a place from which to speak, but also that there is a possibility for the transformation of their prior deleterious effects into something more positive. Elsewhere in the book, Butler expands upon the former idea, and states that, “the name has, thus, a *historicity*... that has come to constitute the contemporary meaning of a name: the sedimentation of its usages as they have become part of the very name, a sedimentation, a repetition that congeals, that gives the name its force,” although she focuses the majority of her efforts on theorizing the potential that might exist in the rearticulation of the stereotype.²⁹⁰ In characterizing the process of rearticulation, Butler uses the schema developed by J.L. Austin in his *How to Do Things With Words*, and describes the change in being spoken about to speaking as a movement from “illocutionary” and “perlocutionary”:

Austin, of course, distinguishes between illocutionary and perlocutionary acts of speech... The distinction is tricky, and not always stable. According to the perlocutionary view, words are instrumental to the accomplishment of actions, but

they are not themselves the actions which they help to accomplish. This form of the performative suggests that the words and the things done are in no sense the same. But according to his view of the illocutionary speech act, the name performs *itself*, and in the course of that performing becomes a thing done; the pronouncement is the act of speech at the same time that it is the speaking of an act... [Austin] suggests that there is a perlocutionary kind of doing, a domain of things done, and then an instrumental field of "words," indeed, that there is also a deliberation that precedes that doing, and that the words will be distinct from the things that they do.²⁹¹

The crucial distinction between the illocutionary and the perlocutionary here is that the illocutionary produces the intended effect as it is spoken, whereas the perlocutionary opens a space in which the effects may diverge from what is typical and enable new results for the word. In relation to stereotypes about homosexuality, the illocutionary would tend toward stereotypes about queers spoken as a result of profiling (i.e., an agent of power identifying a queer at a concert and calling him a "faggot,"), whereas queers themselves might speak from a perlocutionary position to shift the usual effects of their own terms of visibility. For example, were a gay man to publicly identify himself as a "faggot" within a mixed crowd while using an angry voice, he might make others aware of the limitations of the term to describe the fullness of his identity and lead them to reconsider how useful the term might be generally. While the word "faggot" is instrumental in both of these examples, it achieves radically different effects depending on the intent of the speaker (and likely the identity of the speaker as well). Indeed, regarding the history of homosexual profiling Butler even notes that "the revaluation of terms such as 'queer' suggest that speech can be 'returned' to its speaker in a different form, that it can be cited against its originary purposes, and perform a reversal of effects."²⁹²

Butler's distinctions here are illuminating and useful, but applying them to the historical context of the period following gay liberation demonstrates how difficult it is to make such distinctions *in situ*. For example, many queers attempted to refuse the use of such stereotypical language entirely. These efforts began as early as 1973 in the form of the Gay Task Force. As described by a December 10 article in the *Los Angeles Times*, this group actively sought to change the use of gay stereotypes in popular media:

The stereotypical homosexual, limp of wrist, effeminate in manner, a bitchy remark at the ready, may soon have made his last appearance as a standing joke on television comedy and variety shows. Similarly, his counterpart, the tortured, teary-eyed homosexual, half afraid of living but too scared to die, may be making fewer scenes in dramatic series and films. "Stereotypical people do exist, but if such a minority of any group receives exclusive media exposure, that's bigotry. Until a broad spectrum of the gay community has been stressed on film and the stereotypes are put in perspective, the use of stereotypes is damaging," a coalition of gay activists has argued in a series of meetings with representatives of the entertainment industry begun last month.²⁹³

The list of principles provided by the Gay Task Force actually begins with "Homosexuality isn't funny," follows with, "Fag, faggot, dyke, queer, lezzie, homo, fairy, mary, pansy, sissy, etc., are terms of abuse," as well as, "If all blacks (or Jews, Irish, Chicanos, etc.) were

presented as anguished, oddball or insane, blacks (etc.) would be angry. Gays are angry,” and later makes clear that despite the proposed limits they sought to place on queer representation that “Gay people do not want to return to media invisibility.”²⁹⁴ The problem here, however, is that without the conditions that provided queers visibility (stereotypes), they were not able to be visible in the same way, even as the stereotype had a continued life elsewhere. Butler actually addresses the dilemma of disidentification and the policing of language when she notes:

Imagine the quite plausible scene in which one is called by a name and one turns around only to protest the name: “That is not me, you must be mistaken!” And then imagine that the name continues to force itself upon you, to delineate the space you occupy, to construct a social positionality... One is still constituted by discourse, but at a distance from oneself.²⁹⁵

Stated quite simply, it is impossible to control the use of language by others, as language has a life of its own and constitutes the conditions of visibility of those subject to it.

What is striking about the statement provided by the Gay Task Force is how it disavows camp, not only as a strategy for viable queer discourse but also its overtones and associations with popular consumption at the time. The statement predominantly addresses humorous representations of queers, which, in itself, marks an aversion to camp style. In a sense, this was a very real concern, as homosexuality became the butt of many jokes quickly after Stonewall. For example, the 1973 film *Blazing Saddles* features a musical number (in 1930s “Big White Set” style) called “The French Mistake,” in which Dom DeLuise coaches a group of extremely effeminate male dancers by shouting “WATCH! ME! FAGGOT!” before executing the routine. While the characterization in the number is so broad in its campiness as to be ridiculous (not unlike the meta-commentary on racial stereotypes achieved by much of the rest of the film) it is easy to understand how some might find it offensive. The humor of camp, however, was key in combating the deleterious effects of oppression for queers prior to Stonewall. Richard Dyer describes this ameliorative capacity of camp in his essay, “It’s Being so Camp as Keeps Us Going”:

Camping about has a lot to be said for it. First of all and above all, it’s very us. It is a distinctive way of behaving and of relating to each other that we have evolved. To have a good camp together gives you a tremendous sense of identification and belonging. It is just about the only style, language and culture that is distinctively and unambiguously gay male. One of our greatest problems is that we are cut adrift for most of the time in a world drenched in straightness... Camp is one thing that expresses and confirms being a gay man.”²⁹⁶

The machinations of the Gay Task Force, and especially their attitude toward humor marks a radical divergence from camp humor, and a key component of this is its abandonment of camp terms. One of the striking aspects of the list of edicts is that many of the terms it forbids (i.e. faggot, mary, pansy, etc.) were commonly used among queers before liberation. While this list is a reaction to illocutionary uses of such words to stereotype queers, it simultaneously deactivates the potentially subversive potential of camp terms that could be deployed in a perlocutionary manner. In turn, the stance of the Gay Task Force also renders humor useless as a vehicle for radical social commentary.

The Gay Task Force's crystal clear statement that "Gay people do not want to return to media invisibility" is especially illuminating of the difficulties of reconciling nuanced uses of language or stereotypes to mass media, and also a generational disidentification with camp language generally. The authors of the list clearly understand that by disallowing the use of stereotypes they ran the risk of forgoing queer representation as a whole. While this would not have been a real concern in terms of the longevity of the stereotypes themselves, it could nonetheless make queer representation even more marginal. This statement is not only about visibility generally, however, but the specific visibility of a generation that disidentified with earlier queer generations that were dependent on camp language for social existence. Younger generations of queers who identified with culture of the late 1960s now found themselves in a more liberal environment in terms of queer representation, but this representation to a large degree also relied on stereotypes about a completely different group of queers. This visibility certainly did not result from the efforts of an earlier generation, but instead resulted from a popular interest in homosexuality that was sated by the new function of camp as commodity. Stated more directly, the queers that fought for increased visibility and political recognition found that the latter came through stereotypes with which they had always disidentified, that had little to do with their own culture, but that were nonetheless desired by a mass audience and popularly understood as equivalent with homosexuality.

The difficulty and complexity of the Gay Task Force's situation ultimately points to a shortcoming of Butler's theoretical model for the potential of the perlocutionary, as it largely assumes that speakers are self-willed rather than understood through capitalism and the commercial viability of certain types of identity. While the use of language between individuals who are copresent may provide potential in transcending the history of oppressive language, the same relationship does not exist between a consumer and that which he or she consumes. Even when confronted with a representation that both presents and complicates a stereotype (with perlocutionary intention), an average person who consumes homosexuality whether as a visitor to the Continental Baths or a viewer of television or film would have engaged in this consumption expecting something specific. This desire is given expression by Richard Goldstein's reflections in *New York Magazine* about the affirmation he hoped to receive through gay male sexual attention, and his solipsistic dissatisfaction with what he received. For consumption that requires even less active engagement, it is entirely likely that only the stereotype would be perceived rather than its complication. In short, people largely consume what they already want or understand, and take pleasure in recognizing that which reaffirms their own ideas and dispositions. In turn, it is easy to sympathize with the Gay Task Force's desire to disallow certain language entirely rather than use it with resistant intent.

While the efforts of the Gay Task Force provide a lucid example of the generational disidentification with camp typical to the era, many queers took a less absolute approach to abolish camp even as they sought to temper its effects as a product for consumption. In 1972 Straight Arrow Books, a gay San Francisco press, published *The Queen's Vernacular: A Gay Lexicon* by Bruce Rodgers, a veritable compendium of camp language from earlier decades during the 20th century. Published at a time of profound popular interest in homosexual lifestyles, the book addressed both popular and queer audiences; for the latter, especially younger queers who might have found themselves exposed to camp language without the tools to interpret it. In turn, the book records camp terms, and also indexes the viability of camp as an object for consumption by both queers and straights alike during this

period. Not unlike the advertising campaign for *The Boys in the Band*, the title of the book itself avails of camp language (to immediately understand the title before *A Gay Lexicon* requires a minimal knowledge of camp terms), indicating the transitional viability of the terms it documents. However, when the book was republished by Paragon Books (an imprint of G. P. Putnam's Sons in New York City) in 1979 the title changed to *Gay Talk: A (Sometimes Outrageous) Dictionary of Gay Slang*, leaving no doubt to the average reader what the book contained. As part of the shifted address to a predominantly popular audience, the cover design and typeface changed from the modernist severity of Helvetica to a friendlier serif style, although both books shared solid fuchsia backgrounds. (Figures 6 and 7) Other than the superficial changes of title and cover design, there is no difference between the two books, suggesting both that the volume was considered a novelty money maker by Putnam's that didn't require revision, and also that there simply wasn't any more camp language to document—that camp as a social practice was no longer vital. Despite the ostensible death of camp language, the republication of the book and its repackaging demonstrate the popular interest in camp, the equivalence of camp with commodity rather than social practice, and the broadening of the commercial viability of camp to a wider audience as the decade progressed. Furthermore, the books are symptomatic of the peculiar bind in which queers now found themselves in regard to camp: while camp language held no viability as a strategy to gain public, political territory, it nonetheless provided what a popular audience desired from queers as entertainment and commodity. And while the ostensible educational value of the volume might illuminate popular perceptions of queers, the change in presentation of the later volume presents the book more as a novelty rather than a serious (if nonetheless entertaining) effort to inform.

Running throughout the different approaches to queer visibility during this era is the gradual solidification of a unified queer political body. While this tendency is especially visible in the aims and tone of the Gay Task Force, it is given even greater expression later in the decade with the establishment of the “National Gay Leadership Conference.” In 1977, the National Gay Leadership Conference voted to form a “national network of gay-related radio and television programs.”²⁹⁷ The spatial, territorializing agenda is on clear display in a memo from Gay Electronic Media Services that relays the decisions made at the conference, at one point stating that the intent of such an endeavor is “to form a giant piece of machinery, [so that] we can tame those Americans who aren't understanding, and we [can] also benefit our gay brothers and sisters by up-to-date information.”²⁹⁸ Quasi-militarized in tone, the memo makes clear the strategic aims of those who controlled queer media at the time, and their efforts to gain territory as fully speaking, politicized citizens. What is ironic about this task, however, is that it advances the aims of a group of queers who were not necessarily representative of the entire queer population—indeed many queers remained closeted during this time, and did not desire further exposure or strengthened pressure to “come out.”

The crafting of an illusory, unified queer body relied to a great extent on locating queer political struggle within actual bodies. The location of struggle within the body was especially important during this period, as queers had been largely spectral in the previous decade, and the rhetorical power of an actual speaking body was far greater for a general audience than statements of an ostensibly unified (yet illusory and intangible) queer caucus, even if such statements were ultimately the same. For example, a memo from the “Gay Media Alliance” from November 12, 1979 recommends that viewers watch the following program and “then call his/her local station about it”:

The program "...is not about those who are hiding their sexual preferences." In [Fred Goldhaber, the president of the Gay Media Alliance]'s opinions, "this makes this program a significant pro-gay event." "This is an important program," Goldhaber said, "which features only lesbians and gay men talking about themselves, their experiences and their feelings about being gay." The program has no narration at all, and there are no attempts at "professional" overviews or other heterosexual intrusions... Unfortunately there are no militant gay activists speaking or demonstrating in the program. However, the people who do speak generally do a good job.²⁹⁹

The statement is striking for a number of reasons, but especially for the way in which it makes clear the equivalence of public speaking about homosexuality with a gay agenda, and even indicates that "those who are hiding their sexual preferences" are "anti-gay" in their reticence to present a speaking queer body. This statement reveals the rhetorical value of an actual queer body in presenting an inherent political agenda that was generally shared by the Gay Media Alliance, even if the nuances of their agenda were lost. The problem in presenting a body in lieu of a political argument is that it relies on essentialism in order to make a political point, placing the burden of representation and political struggle onto a specific person rather than targeting responsibility outward and pointing to social oppression more generally. This dilemma of political representation is ultimately related to the process that queers underwent as they abandoned camp language and came on scene as subjects; without first being visible, it would be impossible to gain political territory. However, this also required queers to assume the political values and means of speaking that were available to them, rather than charting territory of their own.

Ultimately, this emphasis on the body is similar to the condition described by Laura Mulvey in her foundational psychoanalytic feminist essay, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema." While Mulvey focuses specifically on the role of women in upholding patriarchal order, noting that "the paradox of phallogentrism in all its manifestations is that it depends on the image of the castrated woman to give order and meaning to its world," her more general argument about the signifiatory capacity of women and their position in hegemonic practices of visuality can be applied to other, marginalized populations. For example, Jacqueline Stewart in her book *Migrating to the Movies: Cinema and Black Urban Modernity* has applied Mulvey's account of viewer relations and looks as "a framework for understanding how Blackness is not only figured in social terms but also structured within the dominant cinema's developing looking relations."³⁰⁰ Alternately, I focus on the relationship that Mulvey traces between the female body and language. The central dilemma described by Mulvey is ultimately one of signification and the ability of women to speak for themselves within a phallogentric linguistic order:

Either [the woman] must gracefully give way to the word, the Name of the Father and the Law, or else struggle to keep her child down with her in the half-light of the imaginary. Woman then stands in patriarchal culture as signifier for the male other, bound by a symbolic order in which man can live out his phantasies and obsessions through linguistic command by imposing them on the silent image of woman still tied to her place as bearer of meaning, not maker of meaning... [This position] gets us nearer to the roots of our oppression, it brings an articulation of the problem closer, it faces us with the ultimate challenge: how to fight the unconscious structured like a

language (formed critically at the moment of arrival of language) while still caught with within the language of the patriarchy. There is no way in which we can produce an alternative out of the blue, but we can begin to make a break by examining patriarchy with the tools it provides, of which psychoanalysis is not the only but an important one.³⁰¹

While the psychoanalytic position adopted by Mulvey is specific to the female condition, the tyranny of patriarchal linguistic order is nonetheless applicable to queers. Indeed, many of the circumstances described by Mulvey apply to the circumstances in which queers found themselves in the 1970s, especially the marketing of homosexuality to a heteronormative audience through musical performance at the Continental Baths, etc. Already structured into a specific position through language and consumption, what other alternative did queers have than to adopt the terms of the oppressor “while still caught within the language of the patriarchy?”

As Mulvey makes clear, there is no simple way to correct the oppression of the patriarchal order, as “there is no way in which we can produce an alternative out of the blue.” The problem with queer responses to self-representation that began in the 1970s is not that it did not yield an alternative, but instead that they were not appropriately self-conscious about the way they replicated patriarchal expectations about the nature of queer subjectivity and its overly direct expression in the body; i.e. the conflation of physical bodies with ideological and linguistic bodies. Rather than “examining patriarchy with the tools it provides,” the strategies of the Gay Task Force, the Gay Media Alliance, and the Gay Leadership Conference willfully adopted representational strategies that appealed to hegemonic conceptions of the nature of homosexuality. For example, the mandates suggested by the Gay Task Force for homosexual representation focus on the characterization of queer individuals rather than point outward to the conditions of their visibility. In a similar way, the program described by the Gay Media Alliance features, “lesbians and gay men talking about themselves, their experiences and their feelings about being gay,” ostensibly to present persuasive, sympathetic queer individuals in an effort to increase awareness of queer subjective experience, rather than delineate and critique the oppressive conditions that inform such existence.

The essentialist solidification of queer sensibilities within coherent queer bodies found remarkable expression within politicized discourse on queer relationships with music. To a large extent, a fondness or affinity with music and performance was naturalized within queer discourse as uniquely expressive of queer subjectivity. For example, although Dyer takes pains in his essay “In Defense of Disco” to foreground Disco music as a form of commodified entertainment “that has been taken up by gays in ways that may well not have been intended by its producers,” he nonetheless proceeds to describe the ways that disco can encourage resistant behavior within this queer community and society at large.³⁰² Dyer focuses specifically on disco’s relation to eroticism and romanticism, and ways in which it might actually correct the effects of capitalism to allow more authentic queer expressions of “whole body eroticism,” and remind its consumers of “an alternative to work and to society as it is,” a suspiciously utopian turn.³⁰³ The tendency to solidify specific forms of music as uniquely queer took greatest hold, however, within queer ethnomusicology, and markedly within the output of the path-breaking academic Philip Brett. Brett is best known for his work on gay composer Benjamin Britten, and is largely credited with bringing him out of the closet. In his essay “Britten and Grimes” from 1977, Brett not only performs a queer reading

of the opera *Peter Grimes* through narrative and musical analysis, but grounds this analysis firmly in Grimes's biography. The essay begins with a description of Britten's brief sojourn to the United States, and then states that, "the opera *Peter Grimes* has an intimate connection with the composer's decision to go back," in the way it concerns, "a man who is persecuted because he is different."³⁰⁴ Brett slowly builds a case for the importance of biography before establishing the composer's sexuality by noting that, "if Britten had been black, or had been a woman composer, he might well have addressed himself to the oppression of these groups," before directly arguing, "there is every reason to suppose that the unspoken matter is what in 1945 was still the crime that hardly dare speak its name, and that it is to the homosexual condition that *Peter Grimes* is addressed."³⁰⁵ Brett soon strengthens his case by offering counterexamples about the artistic output of British homosexuals and Christopher Isherwood and E. M. Forster as evidence that, "every homosexual man, and in particular the artist, needs to come to terms with himself as well as society, and settle the linked questions of 'roots' and sexuality in order to live, to grow, and to work fruitfully," before closing with the decisive statement that "*Grimes* served as a catharsis, purging [the] agony and terror" of Britten's decision to remain and work in England as a closeted gay man. Brett was writing at a time at which the status of Britten as homosexual was not by any means widely accepted, and as such he had to tread carefully, which accounts for his delicate rhetorical footwork: it is far easier to argue to a mass audience that an artwork should be considered queer if one can state definitively that its author was also queer. The problem, however, is that the crux of Brett's argument rests on unsubstantiated inferences about Britten's inner desires and drives, specifically those which animated the writing of *Peter Grimes* (though he would later write extensively about much of Britten's oeuvre). As such, the ultimate reason that *Peter Grimes* is gay (according to Brett) is that Britten himself was gay, rather than the also-cited thematization by the opera of social oppression and punishment. Brett's maneuver thus solidifies the queerness of the text in the body of its author rather than in how it circulated within culture and amongst queers, which could provide a better index of how the opera held meaning in practice.

Brett's reliance on biography for rhetorical force evolved into an impossible, chiasmatic tension that animated his work, as it attempts to balance both an awareness of social oppression and also the necessity of an exceptional, essential quality that differentiates queers from others. Nowhere is this tension more evident than his essay, "Musicality, Essentialism and the Closet," which was first delivered as a talk in 1990, contemporaneous with the proper solidification of queer theory as an academic field. Brett actually begins the essay with a defense of sorts for essentialism after providing a brief history of the anti-essentialist tendency within work on gender and sexuality, insisting that:

There is of course one major problem with this approach. In an age in which public discourse surrounding homosexuality has become increasingly dominated by right-wing rhetoric, institutionalized philistinism, and AIDS panic, it seems to be a way of encouraging oppression by offering a view of gay identity, and furthermore desire, as merely a cultural production—with the implication that this production can simply be unproduced, erased, silenced.³⁰⁶

While Brett acknowledges the reality that queer discourse is perpetually challenged as legitimate (given especial expression by the resistance of the musicological field to queer voices), it is still nonetheless problematic that he takes an antiessentialist approach to task

not for the grounds of its argument, but instead because of the biases of those to whom such discourse is sometimes addressed. Brett continues to perform a discursive analysis and argues that “musicality” and “homosexuality” have performed similar work in the English language in the twentieth century in how they denote a “deviant” role, even though one is privileged rather than punished.³⁰⁷ Brett continues this line of thought to contend:

The application of a labeling perspective to musicality will moreover allow us—as a first step—to get at some of the otherwise inexplicable questions surrounding music and gay identities. These two things are often associated, and not only in the popular imagination: it is surely no coincidence that among the many code words and phrases for a homosexual man before Stonewall (and even since), “musical” (as in, “Is he ‘musical’ do you think?”) ranked with others such as “friend of Dorothy” as safe insider euphemisms.³⁰⁸

Brett continues on to acknowledge that both musicality and essentialism are imperfect, flawed terms and that “neither label is up to much good,” and then states that, “a lesbian and gay musicology will want to interrogate both terms unceasingly as it re-searches our history, proposes new theories of music, and devises a new pedagogy.”³⁰⁹ Brett’s solution, in practice, is to advocate for a transcendence of language through the generation of “new” terms that might convey the “richness and variety of form of same-sex desire” from a homosexual perspective rather than a heteronormative one.³¹⁰ What is particularly striking about Brett’s manifesto for the field is that it both acknowledges the way in which queers have been bracketed by language and forced into a marginal speaking position, *and also* insists that queers might transcend the repressive machinations of language by creating new terms. The effect of Brett’s argumentation is that his writing is torn between utopianism and grim realism in its attempt to reconcile discourse within and beyond queer circles.

Brett’s position is troubling when viewed against the feminist and queer scholars with whom he ostensibly aligns himself who also work with language, gender and sexuality. Brett’s advocacy for new terminology stands at odds with Laura Mulvey’s characterization of women (and ostensibly other marginalized groups) as, “bearer of meaning, not maker of meaning,” which points to the condition of queers as being constrained within and by language. Similarly, Judith Butler’s work in *Gender Trouble* in which she describes the necessity of appearing within a “grid of intelligibility” so that queers (and others) can be understood by others at all, clashes with the idea that queers might be able to control or generate the terms of their own visibility and legibility. This assumption that queers might willfully determine the conditions of speaking is present not only in Brett’s proposal for new terms to describe queer relationships with music, but also in his earlier argument about the use of “musical” as a camp term to designate a homosexual sensibility. While Brett describes “musical” as a “code” word, he does not consider the conditions that would have allowed such a word to act as code. As I have argued in Chapter 3, camp or code terms such as “musical” act as an index of the public and semipublic spaces in which queers circulated and wished to remain imperceptible to agents of hegemonic power, as a term like “musical” could pass inconspicuously in public generally and especially in musical performance venues. Brett’s suggestion that queers self-selected the word “musical” to designate their own sensibilities overlooks the power relations inherent in such a choice, and, indeed, what compelled queers to develop camp language at all—even if queers did choose the word from a larger lexicon. In his neglect of the omnipresence of power and its relation to language,

Brett effectively reinscribes hegemonic power by normalizing the term and characterizing it as essential to queer subjectivity. While Brett makes this move to present queers as powerful, it also disavows the oppression that he uses to differentiate queers from the general population and undercuts the necessity for the generation of new terms.

While Brett's rhetoric is flawed, it nonetheless makes abundantly clear the complexity of speaking publicly from a queer perspective, and complicates the potential for reclaimed words of oppression to function subversively. While Butler's work in *Excitable Speech* is theoretically sound, it also lacks evidence of applicability in day-to-day life. In turn, while Brett's promotion of what is effectively an essentialist approach to advance queer causes grates against Butler and others who draw from the work of Michel Foucault, it is nonetheless more pragmatic in how it might appeal to the general public and translate to gains in queer visibility and public territory. Brett is practical enough to acknowledge that words derived from a history of oppression are difficult to frame differently by means of the intent of the speaker, and he notes this specifically with the potential for musicality to accrue new meanings considering its history "in the social rituals of a music dominated by personality, media, and marketing."³¹¹ While he only considers the term "homosexual" according to its "overtones of medicalized essentialism," as I have demonstrated queers became marketable remarkably quickly after the Gay Liberation movement, and as such were bracketed by the expectations of consumers. The forces of consumerism and capitalism may not foreclose potential within language, but the distinction between illocutionary and perlocutionary uses of terms of profiling would nonetheless be far more difficult to communicate through a mediated transaction than between speakers who are face to face. In turn, even though Brett's desire for new terms generated by queers is not properly possible, this desire at least acknowledges the difficulty of reclaiming language to alter its effects within a broadened environment where queerness is already imbricated in consumerism. Following this line of thought, Brett's willingness to accept essentializing terms makes queers more visible and agential under hegemony, even if this comes at the cost of accepting the conditions of hegemony wholesale rather than (in the words of Mulvey) "examining patriarchy with the tools it provides" in order to lessen its repressive effects.

Gay Men's Choruses, and the Rearticulation of Gay Musicality

The gay male singing body acted as an important vehicle for the entrance of queers into mainstream society, and the emergence of gay men's choruses in the late 1970s crystallizes many of the countervailing tensions I have described so far in this chapter. Although gay men's choruses created opportunities for queers to speak with illocutionary intent to a broader audience about their relationships with music, this interaction also largely bracketed itself off as commodified entertainment. As such, the potential for resistance within this entertainment to patriarchal and heteronormative conceptions of queers remained fundamentally limited. Furthermore, if a relationship rightly changed through gay men's choruses between queers and the general public, it was that these choruses created a venue in which they could profit from their own market value as queer entertainers and break from heterosexual management.

The emergence of gay men's choruses happened at a moment when the figure of the musical queer signified anachronistically within many queer cultures. This is not to say that music did not remain an important element of queer sociality. Among the many openly queer venues for kinship that emerged post-Liberation, musical societies and themed bars were especially common. Bars, and special nights at bars, frequently referenced queer

attachments to music that had been forged during WWII. For example, a gay and lesbian bar called “The Hollywood Canteen” opened in Los Angeles in the 70s that hosted musical performances practically every night of the week, as demonstrated by a calendar for the venue for January 1978. (Figure 8) Likewise, WWII theme nights were quite common, as with a “Hollywood Canteen” night hosted at a gay bar called Fanny’s that occasioned a “Miss U.S.O. 1944” drag competition. Although from a few years later, a flyer promoting a grand opening event for “ClassicAL* (*Alternative Lifestyles) Music Lovers Network” in Brea (Orange County), California is exemplary of the way that an affiliation with specific forms of music (here “fine music, opera and ballet”) provided an opportunity for queers to find each other in semi-public settings without hiding their sexual identities.

A queer affiliation specifically with musical theater, however, became suspect in the period following Stonewall. Perceived by the younger queer generation that memorialized Stonewall as anachronistic, among many queers the musical became synonymous with the closet. This stereotype is given vivid visual expression in Tom Tierney’s *Attitude: An Adult Paper Doll Book*. The book’s back cover addresses a gay male audience by saying, “So they didn’t let you play with paper dolls when you were a kid. They’ll be sorry,” and its contents comprise several gay types gathered at, “the chic-est shindig given this autumn on the fabulous Manhattan cocktail circuit,” given by “Auntie Mary.” Each type has a corresponding character and its own paper doll, complete (in many cases) with a number of different outfits. There are many theatrical types in the book, including Vic, “a promising actor, painter, Western recording star, Judo expert, and young man-about-town,” and Sammy, “an ex-show-biz gypsy who has found his place as a female impersonator.”³¹² What is striking about the crew assembled in *Attitude*, however, is that despite the book’s replication of a stereotypical pre-Liberation milieu (i.e. affluent, white, urban, and artistic), the majority of these individuals are now openly allied with the production of entertainment rather than its consumption, indicating an important shift in queer self-perception as a visible maker rather than invisible consumer. In turn, the only person allied with theatrical consumption is George, described as follows: “This is George. He is a Madison Avenue advertising director. He thinks “big,” but does some of his best work in a closet. George loves the theatre and visiting out of the way tea rooms.” (Figure 9) This representational contradiction—*Attitude* makes abundant use of camp humor, terms and milieu, but also distances itself from the specter of the closet—speaks to the fragility and contradictory nature of queer entry into mainstream society post-Stonewall. Within this newfound space of visibility and self-expression queers had to market themselves using camp and simultaneously distance themselves from the linguistic attitudes to remain largely imperceptible that engendered camp in the first place.

Gay men’s choruses emerged in the late 1970s and at first functioned as social clubs, but quickly began to gear their concerts to a more general audience. As recounted by Mischa Schutt, longtime member of the Los Angeles Gay Men’s Chorus (LAGMC), the first meeting happened in 1979 as a community organization and the first concert was dedicated to songs that were uniquely relevant to the queers who took part. These songs included those that referenced time spent in the military, for example “Stout Hearted Men,” as well those with camp value from the spectatorship of theatrical and movie musicals, for example “We Kiss in a Shadow” from *The King and I*.³¹³ By 1980, gay men’s choruses could be found throughout the US, including organizations in Chicago, Sacramento, Washington D.C., and no fewer than 3 musical groups in San Francisco and four in New York City.

What is remarkable, however, is how quickly these organizations shifted to address a broader audience in the early 1980s. 1981 was a bellwether year in which the LAGMC began to require that its participants be able to match pitch, marking a movement toward the professional musical group the organization has become.³¹⁴ More enterprisingly, the San Francisco Gay Men's Chorus (SFGMC) embarked on an international tour and issued a recording the same year. (Figure 10) The recording features tracks that stake out homosexual musical space from a range of perspectives, both popular and rarefied. For example, the record includes popular songs from the historical queer canon including "We Kiss in a Shadow" and "Stouthearted Men," as well a song by Schubert and queer lyrics anachronistically set to music by Jean Sibelius. The underlying rhetoric of the recording is to lay queer claim to well-known music that, for decades, had been played in spaces as diverse as homes, clubs, concert halls and operas, and demonstrate the importance of queer contributions to musical culture.

While the strategic, territorializing agenda of SFGMC is unambiguous, it is also important to remember the exceptional circumstances under which these actions took place in lockstep with the onset of the HIV epidemic. Viewed in retrospect, a benefit orgy titled "Cum for the Chorus" held by the SFGMC to fund their 1981 tour takes on added meaning. (Figure 11) The nature of the event itself demonstrates the role the chorus continued to play within the community, deflating any doubt that at the time the organization was a vital locus for homosexual cathexis. What is unfortunate and poignant about the flyer, however, is the knowledge that even a year later such an event would likely not occur as the epidemic spread quickly throughout queer communities in the US, and especially in San Francisco. The outward turn of the SFGMC, likewise, takes on added meaning as an attempt to present homosexuality as palatable and sympathetic to a mass audience at the same time that the US government under Reagan actively disenfranchised queer communities and refused to prioritize HIV research.³¹⁵ In turn, gay men's choruses assumed an important role in fostering palatable queer visibility, and they inherently promoted queers as sympathetic citizens through the singing bodies of gay men.

In the 1980s the singing gay male body—through the gay men's chorus—provided material expression for the many stereotypes that had circulated since the 1960s and earlier about the close ties between gay men, musicality and misfortune. This legibility was crucial and hailing the general population as a sympathetic audience for the queer cause, as it presented queers not as accusatory, politically strident activists (in the style of ACT UP), but rather as friendly faces that delivered reassuring, marketable entertainment. This tension between outright activism and entertainment is manifest in a flyer sent out in Fall of 1984 by the SF Lesbian/Gay Chorus, which notes that they, "took to the road for the Lesbian/Gay Pride parade... and our aching feet proved once and for all that we'd rather sing than march."³¹⁶ Elsewhere the document inherently disavows the gravity of the epidemic (which remains a spectral context nonetheless) by describing the organization's future in the community: "As the never-ending flight of future days continues, we'll be growing, singing and keeping you informed. We want to be an important part of your future, and we know it'll be brighter because of the music."³¹⁷ As the decade continued, gay men's choruses continued to present an upbeat tone and catered to popular tastes, and especially the by-then anachronistic (at least within queer circles) association of gay men with musical theater. For example, the same program highlights the upcoming "Lullaby of Broadway" concert that presented "a selection of our favorites from the best Broadway musicals ever produced," and added, "we know they're your favorites, too."³¹⁸ Likewise, a 1983 concert

given by the Chicago Gay Men's Chorus featured music from *The Wizard of Oz*, *Company*, *The Fantasticks*, and *South Pacific*, and a 1988 concert titled "Showtime!" given by the New Orleans Gay Men's Chorus featured songs from *Bye Bye Birdie*, *The Pajama Game*, *42nd Street*, and many standards by Irving Berlin and Cole Porter.³¹⁹

Returning to Judith Butler's argument in *Excitable Speech*, the problem here is not that there is not potential in the movement from illocutionary to perlocutionary speech, only that the contexts in which this might occur are rarely supportive of such fine distinctions. As exemplified by the hollowing out of camp in the late 60s and early 70s, its subsequent marketing, and the entrance of gay men's choruses into a capitalist system where they were already bracketed through a specific point of view, it is difficult if not impossible for marginalized populations to break from the conditions of their own visibility and legibility within mainstream culture. Butler's earlier work in *Gender Trouble* complicates her position in *Excitable Speech*, as it is remarkably difficult to shirk the bracketing effects of the "grid of intelligibility" that allows entry into society. What is especially ironic about the specific history of Gay Men's Choruses in the late 70s and early 80s is that the perlocutionary rearticulation of queer attachments to music did nothing to combat the stereotypes. Instead, such rearticulation provided a strategic launching point for greater acceptance within mainstream culture by conforming to popular expectations and packaging and selling queer entertainment that was perceived to be "authentic" even as it was also largely disavowed by queers. This is not to suggest that the effect Butler suggests is possible through perlocutionary utterance, only that the positions in which marginalized populations find themselves are always already severely limited, and, as such, provide little substantive "progress" towards equitable subjecthood even as they might instill an expanded awareness within a few individuals.

Within the performing arts, this legacy of packaging homosexual tastes and entertainment for a mainstream audience resulted in an eventual disavowal of meaningful or historical queer identity, and this virtual erasure is manifest especially in *After Dark* in the early 1980s. The August 1980 issue marks a transition for the publication, with a newly styled front cover and an editorial decision to discontinue male nudes within the publication's pages. The issue's letter from the editor treads a delicate line between acknowledging the gay readership of the magazine and attempting to court a broader audience:

Magazines are a reflection of the editors who put them together, the advertisers who seek a marketplace for their products, and, especially, the readers who faithfully purchase them... "Informed," "Upscale," "Well-groomed" and "Pleasure-loving" are adjectives that have been used in marketing studies to identify the *After Dark* reader... *After Dark* also has a large gay readership. It was surprising, therefore, and inexplicable to many people when reports (in the "gay" and "straight" media) noted that *After Dark* was going "straight." The assumption that the elimination of male nudes in *After Dark* would make it a "straight" publication represents a narrow-minded perspective that defines gays as exclusively sexual beings... The most significant progress the gay liberation movement has made in the last decade is to lift gays out of this tunnel-vision mentality and into a larger awareness as whole and creative individuals... It is within this larger context that *After Dark* addresses itself to the gay community specifically, and to the world at large. However socially and

politically aware it must be, *After Dark* is first and foremost the national magazine of entertainment...³²⁰

What is striking about the letter is its inherent admission that the elimination of male nudes might alienate some gay readers, but also its indirect argument that such gays are not sufficiently politically progressive. Stated differently, the magazine rationalized queer disenfranchisement through queer political struggle that sought to integrate homosexuals within the larger population. The problem is that *After Dark* had always relied on the prurient interest of its readers, and the changes led to a loss of subscribers (not unlike the eventual shuttering of the Continental Baths when it attempted to reach a heterosexual audience). The longevity of gay men's choruses provides an instructive and striking counter example, in that the organizations *themselves* profited from their own catering to mainstream tastes; their territorializing actions were more strategic.

In closing, I wish to stress that while I have written extensively in this chapter about the normalizing capacities that musical affiliation had for queer populations in the US in the late 20th century, I mean to provide greater context for this tendency rather than criticize it directly. Indeed, why would it be fair to criticize a disenfranchised, ailing population for making canny use of stereotypes to gain political favor and governmental support? While the effects rendered through the strategic use of musical stereotypes might be criticized as "conformist" or likened to minstrelsy, these were *survival* tactics. Furthermore it is unclear what substantive benefit there would have been for queers had such strategies not been employed, though it is easy to speculate about the potential losses. In highlighting this tension it has been my desire to demonstrate the complexity of the situation that queers faced post-Stonewall, in which they both had to conform to and resist popular stereotypes about gay musicality.

The problem is not so much in the actions of "assimilating" queers as much as expectations within academia that queers are by nature exceptional and unique, different from other populations. I contend that this is wishful thinking, and thinking that furthermore had a decisive political use as queers came on scene as political subjects in the 1970s. As I have demonstrated in this chapter, assumptions about queer uniqueness, or an ineffable, essential quality possessed by queers (given expression through music, etc.) expanded queer visibility and political agency by assuming and naturalizing hegemonic expectations about queer subjectivity. In effect, the strategies of both queer academics and gay men's choruses availed upon hegemonic expectations to advance queer political presence through notions of an essential affiliation between queers and musical entertainment.

The necessity of queer difference, exceptionalism, and essentialism is a fallacy, one that furthermore stands in the way of recognizing the similarities between queers and other marginalized groups. Like racialized others, women, and the disabled, queers enter into discourse already burdened by expectations about their nature, aptitudes and interests. And as stressed by Laura Mulvey, "there is no way in which we can produce an alternative out of the blue," and create one's own conditions of visibility and legibility. Nonetheless, it is important to work to find the weaknesses within the system so that "we can begin to make a break by examining patriarchy with the tools it provides." This historical framework provided in this chapter is meant to encourage discourse in this direction, and contribute to recent trends within gender and sexuality studies that question the foundational assumptions of the field. In so doing, it is my hope that future scholarship will develop a more ethical relationship to its subjects that is more mindful of the complicity of assumptions about

queer difference with histories of repression, surveillance and punishment, and, more generally, hegemonic expectations about queers.

Chapter 5: The Musical and Figural Potential

Following on the heels of Chapter 4 and its emphasis on the speedy and open assimilation of queer identity into capitalist values via musical stereotypes, it may seem that there is little left to explore or that the present status of queer identity is a foregone conclusion absent of political potential. In many ways this is a valid viewpoint, at least when considering the relationship between popular discourse on queer musicality and its relationship to queer visibility (as this chapter will examine). What is substantially different, however, is the terrain on which this discourse takes shape. Without making unnecessary generalizations, one can say that digital networks have changed fundamentally ideas of spatial proximity and distance, the experience of temporal duration, and forms of sociality that rely on technological mediation rather than physical or even temporal co-presence. As detailed heretofore, these are all basic conditions that determined the daily actions and social practices of queers in the 20th century. The necessity of physical movement throughout and between different spaces in cities gave rise to strategies to manage the potential forms of punishment (social, corporal, juridical, etc.) that might result from public recognition of queer identity. The strategies I have described most extensively are the development of coded, camp language and an outward affiliation with musical consumption and performance to appear as a normative citizen. In turn, these practices became sedimented into power relations and language through popular stereotypes that were used to profile queers in public spaces before liberation and also make queers visible thereafter. What happens, however, when the very conditions of spatial proximity and physical visibility that engendered the expression of queer identity (by queers and heteronormative citizens alike) change dramatically?

Chapter 5 responds to the preceding question by exploring a range of contexts in the 2010s that concern both the practice of queers and the formation of discourses about them. These include (among others) the continued use of a fondness for musical entertainment as a metonym for homosexuality, the unsettling of urban circulation as the fundamental context for queer experience, and the effect of digital technologies on affective social practices. The central text of the chapter, however, is a viral video from 2010 that features several US soldiers stationed in Afghanistan dancing to Lady Gaga's song, "Telephone." The reception of the video online and the way that viewers elaborated its purported homosexual connotations opens onto many questions at the heart of what has changed on a digital terrain. These questions are many, including: how might the creation of discourse in a virtual rather than physical space grow resistance to hegemonic authority? What is the relation of viral content (that which becomes popular and spreads across social networks rapidly) to the reader's drive to create meaning? How do musical homosexual stereotypes circulate and hold meaning in an era far removed from that which engendered them? And does the digital provide political potential for musical content generally?

My desire to interrogate this final question leads me to change my approach in this chapter compared to the previous chapters, and engage in more formal and theoretical exploration. To be clear, this chapter remains rigorously historical. The reason for the change in approach is not to end this project on a "positive" note (if my thoroughly qualified claims might even qualify as such), but rather because the subject material demands a conceptual shift. The history of human interaction and exchange cannot (and should not) be approached with the same tools when it occurs on a physical terrain as when it is mediated by nonhuman networks and protocols. The key shift for this chapter is that it begins to

inquire about the role of nonhuman networks in facilitating discourse, which, in turn, requires an attention to a different set of concerns. The shift to predominantly electronic networks for growing, shaping and consolidating discourse fundamentally changes the potentials for human interaction. This chapter represents a desire to understand better how this interaction is different, and what potentials might be opened by yielding to nonhuman protocol for interaction and the creation of discourse.

Sociality Queered and Queer Sociality

Considering the ways that digital media have shifted forms of relationality requires a more detailed exploration of contemporary musical reception. The circulation of music via digital media perpetuates many of the spatiotemporal patterns that have been discussed previously, but in some ways also drastically reconfigures them. Popular song exists as both independent sonorous information and also attached to visual forms, and as such it can be heard via radio, music recordings, digital music sites such as Spotify, Mog, and Pandora, and also tethered to films, television shows, and music videos. In terms of reception, people can experience the same song privately at home or in the car, in public venues such as cinemas, performance spaces, and as ambient background information in spaces such as lobbies and shopping centers, and in semi-private spaces with friends. What is different, however, is the spatiotemporal disparity that now characterizes interactions in the latter sphere. Whereas the former modes of reception largely depend on a phenomenal experience predicated on presence, interaction with others around specific musical texts often is mediated digitally and at a spatial distance. Socialization that happens around music now often takes place on a different timescale that is virtual even if it can be measured using empirical tools, and that substitutes asynchronous (digital) interaction for temporally continuous engagement (analog).

Queer identity in the US has always involved a certain degree of spatial tension (the pressure of heteronormative posing in the office, on the street, in the military, or in the concert hall before liberation, and also pressure to present oneself as legibly queer thereafter), but in previous media epochs the relationship between space and time wasn't fractured in the same way. While asynchronous contact may have been common through letter writing, much queer sociality relied on mutual copresence in spaces such as private clubs and homes and via coded communication in mixed public and semipublic settings. While digital media have not upset dramatically queer paradigms that privilege urban cosmopolitanism over bucolic rusticity, they have expanded the potential forms of queer sociality for those living in both types of locales. As explored by Mary Gray in *Out in the Country: Youth, Media, and Queer Visibility in Rural America*, widespread access to representations of queers and news related to their legal struggles has encouraged LGBT youth living in rural areas to attempt to change their settings to make them more tolerant of sexual difference.³²¹ In her analyses, Gray focuses on interactions queers have with digital social media that are directed at the local communities in Kentucky and Tennessee in which she spent time, such as websites for local queer pride groups.³²² Such sites effectively function as a form of virtual heterotopia that enables the negotiation of one's local environment, but that also actually engage directly with that space by organizing meetings and disseminating pro-LGBT messages with the intent of changing these environments. What Gray largely ignores, however, are the modes of sociality that digital media encourage that are directed outward with no clear interlocutor or recipient. Indeed, in her book Gray doesn't mention or interrogate YouTube, the video-sharing site, as a crucial locus for queer

sociability. This is especially surprising because Chris Crocker—perhaps the most recognizable icon of queer rural youth due to his YouTube celebrity—hails from Tennessee. Crocker became famous at the age of 19 when his video, “Leave Britney Alone!” went viral, amassing millions of views over the course of a couple of days after it was posted on September 10, 2007.³²³ Prior to this, however, Crocker had developed a smaller Internet following due in part to an extended profile of him in the popular blog *The Stranger* in May of the same year.³²⁴

Crocker exemplifies the ways that social networking dramatically alters potentials for queer sociality in an era shaped by digital communications. Digital social media both transcend and reinforce paradigms of physical location for queers, increasing awareness and knowledge of an inaccessible world at large and at the same time making proximate, face-to-face contact more difficult. Albeit hyperbolic, the video Crocker made for *The Stranger* for Seattle’s 2007 gay pride festivities speaks directly to the uncomfortable living conditions rendered by a preference for virtual rather than physical sociality. Over the course of the video Crocker displays a rainbow-hued cupcake and addresses the camera directly while underneath a blanket, his surroundings reinforcing the suffocating atmosphere in which he lives. Crocker goes on to spit out such one-liners as, “And Stonewall? Never heard of it. I’m from the South and we don’t catch wind of these things. We don’t read about this in our textbooks at school. Maybe I’ll Google it,” and, “The only gay pride parade where I live is in my bedroom. We don’t have pride and rainbows here. We have MySpace. We don’t have bathhouses. We have outhouses.”³²⁵ Much of Crocker’s posturing in this video is deliberately polemical and overblown; he obviously knows what Stonewall refers to, and the vision of the South he draws—replete with outhouses—speaks to urban fantasies of underdeveloped rural areas than what tended to exist there in 2007. The necessity and impossibility of digital forms of sociality as a means to escape or transcend his surroundings are both on the surface and buried. The search engine Google, though offered scornfully in his monologue, functions as the repository of information that speaks to other possible existences, much like the social networking site MySpace stands for a form of sociality that reinforces his own identity even as it fails to incorporate it into his physical encounters.

What is ironic in this video is that Crocker indeed had faith in the ability of digital sociality to change his day-to-day life, and this belief deferred his departure from childhood surroundings that grew more hostile daily. The profile of him that had previously appeared in the blog speaks directly to Crocker’s shrewd use of the Internet to change his life radically:

Most young men like Chris, at loggerheads with their families and unwelcome in their communities, quickly give up. They either adapt to a closeted lifestyle or they run off to a big city, locate that city’s gay neighborhood, take a job in a coffee shop or bar or theater, and start anew. Chris may still do that. He’s given himself until mid-June, the anniversary of his first Internet video, to leverage enough money and opportunity out of his Internet fame to escape his small town. If that doesn’t work, he says, he’ll consider doing something more old-fashioned, like buying a bus ticket. Ironically, the Internet is the reason he didn’t run away long ago. It’s been a salve for his isolation, and improving communication technologies (the cell phone, the digital camera, the text message) have helped Chris thwart, at every turn, his grandparents’ attempts to keep him distant from a gay life.³²⁶

Rather than follow the path that most young queers have taken in a historical period defined by analog media and move posthaste to the nearest big city, Crocker instead stuck around for the potential offered by the virtual world of digital sociality. While this quote emphasizes that digital forms of kinship can offer a means to mitigate one's current situation, it also makes clear that for Crocker they have also had the effect of protracting it. Instead of changing his surroundings and leaving, he chose to stay because he could manage the pain of everyday life via online encounters and because these affective ties led him, in turn, to prioritize digital celebrity over the immediate—if “old-fashioned”—change a bus ticket would bring.

More jarring, later in the profile it becomes evident that Crocker prioritizes the virtual, affective world of the internet even as he recognizes that it could make his escape from rural Tennessee impossible, or at the very least delay it. The profile was written at a moment of perceived imminent widespread celebrity (something that never fully came to fruition), and Crocker had been approached by a television producer to shoot a reality show in his grandparents' house, meaning that he wouldn't actually be able to leave a home he refers to as “real bitch island.” Crocker would be willing to do this despite the fact that he had lived under the constant threat of physical harm since middle school, a condition that only became more extreme as he gained internet notoriety. Crocker eventually made it out propelled mostly by the numerous television talk show appearances that “Leave Britney Alone!” afforded and sustained by a revenue sharing program on YouTube for ad sales. However, he has never fully become a celebrity beyond the Internet, with an abandoned music career and a brief, highly publicized stint in porn.

Chris Crocker's digitally networked persona provides an exceptional case study for what is a much more widespread phenomenon: the use of digital communications to create affective support networks at odds with one's everyday life. While I have focused on queers, this is in no way a phenomenon exclusive to them. In more general terms, Crocker's situation is characteristic of what Sherry Turkle describes as “the collaborative self” in her book *Alone Together*. According to Turkle, a psychodynamic therapist who has written about human interaction with technologies since the 1980s, mobile communications devices and social networking have changed fundamentally the developmental psychological processes that concern emotional attachment. In general terms, Turkle argues that children who come of age in the current media environment develop a sense of self that is “always on,” tethered, networked and poorly adapted to using older therapeutic means because they “[do] not have the experience with only him or herself to count on.”³²⁷ The danger for Turkle is that this arrangement results in a less stable sense of self that relies on constant outside reinforcement to sustain ego ideal, whether via constant texting or constant exchange on social networking sites. What interests me more generally, however, is how “the collaborative self” is uniquely suited to appeal to those burdened with forms of social difference who find themselves in uncomfortable physical surroundings. Returning to Crocker, while it is clear he used social media pragmatically to change his situation (eventually), it is also evident that he relied on and was sustained by the emotional and relational aspects of social networking. Had Crocker not had access to the network he developed online through his YouTube persona, it is difficult to believe that he would have remained in Tennessee as long as he did.

Like Crocker, the potential for online recognition and affective connections via YouTube or other video hosting and sharing sites inspires many people to create and share their own videos, and they often borrow or remake the form or content from an object that is

already well-known so as to be legible more readily to others. For many, this takes the form of the “remake” video, that quotes or makes over a well known music video or audiovisual sequence to create humor or stir another affective response in viewers. The citationality that characterizes the general category of the remake video provides a context for random viewers of the video who stumble upon it, or are directed to it by YouTube in the site’s margins or on the screen after a different video has ended. The remake—inclusive of content that is known primarily online as well as across other media—is thus an exceptionally well-suited form to accommodate both the expectations of viewers of YouTube and the site’s user interface. For example, “Leave Britney Alone” inspired a number of remakes that went viral (or achieved a very high view count) including actor Seth Green’s “Leave Chris Crocker Alone!” and *nationallampoon.com*’s “LEAVE CHRIS CROCKER ALONE! Britney Spears Responds.”³²⁸ Thematic re-edits of well-known film trailers also fit into this phenomenon, such as the trailer for “Scary Mary” that shifts the genre of the Disney family film *Mary Poppins* (Stevenson, 1964) from fantasy to horror by decontextualizing some of the film’s effects and adding an atmospheric soundtrack, and “The Shining Recut” that does the opposite by turning Kubrick’s horror film *The Shining* (1980) into family-appropriate romantic comedy by adding a chipper voice over, retitling the film “Shining,” and editing out the film’s macabre themes.³²⁹ What subtends all of these examples is that they work from an extensive pool of collective knowledge: the joke is lost if the viewer is unfamiliar with the original text, whether it is Crocker’s video or *Mary Poppins*.

The remake video operates through and in relation to the vast resources of the Internet as a source of information that is widely accessible, and parallels camp practices from earlier media epochs. “The collaborative self” describes an affective, relational structure for subjectivity, and the Internet and its contents provide the logistical terrain and mechanical tools (via sites like YouTube) to facilitate it. Videos such as “Scary Mary” that create new, potentially subversive meanings for widely known texts demonstrate that remake culture is much like older forms of queer sociality that required a privileged knowledge of both the denotative and connotative meanings of a given text. For example, contemporary remake culture is similar to queer camp practices that relied on a strategy of appropriation to provide their affective punch—such as the persistent popularity of the song “We Kiss in a Shadow” from *The King and I* for gay men’s choruses in the late 70s (discussed in Chapter 4) as both a means to acknowledge life in the closet before Stonewall as well as thereafter. Moreover, for many users of YouTube, the remake—not unlike queer consumer practices around sheet music—provides an opportunity to exert an influence on products of popular culture that they might otherwise be excluded from.

One of the most enduring genres of the remake is the video that adapts and quotes the audiovisual styling of a well-known music video, or simply pictures someone singing a popular song. Many vocal artists and songwriters have launched or built careers—with varying degrees of success—by growing a large base of followers and viewers on YouTube for videos they post of themselves singing or playing music. David Choi and Mia Rose are examples of individuals who have launched careers on YouTube, whereas Sara Niemietz has used it to advance her career on the stage and screen.³³⁰ What Choi, Rose, and Niemietz have in common is that their most-viewed videos on the site are covers of popular songs, not videos highlighting their own material. For example, Niemietz’s most-viewed video is a cover of singer Adele’s 2010 hit “Rolling in the Deep” and her next most popular is another Adele cover for “Set Fire to the Rain”.³³¹ Popularity for these users—who are also normatively attractive, if not racially homogenous—comes as a result of them conforming to

popular tastes established predominantly in other, more rigidly controlled and monetized media.

Viral success via the remake becomes more complex, however, for those who don't adhere to normative standards of beauty, gendered performance, or otherwise fit within a widely palatable range of difference. Whereas successful popular music stars on YouTube usually have images that are groomed and prepped for public attention, anyone is able to post a video. In turn, YouTube users who occupy marginal social positions tend to receive more hostile, pointed, and dehumanizing responses than those who conform to accepted norms. For example, user "nanaluvstroubles," an obese woman who sings covers of pop songs that are difficult to hear and follow the source material with limited fidelity, has achieved greater YouTube celebrity than the previously mentioned users with very simple videos that are extended close-ups of her face. Her most popular cover is for Katy Perry's "E.T." but rather than admiration the video largely solicits extremely negative comments that focus on her weight and inability to sing.³³² For example, GTAwizzo123's suggestion, "learn to sing and go to weight watchers u fat bitch," (sic) and the altogether dehumanizing directive from 123456lappen to "kill it before it lays eggs!!" (sic). Another user with the name "PhatGayKid," a young man who appears husky and flamboyantly gay, and speaks in a very high, nasal voice, beats commenters to the punch by performing in a way that deliberately hyperbolizes his body size and apparent homosexuality. To illustrate, his remake of the video for Lady Gaga's "Alejandro"—according to Gaga a song that thematizes her love of gay men who don't return her interest—reverses the roles, and the video's maker pursues a fit, muscular, apparently heterosexual man to no avail.³³³ "PhatGayKid's" performance of homosexuality is so over-the-top that it has led some to question the verity of his identity; whether or not he actually is gay (or, perhaps more likely, so demonstratively "gay"), he understands that a specific version of homosexuality has a greater exchange value with a broad audience than one that is more subdued, and that this in turn will get him higher view counts for his videos. "PhatGayKid" and "nanaluvstroubles" illustrate how circulation online via YouTube may enable virtual circulation and the potential for affective affirmation, but it also brings with it the threat of hostility, largely along identitarian lines that call attention to forms of difference. As demonstrated by "PhatGayKid"—who, not unlike homosexuals post-Stonewall—performatively foregrounds and capitalizes on a widely understood persona in his user name and throughout his videos, "the collaborative self" can also point to its own limitations and biases.

Glee and the remake remediated

The deeply intermedial television show *Glee* essentially builds off of the YouTube phenomenon of the music video remake to engage with several modes of sociality, both online and off, private and intersubjective. *Glee* is the most evident inheritor of the intermedial address of the classical Hollywood Musical as it has been described in earlier chapters, because the spectator's affective satisfaction hinges on an interconnectedness across adjacent media. *Glee* works by referring to and reinstating layered experiences (of viewing, listening, singing, playing, and so forth) that are find expression across several media and practices of reception, performance and consumption. The show itself pulls from a wide array of popular songs—mostly from the 1980s and current top 40 hits, but inclusive of the 1940s and on—that would engage a varied viewership. For example, the cover of the Burt Bachrach song "A House is Not a Home" in the show's first season would more reliably stir an emotional response in someone in mid-life than the songs featured on the second

season's Britney Spears-themed episode, that would likely appeal to younger viewers. But the show's musical variety comes not just from the range of music it features, but from the many ways the show's spectators can access it. Most evidently, the television show itself features covers of songs, but these same covers are available for purchase and download for repeated listening on the online music store iTunes—and people *do* listen to the covers, most famously the cover of Journey's "Don't Stop Believing" featured on the pilot episode, which went double platinum (indicating sales in excess of 2,000,000) on March 16, 2011. It is very difficult, however, to disassociate the success of *Glee* covers from their original songs, and "Don't Stop Believing" provides a case in point: the original had only gone platinum digitally on January 29, 2009, months before the show's premiere on May 19th of the same year. As an intermedial phenomenon, *Glee* animates a range of associations for music that span several different types of spectatorial practices: in addition to the television show, covers, and the source material for the covers, there is also a live tour of the show that hits major venues across the United States and the United Kingdom, and the 2011 film, *Glee: The 3D Concert Movie*, was made to bring the concert experience to yet a wider audience.

The show takes place in Lima, Ohio, and centers on the marginalized glee club of the local high school, an attempt to appeal to a wide range of viewers who might not fit into normative identitarian positions. The club's members are positioned firmly as outsiders within the school due to their typical "outsider" identities. The most recurrent theme of difference in the show is that of sexual orientation, conveyed largely by the character Kurt—a young, flaming theater queen, whose tastes read as anachronistic and consonant with an older viewership and sensibility. What is especially striking about Kurt is that his persona, in essence, adheres to the anachronistic gay musical stereotype that was already outdated when similar characters appeared in 1969's *The Boys in the Band*, indicating the tenacity of the effete musical gay as the most overtly legible homosexual stereotype within popular consciousness.³³⁴ Themes of sexual queerness are also explored in the show through the female characters Britney and Santana, as well as via Rachel, who has two gay fathers. Other forms of difference include race (the club includes members of most US racial minorities: Santana is Latina, Mike and Tina are East Asian, Mercedes is African-American), disability (Artie is paraplegic and confined to a wheelchair), body size (Mercedes and Lauren are both plus-size), and mental pathology (the guidance counselor Emma suffers from Obsessive Compulsive Disorder). The show's most basic narrative concerns the success of the glee club at varying local and national competitions, but it is more truly about various forms of difference and overcoming adversity; in a sense, the show attempts to address the experience of YouTube users such as "PhatGayKid" or "nanaluvstroubles," but in a way that is thoroughly unrealistic. The first season episode "Throwdown" speaks to this representational overabundance directly, wherein the club's faculty sponsor, Will Schuster, tells it's members that "you're all minorities because you're in the Glee Club," effectively subjugating all types of difference to a shared identity and community. Even though the show works to emphasize the travails of variously different subjects, all of them are equated. The Michael Jackson tribute episode from the third season speaks to this, in which a reference to the "It Gets Better" campaign (an online phenomenon offering support to disenfranchised queer youth by sharing personal narratives) is deliberately placed in Artie's mouth rather than a sexually queer character: he says, "And don't give me any of that 'it gets better' crap, because I'm not interested in it getting any better. I want it to *be* better, like right now." Difference is conflated rather than addressed substantively, and often is

normalized via narrative developments that result in romantic dyads to stabilize outliers, in turn yielding outlandish and unbelievable couples—such as the pairing of Noah (the desirable jock) with Lauren, or Artie with Britney (one of the school’s most popular cheerleaders). In *Glee*, difference is used strategically as a foothold to establish a loyal and wide viewership, even as it also disenfranchises these spectators by refusing to consider realistically their lived experiences.

But the shattering of narrative realism on *Glee* is also a crucial condition for the show to function as a pleasurable, intermedial text that draws its meanings and moments of recognition from a wide array of media. It is simply impossible to make coherent sense out of a show that consistently prioritizes scattered, episodic moments over serial continuity. At a micro level, this intermedial drive is given voice by the many deeply embedded references within each episode. Episodes of *Glee*, especially in the second season, are often structured around allusions to pop culture phenomena that derail (and rarely propel) the show’s narrative themes, often by referencing viral videos from YouTube. In the second season references to YouTube phenomena appeared in the following episodes: in “Furt” the wedding processional quoted “JK Wedding Entrance Dance;” “The Sue Sylvester Shuffle” referenced the famous video of Filipino prisoners dancing to “Thriller;” “A Night of Neglect” borrowed from “The Crazy Nastyass Honey Badger;” “Prom” quoted Rebecca Black’s “Friday;” and “Britney/Brittany,” the Britney Spears tribute episode referenced, of course, Chris Crocker’s “Leave Britney Alone!”³³⁵ The end effect is a text that provides moments of pleasure in the recognition of something that is already familiar, but has little to do with the show itself. In this sense, *Glee* builds a spectatorial structure that is dependent not on a coherent narrative foundation as much as the chaotic, fractured, and rhizomatic potential for moments of camp recognition. This has camp’s benefit of achieving the effect of an “in” joke amongst certain groups of viewers, but it is difficult to predict when or how often these moments occur, or even to know reliably who the show’s target audience is. Like remake culture on YouTube, spectatorial pleasure hinges on advance knowledge of what is being remade, restaged, or revised, and while a lack of knowledge thereof may not guarantee displeasure it also doesn’t provide a compelling reason to continue watching. In turn, this strategy also presents a text that is thematically and politically incoherent for a show that so insistently foregrounds the marginalization of difference, a shortcoming that has been critiqued by many, among them Alexander Doty who calls out how the show, “trafficked in the worst kind of United Colors of Benetton liberalism.”³³⁶

At a macro level, *Glee*’s insistent intermediality plays out thematically on an episode-to-episode basis via special musical theme episodes. While many episodes of *Glee* are more or less “jukebox” in style, drawing from a range of popular hits for the musical numbers therein, a large number of them are special episodes that are built around the musical corpus of a single performer, group, or show. There have been special theme episodes devoted to the music of Britney Spears, *Saturday Night Fever*, Madonna, Michael Jackson, *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*, and, predictably, Lady Gaga among others, the latter few meshing with *Glee*’s overarching themes of diversity in difference. These episodes, although they sometimes advance the plot, largely serve as special opportunities to remake a well-known series of music videos. Rather than working within the audiovisual patterns of the rest of the show as better “integrated” numbers in *Glee* tend to do, these episodes often feature remakes of entire music videos and insert them into the show’s universe without clear motivation, other than the need to break to a musical number. The remakes of Madonna’s video for “Vogue” and Michael Jackson’s video for “Scream” both exemplify this

tendency, and the pleasure they provide is not one of simple musical enjoyment as much as the frisson offered by the act of remaking what is already familiar. (Figures 1, 2, 3, 4) Furthermore, when examining the show's ratings episode by episode, it becomes clear that the show's viewers want remakes rather than narrative. Aside from the episode of *Glee* that immediately followed the 2011 Super Bowl (bringing with it an atypical, inflated viewership), the highest-rated episode of *Glee* was the second season's Britney Spears episode, with 13.51 million viewers.³³⁷ In contrast, the second season's penultimate episode, "Funeral", that speedily advanced the season's narrative arc and also reveals that the glee club would be performing original songs at a national competition, garnered only 8.97 million viewers.³³⁸ It is instructive to examine the ratings of the third season, which more thoroughly emphasized and advanced the narrative over the entire arc of the season: aside from the premiere (with 9.21 million viewers), the highest rated episode came mid-season with the Michael Jackson tribute episode (9.07 million viewers), before regularly achieving only little over 6 million in the later, more narratively heavy episodes.³³⁹

The emphasis on remaking offered by *Glee* may seem excessive, but it only deviates in a few ways from earlier instantiations of the musical that have been explored in previous chapters. Building from the ratings paradox, *Glee* attempts to revise the musical by offering a complex, serial narrative that is at odds with the episodic nature of musical numbers. As Rick Altman argues in *The American Film Musical*, "in the musical *the couple is the plot*," and the narrative tends to center on the eventual union of male and female stars that results in—if not an actual wedding—a declaration of love and devotion and the suggestion that they will live happily ever after.³⁴⁰ *Glee* follows the logic of coupledness, but rather than offering the viewer one marriage it offers several (Will and Emma, Burt and Carol), thwarted marriages (Rachel and Finn), divorces (Will and Terri, Coach Beiste and Cooter), and a slew of other plotlines that upset and derail any possibility of narrative closure. Indeed, *Glee* cannot have a simple narrative because it has to continue as long as it is popular with viewers, and the melodramatic seriality the show has adopted requires narrative complexity and openness. This would not necessarily pose a problem, but (as previously discussed) viewers respond better to episodes of the show that are more deeply episodic and prioritize the process of remaking rather than that of elaborating narrative. The show's writers are essentially in a double bind, required to deliver both momentary and continuous pleasures. *Glee* requires too many types of spectatorial attentions, and alternates erratically between offering the viewer pleasure in moments of recognition and a different type of enjoyment delivered over time by the show's convoluted, often irreverent narrative.

From a perspective attuned to processes of (re)mediation, *Glee* differs from previous models for the musical in terms of its scope and the practices of spectatorial remaking and appropriation it represents. Whereas previous musicals may have presented popular songs from a range of eras—for example, *The Band Wagon*, that drew music from the 1931 Broadway show of the same name, as well as later hits by the show's song writers Arthur Schwartz and Howard Dietz—*Glee*'s musical catalog is apparently limitless, dictated only by the cost of licensing songs for the show's producers. The result is a television show that presents not the production of culture (because it has always already been produced, show choirs are supposed to sing covers and not their own material), but the remaking and processing of that culture. *Glee* fits uneasily into Altman's subgenre "the show musical" that concerns itself with the backstage business of putting on a show.³⁴¹ The show being made, however, is one that no one ever wants to see (the titular glee club is notoriously unpopular), and the stakes involved in the show's production hinge not on satisfying the audience as

much as the personal relevance of the music for the performers. These feelings relate variously to success (Rachel's ambitions to go to a prestigious performing arts school), longing (Kurt's desire for Finn given voice by the song "A House is Not a Home"), disenfranchisement (Santana's performance of Adele's "Rumor Has It" after being forced out of the closet), and so forth. The show emphasizes how its characters interact with the music they reproduce, not on the entertainment they generate for diegetic audiences. In a way that deviates from previous musicals about the production of entertainment, *Glee* represents subjects shaped by the music they have consumed and the affective currents that become charged for them in the process of its restaging and remaking. In this way, *Glee* represents the spectatorial practices of appropriating and consuming music to build personal meanings for it that (as discussed in previous chapters) have always underwritten the pleasure involved for spectators of musicals.

Glee's self-reflexivity, however, functions as a means to bring practices of remaking and appropriation that have long been sites for potential subversion (especially among marginalized audiences) more directly under the aegis of capitalism and its forces of normalization. The visions of remaking pictured on *Glee* are thoroughly commodified, as every cover is available for purchase on iTunes, and the show's songs are repackaged and resold via film, live performance, and other ancillary products. While *Glee*'s commercialization of processes of remaking via representation in no way inhibits the potential for subversive appropriation by spectators of the show, it does provide a prevailing model for what form this spectatorship is supposed to take. Representations of acts of remaking on the show often work to advance stereotypes, for example Kurt's hyperbolically "gay," predictable restaging of most of the music from gay touchstone *Gypsy* over the course of the series, or Mercedes's tendency to perform songs by other black women, such as her covers of "And I Am Telling You I'm Not Going" from *Dreamgirls* and Aretha Franklin's "Respect." Leaving aside the potentially negative or positive ideological dimensions of these representations as they relate to minoritarian discourse, these stereotypes are important because they have discursive currency and associate normative ideas about identity with forms of spectatorship that are potentially lucrative for the producers of *Glee*. In many ways, this strategy replicates how Steve Ostrow through his musical events at the Continental Baths sold homosexuality to large audiences through music as described in Chapter 4. If anything is surprising, it is that homosexual identity remains a durable means to sell music to a mass audience over 40 years later. While these representations may appeal to viewers who self-identify along the same lines as those pictured in the show, they are also legible (and saleable) to a much wider audience. To be fair, this is a wide-scale, international expansion of the monetization of queer individual and community practices around song that were already made fungible by many different groups (especially gay men's choirs) after Stonewall. But this expansion isn't simply one of scale: unlike the aforementioned groups, the profit to be made does not necessarily return to the communities who are marketing their practices and talents, and it instead ultimately goes to Fox and its parent corporation, News Corp. And unlike gay men's choruses, *Glee* attempts to capitalize not necessarily on any particular form of difference (because the show willfully conflates them) as much as feelings of being different, which would presumably be shared by a much larger potential audience. Again, I am not arguing that politicized or defiant acts of spectatorship can't be spurred by this material (or that such politicized acts are even important); rather, I am arguing that there is an economic incentive to advance and solidify specific, palatable, and fungible versions of minoritarian spectatorship predicated on processes of appropriation

and remaking, and, furthermore, that the unique differences of these representations are deliberately blurred in order to make them more marketable.

“Telephone Remake” and Discursive Resistance

Until this point I have largely discussed texts commonly categorized as “new media” from a humanistic perspective that emphasizes human agency in interactions with media. For example, my analysis of Chris Crocker highlights the way new media have the potential to change the affective processes of queers. Likewise, my analysis of *Glee* highlights the exploitation of consumers and queer identity more broadly by the capitalist machinery of new media. At this point, however, I will shift my perspective and begin to explore the circulation of queerness in digital networks from a point of view that foregrounds the importance of digital protocols in shaping human response. Taken to its extreme, this might be interpreted as a dystopian vision analogous to that described by Marshall McLuhan in *Understanding Media* and his characterization of humans becoming “servo-mechanisms” to aid computer processes.³⁴² While McLuhan offers that such an understanding might help to reinterpret what defines humanity, I am not interested in the exploration of such a dialectical relationship, in part because it ultimately serves to reinforce a humanist perspective.

While this media-oriented perspective departs from the methods I employ in the rest of this project, it nonetheless shares an important continuity: my ongoing analysis of how media shape human activity. Much like my attention to the potentials offered by media pathways for queers early in the twentieth century for achieving normative forms of visibility, I remain interested in considering how media don’t necessarily determine how people use them, but nonetheless offer a range of possibilities that open themselves differently in different circumstances for varying groups of users. This is an important distinction between what might be called technological determinism and path dependence. Whereas a technological determinist position might claim that technologies alter human behavior because they are uniquely suited to do so (as argued by Friedrich Kittler in *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*), an emphasis on path dependence instead thinks about how humans come to rely on the unique possibilities opened by specific technologies or organizational structures.³⁴³ Whereas dominant academic and popular discourse characterizes the relationship between musicality and queer subjectivity in a determinist or essentialist way, I have made clear in the preceding chapters how the complex forces of public circulation engendered bodies of both queer and heteronormative knowledge and language that associates queers with musical reception, consumption and performance. It is this attention to how media pathways do not determine but nonetheless shape popular understanding that I find especially important.

However, the question of path dependency becomes more complicated as language sedimented with power relations based on spatial proximity and mutual copresence begins to circulate in digital networks that are asynchronous and dispersed across a global network. In fracturing simultaneity and rearranging the spaces occupied by users/speakers, digital media open up a potential to interpret material that circulates online without the parameters that connote and delimit interpretation in daily, material life. David Rodowick theorizes the potential of asynchronous communication in *Reading the Figural*, but he also notes that more often than not, such potential serves to reaffirm extant power relations: “asynchronous communications restore an illusion of control to the individual, whose time is more clearly managed by those who demand that more of it be devoted to work.”³⁴⁴ The global, delocalized circulation of content online also allows for more users to reach content

that they otherwise wouldn't, and, accordingly, to achieve "viral" status. When content online turns viral it metaphorically infects the digital network, quickly saturating a broad swath of digital territory through social networks where users share or comment on popular news items and videos. Just as a biological virus has a limited lifespan *in vivo*, viral content quickly fades and is replaced by another popular story, etc. In terms of media practice, this is nothing really new, and the pattern is remarkably similar to the lifespan of a song's popularity in gay bars. As Donald Webster Cory explains in *The Homosexual in America*:

The music starts, and some songs seem to be extremely popular that evening. If one were able to obtain a report on the music at the other gay bars, the similarity of taste would be striking. Everywhere the same song seems to have taken hold... So thoroughly is the air filled with a line from a popular song that to hear it on the street is to know that it comes from the mouth of a gay person. Then the song disappears, not as quickly as from general popularity, and its place of preeminence in every gay bar is assumed by another.³⁴⁵

Like the song heard in gay bars and on the street, viral content often functions to establish feelings of community among like users. Remarkably unlike the song, however, viral media in the digital age has a more accelerated lifespan and is not conditioned through daily practice and urban circulation. Rather, viral media takes root in the expanded, asynchronous access of content online and its perceived perpetual replay and availability (even if it is a short-lived phenomenon) is controlled not by human performance but instead by the protocols that determine access online.

This section focuses on "Telephone Remake," a viral video from 2010, the history of which exemplifies the potential of digital forms of access and control to build resistance to hegemonic discourse. Uploaded to YouTube by Sergeant Aaron Melcher with the message, "Prepare yourself for a fantastical journey," "Telephone Remake" pictures Melcher and some fellow soldiers (rather clumsily) recreating Lady Gaga's popular music video for the song "Telephone." Beyond this basic premise, however, there is little that provides meaning or context for the viewer. Blogs first interpreted the video as a subversive expression of queer identity in the face of the military's policing of explicit articulations of homosexuality before the video was normalized in print and on television as a morale-booster for troops on duty and Americans at home. "Telephone Remake" then became part of a constellation of forces that animated legal change and established LGBT soldiers as vital to the armed forces, even though the video remains othered within this revised identitarian discourse. The ambiguous identities and motivations of those who made the video propelled it to notoriety; despite statements from Melcher and the video's other makers that they are heterosexual, certain formal qualities of the video (or, rather, the preponderance of formal qualities over speech) sowed collective doubt in the minds of viewers about the legitimacy of these (or any) statements about identity. To be clear, the video's rise to popularity and notoriety had nothing to do with the intent of the videos makers, but rather the ways that the non-human formal elements of the video sustained oppositional readings.

Stationed at the time in Western Afghanistan, Sergeant Aaron Melcher and his colleagues posted "Telephone Remake"—a restaging of the immensely popular video "Telephone" by Lady Gaga—to YouTube on April 23, 2010. "Telephone" had topped the *Billboard* pop and dance/club charts the previous two months, propelled by a lengthy, spectacle-heavy music video that co-starred fellow pop megastar Beyoncé. The original video

is a perplexing mix of product placement, choreographed dance, and costume changes (ranging from an ensemble crafted only from crime scene tape to swimsuits made of American flags) that follows Lady Gaga's imprisonment, her bail by her "honeybee" Beyoncé, their poisoning of the patrons of a roadside diner, and their subsequent (*Thelma and Louise*-style) escape, as they clasp hands and drive down the highway in their "Pussy Wagon." (Figures 5 and 6) Although the video for "Telephone" ostensibly presents the preceding narrative, the video's deeply ironic affect undercuts the narrative's weight.

In their remake of the video, Melcher and his fellow soldiers emphasized formal elements rather than the meaning they might carry, borrowing visual cues, choreography, and a similar sense of irony about the importance of narrative from Lady Gaga's video. The video opens with Melcher and his colleague Sgt. Baker in fatigues dancing with each other in army barracks, gesturing as if engaged in an intimate phone call during the song's opening lyrics before dancing at the call's termination. "Telephone Remake" moves on to showcase Melcher's elastic dance moves before cutting to a more elaborate set in a storage hangar, decorated with cardboard cutouts of a rotary phone and two handsets. In this new set, eight soldiers dance in costumes in the style of the original video's prison outfits, with Melcher wearing an altered version of Gaga's crime scene tape costume. (Figures 7 and 8) The choreography featured in "Telephone Remake" borrows from Lady Gaga's original, especially the emphasis on hand claps, but other dance moves are improvised. From a formal perspective, the video is rather disjointed, showing little consistency in terms of the styles it uses (for example, some shots are quite long while other sequences are filled with frenzied cuts). If anything, the video's form indicates that it was made by amateur videographers, an assumption supported by the video's fuzzy grain and handheld camera positions that are often slightly canted. The video's description on YouTube provides little context, other than that it was made by soldiers in Afghanistan, and leaves viewers to guess at its purpose.

Before exploring the reception of "Telephone Remake," or even the motivations behind its creation, it is important to establish it as a figural object. Although the figural is a complex concept, it can best be paraphrased as that which troubles the boundary between looking and reading. As described by Lyotard in *Discourse, Figure*, the figural constitutes a generative aporia between language and the means of signification, representation and form, fixity and plasticity, order and desire; in other words, the figural implies a phenomenological encounter with something that "can be either letter or line."³⁴⁶ From a more contemporary perspective, D. N. Rodowick fixes on emergent new media as a generative source of the figural, as technological innovation consistently requires the recalibration of the human sensorium in order to make sense of new interfaces, "a distinct mutation in the character of contemporary forms of representation, information, and communication."³⁴⁷ The figural necessarily possesses qualities that might prompt moments of aesthetic surprise or absorption, but such reactions are usually bypassed through the figural's role in conveying meaning. Examples of the figural might include the specific characteristics of a typeface, the qualities of a screen upon which films are projected, or the audible traces of compression algorithms on digital audio tracks. Lyotard cites several examples of figural objects and texts, such as the work of artist Paul Klee, who wanted viewers of his work "to see with one eye; to feel with the other," or the sensorial (and illogical) appeal of surrealist poetry.³⁴⁸ Under typical circumstances, none of the preceding examples elicit reactions from those who regularly encounter them, as such users would be inured to any aesthetic quirks. A reader unfamiliar with comic sans, on the other hand, might

find it highly distracting. While all objects and texts that signify *necessarily* include figural content, some foreground the figural to a greater extent than others.

There are many qualities about “Telephone Remake” that are overtly figural, that in turn make possible a spectatorial process that blurs looking and reading in an effort to excavate meaning where there might be none. Aside from informational bits provided in the introduction and conclusion, which read “Telephone The Afghanistan Re-make” and “This has been a STEAM Production” respectively, there is little to contextualize the video. Instead, “Telephone Remake” foregrounds the movement of the soldiers it pictures, as well as its costumes and sets (especially the more elaborate *mise-en-scène* of the hangar). Other formal elements, such as camera movement, framing and lighting appear either unmotivated or haphazard; it seems that what is caught on video is important rather than the means or technique of capture. While the words of the song might elucidate the video’s meaning, “Telephone” itself thematizes both the breakdown of linguistic meaning and the desire to lose oneself in such disorder. This predisposition toward meaninglessness is implied by Lady Gaga’s insistent chorus, “Stop callin’, Stop callin’ / I don’t wanna think anymore / I left my head and my heart on the dance floor / Stop callin’, Stop callin’ / I don’t wanna talk anymore / I left my head and my heart on the dance floor.” The chorus eschews linguistic communication (and even thought) for the ecstatic pleasure of being “on the dance floor,” a setting that “Telephone Remake” consistently pictures. This breakdown of language is reinforced by the song’s sampling of recorded speech to isolate phonemes within words, resulting in staccato pulsations such as “-eh -eh -eh -eh -eh -eh -eh -eh -eh -eh -eh / stop Telephonin’ me” that are visualized by frenzied, repetitious cuts in both the original video and the remake. All that the viewer of “Telephone Remake” is left with are the formal elements of the video: the quality of the video on which it was shot; the video’s imperfectly handheld capture; the bodies and dance moves of the soldiers that populate the video; the costumes and structures that clothe and house these soldiers; and the ways in what is seen might relate to the song that plays over the video. Viewers on YouTube familiar with Lady Gaga’s original video for the song might possess privileged information, but “Telephone Remake” is at best a very loose adaptation of its source material, and fails to replicate the original video’s narrative or *mise-en-scène*, instead adapting a few of “Telephone’s” dance moves and costumes. Even for “privileged” viewers, “Telephone Remake” is a somewhat hermetic text that prompts the excavation of meaning from it.

It is in moments when the figural both forecloses meaning and kindles a desire to find meaning therein that there is a potential to reorder the distribution of power. Stated more fully, it is important not only that the figural speaks to the desire of the subject who encounters it through the look; it is also important that this desire motivates the subject to find meaning in the object, because this act of reading is guided by individual desire rather than hegemonic hermeneutic systems. For Lyotard, the potential of the figural rests primarily within the subject. He argues that the figural is intimately bound with desire, and has the potential to make “a direct appeal to the reader’s phantasms, by offering a stage upon which it can be fulfilled.”³⁴⁹ Expanding on the figural in relation to late capitalism, Rodowick frames the potentials of the figural within an outwardly political, intersubjective arena concerned with structural power relations. When addressing the radical potential of the Internet as well as its status as “a space of surveillance and social control,” Rodowick insists:

But new potentials of power are also new opportunities for criticism and resistance, and thinking the figural means that “visuality” needs to be considered not only as a discursive phenomenon but also as a transformation of relations of power and knowledge as well as subjectivation. Reading the figural means rethinking the aesthetic as a question of power.³⁵⁰

The process of “reading the figural” (an act that is prompted by the desiring look of the subject) opens up the potential for the redistribution of discursive power through sensory experience and the aesthetic. In other words, reading the figural prioritizes subjective, affective experience as primary in the process of creating meaning, opposed to models of power wherein language and visuality serve only to bring subjectivity in line with hegemony.

Although not framed in terms of the figural, the figural’s confusion between looking and reading has long animated the formal potentials of the musical genre, and specifically segments that feature song and dance not unlike “Telephone Remake.” As theorized by Richard Dyer in his essay “Entertainment and Utopia,” the musical genre is characterized by its superabundance of “non-representational signs” during moments of musical spectacle that resist the codification of framing narrative segments.³⁵¹ Dyer’s Marxist argument hinges on the status of musical films as commodities that offer an ideological simulacrum of utopia that both remedies and reinforces the drives and conditions of capitalism. The one potential for resistance highlighted by Dyer is in the prevalence of non-representational signs during musical numbers, which render hermeneutic systems “less clear-cut.” Dyer notes that, “much of the representational level reprises the lessons of the narrative... while the non-representational certainly suggests an alternative to the narrative.”³⁵² In a similar sense, the same hermeneutic instability theorized by Dyer has been cited as the primary reason for the box office failure of excessively flamboyant musical films. In *Working Like a Homosexual*, Matthew Tinkcom contends that musical films that foregrounded musical spectacle at the expense of narrative such as *The Pirate* (Vincente Minnelli, 1948) and *Ziegfeld Follies* (Minnelli et al., 1946) failed at the box office because they prioritized an excessive, queer aesthetic rather than a heteronormative one that would better lend itself to narrative closure.³⁵³ Both Dyer and Tinkcom demonstrate the ways that figural content might destabilize hegemonic, heteronormative and capitalist models of order through the foregrounding of musical rather than narrative content, thereby encouraging the reading of that which cannot yield a consistent meaning.

In a contemporary context, it is striking that the breakdown of meaning that accompanies the figural often subtends the success (rather than failure, vis-à-vis Tinkcom) of “viral” videos online. Language and representation are often at odds with viral popularity on YouTube: videos that emphasize the transmission of information rarely appeal to massive, international audiences. Videos like “The Sneezing Baby Panda” (picturing exactly what the title indicates) achieve viral success because they are presentational, lack language, and encourage a simple affective response, expressed by comments such as “Aaaawwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwww” and “i love pandas! :D.” Even when viral videos foreground language, their affective payoff often comes with its breakdown, for example the misunderstanding of Mariah Carey’s lyrics for “[I Can’t Live] Without You” as “Ken Lee” by a contestant on the Bulgarian show “Music Idol,” or the unimportance of what the narrator of “The Crazy Nastyass Honey Badger” (a reappropriated nature documentary clip with an amusing voiceover) says relative to his tone. Viral memes, on the other hand, work within a consistent structure that often encourages an antagonistic relationship to meaning, and

(like “Telephone Remake”) often work with song and dance. For example, the Harlem Shake videos that became ubiquitous in early 2013 are consistent in that they first foreground a group of orderly individuals engaged in a collective activity, one of these subjects then breaks off to dance in an inexplicable way, and finally there is a jump cut that reveals the entire group engaged in different, bizarre movements.³⁵⁴ (Figures 9 and 10) In contrast, videos on YouTube that emphasize the transmission of knowledge rarely become viral: the official Army YouTube channel is exemplary here, with a paltry average view count per video of 1,415. As a general rule, viral videos on YouTube foreground affect ahead of meaning to elicit simple, often bodily responses from viewers, like delight, glee or shock, rather than a more nuanced, analytical (if still emotional) understanding of one’s place in the world.

While it is difficult to characterize the effects any of these videos have had as progressive or politically volatile as the figural might be, I argue that this is in part a matter of how they are framed. Certain websites such as BuzzFeed function to aggregate such material and to organize it into “listicles,” such as “8 Animals That Yell Like People.” The political potentials of animal videos to trouble discourse may not be as high as those for videos of dancing soldiers, but it is even more difficult for them to behave queerly when they are so thoroughly normalized as that which is cute, cuddly, adorable, zany or funny.³⁵⁵ When the figural content of videos online resists a normative frame, however, such ambiguity has the potential to fuel (via acts of reading the figural) a more subversive type of viral celebrity.

The Reception of “Telephone Remake,” and the Figural as Exploit

“Telephone Remake” was intended as an intermedial telephone call to the families of those who made it. As stated by Melcher on *The Early Show* on May 5, 2010, at which time the barely 13-day-old video had amassed over three million views, the purpose of “Telephone Remake” was “to make some people smile back home,” referring to Melcher’s wife (who had introduced him to Lady Gaga’s video) and other loved ones and relatives. The remake’s creators were working not only within the syntax of the original video, but also that of army communication by drawing from the conventions of the American Forces Network (AFN), a specialized television network transmitted to American soldiers stationed abroad. A salient feature of AFN is the remake: commercials are remade featuring army personnel for the soldiers viewing them. For example, “Safeguard Your ID Card” works within the conventions of Mastercard’s “Priceless” campaign by identifying the costs of various army tools via onscreen text before describing the Military ID as “invaluable.” (Figure 11) When asked by Harry Smith during the same interview on *The Early Show* whether or not he had “any anticipation whatsoever what kind of response there would be” to “Telephone Remake” (currently 6,967,584 views), Melcher responded “No sir...not even close. After about a hundred hits we were all pretty blown away.”³⁵⁶ This bewilderment seems to be a result of Melcher’s understanding of “Telephone Remake” as silly and meaningless, to be shared by a few friends using formal structures that were easily legible to them. This limited audience stands at odds with the larger, global public that also has access to YouTube and saw “Telephone Remake.” This larger audience lacked privileged information about the video’s original purpose or the audiovisual conventions of AFN, and without a frame of reference such viewers constructed meaning from the video’s figural contents.

In the absence of any apparent context, such as the AFN commercials and knowledge about Melcher’s family, “Telephone Remake” was scrutinized excessively for its depiction of militarized bodies that do not behave according to heteronormative standards. Although Melcher identifies as heterosexual and reports to be happily married, the video

was popularly received as an expression of homosexual identity even though it presents no decisive articulations of same-sex desire. Many of the elements in “Telephone Remake,” however (mainly the costumes and bodily movements of the soldiers), collude to work along the lines of what might be called homosexual “representability.” In her book *unInvited*, Patricia White theorizes “representability” as a relationship between coded representations and spectatorial practices that contextualize such representations by way of extra-textual information.³⁵⁷ White is interested specifically in the historical forms of cinematic lesbian representability engendered by the repressive Hays Code (which outlawed explicit cinematic representations of homosexuality and other forms of vice during the Classical Hollywood Period), but this concept is nonetheless applicable to more recent hermeneutic contexts. In the case of “Telephone Remake,” contemporary spectators perceived the adaptation by Melcher et al. of Lady Gaga’s original choreography, the use of gestures that imply sexual intimacy between men, the flamboyant costumes, and the air of irreverence that infuses “Telephone Remake” as constitutive of a gay representability. The citation of Lady Gaga (who is famous for her gay following) furthers this association, as well as the original “Telephone” video’s depiction of lesbian desire between Gaga and other women. Public reception of “Telephone Remake” that positioned its makers as gay had nothing to do with the sexual identities of the actual soldiers in the video, and instead speaks to a crisis of how to interpret the video’s content (dance movements, pop music, absurd costumes, American soldiers) using available frames of reference to construct meaning in the face of the video’s apparent purposelessness.

Given “Telephone Remake’s” perceived gay sensibility and the subversive homosexual associations it animated, it is unsurprising that the video prompted wildly different responses, many of them negative and preoccupied with the sexual orientation of the video’s subjects. Although the comments page for the video on YouTube is incomplete—Melcher disabled it early in the video’s life only to reactivate it later—it still provides a substantive record of public responses. Comments from users that grapple with the soldiers’ sexuality range in tone from perceived affinity, as with a comment that reads, “This is what you get when you put us (gays) in the military, FUN CREATIVITY AND GOOFINESS,” to hostility: “Gayest wing of the military ever. SEMPER FI MOTHERFUCKERS,” and “Great use of our tax dollars to this faggotry.” Some commenters are more subdued, simply saying “how gay is this,” while others speculate about the soldiers’ sexual proclivities: “I know 4 a fact the chubby guy is the bottom, and skinny is poking his roast!” [sic]. Following White’s model, the legibility of “Telephone Remake” as constitutive of gay representability prompted many viewers to align themselves either with or against the soldiers pictured, with the networked video sharing site YouTube serving as a locus for the negotiation of the viewer’s identity and its consequent public expression.

What is remarkably different about “Telephone Remake” when considering it through the lens of representability is that it emerged at a time without such a strict audiovisual regime as the Hays Code; what existed instead for American officers was the similarly repressive “Don’t Ask Don’t Tell” (DADT) policy. DADT was put into law in 1993, and protected LGBT members of the American armed forces only if they did not speak about or act on homosexual desire. DADT made life in the armed forces possible for LGBT soldiers only if they disavowed sexual desire (or acted on it in secret) and self-censored articulations of identity unless they were congruent with heteronormative standards. Much like the potentials for queer reading animated by the Hays Code, many viewers perceived “Telephone Remake” as a paralinguistic, audiovisual expression of soldiers who would be

punished were they to speak, rather than as a product created (likely out of boredom) with no purpose beyond humor. Perceiving the music and dance pictured in the video as meaningful and indicative of a repressed will towards self-expression, a vast number of viewers left comments that say only “don’t ask don’t tell” or slight variations on it, to the extent that one commenter decided to intervene and state “ok future reference if u think ur clever with’ don’t ask don’t tell’ 20 other ppl before u have already done it.” [sic] From a supportive perspective, user “underthepiano” commented “This is fantastic... and yes, it’s just more evidence of how quickly we have got to get the DADT repeal... work it, boys. :)” with the direct response from “rich02468,” “why so the armed forces can produce more...music videos?” Viewers of “Telephone Remake” tended to read the figural musical elements of the video—as well as the desire to remake Lady Gaga’s video, or music videos generally if rich02468’s comment is indicative—as veiled declarations of the queer identity of the soldiers in the video, demonstrating a drive to read the video’s figural content (here the performativity of the bodies of the soldiers pictured and the contextual associations of Lady Gaga) rather than only look at it. The repressive backdrop of DADT in effect animated the public (queer or not) to read with greater scrutiny and interpretive liberty the bodies and actions of soldiers, not unlike the situation created by public discourse about pervasive homosexual presence at musical venues before gay liberation. This act of reading both acknowledges the legal impossibility to denote homosexuality explicitly, and also interprets the video’s nonlinguistic, audiovisual elements such as music, dance and mise-en-scène as indicative of sexual orientation.

The perceived homosexual connotation of the figural elements of “Telephone Remake” was so persuasive when read against the backdrop of DADT that it spread speculations about the soldiers’ sexual preferences across a varied media terrain beyond YouTube, and even prompted investigations of the soldiers’ relatives to ascertain their sexual identities. On April 30, 2010, the first full day of the video’s viral status, U.S. gay magazine *The Advocate* reported on its blog that Aaron Melcher’s mother is a lesbian, the result of some quick biographical digging.³⁵⁸ The revelation of Melcher’s mother as homosexual is excessive, but it was used as circumstantial evidence to imply that Melcher is gay himself (or sympathetic to homosexuals due to his genetic makeup) in order to solidify the perceived status of “Telephone Remake” as a veiled statement against DADT. From a parallel perspective, several blogs also made clear that Melcher was married even as they questioned the legitimacy of this union, much like the insistence on *Queerty* that Melcher’s status as married doesn’t “out [Melcher and Baker]...as heterosexuals?”³⁵⁹ Rather than correcting the repressive effects of DADT, the media’s fixation on Melcher’s familial relations instead intensified its regime through the search for meaning that might be insinuated in dance moves and sets where it wasn’t directly stated, an act that privileged perceived connotation over the denotative transmission of speech.

When examining the distributed narrativization of “Telephone Remake,” it is striking that the video’s association with DADT developed as coverage of it spread between different blogs, which in turn generated more and more links (read by more and more readers) that only fueled the viral success of the video. When “Telephone Remake” was featured on gay blog *Towleroad* on April 29, 2010 (launching its viral breakout and subsequent spread to other blogs the following day), the video was framed as presentational and amusing: the post did not mention DADT or the sexual identities of the soldiers. The presence of the post on *Towleroad*, however, indicated the video was of interest to homosexuals. By the next day, insinuations that the soldiers were gay, explicit speculations about their sexualities, and

associations of the video with DADT were common in posts on other blogs. *The Smoking Gun*'s coverage of "Telephone Remake" on the morning of April 30, 2010, added information about the individual soldiers, included suggestive descriptions of their costumes that made the soldiers legible via standards for gay representability ("The 23-year-old Baker, wearing a belly-bearing shirt, is accessorized with a pink "Drama Queen" sash"), and shrouded the making of the video in a zone marked by restricted speech—implicitly associating it with DADT—by noting that "Melcher declined to answer questions."³⁶⁰ Another gay blog, *Queerty*, quickly linked to the *The Smoking Gun*'s coverage of "Telephone Remake," and titled its post "Doesn't Parading Around Like Lady Gaga Basically Qualify As 'Telling'?" By the time that media blog *Mediaite* covered the video at 1:44pm ET, its story began with: "The Afghanistan remake of Lady Gaga's 'Telephone' video went viral yesterday and sparked a million Don't Ask Don't Tell jokes was meant to be an inside joke among a few friends." This sentence included text hyperlinked to both *The Smoking Gun* and *Queerty* and solidified the video's association with DADT and a regime of repressive non/communication. When *The Advocate* publicized the identity of Aaron Melcher's mother as a lesbian at 5:30pm ET the same day, it merely added to a discursive network already saturated by descriptions of "Telephone Remake" that associated it with homosexuality and the repression thereof. The very lack of a clear frame for "Telephone Remake" enabled its viral success as a type of conspiracy theory that perpetuated its own notoriety and the need to build meaning for it among viewers who attempted to metabolize it; this is the inverse of the previously cited videos from *Buzzfeed*, etc.

The destabilizing effects of the online response to "Telephone Remake" were so great that the U.S. Armed Forces deemed it necessary to normalize the video via authoritative, official channels of communication. These communications purposefully avoided all reference to queer sexuality despite its centrality to the video's online reception, and framed the apparently "queer" figural elements of the video as normative and even productive. When news anchor Harry Smith spoke to Aaron Melcher on *The Early Show* on May 5, 2010, he first referenced the video's viral success on the Internet and described it as "the video hit heard 'round the world" and a "YouTube sensation." Smith's later interview with Melcher, however, avoided mention of DADT or anything related to it (a disavowal of the thrust of discourse about the video on the Internet), and instead emphasized that Melcher's wife had introduced the soldier to the Lady Gaga's original video, and that (by this time) his superiors had endorsed the video ("Lady Gaga 'Telephone' Remake Boosts Army Morale"). The CBS interview thus reintegrates "Telephone Remake" with the hegemonic mission of the U.S. Armed Forces, and celebrates the soldier-makers of the video as defenders of American ideals and Melcher individually as a "visionary." Furthermore, the interview disavows assertions about the video that proliferated on the Internet even as it acknowledges the importance of this online circulation. Print media consistently collaborated with television to realign "Telephone Remake" with hegemonic order, and compensate for the early reprinting in regional U.S. newspapers such as the *Houston Chronicle*, the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, and *The Seattle Times* on May 2 of dance critic Sarah Kaufman's coverage of the video's "frisson of homosexuality" in *The Washington Post* the previous day. By May 4, the army had officially endorsed the video, and the Scripps Howard News Service picked up and widely reprinted Jay Price's coverage of "Telephone Remake" for the *Raleigh News and Observer*. Price's article quoted army spokesperson Major Michelle Baldazana to position the video as a morale-booster, and firmly refuted the video's association with DADT. The possibility of such a radical shift in interpretation demonstrates both how wide a range of interpretations

figural content might yield, as well as the tenacity of such interpretations once they have been formed.

Despite the prevalence of videos of dancing American soldiers, “Telephone Remake” is also unique in requiring substantive recuperation as hegemonic, which demonstrates the extent to which the video privileges the figural over legible discourse. Another of these videos is “Your Tax Dollars At Work (I’m in the blue gloves)” that shows a group of eight Marines doing the Cha-Cha Slide while engaged in productive tasks. (Figure 12) Despite the presence of a soldier whose enthusiasm for dancing matches Melcher’s, and the repeated presentation of soldiers shaking their asses—at times directly in front of the camera—the video did not generate the same level of responses that speculate on the soldiers’ sexual orientation. In the case of “Your Tax Dollars At Work,” the thematic utility of soldiers engaged in productive labor holds the video’s non-utile, figural elements in check. “US Soldiers in Iraq—The Ding Dong Song” (4,533,660 views) provides another point of comparison that contextualizes song and dance as an explicitly humorous act. The heavily edited video combines staged footage of soldiers lip-syncing to Günther’s “Ding Dong Song,” soldiers dancing to the music, and still images of soldiers in close physical proximity, sometimes with superimposed text such as “awkward” overwriting the image. (Figure 13) By emphasizing the lyrics of the song via lip-sync, including lines such as “you tease me, oh please me, I want you to be my love toy” and “you touch my tra la la...mmm, my ding ding dong,” the video creates a meaningful bond between what is seen and what is verbally communicated in a way that “Telephone Remake” doesn’t. “US Soldiers in Iraq—The Ding Dong Song” subjugates figural elements such as dance moves and costume to the linguistic meaning of the song in order to satirize homosexual sex: the general strategy is to juxtapose images of soldiers in intimate contact (sometimes even grabbing each other’s crotches) with the song’s suggestive lyrics. Although this video prompts a number of comments that speculate on the sexual orientation of the video’s makers, they dominate conversation less than for “Telephone Remake,” and the majority of statements emphasize how funny the video is. When comparing this video to “Telephone Remake,” it is important to emphasize that “The Ding Dong Song” largely works at the level of representation rather than representability, and employs a strategy that makes explicit and satirizes gay sexual contact via the use of words. This rhetorical move effectively absolves the soldiers pictured of any guilt in violating DADT precisely (and counterintuitively) because it implicitly situates them as heterosexual due to their freedom of expression, providing them *carte blanche* to simulate gay sex with impunity. The soldiers in “The Ding Dong Song” display the power to speak that those actually affected by DADT would not, and although the makers of “Telephone Remake” might enjoy the same discursive freedom their video does not thematize this power. The ambiguous purpose and linguistic resistance of “Telephone Remake” is also, however, what spurred its viral media celebrity and inadvertently created resistance to military and national authority.

The importance of figural content to the rise of “Telephone Remake” and its coincident discursive elaboration problematize normative models for online popularity that focus on the intent of makers and producers, and furthermore demonstrates the importance of conceiving of the figural as a type of inhuman, viral content. Although the recent *Spreadable Media* by Henry Jenkins, Sam Ford and Joshua Green argues for the increased use of “spreadable” rather than viral to describe how online content becomes popular in order to emphasize human participatory culture, such a frame only captures one part “Telephone Remake’s” history. While users certainly spread coverage of the video to

different sites and elaborated meaning for it, this spread was initiated by how these users interpreted the video's figural elements against a repressive discursive regime rather than any latent intent in the video to chart such a hermeneutic gambit. At issue here is the assumption of Jenkins, Ford and Green that content that flourishes online is created to speak to a specific group of people on a specific topic.³⁶¹ While "Telephone Remake" did have a purpose (to entertain loved ones), this had nothing to do with the video's rise to fame, which had far more to do with the way figural elements such as dance, costume, and mise-en-scène encouraged the interpretive liberty of the video's audience. While "Telephone Remake" clearly would not have become popular without human intervention, the term "spreadable" conflates the inhuman and figural properties of popular objects online with the human acts that spread such objects.

In the particular context of discourse online it is important to think of figural objects such as "Telephone Remake" not only as media with viral potential, but as viruses that are uniquely suited to infect discursive networks. In his essay "Virus, Viral," Zach Blas considers the way that discussions of the viral often neglect the virus itself, to which he states "[w]hat a virus is and does cannot only be extracted into the qualifier viral just as the qualities of the viral cannot be reduced to the virus."³⁶² In describing the relation between the two, Blas notes that "all viruses require a host and can be spread from one host to another," and concludes with the assertion that "while the viral typically has a political leaning or inclination, the virus itself is politically ambiguous."³⁶³ Blas's larger aim in this essay is to limn affective dimensions of human encounters with the viral, and he concludes with the assertion that "the determination of what is viral generates political, poetic, and ethical schemas" even though the virus itself remains resolutely inhuman.³⁶⁴ The relationship that Blas charts between the virus and the viral illuminates the peculiar relationship that "Telephone Remake" had with the many discourses elaborated for it: political interpretations with no relation to any intention on the part of the makers, or, indeed, the text itself. It is important to foreground this inhuman, virus-like component of the figural because, as demonstrated with "Telephone Remake," it has the potential to create resistance to repressive discursive regimes such as DADT by infecting discursive bodies online. In other words, the embodied, affective experience that the figural-as-virus might engender in a subject in turn yields a viral spread through the discursive networks in which he or she participates.

To be clear, the equation of the virus with the figural is specific to contemporary digital networks because it is only therein that responses to the figural might accumulate and provide resistance to prevailing power structures. From a perspective specifically on new media, Alexander Galloway and Eugene Thacker in their book *The Exploit* elaborate the potentials of "counterprotocol," or a practice that "can capitalize on the homogeneity found in networks to resonate far and wide with little effort."³⁶⁵ Galloway and Thacker's use of technical language is deliberate, because the potential of the exploit resides in taking advantage of the way electronic systems are organized. The computer virus is Galloway and Thacker's preferred example in that its ability to wreak havoc is proportionate to the extent that a virus is uniquely suited to attack forms of coding and formatting particular to specific arrangements of hardware and software (i.e., Microsoft Windows on a home computer). Considered as counterprotocol, the figural has a similar potential to disrupt homogenous discursive networks (such as that which DADT engendered) when it is amplified through online networking. To illustrate, were "Telephone Remake" encountered by a viewer without the ability for him or her to respond to it online, he or she might still interpret it as a

response to DADT, but this interpretation wouldn't spread in the same way or create a similar level of resistance to sanctioned discourse. Even though "Telephone Remake" had the potential to reinforce hegemonic power (as given expression by the video's recuperation as a productive morale-booster), networked viewers of the video instead read the video's figural elements in relation to what such power relied upon to be repressed.

Non-Utility, and the Limits of the "Queer Assemblage"

So far in my analysis of "Telephone Remake" and its reception I have highlighted various ways in which the video might be framed as non-utile: the video's thematic lack of markers of military productivity; the difficulty of its figural content (in the absence of clear denotation) to convey a consistent, fixed meaning; the discursive ambiguity the video's figural elements effected across a range of media; and the way all of these qualities cooperated to propel the video to online popularity. The non-utility of "Telephone Remake" is impossible to divorce from the way in which it privileges the figural; had the video used a different model for expression that relied on more straightforward means of signification (such as "The Ding Dong Song") or thematized labor and productivity in addition to dance ("Your Tax Dollars at Work") it would have never prompted such intense scrutiny from its viewers. This non-utility is important, not only in how it might enable resistance to government protocols, but also in the very specific ways in which it speaks to contemporary and historical dilemmas of queer identitarian visibility, repression, and exploitation.

Much recent queer theory has occupied itself with what might be called an ethics of non-utility as a response to hegemonic forces that seek to both repress sexual identity as well as exploit it. Central in this endeavor is Jasbir Puar's *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times*, in which she advocates for what is essentially a philosophy of non-utility to circumvent the exploitation of homosexual identity for national purposes, or "homonationalism." Puar critiques homonationalism because it functions to benefit the state at the expense of queer subjects, both local and international; homosexuality remains contested within the United States even though the country asserts itself as tolerant to bolster its reputation abroad, and homosexuality furthermore provides the backbone for the construction of terrorists as sexually deviant. Puar makes the case for the "queer assemblage" as an embodied presence that refuses use and identity within minoritarian discourse, that implicitly rejects homonationalism by not adhering to the identitarian politics and uneven power relations that subtend it. Puar advocates for the circumvention of language and identity entirely, expanding her early and pithy characterization of queerness as challenging "a linear mode of conduction and transmission" to assert that:

As opposed to an intersectional model of identity, which presumes that components—race, class, gender, sexuality, nation, age, religion—are separable analytics and can thus be disassembled, an assemblage is more attuned to interwoven forces that merge and dissipate time, space, and body against linearity, coherency, and permanency.³⁶⁶

The queer assemblage (the description of which resembles a network) relates to the figural in that it emphasizes phenomenal encounters and materiality rather than the harnessing of this matter to specific ends, and in so doing thwarts the ideological use of identity within discourse by refusing clear distinctions within the field of personhood. In its non-adherence

to legible hermeneutic structures, the queer assemblage is thus marked by a degree of radical non-utility that calls into question hegemonic constructions. Although Puar does not forge this connection, the non-utility of the queer assemblage is related to subversive currents that run throughout queer history and theory, from characterizations of the dandy in the 19th century as useless, to articulations of the camp aesthetic as “failed seriousness” and incongruous (by Susan Sontag and Esther Newton, respectably), to more recent fixations on negativity such as Lee Edelman’s characterization of homosexuality as future-negating and Judith Halberstam’s meditation on failure as queer.³⁶⁷

Although not clearly tied to sexual identity, the most common comments from YouTube viewers of “Telephone Remake” concerned the video’s non-utility, and tended to conflate the uselessness of the video with the soldiers pictured. Many viewers vented hostility at the soldiers for not working, with comments such as “It’s nice to see our tax dollars at work here. I hope a suicide bomber kills them all.” Some took a more bemused stance, even if they still articulated the need for the soldiers to get back to work: “What soldiers do when they have free time...A bit too much free time.” Other commenters used this perceived non-utility to make attacks at the American government and the war generally with statements like “The fact that they have this much time to create this proves that it’s fucking time to return to America,” and “no wonder patriot and idiot rhyme so naturally.” The video’s evident non-utility animated responses from viewers that situated “Telephone Remake” and its makers as failed or aberrant products of American war. In this way, the purposelessness of “Telephone Remake” is queer, insofar as it scrambles any clear function within discourse or the war effort.

The functional non-utility of “Telephone Remake” enabled it to wreak havoc with the military’s self-construction online, as the video’s figural content offered an unexpected means to both adhere to and deviate from established guidelines for communications through digital social networks. The potential for online content to weaken the army’s brand led U.S. military officials to publish handbooks that established an official protocol for the use of social media by the armed forces, with the aim to maintain online articulations of the army as marked by strength and purpose. The first version of the *Army Social Media Handbook* was released in 2010, the result of the (belated) realization that “social media has the ability to communicate with larger audiences faster and in new ways,” and that it “has become an important tool for Army messaging and outreach.” The move to social media is a strategic one for the armed forces because it can reach and mobilize a larger audience more quickly “to increase effective communication.” Brief outlines of the official Army pages on sanctioned social media are then provided, as well as a list of “security items to consider” that limits the information that can be conveyed online to that which doesn’t “compromise the safety” of soldiers or their relations at home. The 2011 guide deprioritized YouTube as a viable social networking tool and provided clear lists of “don’ts” to prohibit inefficient uses of Facebook and Twitter, endorsing a rigid, mechanistic use of social media that disavows personal entanglements online to uphold the Army’s image. For example, the recommendations on the “don’t” list for using Twitter such as “Tweet too many times in a day (you will lose followers),” and “Tweet with unprofessional Twitter language (“lol” “2 be” “OMG”),” instruct officers on how to maintain the Army’s brand and maximize effective linguistic communication. The decision to move away from YouTube as a viable networking tool is telling, in that it exposes the drive of the military to communicate clearly with words on platforms more amenable to this (such as Facebook and Twitter) rather than via audiovisual information that may not convey meaning as reliably or mechanically.

When viewed against the *Army Social Media Handbooks*, “Telephone Remake” presents a complex relationship to queerness in how it both circumvents the transmission of information (by its very minimal use of language beyond the song’s lyrics) and also adheres to the guidelines set forth for appropriate army communications. Drawing from Puar’s characterization of queerness as challenging “a linear mode of conduction and transmission,” “Telephone Remake” is defiantly queer because it troubles the dissemination of linguistic meaning by using it only minimally in the video’s title and credits, not to forget the communicative blockage thematized by the song’s lyrics.³⁶⁸

Countervallently, “Telephone Remake’s” nominal use of language allows the video to fall within the boundaries of what is condoned by the military, as it doesn’t divulge sensitive, compromising information. Indeed, Galloway and Thacker insist that, “Tactical misuse of a protocol, be it intended or unintended, can identify the political fissures in a network,” and videos like Melcher’s have the potential to destabilize constructions of military power without a clear intention to do so.³⁶⁹ This is not to say that military authorities could not punish those who transmit non-utile videos like Telephone Remake.” Indeed, a comment left by *dsears266*, a self-identified lieutenant from Colorado, insinuates a history of conflict between himself and his superiors for posting similar content: “you might want to check up your chain about this...I would hate to see you all get slammed for a funny Video...I know, damn O’s [presumably officers] always trying to ruin a good time...been doing this for 12 years now.” An article issued by the *Agence France-Presse* headlined “No security risk in grooving to Gaga, US Army says” about “Telephone Remake” also indicated a perceived act of subversion in the video despite denials by military authorities, and extensively quoted Major Michelle Baldazana to make clear that “the paratroopers involved were not disciplined at all for their actions,” and that “they did nothing illegal, immoral or unethical and the video did not violate our operational security at all.” The non-specificity of the conflict between *Dsears266* and higher ranking officers, especially when compared to the way “Telephone Remake” was recuperated as a productive, condoned activity, suggests that punishment for such an offense is both ad hoc and at the discretion of the commanding officer: an unclear punishment for a crime that doesn’t evidently break any rules. “Telephone Remake” is queer, as schematized by Puar, because as a figural object it is resistant to discourse and systems of meaning, but at the same time it isn’t due to the figural’s dualistic relationship with both phenomenal, affective experience and discursive meaning. This dualism is expressed by the video’s coincident ability to adhere to *and* transgress regulations for appropriate army communication online.

The curious status of “Telephone Remake” as both queer and normative points to a deeper, structural problem in Puar’s formulation of the queer assemblage: the artificial cleaving of phenomenological experience from identity and systems of meaning. When elucidating the queer assemblage more fully, Puar asserts that “Intersectionality privileges naming, visibility, epistemology, representation, and meaning, while assemblage underscores feeling, tactility, ontology, affect, and information.”³⁷⁰ This model aligns phenomenological experience with the assemblage, and constructions of identity and meaning with intersectionality. Puar includes “visibility” as undesirable and politically conservative, with “tactility” as its binarized partner. The problem here is that Puar assumes that the phenomenal, visual encounter will always give way to a politically regressive meaning when situated within established hermeneutic systems. In other words, Puar assumes that the sensual act of looking will always be overwritten by the consequent drive to read meaning into it. This oversimplification effectively collapses looking as reading even

though the figural-as-virus offers an important potential for these acts to be confused, a process that necessitates the “rethinking [of] the aesthetic as a question of power.”³⁷¹ Rodowick’s reminder that “‘visuality’ needs to be considered not only as a discursive phenomenon but also as a transformation of relations of power and knowledge as well as subjectivation,” bears repeating here, as it highlights the ability of figural material to act as a politically volatile agent that might disrupt structures of power and identity from within discourse by remaining non-utile and resisting prevailing hermeneutic systems.³⁷²

Audiovisual, figural objects should be valued for their potential to disrupt both hegemonic discourse as well as typical divisions between subject positions. The ostensible reason for Puar’s separation of phenomenal experience from identity is to stem homonationalism (or the instrumentalization of marginalized identity for nationalist purposes), but the figural elements of “Telephone Remake” that spurred subversive discourse preserved LGBT identity as incompatible with the mission of the army. Indeed, the complexity of the affective relationship between the video (as a virus), human subjects, and that which they then create in response to it is neglected completely. Viewers of “Telephone Remake” discursively constructed the soldiers pictured as homosexual from a position at odds with army authority, and as such the military was bound to rearticulate the soldiers as normative in order to maintain its branded image under the constraints of DADT. The military’s non-acknowledgement and disavowal of prevailing rumors about their sexual orientation preserved the alignment of this networked discourse with a queer position of alterity, unassimilable to the ends of the army. Puar maintains that only by removing experience from minoritarian politics is it possible to preserve a space of radical non-utility that doesn’t feed back into hegemonic structures of power, but the figural provides this *within* discourse and destabilizes previously fixed identities when subjects attempt to read it. It is important that both pro-gay and homophobic, nationalist and revolutionary sentiment was voiced in the comments for “Telephone Remake,” because it demonstrates that these opposing positions were united in reading queerness and meaning into the video as a result of its emphasis on non-utile elements, despite (or because of) the army’s official position that refused to acknowledge LGBT soldiers. Stated more succinctly, everyone becomes complicit in reading the figural regardless of their subject position or political persuasion, a leveling of identity that troubles the “resistance-complicity binary circuit” Puar sees as an inevitable result of minoritarian politics.³⁷³

Puar prematurely forecloses visibility by conflating the meanings that are discursively constructed for figural objects with their aesthetics, and does not recognize the non-utile volatility of the figural or its potential to destabilize networked identities. Although the figural’s effect is unpredictable, it crucially preserves the ability to gnaw away at meaning—at constructions of identity and positions of power—from within discourse rather than from a position that refuses hermeneutic systems, as with Puar’s formulation of the queer assemblage. In other words, the queer assemblage could never go viral in the way that a figural object like “Telephone Remake” could, infecting discursive, identitarian terrain even as it relates to and subtends these constructions. Puar’s desire to speak from the remove of the queer assemblage indicates that she doesn’t take into account the network as a structure that determines access to the ability to speak, be recognized, or offer resistance. Although the network is a space of control (in a sense analogous to the discursive regime that takes advantage of marginal identities for its own ends) it is also a space of potential *because* it is connected to rather than separate from sources of power. In working as counterprotocol, the figural can only behave subversively if it is situated within the discursive

regime it might exploit. Likewise, the figural can only act as a virus if there is a discursive body that it might inhabit.

The demonstrated ability of the figural to destabilize identitarian positions is perhaps its most important contribution to queer struggles against and under power. While personal identity may be important at a subjective and interpersonal level, self-declarations of identity (or non-declarations, vis-à-vis the queer assemblage) are generally vulnerable or ineffective from a structural perspective; such self-identification is generally legible only within systems of language and order that have repressed those at the margins historically. As rightly argued by Puar, the increased visibility of self-identifying queers has led to their instrumentalization by the nation rather than subversion. The figural can instead infect the hermeneutic binds under which such queers live, rather than displace a neoliberal responsibility onto them to address and correct a system that has already predetermined their appropriate roles and uses.

Homonationalism, the Collapse of “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell,” and the Musical

National discourse on LGBT rights has changed substantially since “Telephone Remake” went viral. On September 12, 2010, Lady Gaga arrived at the MTV Video Music Awards escorted by four former members of the armed forces who were either discharged or had resigned as a result of DADT. While receiving her award for Best Female Video of the Year, she singled out and thanked these soldiers as well as “all the gays for remaking this video over and over again.” In the following days Gaga tweeted several times regarding the upcoming vote in the Senate to repeal DADT and made a stump speech in Maine on the 20th pleading for the repeal of DADT.³⁷⁴ The next day on September 21, 2010, writer Dan Savage and his partner Terry Miller uploaded the first video to YouTube for their “It Gets Better Project” to address the recent suicides of queer youth and call attention to the prevalent culture of bullying that surrounded them. “It Gets Better” quickly spread, with thousands of additional messages posted by LGBT citizens and allies across the nation and beyond, including messages from both Secretary of State Hillary Clinton on October 19, 2010, and President Obama on October 21, 2010, in support of the campaign.

Discursive resistance to DADT and the marginalization of LGBT visibility and rights—in which “Telephone Remake” is deeply imbricated—effected significant legislative change, but this change brought with it the normalizing effects of homonationalism. On December 18, 2010, the US Senate voted to strike down DADT, the result of eight Republican swing votes that joined the Democrat bloc.³⁷⁵ The repeal took effect on September 20, 2011, spawning a flurry of YouTube videos of previously closeted soldiers publicly declaring their sexuality. Many of these videos worked within the syntax of “It Gets Better,” and others explicitly associated themselves with the campaign. Never before had there been such a forceful and sustained articulation of homosexual identity as congruent with the mission of the United States, both nationally and abroad. One of these videos, “Outserve BAF: It Gets Better (Deployed U.S. Military),” is notable because it features five different soldiers who were serving in Afghanistan. As the video begins the soldiers speak directly to the camera about the difficulties they’ve faced due to their sexual identities. Many of them say “it gets better,” extending discourse on LGBT individuals that had been officially sanctioned by both the US President and Secretary of State. This video strengthens this connection in its next section: a montage of the soldiers carrying signs that read “It Gets Better” while going about their daily activities set to Lady Gaga’s “Born This Way.” (Figure 14) Unlike “Telephone,” the lyrics of “Born This Way” convey a clear message that argues for the acceptance of sexual

difference (“No matter gay, straight, or bi / Lesbian, transgendered life / I’m on the right track baby / I was born to survive”). The video emphasizes and integrates speech and signification thoroughly, marking its difference from “Telephone Remake” (and greater similarity to “The Ding Dong Song”) with the direct address of the soldiers at the beginning of video and the omnipresence of text and meaning-laden song in the video’s second half. “Outserve BAF” has a clear point and purpose: to normalize queer identity as a vital presence in the U.S. Armed Forces. The video’s insistence on language and meaning is central to this point, positioning the subjects in the videos as masters of speech, but their reliance on linguistic communication also positions them as *subject* to this system and the homonationalist agenda it promotes.

At a viral scale, the figural has the potential to reshape discourse on (and constructions of) identity because it points to the weakest points of a discursive network: if homosexuality within the armed forces had not been a contentious issue to begin with, the potential for “Telephone Remake” to animate discourse around it would have been much lower. In this case, however, the neoliberal, homonationalist agenda of the U.S. Government and Military expanded to neutralize the video. While such a result may not be ideal, to expect the figural to behave reliably or purposefully in this context assumes that networks themselves can be understood as discrete entities when they defy such coherent, unitary logic. Indeed, such an expectation assumes that the figural-as-virus behaves with a sort of willed determination that could be characterized as human. The figural is not a utopian solution to shift power imbalances or level the playing field between privileged and marginalized identities; rather, it is a pragmatic means to expose the discursive fault lines upon which identities are given marginal positions, and in the process deconstruct these identities even if they are later reconstructed.

The queer non-utility of the figural has nothing to do with its relationship to marginal forms of sexual identity (even if there have been historic affinities between the two), but instead its ability to destabilize identity generally by filtering it through the network. This is an important distinction, because it also shifts the responsibility for political subversion and social upheaval from persons subject to an existing order to a form of counterprotocol that might alter the mechanics of this order. While those living under repressive forms of power are likely the ones who would want to see it changed the most, to expect them to attempt to do so and risk further marginalization, disenfranchisement, or forms of juridical punishment is potentially unethical, and at the very least difficult to propose. This applies for the queer assemblage as well; to become invisible to language, while perhaps liberatory, seems impossible given the hermeneutic order under which such subjects live and are identified by others. It is difficult to criticize the soldiers who made the “Outserve BAF” video; self-preservation is powerful, and the repeal of DADT surely made their day-to-day lives far more comfortable.

While “Telephone Remake” doesn’t demonstrate the ability of the figural, the virus, or queer non-utility to overthrow repressive political and discursive regimes, it nonetheless makes clear that these applied concepts can destabilize the order and structure of censored speech and the mechanics of political agency. Given the close ties between popular videos online and the figural, it seems likely that other videos that are situated within a regime of restricted speech could achieve a similar sort of effect by acting as a virus that infects contextualizing discourse. The continued debates over copyright and free use—not to mention repressive governments around the globe that continue to target and punish specific populations—indicate that the political potential of the figural and its queer non-

utility is indeed great. It is important to recognize and conceive of figural content online not only as something that people produce, but also as deeply networked texts that others encounter and construct meaning for. While such resulting meaning may be normative, it might also trouble the boundaries between subject positions under repressive power structures. It is only through the networked structure of digital communications that such viral potential exists, wherein the affective encounter with the figural-as-virus might incite a resistant body of discourse that is sizable and diffuse enough that it cannot be ignored or rooted out.

Although networked, figural content may not possess the ability to self-direct toward set political ends, it is also important to remember that the discursive constructions it evinces do not foreclose future forms of resistance. Returning to “Telephone Remake,” the repeal of DADT may have worked to normalize the video and integrate LGBT soldiers into the armed forces, but its figural elements remain provocative and encourage viewers to read in opposition to this discourse. Commentary on the video has cooled considerably, but in March of 2013, about a year and a half after the repeal of DADT, viewers continued to draw links between the video and the repressive law, such as amc454’s contribution, “This is what republicans were afraid of when we repealed ‘Don’t ask, Don’t tell!’” More common are comments that point out the video’s questionable utility, such as user Helvetica Neue’s remark “Greatest use of my tax dollars ever. :3,” in January 2014. By pointing out the video’s relationship to DADT and questionable military practices, these viewers disavow contemporary nationalist discourse and instead animate concepts of gay representability and general distrust in the government via the video’s figural elements. Viewed against the established stereotypes of gay male musicality, the figural has the potential to incite such language while simultaneously inverting the power dynamics that created it in the first place: what was a language of surveillance and punishment effectively became a means to hold the government in check, without any real intention to do so on the part of “Telephone Remake’s” makers. While this power reversal is important, what is ultimately more crucial is that the circulation of the figural through digital networks and its coincident reception moves beyond human intentionality, in a sense circumventing the self-representational trap in which queers found themselves immediately following gay liberation. The figural insists that the reader—if only momentarily—must prioritize perception and affect over the meaning that is imposed upon it, or, in the words of Lady Gaga’s “Telephone,” to “Stop callin’” and “Get on the dance floor.” It is through this aesthetic, affective experience that figural objects like “Telephone Remake” remain capable of virally transforming discursive bodies, and, in turn, the subjectivities they engender.

“Telephone” and “Telephone Remake” demonstrate continued the vitality of music to create privileged systems of knowledge that can circulate widely, as well as the new potentials and limits of this circulation in digital networks. Not unlike the way queers pre-Stonewall availed upon the musical network offered by popular song through venues of performance and reception and spaces of commercialized leisure, music continues to provide a way for its consumers to relate to one another. As a digital object, however, music now moves these related practices through spaces where they might become far more visible with greater scrutiny placed upon them than ever before. It is important to remember that the attention garnered by “Telephone Remake” parallels the surveillance and policing queers suffered in earlier eras that ultimately resulted in popular stereotypes about gay musicality. The only crucial difference is that those who observed and interpreted the video to make meaning from it did so from a different range of perspectives, inclusive of queers

who sought to reform political policy. While this may seem positive comparatively, such viewers and commentators remain repressive in that they aimed to solidify the identity of others they observed to buttress their own perspective. Likewise, this “progressive” interpretation would not have happened had queers never been repressed, surveilled, imprisoned and disenfranchised in the first place. While the figural may offer a specific set of potentials in digital networks, it is by no means unlimited. It is necessary to remember that whatever potentials the figural might present, they are historically and contextually contingent, and relate to specific formations and arrangements of power, control and resistance.

Conclusion

So what is the status of music and its relation to homosexual public identity moving forward? Of course, this is impossible to predict with any certainty, but I wager the musical stereotype profiled through Chapters 3 through 5 will continue to function as the way it has for the past 40-odd years: as shorthand for homosexual taste, and as a convenient way to render queers intelligible to a heteronormative audience. If anything, this stereotype has proved remarkably durable, whether used to market entertainment to a mainstream audience or grow political traction in favor of greater assimilation of queers into public life. It is one of the most fundamental points in the “grid of intelligibility” that makes up homosexual male identity in the US, and this is why it will be difficult to change despite its anachronism.

I also do not see any clear reason why it needs to change. Any stereotype that might supersede it in the popular lexicon would likely also derive from a conflicted history of oppression and repression. And as a stereotype, the queer affiliation with musicality has been used to advance queer agendas just as much as it has been used to profile and negatively marginalize queers. In its net effect I view it as neutral in the contemporary setting. While it results from a history of policing and punishment, the same could be said for much language related to marginal identity generally, and to reiterate a point stated throughout this project, there is no clear way to move beyond the system in which we operate and circulate with others.

That said, I also see no clear reason why it should be mobilized in exceptional ways or very frequently in the future. In the time since the US government eliminated DADT, homosexuals have also gained marriage equality at a national level and tempered the “sacred bond” between man and woman. While queers, especially trans citizens, do not yet enjoy full parity in terms of legal rights, this work has advanced tremendously since the location where this project began. While newly restored rights have come under threat as a result of conservative, anti-queer laws passed through reactionary state governments, these will not last. Ironically, these laws will not last not because of the greater sense of citizens and legislators, but, rather, the logic of capitalism. Reportage of the reaction to these laws, which operate by “protecting” the right of citizens not to provide services on the basis of religious belief, largely states the cost to states for these laws in financial rather than human terms. Reporting on anti-LGBT laws in Mississippi and North Carolina, the *New York Times* centered its second sentence in an article on the movement of PayPal to cancel a “\$3.6 million investment in North Carolina,” and followed shortly thereafter about the cost to Indiana for similar laws of \$60 million.³⁷⁶ Likewise, the article notes that Mississippi has faced resistance from “Tyson Foods, MGM Resorts International, Nissan and Toyota, which are all major employers in the state.”³⁷⁷ While it may seem to some like cold comfort, the understanding of the commercial value of (and ostensibly advocacy for) queer identity displayed by these companies in criticizing the laws ultimately works to protect queers. Likewise, they are the same protections large employers would seek for their heteronormative employees: there is not an important difference between queers and non-queers when evaluated from a market-driven perspective.

If there is “progress” that might be perceived since the late 1960s and early 1970s in terms of queer circulation within the public sphere beyond the legal arena, it is certainly within commerce. It is now very difficult to find a clear distinction between pro-LGBTQ sentiment and activism and corporate interest. Perhaps the most lucid expression of this is

the transformation of annual Pride festivities in cities across the US that commemorate the Stonewall Riots. Over the past several years, corporate sponsors have promoted themselves as liberal through the promotion of pride themed products and advertisements, among them rainbow colored Oreos and Doritos and a pride-themed Whopper from Burger King encased in a rainbow wrapper. (Figures 1, 2 and 3) The actual pride parades are now often fully divorced from community celebration and instead serve as a vehicle to display corporate sponsorship of LGBTQ community, and, in turn, their manifest beneficence and humanitarian interest (i.e. not their market interest in queers). At San Francisco's 2015 Pride Parade 8,000 of the 30,000 marchers represented Apple, monopolizing more than a quarter of the parade's seven hour 33 minute runtime.³⁷⁸ While there was significant coverage (and criticism) of Apple's virtual monopolization of the parade, it mostly focused on the duration. What was striking as someone who saw it in person was how banal it was. There was next to nothing expressive of public queer identity aside from shirtless stilt walkers who were far too infrequent; the majority of walkers seemed to be there because it was expected of them. While this may be groundless assumption, it is difficult to understand how two thirds of the 12,000 employees at Apple's Cupertino headquarters would participate fully of their own accord. Any sort of festive attitude came from periodic small floats that blasted (heteronormative) top 40 radio.

Corporate investment in LGBT issues is now a commonplace strategy that bolsters public opinion within crucial market segments and promotes the idea that these companies operate in the interest of the greater good, despite not supporting humanitarian interests more directly or even adhering meeting legal requirements for tax payments. This practice is generally referred to as "pinkwashing." Apple is especially symptomatic in this regard, as it maintains an image of liberalism while also rarely investing in humanitarian efforts and evading taxes through offshore accounts. The latter count has recently resulted in pointed confrontations between the company and the local government in Cupertino, which suffers for lack of tax funds and decaying public infrastructure.³⁷⁹ In publicly allying itself with LGBTQ issues, corporate interest as embodied by Apple et al. is able to use a liberal *cause célèbre* to draw attention away from the very real ways in which it avoids responsibility for obligatory forms of public welfare.

Although "pinkwashing" may not seem like "progress" from a critical perspective, it nonetheless represents an important shift in approach to queer identity on the part of business from the one used in the 1970s and 1980s. Unlike the gradual movement away from an affiliation with queers embodied by *After Dark* in the early 80s, or the possible deniability of queers as the primary audience for goods as with men's beauty products post-Stonewall, corporations are now not afraid to publicly celebrate an affiliation with queers. In a very real way, this public recognition has shifted public perceptions of queers, especially among younger generations. To be clear, this change has not liberated the queers from the position of "bearer of meaning, not maker of meaning," to use the words of Laura Mulvey, but it has nonetheless made queers intelligible to heteronormative subjects in a way that eases day-to-day life. And while companies today may ultimately profit from queer affiliation, the arrangement is more indirect than that which characterized the commodification of queers in the early 1970s, for example by Steve Ostrow at the Continental Baths. Pinkwashing might not be good, but it is certainly better than past vehicles for queers within the public sphere.

The assimilation of queers into the same pool of consumers/subjects as others has, however, also resulted in confrontations with corporate policy. Especially expressive of this

discord in the “My Name Is” campaign and its critique of how the social networking site Facebook’s polices user identity. Facebook offers a social platform for users that operates through the sale of information about its users to advertisers. This information is exceptionally valuable, given expression by the company’s initial valuation at \$104 billion when it went public.³⁸⁰ In order to maintain the integrity of collected data for marketers, Facebook insists on a “real names policy” that requires users to register their profile using their actual name. This policy has proven problematic in how it affects a variety of marginal populations, including survivors of sexual and domestic abuse, Native Americans, political dissidents and, especially, trans people, all of whom might use names for social networking profile that are not their legal name. Resistance to this policy gained traction, however, when a large swath of notable San Francisco drag queens lost their profiles over the course 24 hours. Reported by an anonymous user, the performers lost their profiles on the grounds that they didn’t use their actual names and instead an alias. In many ways, one of the key problems with this policy was how it enabled discriminatory “trolling” online without clear penalty, as Facebook relied on its users to police the profiles of other users.³⁸¹ While this result may not have been intended (indeed, it seems like a strategy to outsource labor for site maintenance), the use of Facebook for profiling and surveillance effectively duplicated the hostile culture marginalized populations experience in day-to-day life on a virtual terrain. To be clear, Facebook’s position effectively adds a new, virtual terrain that supports marginalization, surveillance and profiling while publicly affiliating itself with pro-LGBTQ causes. So, while queers may benefit from the more intangible values-driven ideology promoted by corporations such as Facebook, Apple, etc. through “pinkwashing,” this often comes at the cost of corporate negligence regarding the lived experience of queers and other marginalized groups. Protocol like Facebook’s “real names” policy effectively assumes that queers and other minority groups *are* the majority even though this is not the case, and this policy persists despite the ways these companies benefit from affiliation with LGBTQ causes to bolster public opinion.

Moving on, it is striking from an expanded perspective how public perceptions of and possibilities for queers have shifted tremendously vis-à-vis other minority groups over the past four decades. During the same 2013 session of the US Supreme Court, the court struck down Proposition 8 (which prohibited same-sex marriage in California) and the Defense of Marriage Act (which did the same at the federal level) while also stripping back the protections offered by the Voting Rights Act.³⁸² Justices who voted to strike down a key part of the law (allowing states with a history of racial discrimination more leeway in changing voting laws without advance federal approval) espoused the sentiment that the Voting Rights Act was no longer necessary because the same prejudice no longer existed as when the law was instituted in 1965. For example, Chief Justice John Roberts writing for the majority opined, “Our country has changed... While any racial discrimination in voting is too much, Congress must ensure that the legislation it passes to remedy that problem speaks to current conditions,” whereas Ruth Bader Ginsburg in a dissenting opinion stated that the need for the law had shifted from, “first-generation barriers to ballot access,” to, “second-generation barriers” that are less evident in their application.³⁸³ The parallel here between the decision of conservative justices on the Supreme Court and companies such as Facebook is the disbelief that minority experience differs from that of the majority in terms of the repression in day-to-day life. In the time since the stripping of protections offered by the Voting Rights Act, the very real discrimination experienced by the black community has been given tragic expression through the shooting of unarmed teenager Michael Brown by

white police officers in Ferguson, MO, the subsequent demonstrations there, and the continued unjustified killings of young black men thereafter.

The rise of LGBTQ protections and the concurrent lapse in protections for other marginal groups together serve to mark the relatively privileged position queers enjoy within the legal arena today. I contend that this relationship derives more from the imperatives of capitalism and the ability of queer identity (compared to other marginal identity) to buttress white, heteronormative ego ideal. It is easier to find similarities with people who already seem similar to you and, more pointedly, are fully ingrained in the marketing of lifestyle products to a mass audience. From the time queers have entered the public sphere as fully speaking subjects, they have been an integral part of marketing strategies to mainstream audiences, given extraordinary expression by the marketing of homosexuality to heterosexuals very early in this history at the Continental Baths. Racial difference, on the other hand, suffers from far more complicated histories of oppression and the relation of marginal identity to the circulation of capital. While blacks and other racialized groups often circulated as literal capital and could be owned throughout Western history, queer products rather than the queers themselves were understood to have value for mainstream consumers. This is not to disavow histories of sexual slavery in which queers were also targeted, but separating this from conceptions of race would be difficult if not impossible. While queers have not reached proper parity with normative subjects under the law, I nonetheless contend that the more important political battles as of now concern other marginal groups. In turn, I advocate an approach that favors intersectionality, or the understanding that marginal groups suffer similar though not symmetric forms of oppression, and that these various forms of different are copresent. Likewise, I also advocate an approach that interrogates the historical conditions for speaking and circulating in public that have shaped the expression of marginal groups.

From a historiographical perspective, I hope that this project that enlarged ideas about what is possible through a rigorous historical approach to lost histories. As I was writing and researching the themes for this project, I was consistently struck by how my findings differed from dominant understandings of the role of sound in audiovisual media. While this may seem obvious, starting from a different perspective with different guiding questions results in historical projects that diverge considerably from accepted understandings. It may seem that this newly uncovered knowledge would derive from “reading against the grain,” or finding meaning where it isn’t readily apparent. However, many of my basic understandings of the role of sound in daily life and the cinema derived from meaning provided willingly from my objects of study. This was most apparent in my consideration of Vitaphone shorts, many title cards for which proclaim the technology’s affiliation with Baldwin pianos. This industry relationship also enjoyed a different type of visual expression in the *mise-en-scène*. It remains incredibly puzzling to me how these very clear details might not have informed previous historicizations of the technology that framed it in relation to theatrical entertainment rather than also including entertainment in the home, especially since these scholars (Charles Wolfe and James Lastra) are meticulous historians. Likewise, given the difference in my findings, I found myself without a clear line of discourse that I could follow and contribute to without substantial maneuvering that might render my contributions less clear. While this may be a basic condition for scholars (especially junior ones), I also believe that it resulted from applying tools typically neglected by queer scholars to queer inquiry. And while I have focused specifically here on Vitaphones, basic parts of my argument that foreground circulation as a key criterion in analysis are also

lacking in dominant histories that favor centered forms of reception. In other words, much of what I have written and defended diverges in fundamental ways from the history of the cinema, or, at the very least, generally accepted strategies for analysis.

Looking forward, it is my desire that others should also begin to engage in similar processes of history writing. It is difficult for me to say what directions this might take, but I firmly believe that lived experience of oppression is important for the writing of history. In ways that are difficult to articulate or understand fully, my interest in the relationship between queer identity, musical reception and performance and circulation derives from my experiences growing up as a musician while also being conflicted about my own sexual desires. I found that membership in a musical ensemble provided me with the widest, safest form of circulation available to me. Of course, I wasn't even fully aware of this connection when I began to write this history, but it has shaped the final product in ways that are difficult to understand. There are countless other histories that might result from such private and complex experiences of public life, and I sincerely hope that they find their to the page and classroom and change how others see and understand the world around them.

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- ⁶⁸ See Alford, Robert, "Paint Your *Band Wagon*: Style, Space and Sexuality," in *Screen* (Spring 2014) 55 (1), 49-71.
- ⁶⁹ As noted by Donald Vining in his diaries, "The entertainment is not as varied as in new York, there being less vaudeville and nitery talent to call upon but at least the stars really do show up and that's more important. The entertainment the boys can buy, the thrill of getting a star's autograph they can't." Entry from Sunday, December 19, 1943, p. 304.
- ⁷⁰ See Chapter 1, p. 18.
- ⁷¹ Vining as quoted in Tucker, Sherrie. *Dance Floor Democracy: The Social Geography of Memory at the Hollywood Canteen*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2014, p. 204.
- ⁷² Vining, *A Gay Diary: 1933-1946*, p. 312.
- ⁷³ See Chauncey, pp. 301-303, and Tinkcom, Matthew. *Working Like a Homosexual: Camp, Capital, Cinema*. Duke University Press Books, 2002, pp. 37-49.
- ⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 304.
- ⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 313.
- ⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 330, 333, 334.
- ⁷⁷ Vining, *A Gay Diary: 1933-1946*, pp. 213, 252, 285, 326.
- ⁷⁸ Tucker, Sherrie. *Dance Floor Democracy: The Social Geography of Memory at the Hollywood Canteen*. Durham: Duke University Press Books, 2014, p. 119.
- ⁷⁹ Suisman, David. *Selling Sounds: The Commercial Revolution in American Music*. Harvard University Press, 2012, p. 180.
- ⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 197-200.
- ⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 204-205.
- ⁸² *Ibid.*, 178-179.
- ⁸³ Kelley, Andrea. "'A Revolution in the Atmosphere': The Dynamics of Site and Screen in 1940s Soundies," in *Cinema Journal* 54.2 (Winter 2015), 72-75.
- ⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 76, 86-88.
- ⁸⁵ Berubé, Allan. *Coming Out Under Fire: The History of Gay Men and Women in World War II, 20th Anniversary Ed.* 20 Anv. The University of North Carolina Press, 2010, pp. 67-68.
- ⁸⁶ See Alford, "Paint Your *Band Wagon*: Style, Space and Sexuality," pp. 54-56.
- ⁸⁷ Sharon R. Ullman, *Sex Seen: the Emergence of Modern Sexuality in America* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1998), pp. 45-46.
- ⁸⁸ Chauncey, George. *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890-1940*. Basic Books, 1995, 78.
- ⁸⁹ As quoted in Berubé, 13-14.
- ⁹⁰ Though an emphasis on physical traits nonetheless persisted, including "feminine bodily characteristics," "effeminity in dress and manner," and a "patulous [expanded] rectum." As cited in Berubé, 19.
- ⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 24.

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- ⁹² Ibid., 20.
- ⁹³ Ibid., 21-28.
- ⁹⁴ Ibid., 29.
- ⁹⁵ Ibid., 29.
- ⁹⁶ Ibid., 50.
- ⁹⁷ Ibid., 33.
- ⁹⁸ Ibid., 39.
- ⁹⁹ Ibid., 65.
- ¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 64.
- ¹⁰¹ Ibid., 41.
- ¹⁰² Margolick, David. *Dreadful: The Short Life and Gay Times of John Horne Burns*. New York: Other Press, 2013. 76.
- ¹⁰³ Ibid., 85.
- ¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 83-84.
- ¹⁰⁵ Bérubé, 39.
- ¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 40.
- ¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 199.
- ¹⁰⁸ Luciano, Dana. *Arranging Grief: Sacred Time and the Body in Nineteenth-Century America*. New York: New York University Press, 2007, p. 2.
- ¹⁰⁹ Freeman, Elizabeth. *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories*. Duke University Press Books, 2010, xi.
- ¹¹⁰ Kelley, 81.
- ¹¹¹ Black, Gregory D., and Clayton R. Koppes. *Hollywood Goes to War: How Politics, Profit and Propaganda Shaped World War II Movies*. New York : London: Free Pr, 1987, 82-90.
- ¹¹² Ibid., 91.
- ¹¹³ Ibid., 91-92.
- ¹¹⁴ Ibid., 92.
- ¹¹⁵ Douglas, Susan J. *Listening In: Radio And The American Imagination*. 1st University of Minnesota Press Ed edition. Minneapolis: Univ Of Minnesota Press, 2004, p. 115.
- ¹¹⁶ Such narrative machinations present rich possibilities for critical interpretation, especially those that dwell on the status of Miranda herself as an othered spectacle of racialized and gendered identities. Viewed vis-à-vis her lyrics in the famous “The Lady In The Tutti-Frutti Hat” from *The Gang’s All Here*—in which she sings “The Gentlemen, they want to make me say, ‘Si si, / But I don’t tell them that I tell them, ‘yes sirree,’” the final two words proclaimed in a startlingly American accent—they offer evidence of her non-conformity to prevailing standards for the matching of voice with body. As argued by Kaja Silverman in *The Acoustic Mirror*, classical Hollywood cinema cultivated an ideological, sonic regime that relentlessly tethered female voices to their appropriate bodies and punished women who transgressed these boundaries, even as it promoted standards for the male voice that encouraged its transcendence of the corporeal. As developed across her films, Miranda’s persona directly resists this hegemony of the voice, as buttressed by ingeniously obtuse wordplay that outsmarts logic by relying too heavily on her status as an unintelligible, spectacularized other, not unlike the gendered “illogical logic” regularly offered by Gracie Allen on the radio. See the chapter “Body Talk” from Kaja Silverman’s *The Acoustic Mirror: The Female Voice in Psychoanalysis and Cinema* (Indiana University Press, 1988), and the chapter “Radio Comedy and Linguistic Slapstick” from Susan Douglas’s *Listening In: Radio and the American Imagination* (University of Minnesota Press, 2004).
- ¹¹⁸ Bérubé, 99-100.
- ¹¹⁹ Ibid., 89.
- ¹²⁰ Ibid., 80.
- ¹²¹ Altman, Rick R. *The American Film Musical*. Indiana University Press, 1988, 35.
- ¹²² Ibid., 50-58.
- ¹²³ See Robert Alford, “Paint your *Band Wagon*: style, space and sexuality,” in *Screen*, Oxford University Press 55:1 (Spring 2014), pp. 54-56.
- ¹²⁴ Hischak, Thomas S. *The Oxford Companion to the American Musical: Theatre, Film, and Television*. Oxford University Press, USA, 2008, p. 412.
- ¹²⁵ Hart, Moss. *Lady in the Dark: Acting Edition*. Dramatists Play Service Inc, 1968.

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- 127 Ibid.
- 128 Ibid.
- 129 From the Marty Weiser Collection, WB 1943-Publicity, Margaret Herrick Library.
- 130 From the Marty Weiser Collection, WB 1943-Publicity, Margaret Herrick Library.
- 131 Ibid.
- 132 Ibid.
- 133 *TITA Exhibitors Booklet*, 1943, collection of the author.
- 134 Vining, Donald, *A Gay Diary: 193-1946*; pp. 362-363.
- 135 *The Band Wagon Exhibitors Booklet*, 1953, Margaret Herrick Library.
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- 138 Hagius, Hugh. *Swasarn Nerf's Gay Guides for 1949*. Bibliogay Publications, 2010, p. 109
- 139 Ibid.
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- 144 *The Gay Girl's Guide*, 1949, p. 50.
- 145 *The Gay Girl's Guide to the U.S. and the Western World*, 3rd Edition, p. 36.
- 146 Burns, John Horne, and Paul Fussell. *The Gallery*. New York: NYRB Classics, 2004, p. 140.
- 147 Ibid., p.151.
- 148 *Gaedicker's Sodom-on-Hudson*, p. 24.
- 149 Donald Vining, *A Gay Diary Volume II: 1946-1954*, pp. 2-3.
- 150 Ibid., p. 44.
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- 152 Ibid., pp. 38-39.
- 153 *The Gay Girl's Guide*, 1949, pp. 46-47.
- 154 Ibid., p. 42.
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- 156 Hirschak, Thomas S. *The Oxford Companion to the American Musical: Theatre, Film, and Television*. Oxford University Press, USA, 2008, p. 526.
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- 158 See Chapter 1.
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- 162 As cited in Chauncey, George. *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890-1940*. Basic Books, 1995, 286.
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- 165 See Altman, Rick R. *The American Film Musical*. Indiana University Press, 1988., Feuer. *The Hollywood Musical, Second Edition*. Second Edition. Indiana University Press, 1993., Dyer, Richard. "Entertainment and Utopia" in *Only Entertainment*. Routledge, 2002., and Tinkcom, Matthew. *Working Like a Homosexual: Camp, Capital, Cinema*. Duke University Press Books, 2002.
- 166 Blommaert, Jan. *Discourse: A Critical Introduction*. Cambridge University Press, 2005, 2-3.
- 167 Lefebvre, Henri. *The Production of Space*. 1st ed. Wiley-Blackwell, 1992, 133.
- 168 Blommaert, Jan. *Discourse: A Critical Introduction*. Cambridge University Press, 2005,130-131.
- 169 Ibid., 47.
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- 171 Blommaert, Jan. *Discourse: A Critical Introduction*. Cambridge University Press, 2005, 71.

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- ¹⁷⁴ Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London; New York: Verso, 2006, 134.
- ¹⁷⁵ Richard Dyer, “It’s Being So Camp As Keeps Us Going,” in Dyer, Richard. *The Culture of Queers*. London ; New York: Routledge, 2002, 49-50.
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- ¹⁷⁷ De Certeau, Michel. *The Practice of Everyday Life*. University of California Press, 1988, p. 37.
- ¹⁷⁸ Ibid., 38.
- ¹⁷⁹ Chauncey, George. *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890-1940*. Basic Books, 1995, 288.
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- ¹⁸¹ Adorno, Theodor Wiesengrund. *Essays on Music: Theodor W. Adorno ; Selected, With Introduction, Commentary, and Notes by Richard Leppert ; New Translations by Susan H. Gillespie*. University of California Press, 2002, 30-33.
- ¹⁸² Attali, Jacques. *Noise: The Political Economy of Music*. Translated by Brian Massumi. Univ Of Minnesota Press, 1985, 145.
- ¹⁸³ Ibid., 110-111.
- ¹⁸⁴ See Chapter 1, 28-33.
- ¹⁸⁵ <http://www.talkinbroadway.com/cabaret/grimes.html>
- ¹⁸⁶ Stewart, Susan. *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection*. Duke University Press, 1984, 135.
- ¹⁸⁷ Ibid., 136, 147.
- ¹⁸⁸ See Chapter 1, 22-33.
- ¹⁸⁹ Please note that this photograph was unstaged; these were the records at the front of their respective rows when I took this picture.
- ¹⁹⁰ Stewart, Susan. *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection*. Duke University Press, 1984, 135.
- ¹⁹¹ Miller, D. A. *Place for Us: Essay on the Broadway Musical*. Harvard University Press, 1998, 22.
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- ¹⁹³ Miller, D. A. *Place for Us: Essay on the Broadway Musical*. Harvard University Press, 1998, 26.
- ¹⁹⁴ Susan Sontag, “Notes on Camp,” in Cleto, Fabio. *Camp: Queer Aesthetics and the Performing Subject : a Reader*. University of Michigan Press, 1999, 54-55.
- ¹⁹⁵ Richard Dyer, “It’s Being So Camp As Keeps Us Going,” in Dyer, Richard. *The Culture of Queers*. Routledge, 2012, 51.
- ¹⁹⁶ Gamson, Joshua. *The Fabulous Sylvester: The Legend, the Music, the Seventies in San Francisco*. Macmillan, 2006, 204-205.
- ¹⁹⁷ See Chapter 1.
- ¹⁹⁸ Bourdieu, Pierre. *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. 1St Edition edition. Cambridge, U.K.; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1977, 78.
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squares, markets); iconography and graffiti; advertising.” What I find striking about these two categories is that there is remarkable overlap between them (for example between “land uses and built environment” and “open places; places of popular spectacle), and furthermore that the representational practices that might establish a space as “hearth and home” would likely subtend “social networks of communication and mutual aid” in public and semi-public spaces. I argue that for queers, this relationship between public and private practices and spaces, between the “use of space” and its representation, has been facilitated historically by material consumption and its constitution of the habitus, specifically as this dynamic informs the consumption of popular song and its camp elaboration within the home. See David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity*. Blackwell Publishing, 1990, 219-225.

²⁰⁰ Susan Sontag, “Notes on Camp,” in Cleto, Fabio. *Camp: Queer Aesthetics and the Performing Subject : a Reader*. University of Michigan Press, 1999, 64, 65.

²⁰¹ Ahmed, Sara. *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others*. Duke University Press, 2006, 21.

²⁰² *Ibid.*, 37-49.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*, 67-78.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 81.

²⁰⁵ Chauncey, George. *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890-1940*. Basic Books, 1995, p. 280.

²⁰⁶ See Love, Heather. *Feeling Backward: Loss and the Politics of Queer History*. Harvard University Press, 2007, 24-27, and Davis, W. “Queer Family Romance in Collecting Visual Culture.” *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 17, no. 2-3 (May 9, 2011): 309-329.

²⁰⁷ <http://www.sfgate.com/bayarea/article/Bob-Grimes-S-F-sheet-music-collector-dies-2327142.php>

²⁰⁸ “A Gay Cult Classic Re-Emerges” in the NYTimes, March 18 2011

²⁰⁹ See Chapter 1.

²¹⁰ From the ONE Archives.

²¹¹ From the ONE Archives

²¹² Miller, D. A. *Place for Us: Essay on the Broadway Musical*. Harvard University Press, 1998, 55-57.

²¹³ Herzog, Amy. “Illustrating Music: The Impossible Embodiments of the Jukebox Film,” from *Medium Cool: Music Videos from Soundies to Cellphones*, eds. Roger Beebe and Jason Middleton. Duke University Press, 2007, 44-54.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 44-54.

²¹⁵ D’Emilio, John. *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities*. 1st ed. University Of Chicago Press, 1998, p. 62.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 108-110.

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 59-60.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 62.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 62.

²²⁰ Chauncey, George. *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890-1940*. Basic Books, 1995, 288.

²²¹ Koestenbaum, Wayne. *The Queen’s Throat: Opera, Homosexuality and the Mystery of Desire*. Da Capo Press, 2001, 44.

²²² D’Emilio, John. *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities*. 1st ed. University Of Chicago Press, 1998, pp. 108-109.

²²³ *Ibid.*, 124.

²²⁴ *Ibid.*, 132-133.

²²⁵ *Ibid.*, 134.

²²⁶ *Ibid.*, 138.

²²⁷ *Time*, January 21, 1966, 52-56.

²²⁸ *Ibid.* 42.

²²⁹ *Time*, October 31, 1969, 60-67.

²³⁰ Rodgers, Bruce. *The Queens’ Vernacular: a Gay Lexicon / Bruce Rodgers*. [San Francisco, Calif.]: Straight Arrow Books, 1972., 33, 51.

²³¹ *Ibid.*, 103, 140.

²³² *Ibid.*, 169.

²³³ *Ibid.*, 181.

²³⁴ *Ibid.*, 125-127.

²³⁵ *Ibid.*, 190, 212, and 77, respectively.

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- ²³⁶ Ibid., 27.
- ²³⁷ Brett, Philip. "Musicality, Essentialism, and the Closet," in Brett, Philip, Elizabeth Wood, and Gary C. Thomas, eds. *Queering the Pitch: The New Gay and Lesbian Musicology*. 1st ed. Routledge, 1994, 11, 19.
- ²³⁸ Ibid., 11.
- ²³⁹ Koestenbaum, Wayne. *The Queen's Throat: Opera, Homosexuality and the Mystery of Desire*. Da Capo Press, 2001, 11.
- ²⁴⁰ Valentine, Penny, and Vicki Wickham. *Dancing with Demons*. Hodder & Stoughton, 2012, 130-131.
- ²⁴¹ Ibid., 293.
- ²⁴² Certeau, Michel de. *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984, 36-37.
- ²⁴³ Ibid.
- ²⁴⁴ This is not to assert that queer life quickly assumed the same protections as heterosexual life. Queers remained vulnerable to legal inequity and the threat of corporal violence. Only that the early 1970s marks a shift in public orientation that has ultimately led to equal rights (via the crucible of marriage) over 45 years later.
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- ²⁴⁷ Ibid., 726.
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- ²⁵¹ Ibid., 26-36.
- ²⁵² "Séance at the Palace" in *Time Magazine*. August 18, 1967.
- ²⁵³ Burke, Tom. "The New Homosexuality" in *Esquire*. December 1969. P. 178.
- ²⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 306.
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- ²⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 315.
- ²⁵⁷ Ibid., pp. 308-312.
- ²⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 178.
- ²⁵⁹ See Chapter 3
- ²⁶⁰ Dennis Altman, "Fear and Loathing and Hepatitis," in *Coming Out in the Seventies*. Boston: Alyson Publications, 1981, 74-75.
- ²⁶¹ Burke, Tom. "The New Homosexuality" in *Esquire*. December 1969, 304.
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- ²⁶⁵ Ibid., 27-30.
- ²⁶⁶ Ibid., 37.
- ²⁶⁷ Ibid., 39, 44-47.
- ²⁶⁸ Ibid., 58-59.
- ²⁶⁹ Ibid., 53.
- ²⁷⁰ Ibid., 68.
- ²⁷¹ Ibid., 113, 127.
- ²⁷² Ibid., 169-171, 190-192.
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- ²⁷⁴ Ibid., 51-54.
- ²⁷⁵ Ibid., 54.
- ²⁷⁶ Ibid., 101-106.
- ²⁷⁷ Ibid., 105.
- ²⁷⁸ Dennis Altman, "Gay Oppression in the Baths," in *Coming Out in the Seventies*. Boston: Alyson Publications, 1981, 39-41.
- ²⁷⁹ Ibid., 54.
- ²⁸⁰ Ibid., 62.
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- 283 Ibid., 209-213.
- 284 Richard Goldstein, 51.
- 285 *After Dark*, January 1974, 6.
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- ³³⁵ *JK Wedding Entrance Dance*, 2009. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4-94JhLEiN0&feature=youtube_gdata_player.
"Thriller" (original Upload), 2007.
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hMnk7lh9M3o&feature=youtube_gdata_player.
The Crazy Nastyass Honey Badger (original Narration by Randall), 2011.
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4r7wHMg5Yjg&feature=youtube_gdata_player.
Friday - Rebecca Black - Official Music Video, 2011.
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kFvSfOSbjY0&feature=youtube_gdata_player.
LEAVE BRITNEY ALONE!, 2007.
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kHmVkrRoEowc&feature=youtube_gdata_player.
- ³³⁶ Doty, Alexander. "Modern Family, Glee, and the Limits of TV Liberalism." *Flow*.
<http://flowtv.org/2010/09/modern-family-glee-and-limits-of-tv-liberalism/>
- ³³⁷ <http://tvbythenumbers.zap2it.com/2010/09/29/tuesday-finals-glee-no-ordinary-family-ncis-dancing-up-raising-hope-detroit-1-8-7-running-wilde-down/65835/>
- ³³⁸ <http://tvbythenumbers.zap2it.com/2011/05/18/tuesday-final-ratings-breaking-in-the-good-wife-body-of-proof-adjusted-down-ncis-ncis-la-glee-the-biggest-loser-adjusted-up/93216/>
- ³³⁹ <http://tvbythenumbers.zap2it.com/2011/09/21/tuesday-finals-new-girl-glee-ncis-dwts-results-adjusted-up-body-of-proof-adjusted-down/104472/>
<http://tvbythenumbers.zap2it.com/2012/02/01/tuesday-final-ratings-glee-adjusted-up-raising-hope-adjusted-down-2/118284/>
<http://tvbythenumbers.zap2it.com/2012/05/02/tuesday-final-ratings-new-girl-ncis-glee-dancing-with-the-stars-biggest-loser-last-man-standing-adjusted-up/132026/>
- ³⁴⁰ Altman, Rick R. *The American Film Musical*. Indiana University Press, 1988, 35, 51.
- ³⁴¹ Ibid., 200.
- ³⁴² McLuhan, Marshall. *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*. MIT University Press, 1995, 46.
- ³⁴³ Kittler, Friedrich. *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*. Trans. Geoffrey Winthrop-Young and Michael Wutz. Stanford University Press, 1999.

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- ³⁴⁴ Rodowick, D. N. *Reading the Figural, or, Philosophy After the New Media*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2001, 218.
- ³⁴⁵ Cory, Donald Webster. *The Homosexual in America*. First Edition-3rd Printing. New York: Greenberg, 1952, 122.
- ³⁴⁶ Lyotard, Jean-François. *Discourse, Figure*. Trans. Antony Hudek and Mary Lydon. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011, 205.
- ³⁴⁷ Rodowick, 49.
- ³⁴⁸ Lyotard, 221, 285.
- ³⁴⁹ Lyotard, 356. While the field of Immanence and the Event as theorized by Gilles Deleuze, Brian Massumi, Sanford Kwinter and others are more commonly deployed to consider the affective dimensions of New Media, I nonetheless draw from Lyotard's psychoanalytic approach in *Discourse, Figure*. I use this approach because Lyotard's project holds in chiasmatic tension both internal affect and its resulting outward expression, whereas Immanence and the Event refer more generally to internal affective processes.
- ³⁵⁰ Rodowick, 43.
- ³⁵¹ Dyer, Richard. "Entertainment and Utopia," in *Hollywood Musicals: The Film Reader*, Ed. Steven Cohan. New York: Routledge, 2002, 20-21.
- ³⁵² *Ibid.*, 27.
- ³⁵³ Tinkcom, Matthew. *Working Like a Homosexual: Camp, Capital, Cinema*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2002, 40.
- ³⁵⁴ "Harlem Shake (original army edition)." 2013. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4hpEnLtqUDg>.
- ³⁵⁵ This is not to say that such categories yield fully determined affects; indeed, they often engender an ambivalent response from viewers. Rather, they are more consistently tied to regulated forms of consumption, as described by Sianne Ngai in *Our Aesthetic Categories: Zany, Cute, Interesting*.
- ³⁵⁶ "Soldier Explains Lady Gaga Spoof," N.d. [CBSNews.com](http://www.cbsnews.com/video/watch/?id=6462481n&tag=api).
<http://www.cbsnews.com/video/watch/?id=6462481n&tag=api>.
- ³⁵⁷ White, Patricia. *unInvited: Classical Hollywood Cinema and Lesbian Representability*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999, xii-xix.
- ³⁵⁸ "Gaga Soldier Aaron Has Gay Mom." N.d. [Advocate.com](http://www.advocate.com/Arts_and_Entertainment/Entertainment_News/Gaga_Soldier_Aaron_Has_Gay_Mom/),
http://www.advocate.com/Arts_and_Entertainment/Entertainment_News/Gaga_Soldier_Aaron_Has_Gay_Mom/.
- ³⁵⁹ "Doesn't Parading Around Like Lady Gaga Basically Qualify As 'Telling'?" N.d. [Queerty](http://www.queerty.com/doesnt-parading-around-like-lady-gaga-basically-qualify-as-telling-20100430/).
<http://www.queerty.com/doesnt-parading-around-like-lady-gaga-basically-qualify-as-telling-20100430/>.
- ³⁶⁰ "Afghanistan Goes Gaga." N.d. [The Smoking Gun](http://www.thesmokinggun.com/documents/crime/afghanistan-goes-gaga).
<http://www.thesmokinggun.com/documents/crime/afghanistan-goes-gaga>.
- ³⁶¹ To illustrate, the chapter "Designing for Spreadability" (inherently pitched to producers and media insiders) delineates a number of strategies to enhance spreadability for online videos and interfaces, among them "humor" and "unfinished content." The categories "timely controversy" and "rumors" would appear to have the most in common with "Telephone Remake," but upon closer examination they fit poorly. Both categories assume that the makers of videos online intend that their products will fit into explicit causes: the examples the authors provide concern a video that documents and narrates an abuse of power by TSA agents for the former category and videos that speculated about un-American acts committed by Barack Obama before the 2008 presidential election for the latter (213-219).
- ³⁶² Blas, Zach. "Virus Viral," in *Women's Studies Quarterly*. 40, No. 1-2 (Spring/Summer), 30.
- ³⁶³ *Ibid.*, 33, 39.
- ³⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 39.
- ³⁶⁵ Galloway, Alexander and Eugene Thacker. *The Exploit*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007, 30, 85, 99.
- ³⁶⁶ Puar, Jasbir. *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2007, 212.
- ³⁶⁷ While José Esteban Muñoz's *Disidentifications* might also be considered within this trajectory I do not include here because it relies on the clear legibility of that which is encountered and its willful refusal, rather than a failure of transmission or completion or a lack of use value.
- ³⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, xv.
- ³⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 30.
- ³⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 215.

³⁷¹ Rodowick, 43.

³⁷² Puar's bias against audiovisual objects is evident throughout the rest of *Terrorist Assemblages* and not only her closing section. For example, before analyzing the representation of Osama bin Laden on the television show *South Park*, she first qualifies the show as a "minor cultural artifact" and "trivial" in comparison to many of her other objects of study that are primarily text-based (67).

³⁷³ Puar, 220.

³⁷⁴ "Lady Gaga Follows up Meat Dress with 'Prime Rib' Speech." N.d. *The Telegraph*.
<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/celebritynews/8015054/Lady-Gaga-follows-up-meat-dress-with-prime-rib-speech.html>.

³⁷⁵ Hulse, Carl. 2010. "Senate Repeals Ban on Gays Serving Openly in Military." *The New York Times*, December 18.

³⁷⁶ "Anti-Gay Laws Bring Backlash in Mississippi and North Carolina," *New York Times*, April 5, 2016.

³⁷⁷ Ibid.

³⁷⁸ Heather Knight, "Did Apple provide too much of a good thing at Pride Parade?" *San Francisco Chronicle*, July 2, 2015.

³⁷⁹ Nellie Bowles, "Cupertino's mayor urges Apple to pay more tax: 'Where's the fairness?'" *The Guardian*, May 5, 2016, web. <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2016/may/05/apple-taxes-cupertino-mayor-infrastructure-plan>

³⁸⁰ Shayndi Raice, Anupreeta Das and John Letzing, "Facebook Prices IPO at Record Value," *The Wall Street Journal*, May 17, 2012.

³⁸¹ Lil Miss Hot Mess, "Facebook's 'real name' policy hurts real people and creates a new digital divide," *The Guardian*, June 3, 2015.

³⁸² Jennifer Rubin, "Supreme Court makes its DOMA, Prop 8 rulings," *The Washington Post*, June 26, 2013.

³⁸³ Adam Litpak, "Supreme Court Invalidates Key Part of Voting Rights Act," *New York Times*, June 25, 2013.

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Appendix: Figures

Introduction



Figure 1: Still from *Carol*

Chapter 1



Figure 1: Lonesome



Figure 2: Lonesome



Figure 3: Lonesome



Figure 4: Lonesome



Figure 5: National Song Magazine

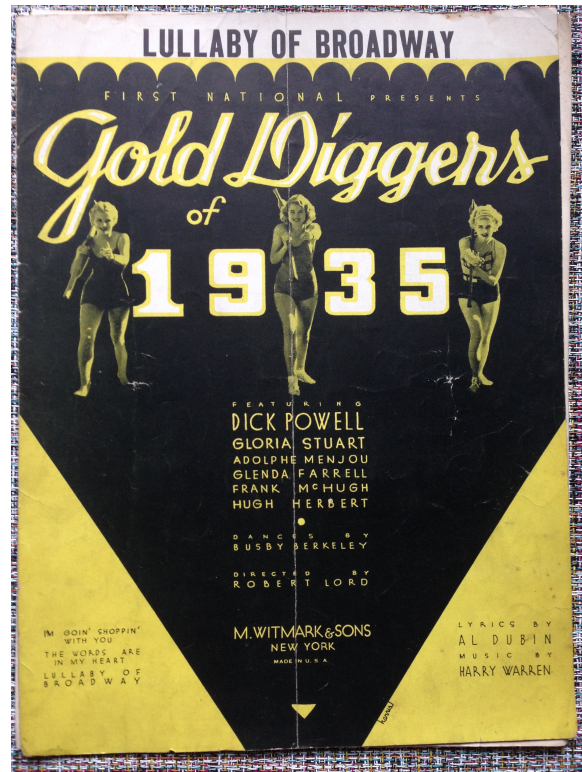


Figure 6: Sheet music for *Gold Diggers of 1935*

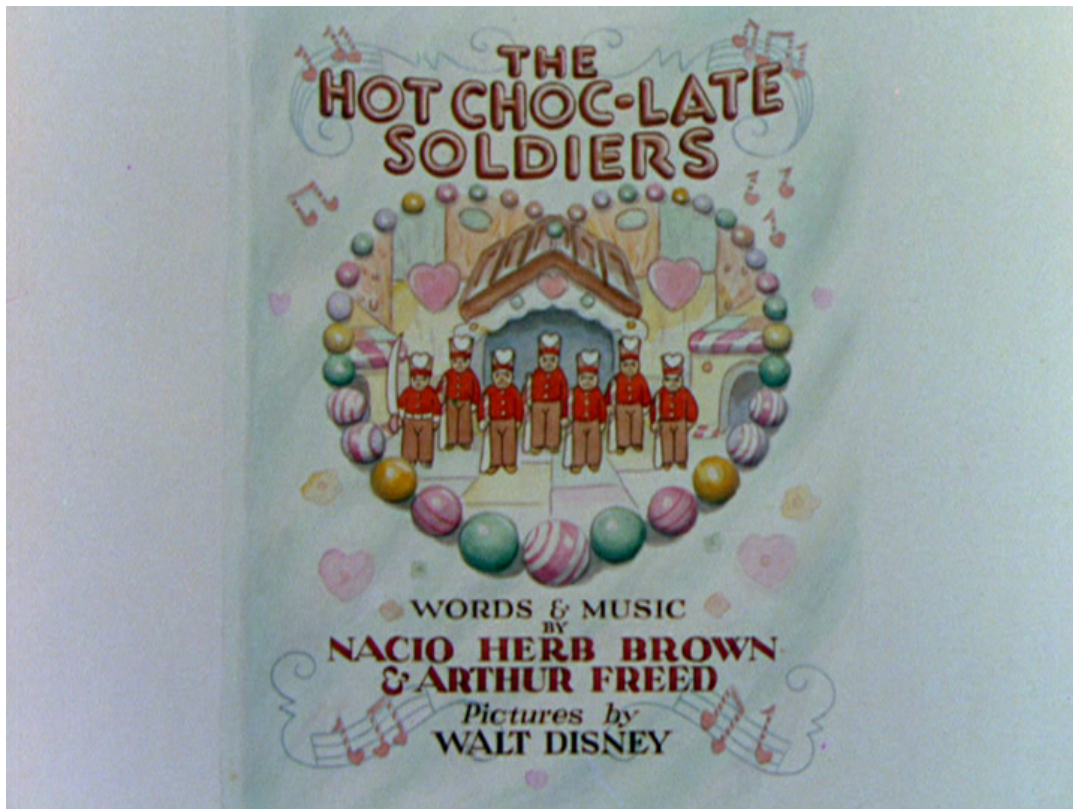


Figure 7: "Hot Choc-late Soldiers" from *Hollywood Party*

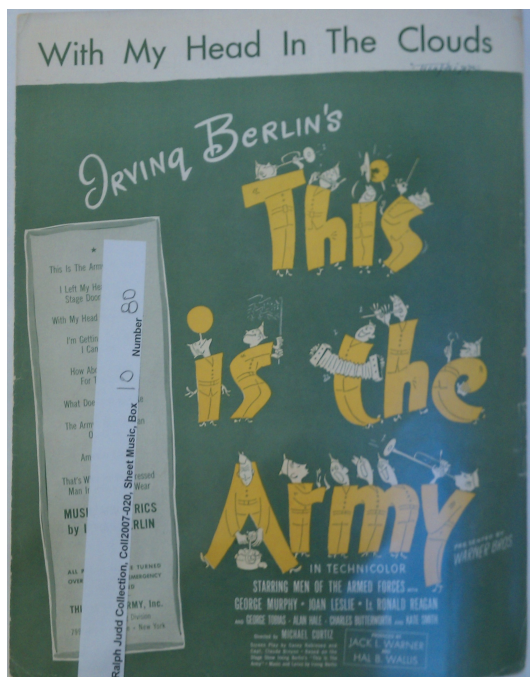


Figure 8: Sheet Music from *This is the Army* Music

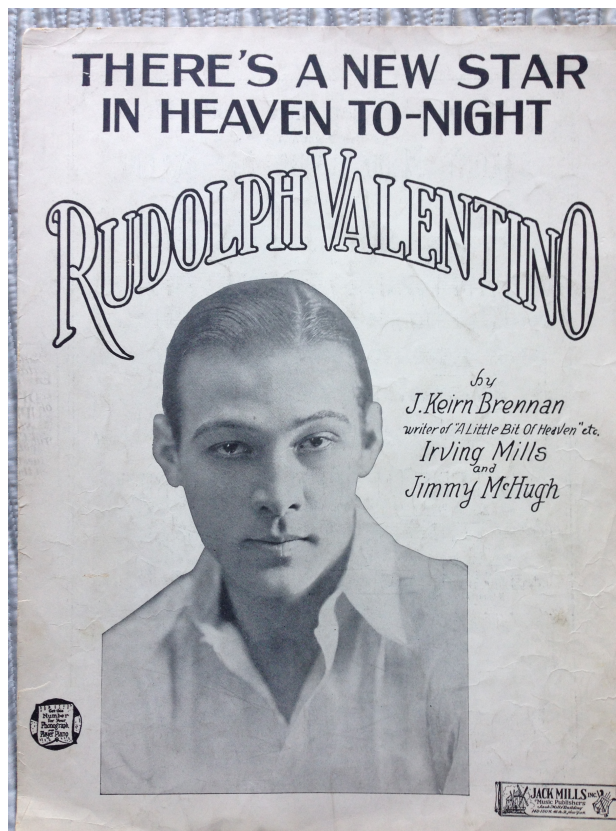


Figure 9: Rudolph Valentino Sheet



Figure 10: "Secret Love" from Calamity Jane



Figure 11: "Do You, Don't You, Will You, Won't You"

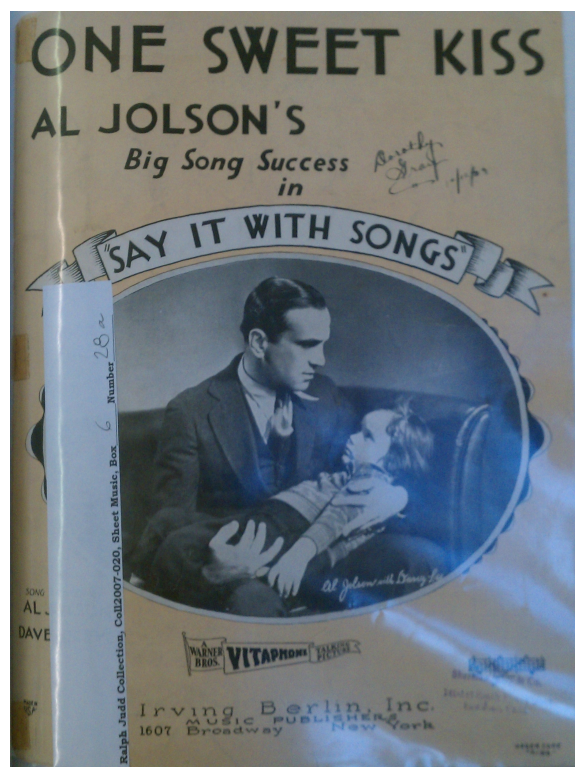


Figure 12: "One Sweet Kiss"



Figure 13: "Into My Heart"

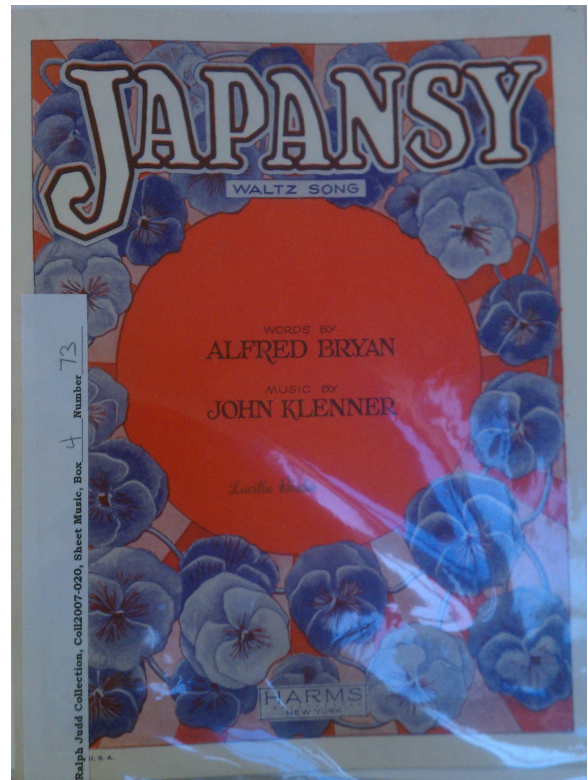


Figure 14: "Japansy"

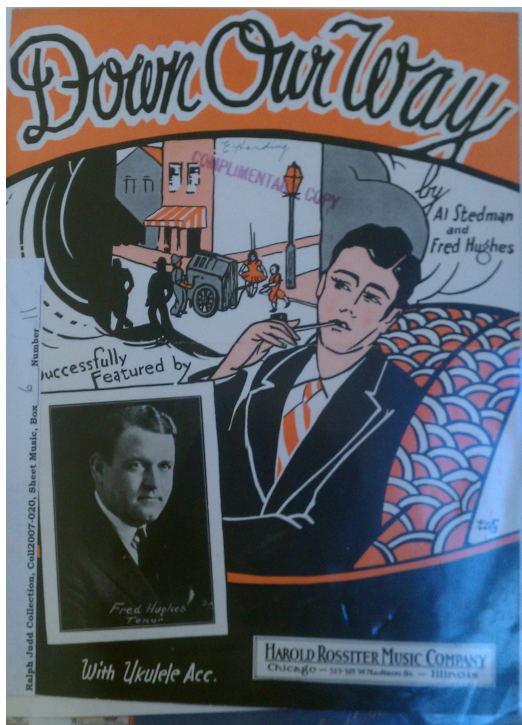


Figure 15: "Down Our Way Guy"

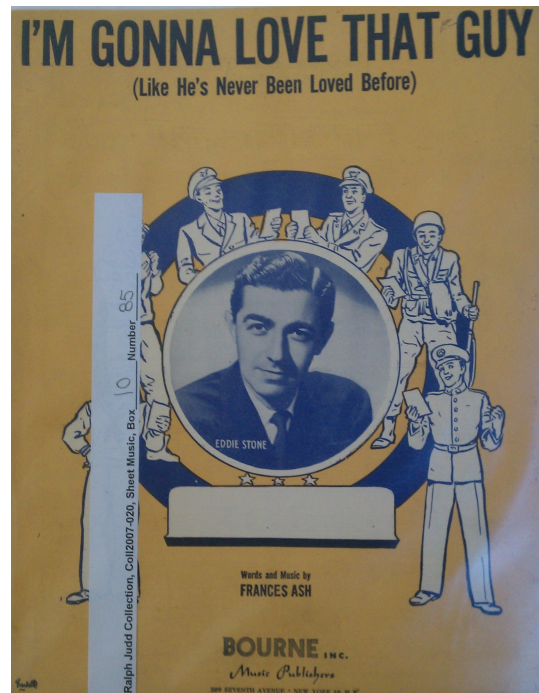


Figure 16: "I'm Gonna Love That Guy"

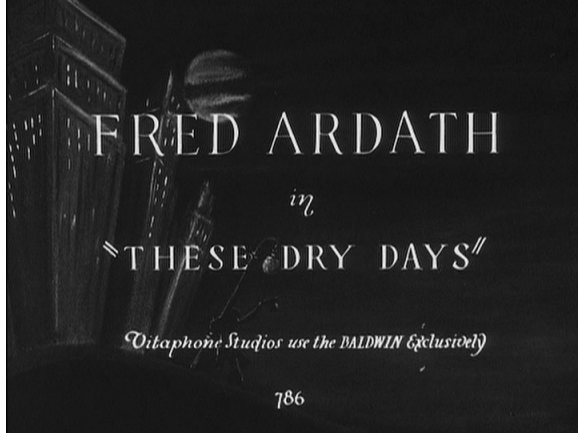


Figure 17: Vitaphone Title Card for *These Dry Days* Boys



Figure 18: *The Gotham Rhythm*



Figure 19: "The Basic Musical Instrument"



Figure 20: *Van and Schenck*

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**Hear
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Figure 21: Baldwin and Vitaphone ad from *The San Jose News*, April 13, 1928, p. 62



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"Yours very truly,

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Palliser on Wednesday, September 25th.

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of the Baldwin.

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Figure 22: Vitaphone and Baldwin ad from *The Calgary Daily Herald*, September 21, 1929, p. 38



Figure 23: *Song Impressions*



Figure 24: *A Cycle of Songs*



Paul J. Weber

IN THE PHOTOGRAPH ABOVE, THE PIANO IS WELL BALANCED BY THE OTHER GROUPS OF FURNITURE, AS IS MORE CLEARLY SHOWN BY THE PLAN OF THE ROOM IN FIGURE 1 BELOW. ITS PLACING IS NOT IDEAL, HOWEVER, IN THAT THE LIGHT COMES OVER THE RIGHT INSTEAD OF THE LEFT SHOULDER. RACHEL C. RAYMOND, DECORATOR

THE PIANO

How to Determine its Place in the Room

BY HELEN SPRACKLING

IT was the composer Karl Maria von Weber who said, 'Music is the real universal speech of mankind.' He was not the first to make this discovery, and we have realized the truth of his observation occasionally ever since. By this time it might seem to have become a generally well-recognized fact; nevertheless, so important is it that I venture to recall it to mind. There is scarcely a home in which music in some form is not to be found. Even if we ourselves cannot perform, the reproduction of music has reached such a state of mechanical perfection that we can sit in our own homes and listen to the voice of a marvelous singer or the playing of a great pianist with almost as much enjoyment as if he were in the room with us. Music has always been, and is becoming constantly more and more, one of the most vital factors in the lives of human beings. In almost every home there is some evidence of it or the desire for it.

And the home that has no music! Alas, how silent, how inarticulate it seems to be! Imagine a beautiful room, perfectly decorated, beautifully and consistently

correct to its veriest detail, but lacking in music. It is just a beautiful room, lovely perhaps to the eye, but like a piece of statuary, cold and inanimate. Place within its four walls the evidences of living music and it becomes a home vibrant with warmth and color, a welcoming place where one is glad to be.

Granted then that music is such a vital element in our lives, it behooves us to give a thought to the instrument which produces it, for so apt are we to associate music with sound alone that we forget that it may have value and meaning to the sight and that the instrument through which it comes to us may have as much personality as a human being. Usually it is the piano that we find in the home, for it is the instrument most commonly played and the one that is used to accompany all others. But just having a piano in the home does not necessarily mean that music has become a joyous living thing there. There is no more funereal sight than a huge box of a piano, its keyboard closed and itself crowded back into the farthest corner of the room; (Continued on page 200)

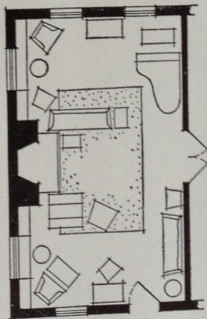


FIG. 1

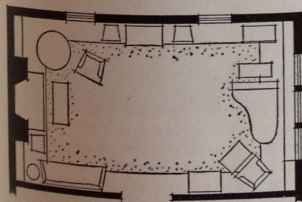


FIG. 2

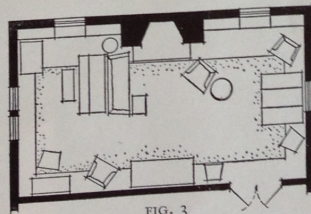


FIG. 3

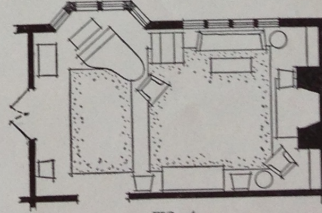


FIG. 4

THE PLANS SHOW SEVERAL DIFFERENT WAYS OF PLACING THE PIANO IN THE LIVING-ROOM. FIGURE 1 SHOWS THE ROOM IN THE ILLUSTRATION ABOVE; FIGURE 2 SHOWS THE PIANO GIVEN EMPHASIS AS THE MOST IMPORTANT PIECE OF FURNITURE IN THE ROOM AND ADVANTAGEOUSLY PLACED WITH REGARD TO LIGHT; FIGURE 3 SHOWS AN EXCELLENTLY PLACED UPRIGHT PIANO WITH ITS BACK TO THE COUCH, AND FIGURE 4 THE PIANO IN A BAY WINDOW ESPECIALLY PLANNED FOR IT

Figure 25: "The Piano: How to Determine it's Place in the Room" from *House Beautiful*, February 1928, p. 131

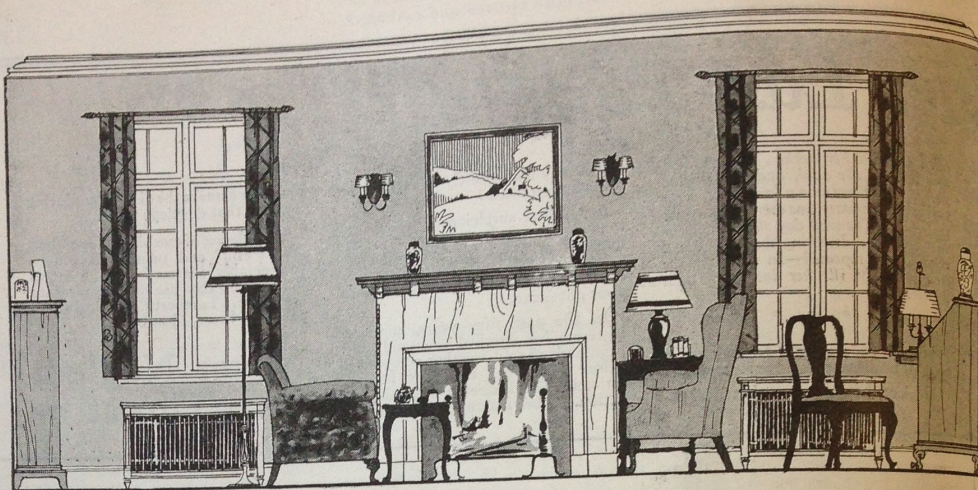


Figure 1.—A 36-inch space between the fireplace and each window permits interesting placing of chairs and davenport

Building From the Inside Out

*Rooms Must Have Furniture,
So Plan in Advance for the Placing of It*

ROSS CRANE

MY living room, 12 feet by 20 feet in size, has four windows and three door openings, two of the latter being seven feet in width. There is no wall space greater than five feet in length. How shall I arrange my furniture?" This question and a thousand similar ones have been asked me, and the only answer I can think of is to suspend the furniture from the ceiling, like a hammock!

Within the past two years I have been invited to make out the furnishing scheme for several so-called exhibition houses which were to be furnished and decorated and thrown open to the public as "model homes." In every instance but one I declined after seeing the blueprints because the houses were so badly arranged that there was no possible way in which the furniture requisite for comfortable living could be installed, except by violating every principle of room arrangement.

In one house which was destined to be shown as an educational exhibit, not only were the living room and dining room so badly cut up with openings that the customary and needed pieces of furniture were prohibited, but in all three bedrooms, even in the largest one, there was no wall space capable of

accommodating twin beds, and in none of them was there a place for more than one major piece of furniture in addition to the bed.

To make matters worse, both living room and large bedroom were on the

these, even, exhibit some of the failings I have just mentioned.

This is not an exceptional condition. It is a very common one despite the fact that American architects, more than those of any other land, have displayed an amazing amount of ingenuity towards providing convenience, comfort and beauty in small house design.

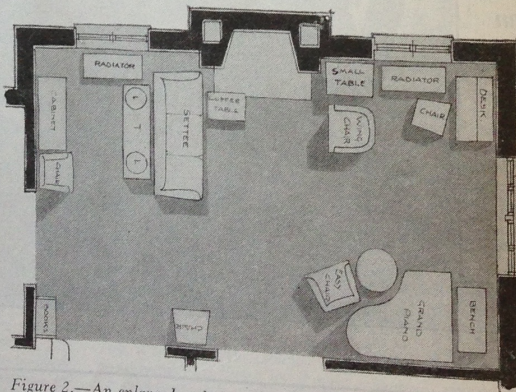


Figure 2.—An enlarged and clearer plan of the living room of Figure 4

north side of the house. And this was actually adopted and advertised as a "model house!"

In my portfolios I have hundreds of house plans, clipped from magazines and newspapers, some of them prize winners in architectural competitions. Most of

planned from the inside out, not from the outside in. By which I mean, of course, that the floor plans are the first thing to work out, considering each room in its relation to the others, to secure what architects call good circulation—that is, convenience. The (Continued on page 68)

THE great majority of American houses, unfortunately, are not designed by architects. They are planned and built by men who are untrained in the principles of good design, and who have made no study of houses as places of human habitation.

The last five words of the foregoing sentence tell the meaning of the word house: "A place of human habitation;" a collection of rooms, each having its own special function and requiring certain specific articles of furniture to make it livable.

It is because of this fact that houses should always be planned from the inside out, not from the outside in. By which I mean, of course, that the floor plans are the first thing to work out, considering each room in its relation to the others, to secure what architects call good circulation—that is, convenience. The (Continued on page 68)

BETTER HOMES and GARDENS, April, 1928

Figure 26: "Building From the Inside Out" in *Better Homes and Gardens*, April 1928,

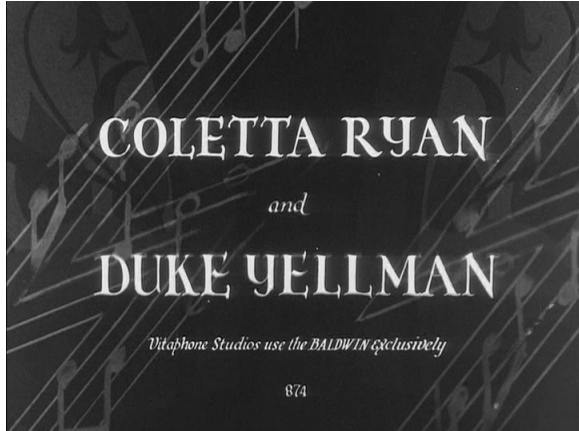


Figure 27: Title card for *Songology*



Figure 28: *Songology*



Figure 29: Medium shot from *Song Impressions*



Figure 30: "Internationalism in Furnishings" from *House Beautiful*, February 1928, p.



Figure 31: *The Revelers*



Figure 32: *I Thank You*



Figure 33: *Songs and Impressions*



Figure 34: *Dooley's the Name*



Figure 35: *The Prince of Wails*



Figure 36: *A Cycle of Songs*



WILLIAM & MARY
Period Model

Beautiful to the Eye —

PLEASING *to the* EAR

THESE charmingly decorative Period Models are delightful to every lover of beautiful furnishings, designed to add still further to the attractiveness of your home. Incomparable for action and TONAL value, each instrument is produced under the same skilled guidance that has played so vital a part in all Kranich & Bach products for the past 60 years. It is "pride of production" with this age-old house, as much as it is "pride of possession" with you in *owning* the piano they sponsor.

A privilege to show you the collection—or if preferred, a copy of the new "Period Brochure" will be sent on request.

REPRODUCING
PIANOS:
Welte-Mignon
(License)

KRANICH & BACH
Quality PIANOS

PERIOD MODELS:
William & Mary
Louis XV
Queen Anne
Cordovan
Oriental

KRANICH & BACH · 237 East 23rd Street, New York · Straus Building, Chicago

Figure 37: Kranich & Bach Ad from Arts And Decoration, December 1928, p. 16.

...the side chairs are
decorated in exactly the reverse

*In one corner of the room is a painted
Venetian corner cabinet and a fine
Louis XV bergère nearby*



able
old *The beautiful painted piano was copied in design and color from the
Venetian corner cabinet with a ground color of old yellow and decorations
worked out in pastel tones*

Figure 38: Detail from "A Decorative Scheme of Elegance and Comfort," in *Arts & Decoration*, November, 1928, p. 31.



Figure 39: *Carlene Diamond "Harpist Supreme"*



Figure 40: *A Breath of Broadway*



Figure 41: *The Police Quartette*



Figure 42: *Lambchops*



Figure 43: *Pack Up Your Troubles*



Figure 44: *Pack Up Your Troubles*



Figure 45: *Behind the Lines*

Chapter 2



Figure 1: *Hollywood Canteen*



Figure 2: *Hollywood Canteen*



Figure 3: *Four Jills in a Jeep*



Figure 4: *Four Jills in a Jeep*



Figure 5: *Private Buckaroo*

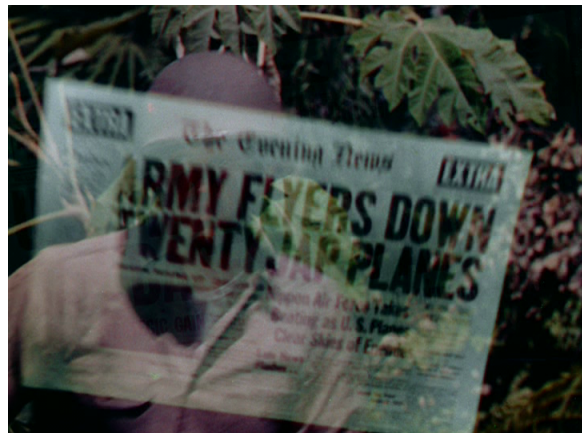


Figure 6: *The Gang's All Here*



Figure 7: *The Gang's All Here*



Figure 8: *This is the Army*



Figure 9: *TITA*



Figure 10: *TITA*, at Hickam Field



Figure 11: *TITA*



Figure 12: *Something for the Boys*



Figure 13: Stage Door Canteen



Figure 14: Hollywood Canteen



Figure 15: TITA, "Ladies of the Chorus"



Figure 16: TITA, "What the Well Dressed Man in Harlem Will Wear"

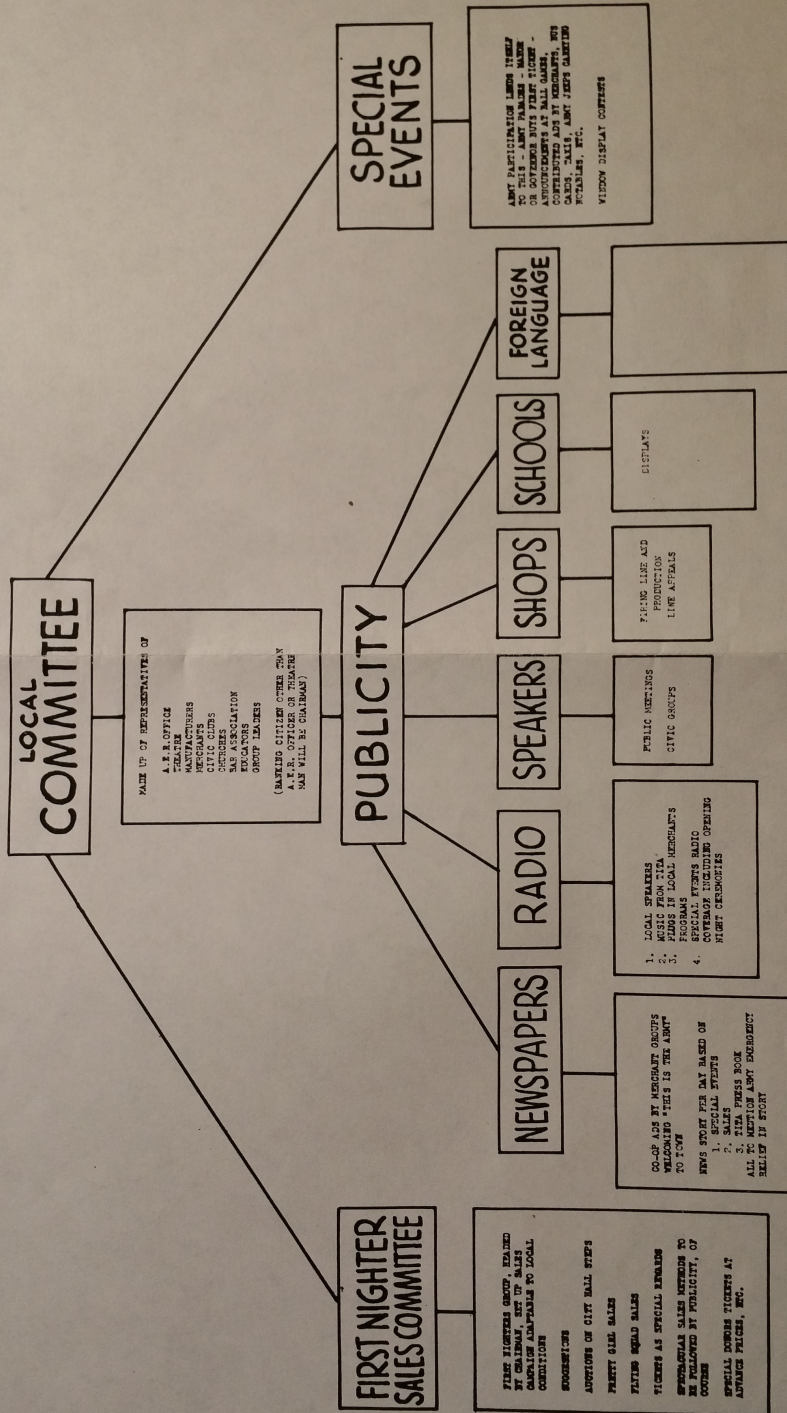


Figure 17: TITA, "I Left My Heart at the Stage Door Canteen"



Figure 18: TITA, "That Russian Winter"

COMMUNITY PROGRAM "THIS IS THE ARMY"



This is The Army WP 1943 - Publicity Mary Weiser Coll

Figure 20: TITA Community Programming Guide

Chapter 3



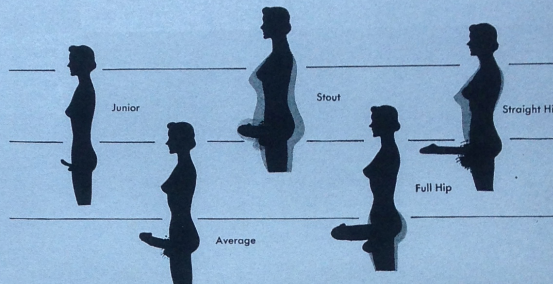
Figure 1: Records at Community Thrift



Figure 2: Miller Chesterfield Ad

Formfit asks this important beauty question...

Which figure type are you?



47 out of every 100 women are dissatisfied with the way their girdles fit, according to a recent impartial study. To assure you perfect fit, Formfit makes a wide range of styles and designs for every figure type!

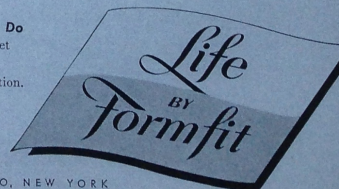
Unless a girdle fits perfectly, it cannot give you the lovely, young lines you want, or the comfort and freedom you need. But remember — no one type of girdle can fit all women perfectly, because no two women have exactly the same figure. That's the reason 47 out of every 100 are not satisfied with the fit of their girdles. And that's also the reason why Formfit makes Life Girdles in such a wide variety of styles and designs!

Regardless of your figure type, there's a Life Girdle to fit as if custom-made for you, in Formfit's vast selection. And it's this incomparable *personalized fit* that makes a Life Girdle more flattering, more comfortable than any other you may have worn!

So if you are one of the 47 out of every 100 women who are not satisfied with the fit of their girdles, be fitted in a Life Girdle at any of the better stores. You'll *see* and *feel* the difference instantly. You'll find your tummy flattened, waist slimmed, hips smoothed — with comfort that's truly a revelation!

#1196 Life Girdle shown, average 16", nylon elastic net with satin elastic front and back panels, \$16.50. Other styles from \$7.50. #586 Life Bra shown, slash front in nylon lace, \$4.00. Other Life styles from \$1.25.

FREE! "Your Figure Type—What To Do About It"—This new, informative Formfit booklet shows how you can determine *your* figure type, and how to make the most of it. No cost or obligation. Mailed in plain envelope. Write to the Formfit Company, 400 S. Peoria, Chicago 7, Ill.




THE FORMFIT COMPANY, CHICAGO, NEW YORK

105

Figure 3: Miller Formfit Girdle Ad

NO. HOLLYWOOD CALI

COCKTAIL LOUNGE
Joanie's
 Valli Haus
 PIANO BAR
 Open 6:00 A.M.
 11012 Ventura Blvd. PO 2-1972



"GIRLS"
 BY DAY...
 W/JOANIE...
 THE ORIGINAL
 VALLI HAUS

= 1958 =

"BOYS"
 BY NITE...
 W/BROTHER
 DAVID
 WALDOR

Ad fo Joanie's Valli Haus, ca. 1958; Joanie
 Hanson Papers

Figure 4: Ad for Joanie's Valli House

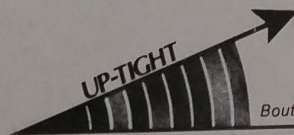
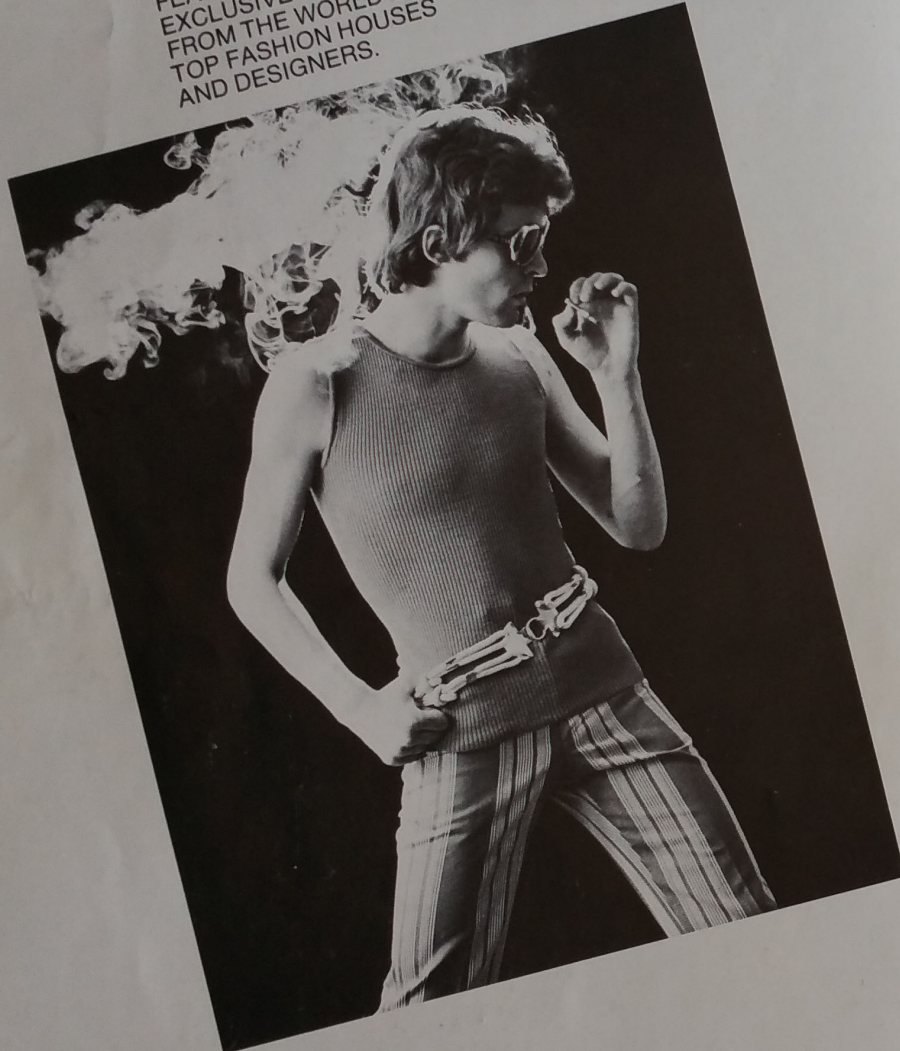
Chapter 4



Figure 1: Lobby Card for *The Boys in the Band*

GO WEST

TO NEW YORK'S MOST ELEGANT MEN'S SHOP, FEATURING EXCLUSIVE FASHIONS FROM THE WORLD'S TOP FASHION HOUSES AND DESIGNERS.



Boutique "Pour Un Homme"

239 W. 72 St., New York, N.Y. 10023 • Tel. 874-3090
Hours: Mon.-Fri. 10 A.M.-7 P.M., Sat. 9 A.M.-7 P.M.

Figure 2: Advertisement for the "Up-Tight Boutique" in *After Dark* August, 1970

CONTINENTAL
BATHS
 and
STEVE OSTROW
 Present

"The Best At The Baths."
 such names as

Bette Midler
Liz Torres
Linda Hopkins
Pat Suzuki
Daphne Davis
Dawn Hampton
Lee Anthony
Betty Rhodes
Scott Jarvis
Cab Calloway
Rosalind Kind
Jill Corey
Donnybrooke Alderson
Manhattan Transfer
Joanne Beretta
Delores Hall
Tiny Reed
Tally Brown
Jackie Curtis
Holly Woodlawn

and many more . . .
 Showtime Midnight
 General Admission \$4.50
 Ladies Admitted 11:30 PM But Are
 Requested To Leave After Show
 230-West 74th Street
 Tel.: 799-2688

Announcing
CONTINENTAL SAUNA CLUB
 Every Saturday Evening
 at 10:15 PM
 You Are Invited To An Exciting
 Lounge Show (Ladies Invited)
 111 West 56th Street
 Tel.: 489-8124
 "The New After Theatre Spot
 That Provides
 The Pause That Refreshes . . ."

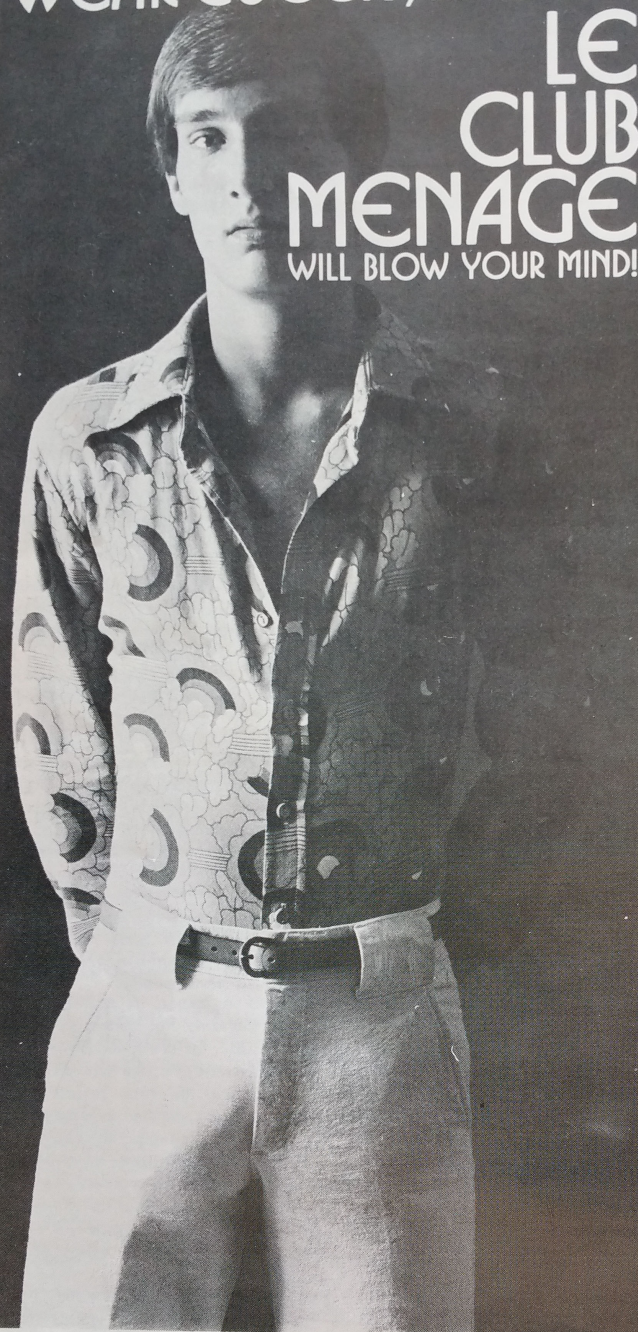
62

Figure 3: Advertisement from *After Dark* for the Continental Baths



Figure 4: Eleanor Steber's album recorded at the Continental Baths

IF YOU DIG BETTE MIDLER,
WEAR GUCCIS, AND READ AFTER DARK...

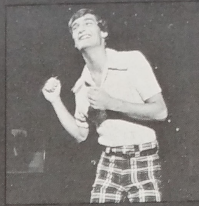


**LE
CLUB
MENAGE**
WILL BLOW YOUR MIND!



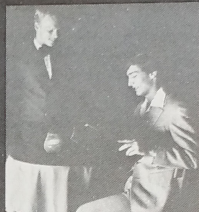
**LE HOTEL
MENAGE**

SEVENTY ROOMS SPECIFICLY
DESIGNED TO CATER TO THE
TASTE AND NEEDS OF OUR
SOPHISTICATED INTERNA-
TIONAL CLIENTELE. HOTEL
REGISTRATION ENTITLES
OUR GUESTS TO FULL USE
OF ALL CLUB FACILITIES.



**LE DISCO
MENAGE**

AN UNREAL COLLAGE OF
LIGHT AND SOUND. SUR-
REALISTIC, SPECTACULAR.
WITH EVERY DRINK FREE...
LIQUOR, BEER OR WINE.
THERE IS NOTHING COMPA-
RABLE IN THE WORLD.



**LE CAFE
MENAGE**

SUPERB CONTINENTAL CUI-
SINE PREPARED BY THE IN-
TERNATIONALLY ACCLAIMED
CHEF, HENRI CARONE AND
HIS EUROPEAN TRAINED
STAFF. TRULY GRACIOUS DIN-
ING IN THE SOPHISTICATED
CONTINENTAL MANNER.



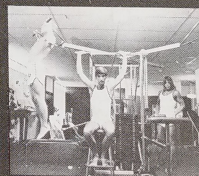
**LE BISTRO
MENAGE**

THE MOST SOPHISTICATED
ENTERTAINMENT. IN AN
ELEGANT ATMOSPHERE CON-
DUCIVE TO MEETING THE
PERSON YOU HAVE BEEN
LOOKING FOR.*



**LE POOL
MENAGE**

RELAX AROUND ONE OF THE
MOST SPECTACULAR HEATED
POOLS IN FLORIDA WITH THE
BEAUTIFUL PEOPLE... THE
REALLY BEAUTIFUL PEOPLE.*



LE SPA MENAGE

THE ULTIMATE IN HEALTH
STUDIOS, WITH THE MOST
MODERN EQUIPMENT. STAF-
FED WITH ATTENDANTS AND
MASSEURS SPECIALLY
TRAINED TO HELP YOU EX-
ERCISE AND RELAX.*

* THESE FACILITIES ARE LIMITED TO MEMBERS OF
LE CLUB MENAGE. FOR INFORMATION REGARDING
EITHER CLUB MEMBERSHIP OR HOTEL RESERVA-
TIONS. CALL (212) 777-3366 IN NEW YORK OR (305)
865-7386 IN MIAMI.

Figure 5: Advertisement from *After Dark*, January 1976 for Le Club Menage

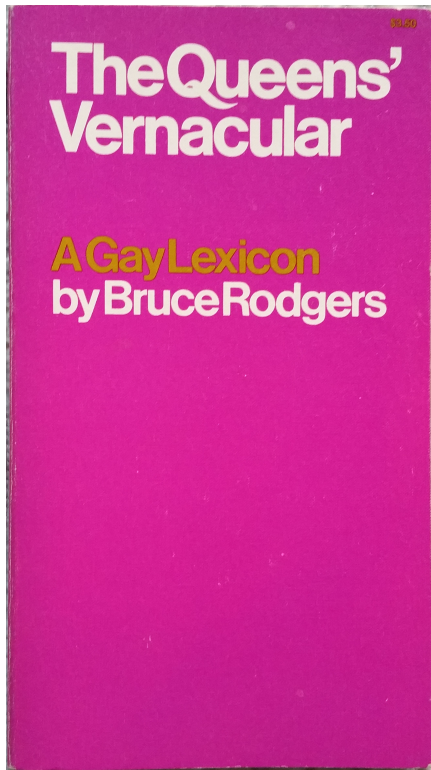


Figure 6: *The Queen's Vernacular*

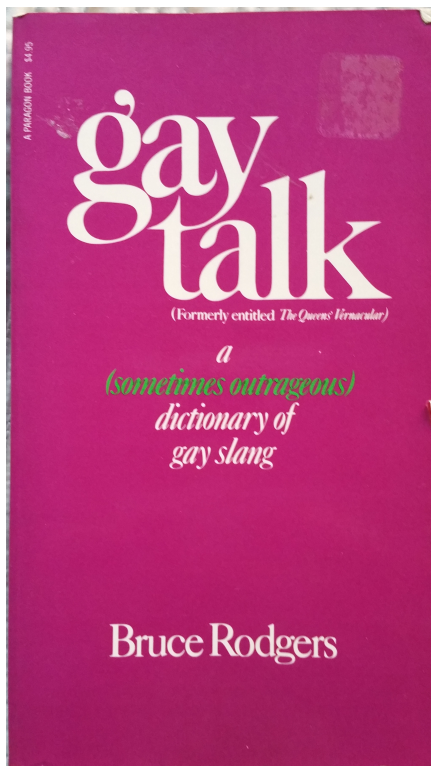

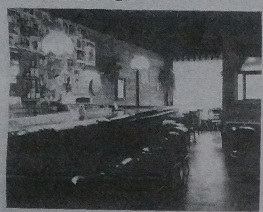
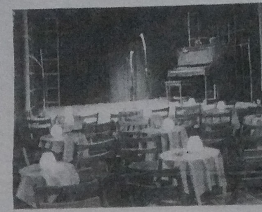


Figure 7: *Gay Talk*

THE HOLLYWOOD CANTEEN

7304 MELROSE AVE 931-1066

Ladies Night
 Every Sunday
 drinks 1/2 price for Ladies

JANUARY

Open after hours
 for food & coffee
 2AM - 4:30AM Wed.-Sat.

| SUN | MON | TUES | WED | THURS | FRI | SAT |
|--|--|--|---|--|--|--|
| 1 Happy New Year Closed | 2 8:30-1:00 Showcase Auditions Sign up 7-8 | 3 Songwriters' Night Artists Listed Below | 4 Shows 9:30-11:30 Richard Hovey Jon Detherage Mark Sebastian | 5 Debbie Holland Frank Spasato SEVERIN BROWN | 6 Ray Colcord Biff Rose Jenny Yates | 7 Peter Klimes Bob Pirtchaed Sally Champlin Special Guest |
| 8 9-9:30 Sign up for Talent Contest \$1.00 cover | 9 Showcase Auditions 15 min Set Sign up 7-8 pm | 10 Passengers HEAMAN LEE MONTGOMERY | 11 Shows 9:30-11:30 Anni O'Brien Cari Bishop Peter Klimes John Henry Raskin | 12 2 Shows !!! Mark Sebastian Chunky, NOVIE Ernie | 13 8-9:30 "Meeting Place" Jack Williams Craig Bratton Michele BROWMAN | 14 8-9:30 "Meeting Place" Bob Pirtchaed Jack Tempchin Sha Se' |
| 15 a new play "Meeting Place" 8-9:30 10pm - Talent Cash Contest Prizes | 16 Showcase Auditions 8:30-1:00 Sign up 7-8 15 min Set | 17 Songwriters' Night Artists Listed Below | 18 Shows 9:30-11:30 Sandy Ross Jenny Yates Jamina James Milner & Zamperini | 19 Debbie Holland FRANK SPASATO TEX REED SHA SE' SEVERIN BROWN | 20 8-9:30 "Meeting Place" Doug COTLER Lisa MacGregor Mark Sebastian | 21 8-9:30 "Meeting Place" MILNER & ZAMPERINI Ron Savage ELLARD DAVIS + the Canteenites |
| 22 a new play "Meeting Place" 8-9:30 10pm Talent Contest | 23 Showcase Auditions Sign up 7-8 | 24 Passengers HEAMAN LEE MONTGOMERY | 25 Shows 9:30-11:30 Anni O'Brien Cari Bishop John Henry Raskin Peter Klimes | 26 2 Shows !!! Mark Sebastian Chunky, NOVIE Ernie | 27 8-9:30 "Meeting Place" Doug Freeman Phil Pearson Craig Chasen | 28 8-9:30 "Meeting Place" Charles John Quarto Sandy Welch Rick Cunha |
| 29 "Meeting Place" 8-9:30 10pm Talent Contest | 30 Showcase Auditions Sign up 7-8 | 31 Songwriters' Night | | | | |

ARTISTS:

3rd

9:00 ELLARD DAVIS
9:30 CRAIG CHASEN
10:00 WYNN FROE
10:30 SLOAN EDWARDS
11:00 JENNY FREEMAN
11:30 RAY COLCORD
12:00 STEVE KIPNER
12:30 HOLLAND & SPASATO

SONGWRITERS' NIGHT

17th

9:00 ELLARD DAVIS
9:30 RICHARD HOVEY
10:00 JAMINA JAMES
10:30 HOLLYE LEVIN
11:00 RAY COLCORD
11:30 SLOAN EDWARDS
12:00 DOUG FREEMAN
12:30 JON DETHERAGE

BEER-WINE-FOOD GAMES

ENTERTAINMENT NIGHTLY

31st

9:00 RICHARD HOVEY
9:30 JAMINA JAMES
10:00 TEX REED
10:30 JON DETHERAGE
11:00 HOLLAND & SPASATO
11:30 HOLLYE LEVIN
12:00 CRAIG CHASEN
12:30 ELLARD DAVIS

Figure 8: Calendar for The Hollywood Canteen

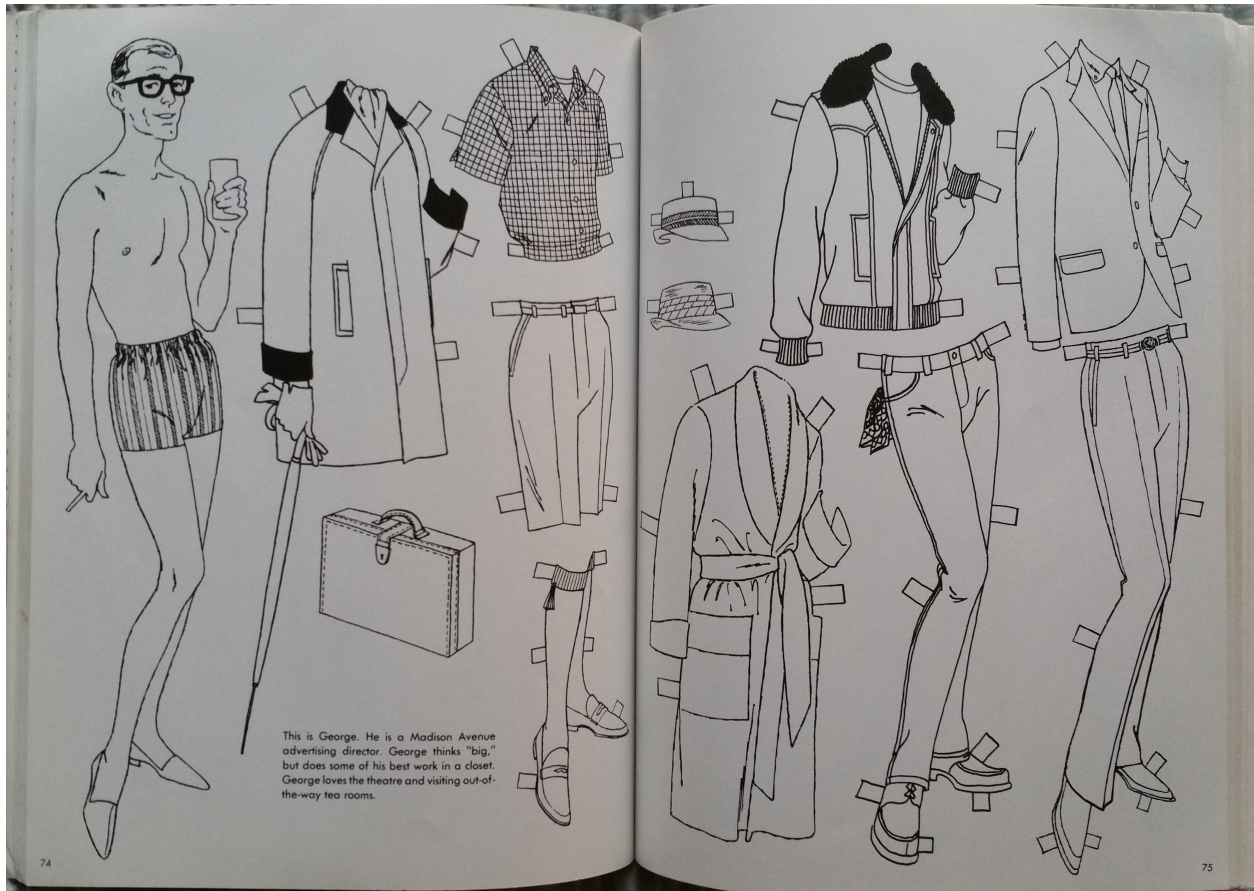
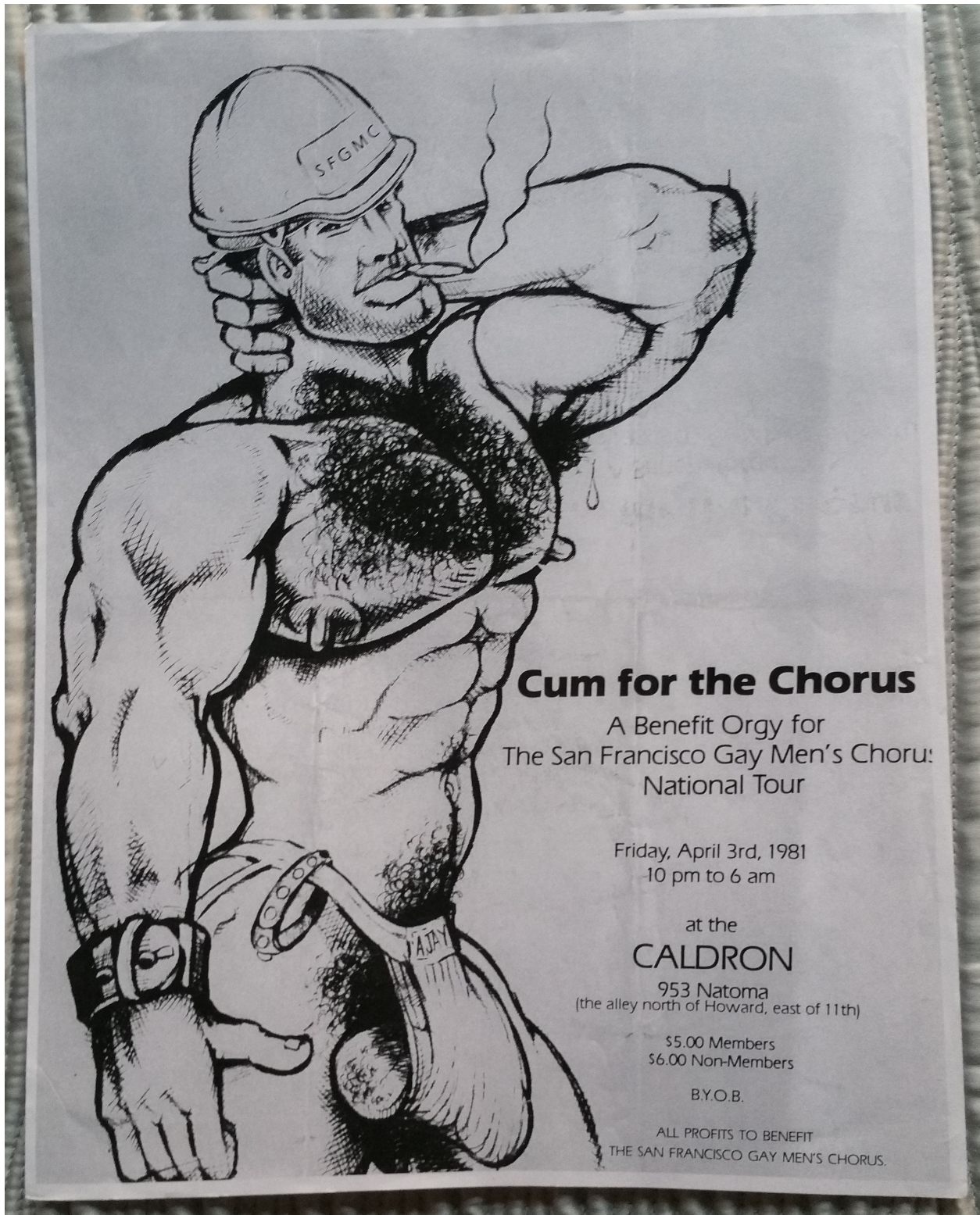


Figure 9: "George" from Tom Tierney's *Attitude*



Figure 10: SFGMC 1981 Recording



Cum for the Chorus

A Benefit Orgy for
The San Francisco Gay Men's Chorus:
National Tour

Friday, April 3rd, 1981
10 pm to 6 am

at the
CALDRON

953 Natoma
(the alley north of Howard, east of 11th)

\$5.00 Members
\$6.00 Non-Members

B.Y.O.B.

ALL PROFITS TO BENEFIT
THE SAN FRANCISCO GAY MEN'S CHORUS.

Figure 11: "Cum for the Chorus" 1981 benefit orgy for the SFGMC

Chapter 5



Figures 1 and 2. Madonna (above) and Jane Lynch from *Glee* performing "Vogue"



Figures 3 and 4. Michael and Janet Jackson (above) and cast members from *Glee* (below) performing "Scream"



Figure 5. Lady Gaga in crime scene tape from “Telephone”



Figure 6. Lady Gaga and Beyoncé in front of the “Pussy Wagon”



Figure 7. Baker (left) and Melcher (right) in “Telephone Remake”



Figure 8. The “Telephone Remake” Set, Melcher in crime scene tape at right



Figure 9: "Norwegian Army Harlem Shake," first segment



Figure 10: "Norwegian Army Harlem Shake," second segment



Figure 11. AFN's remake of the Mastercard Priceless campaign



Figure 12. "Your Tax Dollars at Work (I'm in the blue gloves)" and the Cha Cha Slide



Figure 13. “US Soldiers in Iraq—The Ding Dong Song”

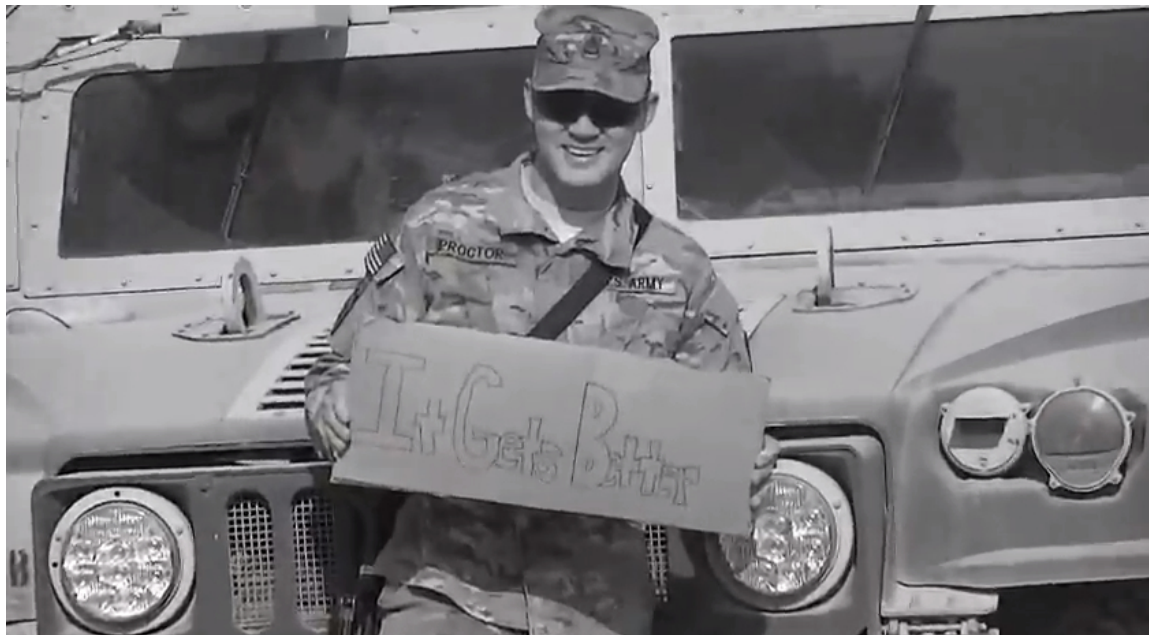


Figure 14. “Outserve BAF: It Gets Better (Deployed U.S. Military)” and linguistic signage

Conclusion



JUNE 25 | PRIDE

Made with creme colors that do not exist.



Figure 1: Pride Oreos



SNACK STRONG and PROUD



Figure 2: Pride Doritos



Figure 3: Pride Whopper