

Notes on Greyzone

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Though I am speaking about sensibility only – and about a sensibility that, among other things, converts the serious into the frivolous – these are grave matters.

Susan Sontag, 1964

I have heard myself say more than once over the last years that I have really said all that I have to say about Greyson. It began with a 1987 piece in French in Quebec, linking John's video shorts of the day with "*la nouvelle masculinité*," whereby I first discovered that my co-provincials routinely mix him up with another John – John Grierson – the sober Scots-Calvinist founder of the National Film Board of Canada and arguably by extension of the entire Canadian film industry – two men between whom this chapter may well find an odd kinship after all¹ ("*Les Formes du discours sexuel dans la nouvelle vidéo masculine*," 1987). It culminated in my 2006 book *The Romance of Transgression in Canada*, with the index offering give or take more than one hundred pages referencing the Toronto wunderkind, more than for any other artist. I may well have said further in that latter volume that John fully deserves a whole book but that the project was too big for me and too close for me at that time. The present project, gestated in a panel organized by co-editors Longfellow and MacKenzie in 2009 and tied in with the release of John's momentous new feature film *Fig Trees*, calls this rudely into question. The artist's most recent work – from the magisterial epic *Trees* to the irreverent and tenacious online shorts, bursting with geopolitical and cultural acuity, self-reinvention, and paradigm shifts – has proven me wrong once more, and this inexhaustible grist, though it is still too close to me, reveals that I have more to mill, indeed much more.

Perhaps because of this closeness, these reflections or "updates" have not yet crystallized into a coherent thesis but rather as a series of three "notes."

I do not claim a genealogy with Susan Sontag, but at least it was she who legitimized this format of "Notes on ..." and I am appropriating John's own *faux*-appropriation of her format and identity in *Covered* (2009) for this purpose. If I can hope that these three notes from 2011 acquire half as much coherence retroactively as Sontag's fifty-eight on "Camp" from 1964, it is because these notes about seemingly disparate aspects of the Greyson oeuvre are ultimately I guess all about a relationship, his and mine, not only that of critic and artist, but more importantly that of friend and friend.

As I start to write this under a monsoony sky not far from the Arabian Sea in late June 2011, John is actually not so far away really, on a boat in the Mediterranean, poised to defy the Israeli blockade of Gaza along with many other world citizens, artists alongside jurists and community activists, and continuously on my mind. I shall disavow my friendly worry and rather profess not only my solidarity with and awe of his exemplary personal courage and commitment, but also my conviction of the rightness, both ethical and aesthetic, for an artist, this artist, to be on that boat, in the same boat with those other world citizens without a state trapped in the world's largest open-air prison. I hope that these notes convey this solidarity and awe as well as a few of the details and dynamics of our relationship insofar as they may be relevant to his oeuvre and to this larger, better-structured, more conventionally scholarly, not-festschrift *The Perils of Pedagogy* that surrounds them.

A

In contrast with Canada's strict censorship laws some countries have relaxed their criteria for Full Frontal Male Nudity. The penis is permissible if it remains flaccid. However if tumescence commences and exceeds the forty-five degree angle, it is deemed obscene and cut from the film.

John Greyson, *UnOut*, 1997

This first note comes back to the heart of the relationship I have evoked above. I cannot resist the following light autobiographical gloss, however narcissistically presumptuous it might seem, to talk through this lens about an artist whose work is so resolutely non-self-referential. At the very least, all of John's friends show up as extras sooner or later in his work, but my role over the years as nudity assistant to Greyzone productions (often "self-appointed" as John has hastened to remind me) seems something more.

This is not about artist-critic dynamics in a conventional sense. John is his own best critic, and he doesn't really need me (his tactful resignation to my readings of *Zero Patience* as a "straight" musical, my impatience with his disavowal of earlier achievements, and my mission to defend the archive of

earlier work that John the perfectionist all too easily disparages are nonetheless productive tensions). Moreover this is not only about the critic-artist relationship embodied in many dialogues over the years, both on stage (in Vancouver ["Out on Screen," 2005], Toronto [2010], and New York [2011]), and on page (in John's *Queer Looks* [1993], in my *Fruit Machine* [2000], and many other sites), plus many mutual institutional hostings from New York (his, 1982) to Toronto (his, 2009) to Montreal (mine, 1996, 2006, 2011). Rather let us skim through this most important role I humbly played over John's career, through a few episodes in which I, as self-effacing nudity assistant, can say I was there, and come up with a road movie, a kind of *Motorcycle Diaries* that hopefully illuminates John's artistic, intellectual, and political trajectory. Think of me as the Rodrigo de la Serna to his Gael García Bernal (or Tom Courtney to his Albert Finney, Tony Curtis to his Kirk Douglas, Alice to his Gertrude, Boswell to his Johnson ...).

John and I agreed very early on in our relationship that full frontal male nudity (soon shortened to FFMN)² is the crux of all artistic transcendence and sex-political integrity. Indeed we anticipated the rigorously scholarly and politically committed books on frontal nudity in the cinema, sub-coffetable tomes that would emerge later on in the pre-Internet VHS era and of course the latter-day Internet sites that enshrine the cult of celebrity voyeurism as a minor industry.³ The websites, two of many, are reminders that gay male culture's obsessive fetishization of the penis icon, including the celebrity dick, has not gone away in today's saturated mediascape of porn-on-demand, porn-drenched social landscapes, explicit dating apps, live online virtual fornication, etc., etc., and if anything has intensified. As John has put it, "Why is *Women in Love* best known for the wrestling scene? Why does Heath Ledger's penis in *Brokeback* matter? Or Harry Potter's onstage?" (email 12 April 2012). What matters is not only symptoms of the larger culture's investment in voyeur trash (one of the first gay memories of a twentysomething friend of mine is of his mother catching him printing out online Brad Pitt telephoto dick shots at the age of six), and not only a degraded "queer film value system built around dropping trou (or not), regardless of the other merits of the film in question" (email 12 April 2012). Indeed, this dynamic matters perhaps most suggestively in terms of the archiving of fantasy and desire, the reparation of the collective lived trauma of the historical fig leaf (is this another kind of "lack"?), and the inherent mysticism around the unveiling of the holy icon (Is this what the penile-close-up queens of the European art cinema like Sébastien Lifshitz [*Presque Rien*, 2000], João Pedro Rodrigues [*O Fantasma*, 2000], and even Sacha Baron Cohen [*Brüno*, 2009], not to mention an earlier generation's Frank Ripplöh [*Taxi zum Klo*, 1980], are all about?) These implications need more space than is available in this chapter and are a subject for further research.

Two of John's and my early road trips in 1983 and 1985 cemented our conviction about FFMN and consolidated my role as assistant nudity watchdog and wrangler in his work. The first, on the Pacific Coastal Highway following our twin gigs at the January 1983 Gay and Lesbian Media Festival and Conference at UCLA (one of the earliest LGBT festivals outside of the Bay Area), involved the quest for a gay nude surfer beach, which became for us a kind of elusive holy grail. Neither of us has ever forgotten our deep but productive shame at being sneeringly kicked off the only thing resembling a nude beach we found, at which we naïve Canadians, unfamiliar with the US concept of the private beach, nakedly spread out our shabby YMCA towel not far enough from a solitary male nude sunbather who obviously had a proprietary relationship with the place. This catastrophe led directly to an August 1985 road trip through the Maritime provinces (and a joint gig at NASCAD), safely situated on Canadian soil and within not-yet-privatized Canadian public space. This was the same year and month as John's participation in the Second International Soviet Youth Congress in Moscow. I am certain that among everything else John's video account of the congress, *Moscow Doesn't Believe in Queers*, processed subtextually the FFMN breakthroughs of our road trip. On the surface of course it's an essay on Rock Hudson, AIDS, and the clash of proto-queer radicalism with the declining Old Left on the cusp of perestroika. Now the tape, however stiff and art-video-ish the acting by non-actor stars Michael Balser and Duncan McIntosh, looks even more than it did then like a tender and uninhibited study of the frontal male nude – a celebration of post-coital nudity as a uniform for conjugal storytelling and geopolitical analysis. These two figures were, however, not the only frontal nudes in the tape: layered over tabloid coverage of Rock's final days and an account of a Moscow gay underground that gathered on a nearby secluded beach were snapshots of both John and me doing frontally daring stride jumps on what I believe was the Prince Edward Island National Park beach, standing in for the Soviet gay youth with whom we then bore an uncanny resemblance, blond and brunette.

Unfortunately, it is not this daring aspect of this work that is remembered most by history, and a two-part anecdote is required to bring out the inextricable relationship of FFMN, Johns Greyson and Grierson, and the 1980s hinge era in the Canadian political struggle over media censorship.

At the 1985 Grierson Documentary Seminar in Brockville, Ontario, John and I hooked up with future pedagogue and then undergraduate film studies acolyte Michael Zryd to intervene in the then hot conflict over film censorship in Ontario. The "Big Blue [Tory] Machine" was gasping its last breath that year after a two-decade regime responsible for the most ridiculed film censorship in the Western democracies, but nevertheless a representative of the Board of Censors (which was just changing its name to the Ontario



Moscow Does Not Believe in Queers: a celebration of post-coital frontal nudity as a uniform for conjugal storytelling and geopolitical analysis. Frame capture.

Film Review Board) had the effrontery to show up at this historic forum of independent and therefore anti-censorship artists. We had no choice but to perform the three monkeys behind him – hear no evil, see no evil, speak no evil – a photo-documented protest against an infamous state apparatus that John and his arts networks had been struggling against through years of confiscated equipment and banned masterpieces (*Pretty Baby*, *The Tin Drum*, and *Not a Love Story: A Film about Pornography* anyone?).⁴

Two years later in 1987, at the next Grierson, in Toronto this time, where I had graduated to curator, I had programmed none other than *Moscow Does Not Believe in Queers*, which occasioned a dramatic reminder that the twin problematic of censorship and FFMN had not died with the Ontario Tories but remained a perennial dynamic in Canadian film culture. However, it was not the lovely flaccid FFMN conjugal study, as close as we got to the grasp of the holy grail, that soon blew things out of the water, the Grierson Seminar included, but the hard and thrustingly defiant porno inserts by anti-censorship activist John. It must be remembered that at this time hard core had been available licitly in Canada for only a few years, and in Ontario was only just appearing, and the *Moscow Does Not Believe in Queers* inserts so alienated the cohort of librarians in the seminar's organizational group, the



Grierson Documentary Seminar (1985): Greyson as the see-no-evil anti-censorship activist confronting the Ontario Film Review Board (Donald Fowler), with Michael Zryd (left) and the author (right). ©Photo by Lois Siegel.

Ontario Film Association, that the Grierson Seminar tradition promptly closed down forever (the increasing polarization of “politically correct” activist artists and less radical stakeholders was also reportedly a factor).⁵ Frontality is no frivolous matter of course, and little did we know then how much the frontally fresh *Moscow Does Not Believe in Queers* would later be seen retroactively as the high point of John’s career in this respect.

Buoyed by this FFMN breakthrough, John would go on to penetrate the hard-core frontier, appropriately, in the four deliriously vernacular “safer sex shorts” that were inserted within his documentary on the smuggling of AIDS treatment drugs into Canada, *The Pink Pimpernel* (1989), made the year of the international AIDS congress in Montreal. He would then also dangle relatively unabashed FFMN in his first four features, *Urinal* (1988 [Sir Gay Eisenstein as Prince Tiny Meat?]), *Zero Patience* (1993), *Lilies* (1996), and *UnOut* (1997). Although the feature film FFMN insertions did not aspire to the high standard of *Moscow Does Not Believe in Queers*, there are a few tales worth telling in this respect and I am proud of my work as assistant nudity assistant on the last three of these works.

Zero Patience began with casting consultations as John videotaped his auditions for the titular leading man in Montreal, and my delectation of the

talented Normand Fauteux plugged into my living room TV led, I am sure, to his selection and his momentous performance as Zero. In this, John’s first big-budget industrial-indie feature, alas, the two handsome leading men disclosed zero FFMN (was this shortfall a symptomatic harbinger of things to come, or was co-star John Robinson’s coy use of a videocam as fig leaf a poignant portent?). However, a FFMN shutout was averted ironically by another problem. An anxious phone call came out of the blue from John during post-production: the anal puppets were not working and something needed to be intercut during the soon-to-be-legendary “Butthole Duet” (alluded to without exception by every critic who has ever even so much as mentioned this film) to distract viewers from the puppetry malfunction, and did I have any archival items to recommend, preferably of the FFMN genre? I can’t remember what I suggested but what John came up with was the interpolation of low-budget video takes of a nude aerobics session by Toronto’s leading AIDS activists, clad only in running shoes and baseball caps, both dangly frontals and slightly wobbly butts. This intercutting worked, and the polarization of anal and phallic, celluloid and video, stop-motion animation and live action, signified prophetically not only the impending digital age’s zeroes and ones (*pace* Lee Edelman [Waugh and Garrison 2010, 149]) but also the forestalling of the anal turn in the Greyson oeuvre, the confidence that, as both Leo Bersani and lyricist Greyson had it, “Your rectum ain’t a grave.”

The *Lilies* production, which tested my mettle as assistant location manager as well as nudity consultant, included one of the most blissful experiences of our relationship. I convinced John that the skinny-dipping sequence, where grimy villagers wash off after battling the Roberval fire that had been set by pyromaniac Simon (Jason Cadieux), had to be shot at Ste-Marguerite du Lac in the Laurentians, the bucolic *plage sauvage* that I had frequented for two decades, then still undomesticated queer wilderness. Traumas surfaced aplenty: the makeup vans and catering trucks had to jolt several kilometres up a narrow gravel path to approach the site, the insurers required that a frogman certify that the gushing rapids and idyllic pools of the river were safe for delicate starflesh, and John was tense in his new sleeveless and zip-pocket director’s vest and first multi-(i.e., two-)million-dollar budget, caught up in the top-heavy technocracy of the Telefilm Canada-funded film industry. Worst of all, the gorgeously hairy Cadieux, it had been decided, didn’t look like a teenager and had been scraped to the skin of his comely torso so mercilessly by the makeup team’s depilator that he promptly broke out in a very uncinematic rash, which threatened to derail the whole production. I was corralled off to the side with the other extras because nudity was in the air, shuddering in the late-September chill while the stars Cadieux, Gilmore, and Ferguson looked professionally coddled under their thermal blankets.

Nevertheless, John made sure his FFMN consultant was in the heat of the action, and after we did multiple extreme long-shot takes of all of us meandering down to the rocky shore, getting naked, and slowly washing off the fake soot, there followed an ambitious skinny-dipping scene wherein the divine Cadieux would dive off a rock into the freezing water, I would dive after him, and then we would both climb back onto the same rock, first him then me. Six or seven takes were required for some reason and I was blue by the end, but pro that I am I paid no heed. Rather I concentrated on maintaining my nose at the correct intimate distance from Cadieux's ethereal crack at each clamber out onto the rock. I realize now that I should have alerted the makeup team to a serious problem, for despite their fanatical shaving obsession I was able to determine at very close range that they had neglected Cadieux's butt, which looked like the Amazon rainforest from the air. Nevertheless, several shots were efficiently imprinted that day. My scene was of course so brilliant and paradigm-shattering that the Telefilm-troughed producers of the feature trimmed it mercilessly, claiming it interrupted narrative rhythm but no doubt covering up the depilation error and showing deep-rooted anti-FFMN phobia. Most of my work, including the famous butt-sniffing apotheosis, was left on the cutting room floor and John informs me that it has been mysteriously missing to this day.

Nevertheless, once again the anal turn was averted, and a tender nude scene between the romantic leads standing in the bathtub on the set, a moment preserved from the original stage production, with FFMN by Vallier (Gilmore), became the set piece of this prizewinning film of many set pieces.

In rapid succession came the effulgent essay narrative *UnCut*, produced independently for one-twentieth of the *Lilies* budget. Cut though I am (in several senses of the word), I was proud that my services were still required by my uncut friend. As befits the themes of censorship, circumcision, Trudeau, and gay romance, FFMN was present galore in this groundbreaking work, both live-action and still, colour and black-and-white, tumescent and flaccid. As one of John's four interviewed "experts" on "copyright censorship," I was proud to tell the harrowing tale of sabotaged scholarly sexual archiving behind the publication of my 1996 book *Hard to Imagine: Gay Male Eroticism in Photography and Film from Their Beginnings to Stonewall*. Through my interview I was able to counter the facial impostures, squashed identities, and historical revisionism that had been imposed on my work by the corporate academic publishing industry, then on the cusp of the digital revolution. I was able to restore for the film's audience the faces of my vintage photo subjects that had been violated by a clumsy manual prototype of Photoshop in my book (Wagh 2000), and safeguard my archive of their precious penises, cut and uncut (plus offer an uncannily prophetic anecdote about my 1971 meeting with Trudeau, the recipient of *UnCut*'s sacramental prepuce).

John's increasing professionalization after entering the Canadian Film Centre in 1990 ensured that fewer and fewer actors could be found to drop trou. In fact, his CFC masterwork seemed to include a meta-commentary on this dilemma: the famous jockstrap hockey ballet of *The Making of "Monsters"* epitomized the end of an era, the infamous straps resorted to when the pool of teenage male dancers in Toronto willing to dance dangling seemed to finally dry up.

Most recently, John's contribution to the multi-authored *Rex vs. Singh* (2009) offers a brief visual "whip" analogy between a close-up of a large flaccid organ and an elephant's tail. This predictably caused consternation in the capitals of Asia (my Beijing queer audience framed their response in terms of "pornography," while, entered in the Mumbai International Film Festival of Documentary, Short and Animation Films, the film was robbed of its due honours, it is widely thought, because the jury was chaired by a long-tooth Bollywood ex-star, Asha Parekh, a reincarnation of Tory Ontario censor Mary Brown, some think, for her most recent gig had been as chair of the Central Board of Film Certification under India's Hindu fundamentalist regime early in the millennium).

As for *Fig Trees*, the video-opera installation-becoming-feature film (2003–09) was my lost opportunity: I turned down yet another extra role, an appearance as a fully clothed modernist queer composer on the staircase in the musical alphabet scene, because I'd promised to visit my mother who was languishing with Alzheimer's and I had to choose between a visit that she would instantly forget and an opportunity to imprint the visual archive. We cannot know whether my absence is the reason that *Fig Trees* is virtually the only Greyson major work without FFMN. Nevertheless, not jockstraps this time but fig leaves here perform a meta-commentary on the lost innocence of FFMN in the harsh world of post-9/11 Western civilization. In this key scene, oversized modesty shields explode the coy contradictions within John's re-enacted riff-tableaus of George Platt Lynes's famous 1934 photo of the crouched nude black dancers and their standing clothed white choreographer.

Whether or not the visual chastity of *Fig Trees* is a harbinger of future artistic directions cannot be known. However, the current Roy and Silo series, as of this writing in summer 2011 being incorporated into a feature film called *Jericho*, gives reason to hope, presenting well-hung avians who are sporadically nude (admittedly FFMN in penguins is a difficult practice to foreground). I cannot deny that penguin footage shot in Mumbai in February 2010 at Colaba, Marine Drive, and Chowpatty Beach (where the teenaged male bodies acrobatically dangling from the mechanical ferris wheel activated by their weight were all fully clothed) skimmed on the FFMN: however, while it cannot be revealed at this time, an interior intra-penguin massage sequence is rumoured by the industry press to have involved nudity. No doubt

the rapidly unfolding saga of the penguins trapped by gentrification, guppi-fication, and the gay marriage lure will offer further opportunities for a principled exploration of FFMN as the crux of twenty-first-century queer art and politics, and I am willing and available as usual to assist.

B

Enough of these tawdry theatrics.

John Greyson, *The Making of "Monsters,"* 1991

Trauma, testimony, melodrama, music. My paper for the 2009 panel, the germ of these notes, spun my reflections around these four rather hip keywords of the decade's film and cultural studies scholarship, connecting John to his abiding affinity with the documentary impulse, and I guess that means to that other John, Grierson. My argument was and is that John's recourse to music and melodrama from the earliest moments of his career is paradoxically connected to that impulse to testify and advocate. This recourse involves among many other things the processing of trauma and its documentary witnessing – and simultaneously the scrambling of this processing. I feel uneasy in thus anatomizing John's process and his work – there's a risk in reducing things to a kind of anachronistic psychologization reminiscent of 1950s Bergman criticism, all the more inappropriate for the work of a friend. Might I end up circumventing/cizing or mystifying his agency as a prolific mid-career artist in the second decade of the twenty-first century? Yet puzzling over a structure that I find to be recurrent across several decades of John's work, I discover tropes engaging an intense stop-and-start affect in material terms of spectators and their apprehension of real worlds – tropes that never fail to strike me straight to the heart and then trip me up – yet I don't know how else to account for his persistent artistic efforts to complicate if not flout the tawdry theatrics of affect.

John's most recent optic for defining his method is as karaoke – *his* definition, not the faux-Sontag definition in his 2010 now-online piece on homophobia in Sarajevo, *Covered* – the colonization and renewal of musical heritage:

colonizing a familiar or iconic text, image, cultural product, idiom or genre ... Wonder in karaoke is achieved when the stretch between raw materials and result is particularly broad ... we reward those efforts which achieve the truest impersonation of the original, while simultaneously utilizing means and materials at the greatest distance from their source. Thus karaoke is miscegenation: not just of gender or race

or scale, but also of artistic medium ... the sampling and satirizing of significations ... Artists addressing AIDS fought back, appropriating these dominant representations and narratives and hurling them back at the world, attempting to speak from within the storm of our desires and fears ...

These fragments of John's MA thesis (2009b) are tackling the postmodern artistic practice of appropriation, but they also seem to address the intersection of affect and alienation that I identify at the core of a documentary impulse worthy of that other John (Grierson), and I would argue that they tie him not only to the postmodern artists he identifies in this thesis (from Cindy Sherman to Derek Jarman), but also to a heritage that can be traced back to Brecht (the protagonist of his 1991 coitus-interruptus masterpiece *The Making of "Monsters"*). Indeed, it's possible to see one generation's karaoke as an earlier generation's postmodern bricolage and that bricolage as an earlier generation's political modernism or even camp/pastiche theatricality and those aesthetic strategies as an earlier generation's Brechtian distancing. (One might also wonder whether this year's cult of affect is not a previous generation's illusionism and a previous generation's naturalism.) Not to mention what John described in a 1990 interview as "taking images apart and putting them back together" (Steven 1993, 153). Basic to all of these avant-gardist strategies of twentieth- and twenty-first-century art aimed at negotiating the real world's "storm of desires and fears" and its political aesthetics is, I would argue, a distrust of affect, a final, insistent repudiation of the legacy of Romanticism – not to mention Aristotelian catharsis – on grounds that are either ideological or artistic or both, or perhaps unconsciously psychic or even more deeply rooted.

Let us agree to look then at Greyson's whole oeuvre as artistic response to the historical triggers of individual and collective traumas and the mediation, diffracting, scrambling, and "hurling back" of their affect. But what could these traumas have been (to be literal-mindedly biographical)? The intractability of an inequitable world? Hetero-patriarchal shaming of queer desire? Adult violence upon the young? Homophobic violence to the community? Viral violence to the body? State violence to freedom of speech and artistic creation? Cultural violence to queer desire? London, Ontario, and the shame of being a young brilliant and queer middle son (of five) therein, the smothering straitjacket of provincial bourgeois conformity that even a loving and supporting family of nonconforming Catholic intelligentsia might not have been able to insulate him against? All of the above? Certainly all have been thematized in his works. As an activist since his teen years, a baby boomer born in 1960 but too late for the sixties, John has always incorporated testimony to the real in his work, the witnessing of pain, injustice,

struggle, and contradiction – and processed this affecting documentary matter into many registers and modes of performance, citation/appropriation, narrative, musical, and visual effect.

Consider the following exhibit from *Urinal* (1988). In this first feature, a narrative essay on toilets and toilet sex (see especially chapter 31), the fictional character “Sir Gay” Eisenstein’s essay tour of Toronto’s hottest sex toilets includes two interview-monologues. One features a Toronto man of Chinese ancestry explaining his tearoom habits, capped by his astonishing testimony to the fulfilling de-racialization he experiences through public yet anonymous and disembodied sexual exchange (in contrast to the racist fetishization or avoidance he encounters within the gay ghetto). This effect is outrageously undercut in typically Greysonian manner by the subject’s “disguise” in Chinese opera masks and even a gorilla mask ornamented with Beijing opera tinsel tassels. This slapstick testimony⁶ is twinned and intersected with that of an undisguised older man, a white suburban social worker whose articulate matter-of-factness and visual banality belie the trauma this man has experienced. He describes his entrapment in one of that season’s epidemic of video sting operations by the Ontario Provincial Police, his conviction based on surveillance video documentation, and his discharge on his “public contact” employment with youth. And then the victim discourse is transformed: his narrative peaks in an affirmation of the self-validation he experienced upon viewing his sexual activity on the public monitor in the courtroom – this the purest and most accessibly intense and unmediated documentary sequence in John’s work (or at least since the two “non-queer” docs about agrarian politics in Ontario and Sandinista Nicaragua in the early eighties [see chapter 3]). The combination is electrifying. An interesting argument is that the “wonder” of this effect is even heightened by the clash between the directly relayed straight testimony and its absurd ornamentation and interference. John clearly intended the slapstick camouflage of identity and sabotage of identification, this sharp contrast in the interview formats, to operate as the fundamental problematization of the documentary premise itself.

In like manner, one can point to an endless sequence of effects/affects over three decades of work – ratcheted up but then turned off, interrupted, re-configured, embroidered, defigured, encrypted – in short, flouted. Unlike in *Urinal*, atypically non-musical among John’s works, song has arguably been a privileged format of this creative transformation. Let’s recapitulate more exhibits in reverse chronological order.

Most recently, in the BDS online works since 2009 (see chapters 14, 15, 28, 29), consistent with their agitprop design in support of the Palestinian struggle, John hacks into pop music standards and refuses outright to transmit his brief shards of evidence and testimony unadorned with the po-mo

irony of pastiche and parody. Even images of atrocities committed against Gaza civilians included in *BDS Justin Bieber* are delivered wrapped in this fabric – in this case a Bieber riff – as one concerned diasporic spectator commented during a Montreal screening in January 2011. The questioner was assuming that documents of collective trauma require the artistic shroud of indexical sobriety, non-interference, and respect, but the filmmaker, present in person, tactfully refuted such unexamined conventions. The atrocity document should collide with pastiche and parody, he argued, producing shock and outrage through such a collision. The serious must be accompanied by the frivolous, outrage by camp! Do we ever learn? Remember the flaps over Chaplin’s and Lubitsch’s campy and frivolous treatments of Hitler at the height of the Holocaust, in *The Great Dictator* (1940) and *To Be or Not to Be* (1942) respectively?

In *Fig Trees* (2009), the transformation of real-life Cape Town AIDS activist Zackie Achmat into an operatic protagonist continues apace – his



Urinal: the affect of a Toronto man of Chinese ancestry testifying about his tearoom habits, outrageously undercut by his “disguise.” Frame capture.

direct cinema documentary testimony had already been transformed into operatic aria for the earlier video-opera installation version of 2003. Meanwhile a new recruit, long-time friend and fellow Toronto activist Tim McCaskell, performs his main interview in a car in an Ontario safari park, and Greyson continues his impatience with interviews of any sort: the whole thing is so distracted by ostriches staring through and pecking at the car window that more than a few nuances are lost. In fact this film is built on the most elaborate program, both diegetic and extra-diegetic, for transforming discursive documentary seriousness into the ludic performance and song of any Greyson work – confirming you might say the frivolous discursive core of his artistic practice.

With regard to *Zero Patience* (1993), the first AIDS opera, I self-quote yet again:

I would like to discuss one song that is my personal favourite, “Positive,” a thematic number that doubles as a portrait and performance set piece for the George character ... This song for George’s solo voice, supported by a chorus of his pupils, expresses the anxiety, confusion and intense fluctuation of feelings from doubt to courage of prototypical PWAs [People with Aids] of the late 1980s, feelings that had surfaced repeatedly in documentary portraits of PWAs in both Greyson’s own work and those he curated in his VAA package. “Positive” is not a showstopper ... Rather, George’s solo, counterpointed by the children’s refrain, is a relatively intimate number, formally rigorous and almost ascetic, set in both the classroom workplace and the most private recess of the home, the shower. It is the kind that classically transforms everyday objects like school desks and shower curtains into magical accoutrements of spectacle and affect. George’s direct one-on-one performance of his feelings, first to his pupils and then, from his shower to us his privileged spectators, bears the qualities of both intensity (“experiencing of emotion directly, fully, unambiguously, ‘authentically,’ without holding back”) and transparency (“A quality of relationships – between represented characters [e.g., true love], between performer and audience [‘sincerity’]”) that Dyer identifies as among those intrinsic to the traditional film musical’s formulaic construction of utopian feeling ([1977] 1992, 20–1). In contrast to the other songs, often energized by Greyson’s compressed archness, self-reflexive wit, and allusion, this dialogue among a man, a lineup of children, and a virtual audience, between two spaces, private and public, is simple in its theme and direct in its appeal to pathos, desire, and solidarity (“I want to plan ... I want to know ... I want to live”). This directness is mediated only by quasi-Brechtian cap-

tions, which Greyson could not resist, in the form of the contradictory media headlines about AIDS that are plastered across George’s shower curtain (which I don’t recall even noticing until about the third viewing of the film). (Waugh 2006, 297–8)

“Could not resist” indeed. Needless to say, the “flouting” of affect in this particular case was met with some resistance, at least with this viewer, and affect prevailed, out-Renting *Rent*. John’s lingering dissatisfaction with his achievement of his goals in this film hinges on this spectatorial resistance to his non-resistance.

As I summarize further in *The Romance of Transgression*, evoking Dyer yet again (1992, 302), the essence of this aesthetic strategy involves the artist “using modernist games to back off from lures and limits of martyrdom,” also “deploying the self-critical formal procedures of modernism to create what Dyer has called (in relation to Judy Garland, evoking a tradition of precursor gay cultural critics as well) an important aspect of the so-called ‘gay sensibility’ ... Passion with irony, a fierce assertion of extreme feeling with a deprecating sense of its absurdity.” Gertrude Stein may well be the patron saint of *Fig Trees* but for me she is the epitome of the bankruptcy and betrayal of cultural modernism in relation to the politics of the interwar period, the era of Manchuria, Ethiopia, Spain, and Munich (John predictably heads off this paradox in his script). Who would have thought that the Steinian formal/linguistic/ludic avant-gardism, ultimately apotheosized in *Fig Trees* – the film’s “happy ending” notwithstanding – could ever be deployed in the instrumentalist service of the real-world politics of AIDS, South Africa, and queer desire, her apolitical frivolity transformed into seriousness? At the ending of the film the Stein persona may well get dislodged from her saint’s throne, with the delusions of opera disavowed in the real world of AIDS-treatment politics, but her aesthetic prevails. If Tim is on a “lachrymal strike,” as he claims, John is on an affect strike. Greyson again subversively channels Grierson, but the ludic undermines the documentary sobriety and the affective is continually cut short.

C

Longing for the warmth of human companionship, hating her fears of others but powerless against them, there lies nothing ahead for her but years of loneliness, desolate, barren, empty, because she is shy ... the child guidance clinic asked me to watch how the outsiders in my class fared among the other children. For in spite of the happy gaiety around them, they might be headed for the kind of unhappiness that is ruining my cousin’s life.

Robert, almost always seemed to be off by himself, but he was always doing something, collecting things or experimenting. He seemed fascinated in his quiet, gentle way with the world around him. And though he was alone a lot, he seemed to be a happy child ...

Robert, nothing the matter with him. If he's alone a lot, it's because he likes to be. Busy, pursuing his own real and healthy interests. Our job is not to change him, but to help him develop further his natural qualities.

Shyness (NFB, 1953)

[P]aradoxically the edifice of male potency appears quite fragile, a fact that is nowhere more apparent than in the spectacle of public intimacy around the male urinal.

Tuters et al. 2009

The plateau phase is the period of sexual excitement prior to orgasm. The phase is characterised by an increased circulation and heart rate in both sexes, increased sexual pleasure with increased stimulation, and further increased muscle tension. Also, respiration continues at an elevated level. During this phase, the male urethral sphincter contracts (so as to prevent urine from mixing with semen, and guard against retrograde ejaculation) and muscles at the base of the penis begin a steady rhythmic contraction.

Human Sexual Response, Wikipedia

This third and final note concerns a not unrelated issue, John's refusal of the "I." And we hereby stumble into the clash of the self-referential critic and his non-self-referential artist-subject. Not that John's work is not deeply personal – it obviously is – but that it is exceptionally avoidant of self-representation. John was new boy in town at the end of the seventies, landing in an incestuous Toronto indie art scene whose torchbearers were all chroniclers of the authorial body, voice, and identity. Think of proto-queer video pioneer Colin Campbell (John's future consort) and feminist video pioneer Lisa Steele (Campbell's erstwhile consort), both deploying their own nude bodies and voices, and the ricochet echo of their practice from their Toronto junior filmmaker Midi Onodera and their West Coast junior performance-conceptualist Paul Wong. Or think of General Idea (a brief dalliance between new boy and GI kingpin A.A. Bronson is also a matter of the historical record and of course A.A. became one of the four interlocutors of *UnOut* [1997]), whose brittle artworld conceptual abstraction – albeit punctuated with hieratically camp self-portraits, it must not be forgotten – was diluted increasingly as they moved through the eighties with intensely cathartic self-representation, soon AIDS-themed. Other Torontonians in the 1970s "first person" camp ranged from performance artist Tanya Mars to neo-socialist-realist photo-

artist duo Karl Beveridge and Carole Condé. Thereafter in a second wave John's loyal collaborator Richard Fung emerged in the mid-1980s as the community's most-sustained familial self-chronicler, followed by erstwhile celluloid experimentalist Mike Hoolboom, transformed in the 1990s by HIV into electronic confessionalist, and soon Elle Flanders took up the torch in the home-movie recycler department, as did Ian Iqbal Rashid, after appearing on screen in his co-directed *Bolo Bolo*, in the thinly disguised autobiographical fiction department (yes, another consort!). This is not to mention John's American and European video artist analogues/friends Rosa von Praunheim, Gregg Bordowitz (another major fling!), Stuart Marshall, and even camera-shy Isaac Julien, each producing intense self-referencing AIDS-themed works in 1986, 1994, 1991, and 1988 respectively (the latter two works are admittedly miniatures).⁷

It was no doubt typical of John's individualism – not to say refractoriness – that he resisted (though not fully) the auto-ethnographic imperative, the autobiographical sublime. The numerous shots of his hands positioning his characteristic iconic plastic toys in frame after electronic frame don't count (the hallmark of the low-budget indie rather than of the synecdochic self-portraitist), and otherwise exceptional indulgences that prove the rule can be counted on one hand: two symptomatically "obscene" authorial vignettes, both symptomatically in disguise, in the Kipling trilogy, the wanking jelly-bean-proffering vice cop in *Perils of Pedagogy* (more of that later), and the penis-nosed lip-syncher of *Jungle Boy*. (Also not counting are John's representations of his future consorts Stephen Andrews and Campbell in *Perils of Pedagogy* and *Jungle Boy* respectively, for these in fact happened only at a moment when the two men were but stars in his eyes.) I am especially fond of two more late head-on "I-indulgences" that for that matter are typically not promoted as part of the oeuvre and seem demoted to "home-movie" status: *It Takes Two* (2003), the charmingly simple essay John made together with partner Andrew about gay [non-]marriage and other binaries as a figure of the two-state Israel-Palestine solution; and *Topping* (2000), a doting father's home video of his two toddler daughters choosing films for TIFF, intercut with shirtless hunk Kent Monkman on a motorcycle for some unknown reason (made for the festival in happier times in the relationship between the lurching ocean liner and the rebellious kayaker ...). Finally, *Covered* (2009) features first-person voice-over (performed not by Greyson himself, tellingly, but by editor Jared Raab) about strictly behind-the-camera John's support for the ill-fated Sarajevo queer film fest, but with his narration masked as a back-and-forth Bosnian language lesson.

Having touched on a half-dozen exceptions that make the rule of his almost sixty films and videotapes, we come to the even more exceptional and John's only full-scale self-depicting, self-narrating work, *After the Bath* (1995).

This first-person tape was paradoxically given birth in 1995 by John's traumatic only scrape with the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, that arbiter of objective third-person standards of tele-journalism. CBC Newsworld forced John to adopt alien standards such as journalistic balance (a polite interview with the ambitious and illiterate then London police chief Julian Fantino ... shudder), expert witnesses, and unadorned voice-over commentary for the only time in his career. John not only made a virtue of necessity but also delivered an under-recognized brilliantly quirky and daring first-person essay about a notorious and ominous sex panic in his home town, which had suddenly acquired the "untrustworthy" reputation "as the kiddie-porn capital of Canada" (see chapter 6). Savouring this fine work, which depicts a handsome thirty-five-year-old John as the intrepid investigative reporter, tuqued and bearded, in the dead of western Ontario winter, I discovered the "smoking gun" that finally allows us to pin down the enigma of camera-shy Johnny. *After the Bath*, in addition to being one of the most astute cinematic essays on sex panics around intergenerational and youth sexuality in the North American canon, is John's sixth of seven works touching centrally or peripherally on public sex, whether in toilets, cinemas, or urban streets (the others are *Jungle Boy*, *Kipling Meets the Cowboys*, *You Taste American*, *Urinal*, *The Making of "Monsters"*, and *Rex vs. Singh*). In this one John finally succumbs to the confessional and the first-person narrative and, exploring London's queer geography, says it all:

The experts then would be confused by my own experience. When I was sixteen I went actively looking for sex and found it in the basement washroom of the London Public Library ... ["There's always something interesting going on in the library," interrupts a smarmy 1950s NFB narrator]. The man was in his fifties, had yellow teeth, a bad toupee. He was the stereotypical dirty old man but when I walked back to Catholic Central fifteen minutes later, I felt great. The sex may have been tacky, but it had been something I'd wanted, something I'd chosen.

I factor this confession in alongside other insider secret knowledge, revealed publicly here for the first time: John has been pee-shy – reluctant-bladdered, paruretic – as long as I've known him (though I am told there has been progress in recent years). We come at last to the broad daylighting of the problem. The psychic link between private authorial paruresis and public artistic advocacy around public sex I can guide the reader through only partly and leave him or her to connect the dots. John was certainly not a shy child, in the general sense, judging from his revelation in the same voice-over that he and his girl friend would go out dancing at London's lesbian and gay co-op space HALO because they "liked disco." On the face of the evidence, I

would certainly be hard-pressed to pin on this precocious and avid reader of British boys' adventure literature the queer political exegesis that Eve Sedgwick and Simon Watney have wrapped around dandy swish child Andrew Warhol (Sedgwick 1996; Watney 1996). One would be hard-pressed also to conclude that the 1970s feminist gospel of the political as personal was not shared by the teenage aspirant. One might argue that the vocation of el supremo appropriator/pastiche-ist might be seen to preclude the calling of the autobiographer, but this would be tautological if it is the case that the pastiche masks the shyness of the invisible video/filmmaker. In any event, it is all too clear that John's increasingly fierce extra-textual public persona does not mask a basically shy adult, at least in person. Shame has been fully processed in queer theory and studies over the last two decades; it is "simply the first, and remains a permanent, structuring fact of identity: one that has its own, powerfully productive and powerfully social metamorphic possibilities" (Sedgwick 1993). But the overlapping concept of "shy," etymologically descended from the Anglo-Saxon notion of an easily frightened horse (Oxford), deserves scrutiny in its own right. The NFB produced not one but two films about shyness in the decade before John's birth (*Shyness* [1953] and *None but the Lonely* [1957]), but unfortunately neither explicitly dealt with paruresis, frightened horses, or queer shame – on the surface.

It was 1982, the year I discovered that John is pee-shy. The precocious Torontonion had moved to New York for short-lived love, and the occasion of our first meeting was a panel he organized as co-ordinator for the Association of Independent Film and Video, entitled "Prognosis for Gay and Lesbian Independent Film." It's not important what I said as the only non-New Yorker involved, even if I could remember, but it was the first of many mutual hostings on his turf and mine over the decades and the spark for the short fling that inevitably followed. More significantly, this fling included a consciousness-raising proto-queer Marxist salon on the Upper West Side in which all the twenty or so participants, men and women, talked in turn of the theme of the day, their childhood sexual experiences, and when it came to John he passed. This shyness seems now in retrospect more prophetic than I then realized.

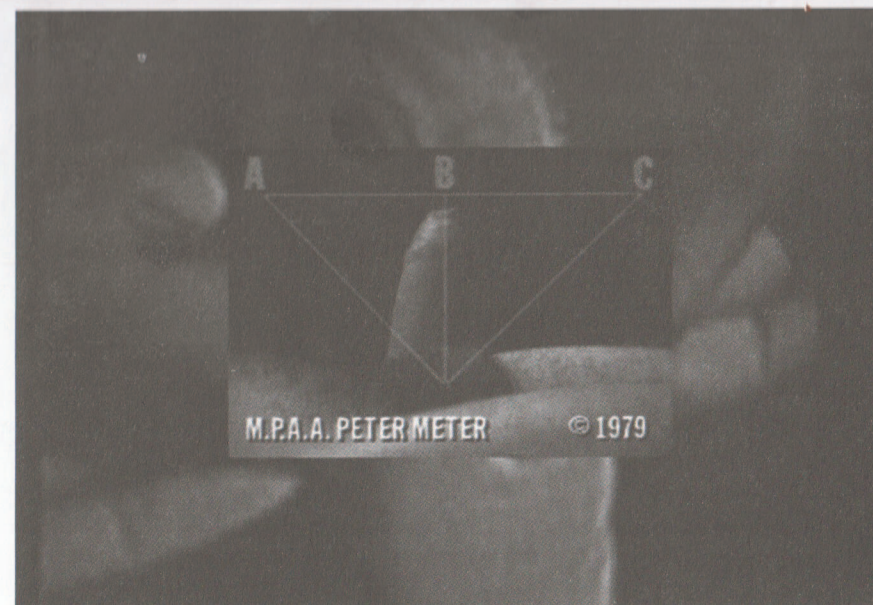
The source of John's political empathy with victims of vice squad entrapment is clear: this paruretic certainly knows what it is to be trapped in a toilet, the sphincter contracted, the fluids separated, and passages blocked. The links to our society of surveillance and the encroachment upon private space are all too clear. The stoppage of desire, the trauma of surveillance, and the dysfunctionality of confession – are these the terrors that have kept John off-screen?

I deliberately postponed until this point mention of two telling instances in the Greyson oeuvre of what he calls the "grand tradition of self-penile

representation – from Bob Flanagan in *Sick* to Guy Ben-Ner's *Moby Dick*.⁸ The convergence of the problematics of FFMN and the autobiographical clearly ratchets up the aesthetical-political discourse to a level of almost unbearable vertiginousness.⁹ *Perils of Pedagogy*'s above-mentioned sleazy vice cop, after sermonizing breathlessly on saving the young from corruption while the camera tilts down to frantic manual movements beneath his jockey shorts, proffers jelly beans to an undisclosed recipient, and the *mise en scène* finally succumbs to a climactic, blurred extreme close-up of FFMN authorial monkey-spanking, so short as to become almost subliminal. The next self-penile performance comes over a decade later: *Un©ut*'s circumcision-obsessed Peter is reading the update on penile censorship quoted in our epigraph above as he watches a square video image of the organ in question, still in close-up but with greater distance, clarity, and perspective, the supine artist demonstrating through stop-motion speed-up the assumption of the forbidden 75-degree tumescence – with, appropriately for Peter, the stubborn foreskin still in place. These two shots, fragmented and detached but bold and in-your-face, anonymous but attached to undisclosed authorial corporeality, encapsulate a resolution to the contradictions of shyness and desire, both personal and artistic.

The self-referential critic poses these issues as insider, collaborator, sharer of guilty pleasures, incriminator (potential blackmailer), but knows not all. Is one simple answer that the pee-shy “I,” the easily frightened horse, is rechannelled into John's famous anachronistic historical figures that became his hallmark in the 1980s, his surrogates, his stand-in urethras? If so, which of them are his privileged surrogate tubes? The eminent Victorians Kipling, Aschenbach, or Burton? One of the mid-twentieth-century ideologues and artists, from Sir Gay to Alexandra Kollontai, Frida Kahlo, Gertrude Stein, Susan Sontag, Elvis Costello, Michel Foucault, and Tennessee Williams? The albino squirrel playing Saint Martin of Tours (already John's Facebook avatar)? All of them? How and why? Who will be next, the separated twin/almost namesake John Grierson, the Havelock Ellis who “discovered” urolagnia at the turn of the twentieth century (with outsider scientific objectivity, natch), or the Warhol who famously created piss paintings in the mid-seventies (Moon 1996, 96)? Perhaps the latter, the works politely called oxidation paintings by the Warhol estate, since John is all too familiar with the analogy between pissing and the creative process, inventing the hoax-concept of urographophilia that he naughtily cited in a recent unpublished paper to tease out the analogy (2010) and situating a bronze interactive public pisser of Prague (by avant-garde conceptualist sculptor David Cerny) as yet another Greyson surrogate in the process.

From refusal of “I” to stoppage of the urethra to shy pisser to refractory but creative non-autobiograph, this is quite a whirl. But to complicate things



Un©ut's 75-degree tumescence censorship rule. Resolving the contradictions of shyness and desire, both personal and artistic? Frame capture.

further the artist himself has weighed in on the shyness issue: “The shy note: I think the crucial thing is my still present (and very irregular) terror over the live vs the pre-recorded – e.g. I had to intro my new Gaza vid at a recent outdoor screening, and my hand holding my notes shook uncontrollably – was really something ... Overall, I *really* don't like public speaking/performing of ANY sort – and really can't do it without it all written out (a few exceptions along the way, e.g. Cinema Politica, prove the rule) – for my PhD, I had to take a basic one-day theatre workshop – memorize a 1 min monologue and perform it – was TERRIFIED! – and I could BARELY get those 5 lines into my head – horrible – (it was from Genet's *Prisoner of Love* – and it's gonna be Genet in the new *Jericho* film with the penguins – and his tightrope-walking lover – so ... can you find me a middle-eastern twenty-something FFMN-friendly tightrope-walking actor?” (email 21 September 2011). The artist's further reflection on this is also suggestive: “[T]he notion of the live vs the pre-recorded [is] a question of mediation and control. Many (actors, teachers, etc.) genuinely revel in the ‘live’ – ‘living in the moment’ – whereas for many of us, the terror of the live makes us yearn for the pre-recorded.” Such terror is obviously a factor in the relative rarity of improvisational and observational idioms (except in regard to animals, domestic

and wild), and proportionally the importance of scripting, writerliness, performance choreography, tableaux (see chapter 13), etc., in John's work is another subject for future research. But someone has entered this tearoom. Zip up. There is no time to analyse further, at least here, the "steady rhythmic contractions" of John's creative process.

Conclusion: The Grey Area

FACILITATOR: Maybe at sixteen you were emotionally prepared for that relationship [with a thirty-five-year-old man], you were mature enough. But that's where the grey area comes in. What about the other sixteen-year-olds, a hundred sixteen-year-olds? Are they prepared for that? What about a fourteen-year-old? Is a fourteen-year-old emotionally prepared for a relationship with a thirty-six-year-old?

JOHN GREYSON [off-camera, born 1960]: Who makes the decision?

FACILITATOR: That's it.

After the Bath (1995)

A grey zone, also known as a grey area, is a space of ambiguity, a borderland, the bleeding together of black and white. The reference made by the *After the Bath* "facilitator" to the thirty-five-year-old director's complicity in her grey area is pointedly oblique (and her unaccountable switch from thirty-five to thirty-six belies no doubt the inner trauma of recovered memory) – while her obviously insider knowledge that the Harper government would raise the age of consent from fourteen to sixteen thirteen years later as a direct result of this film is uncanny.

The concept of a grey zone may well be a good handle for the foregoing notes on John's intense yet playful relationship with the devoted obsession of his assistant nudity wrangler, with documentary affect and the Grierson heritage, and with the autobiographical impulse. The story-spinning tall-tale frivolity of the white of this only slightly tongue-in-cheek autobiographical gloss has not masked the black of its deep underlying seriousness, I hope. The assistant has learned much from the boss. At each stage over thirty years, our careers have been woven together, despite the 550 kilometres that separate Toronto's Queen Street West from Montreal's Plateau, despite the toll aging enacts on our bodies nude and clothed, and despite the twelve-year generational difference between us and our cultural frameworks as early and late baby boomers. Both of us have witnessed and participated in each other's respective creative and intellectual excitements, supported each other's respective primary relationships, and meandered through each other's living and play spaces, obsessions, crises, and triumphs. For these notes I have with

permission stolen not only John's private life but also part of his email address and intermittent production company name, which I'm sure he savours for its pregnant signification even more than I. These playful musings on serious aspects of his work, these three notes on greyzone that one reader has likened to a campy Greek chorus, have probed and toyed with his prolific, playful artistic negotiations with the human body – sometimes even his own – and the politics of desire, frivolous and serious, over more than three decades. My participating somewhat distantly in his artistic process, as his friend as well as his critic over those decades, my witnessing up close and at one remove, has enabled an understanding of the work, I hope, and the role in the production and meaning of that work enacted by critic, programmer, teacher, kibitzer, friend, and playmate – and an understanding of how the artistic, intellectual, and political cohabit the zone of the everyday, of camp, of play, of desire, of friendship – and now of York-Concordia-tenured collegiality. It is not only the ethics of consent in intergenerational gay relations that are a grey zone, but also the boundaries among all the categories in the above list, as well as of the tropes of performance and pastiche, the zones of video, film, stage, page, and Internet, the stances of affect, pleasure, pedagogy, gossip, camp, and the rationality of political critique – in short, frivolity and seriousness.

Since these three notes on Greyson as greyzone are autonomous works in progress, perhaps there is no need to wrap up further, other than to end on a tawdry theatrical note that tosses in an entirely new concept, to come back to Sontag, the real Sontag, who wrote in 1964 in honour of John's imminent debut at Catholic elementary school in London, Ontario, words to guide his subsequent career, that "Camp taste is a kind of love."

Notes

- 1 This promiscuity extends in the other direction as well: recently driving past the motherhouse of the National Film Board of Canada in suburban Montreal with two international film scholars, I pointed out to them the now empty John Grierson Building, and they were amazed at how Canada continues to hiply integrate dissent, even so far as the government film studio naming a building after a rebel queer indie artist. Ramsay has a similar insight about the convergence of the two Grierson Canadian filmmakers. See chapter 12.
- 2 John has noticed the similarity of this acronym to 1980s Central American revolutionary groups such as FMLN (El Salvador) and FSLN (Nicaragua) (email 12 April 2012), but, the revolutionary import of frontal male nudity notwithstanding, any resemblance is entirely coincidental.
- 3 Campfire Video, *Movie Buff Checklist: Male Nudity in the Movies* (Los Angeles:

Campfire Video Productions, 1988); Craig Hosoda, *The Bare Facts Video Guide: Where to Find Your Favorite Actors and Actresses Nude on Videotape* (San Francisco: The Bare Facts, 1991); Steve Stewart, *Full-Frontal: Male Nudity Video Guide* (Laguna Hills, CA: Companion, 1996); current sites are cinemale, <http://cinemale.com/new/guest/join.asp>; and the Eric Deman Video Library, <http://ericdeman.com/index2.php?nats=MDowOjc&step=2>.

- 4 Earlier, John had energized a Toronto arts community anti-censorship rally in a strapless taffeta ballgown whose skirt opened up to reveal the black-daubed slogan "Fuck you Mary Brown" (the name of the bureaucrat who headed the board from 1980 until after the Tories bit the dust in 1986), the dress designed by artist John Scott – but that is another story. In addition to the feature art films mentioned above, Ontario also saw works by Michael Snow, Barbara Hammer, and Al Razutis targeted at the "Canadian Images" festival and by Barbara Hammer and Isaac Julien at Toronto's A Space gallery.
- 5 <http://www.thefreelibrary.com/Setting+the+record+straight+about+POV+and+Hot+Docs.-a0134257460>.
- 6 Greyson's strategy is a homage to the tactic by the CBC and other North American broadcasters to resort to shaming disguises when interviewing homosexuals, notable in the pre-Stonewall era but still current as late as the early eighties (e.g., the CBC's repugnant *Sharing the Secret*, John Kastner, 1981). And the strategy has still not disappeared, judging from the 2010 Swedish documentary hit *The Regretters*, where one of the two eponymous subjects (senior transsexuals who have reverted to their original biological sex) wears an unacknowledged disguise throughout this feature-length film, including sunglasses and what John would call a "bad toupee." (Is there any such thing as a good toupee?)
- 7 The respective titles are *Ein Virus Kennt keine Moral* (*A Virus Knows No Morals*); *Fast Trip, Long Drop*; *Robert Marshall*; and *This Is Not an AIDS Advertisement*.
- 8 Email message 15 September 2011.
- 9 John is of course referring to Flanagan nailing his dick to a board in *Sick: The Life and Death of Supermasochist Bob Flanagan* (1997), but strictly speaking Kirby Dick is the author of this documentary, not Flanagan; John's comparison is illuminating all the same. In addition to the two heterosexual examples that come to John's mind, we need to add a long list of queer self-penilist film- and video-makers, including for a start Colin Campbell, Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Fred Halsted, Bruce LaBruce, Zachery Longboy, Michael Lucas, Curt McDowell, Marlon Riggs, Phillip B. Roth, Michael V. Smith, Rosa von Praunheim, and Michael Wallin. There is clearly a doctoral dissertation waiting to be skinned back from this engorged list.