

Gay Pride and its Adverse

EuroPride 2006 and the Counter Performance of EuroShame

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On a sweltering day in early July 2006 two events took place that would seemingly have little relationship to one another. England lost the World-Cup game against Portugal that would seal their fate for that season and EuroPride was celebrated throughout London's West End. On this particular day these two events did come together, violently. A third happening also took place that night, an event that had been planned months before and yet seemed to take both events into account in its critique of sexual citizenship and nationality. EuroShame, a night of instillations and satire held at a large Vauxhall warehouse, was intended to critique the codification and corporatization of the GLBTI community.

My three sites of focus: EuroPride 2006's "Pride's Against Prejudice" rally and subsequent football riot at Trafalgar Square and EuroShame are clear examples of performances where identities conflict, are re-affirmed, or are tested. Performance acts as a catalyst and readily available forum, where primary contestations of identity, sexuality and nationality are questioned and confirmed.

I was originally drawn to this project by an interest in the various rights struggles, anti-colonial movements, identity formations and representational politics of the last three decades. Specifically I wanted to know how the queer rights struggle and the contemporary GLBTI rights agenda fit into these movements.

This project wedges itself directly between the huge volume of psychoanalytic queer theory and the materialist, spatial and postcolonial turn in the queer writing of the last ten years. EuroPride London, EuroShame and the Pride's Against Prejudice rally and subsequent football riot, serve as key sites of material spatial contestations over sexual citizenship and identity. While these sites also do the work of exposing the identity based and psychoanalytic struggles and cleavages of the gay rights and Gay Shame movements respectively. Each of these sites also exposes a different iteration of queer theory and an active exchange between queer theory, writing, activism and queer performance itself.

Much of the work that has been done over the past twenty years on the gay rights struggle has been entirely uncritical. Recently a number of important books and articles have questioned the globalization of gay and lesbian identities, the narrow agenda of the gay rights movement and the place of gay pride events in relationship to the

corporate marketplace. This work exposes the nuances and cleavages of Western sexuality constructions, as well as the complex negotiations and erasures of ethnicity, race and culture within performances of sexuality. Authors such as Jose Esteban Munoz and Roderick Ferguson are examining the liberatory and theoretically empowering nature of what Ferguson refers to as "queer of color" critique in order to place race, culture and ethnicity at the center of Euro-American discussions of queer identity[1]. Martin Manalansan IV and Gayatri Gopinath are working to expose the identity imperialism of Western constructions of GLBTI identities and the assumption of gay homogeneity. These scholars argue in different ways that sexual identities are multiple and always contingent on culture, nationality and class. I believe that greater attention to the Gay Shame movement[2] will further this important branch of Queer Studies.

In my work I employ Richard Schechner's definition of performance as he distinguishes it from theater.

Performance is an inclusive term. Theater is only one node on a continuum that reaches from the ritualizations of animals through performances in everyday life - greetings, displays of emotion, family scenes, professional roles, and so on - through to play, sports, theater, dance ceremonies, rites, and performances of great

magnitude. (Schechner Xvii)[3]

The examples of performance I investigate here are on the order of large scale social performances and events; they do not constitute the everyday performances of work, or family life as cited by Schechner. I am concerned with performances that do not take the form of staged plays, where a text is written and performed as in traditional theater. The sites I explore involve different instances of performance, with varying degrees of rehearsal and organization. The events at EuroPride, especially the parade and rally, were the most planned and carefully orchestrated of the events I will discuss. All three primary performance sites left room for audience participation and intervention, as well as performer improvisation and none were repeatable in precisely the same way from one performance to the next.

The resurgence of the radical queer movement of the late 90's, as well as the Gay Shame movement today are at their core an attempt to critique the progressive narrative of the current Gay Rights movement and the occlusion of sexual citizenship in western countries with corporate branding and discrete identity constructions. Gay Shame events often use performance and satire to critique the Gay Rights movement's new face, which argues for gay and lesbian rights while turning its back on other forms of

oppression, even within the queer community itself (such as discrimination of Trans people and people of color within the gay and lesbian community).

The normative trend within the Gay Rights movement has become highly complicit with corporate dominance and forms of oppression. This complicity has tended to silence opposition and has also normalized forms of being queer. Some scholars have argued that the radical potential of queer politics has been compromised or even destroyed by this movement. I will argue here that queer theory and activism still contain the potential for radical critique.

I do not mean to suggest that the Gay Rights movement has been an exclusively negative process, in fact, I would argue the opposite, that it has been in many respects positive. The GLBTI rights movement has led to greater visibility and rights for queer folks and is still responsible for helping queer people to achieve equal freedoms and rights all over the world. However, I do feel that the normative turn within GLBTI politics has become a serious limitation and compromise with various forms of power and dominance.

Most significantly normativity demands narrow forms of self definition that force identification, limiting fluidity and critical subjectivity. This is especially true in the age of corporate capitalist

dominance, in which most of the world's resources are tied up in the hands of few people. The Gay Rights movement in most of its current iterations ignores systemic forms of power and oppression while focusing exclusively on issues of sexuality. A good example is the Gay Rights focus on marriage in recent years. While I agree that marriage is an important right, it is also a drive toward normativity which fails to question systems of gender and power that support marriage as an institution, or the oppressive gender structures that lie within marriage. The Gay Rights movement also tends to identify certain forms of injustice (namely access to rights for sexual minorities) as more important than all other forms of oppression or injustice. I would argue that this is a narrow understanding of oppression. This is also a normative agenda because it fails to critically engage with rights discourse itself. If the oppressed take on the language of the oppressors soon the two become indistinguishable.

Gay Pride is concerned only with overcoming shame. Through overturning shame pride hopes to banish it altogether. Shame is seen only as a threat which must be avoided at all costs. Through this process shame's positive attributes are discarded along with its negative one's. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick argues in *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* that shame can be a positive site of identification and critical engagement where one

becomes acutely aware of self and other. I would argue that the Gay Pride movement shuts down critical thought and engagement through a process of disengagement that takes the form of seeking pride while avoiding shame.

The Gay Shame movement attempts to mobilize shame and abjection as tools for questioning contemporary iterations of Gay Pride. As Lee Edelman argues in *No Future*, the current Gay Rights movement with its focus on marriage, family and reproduction is premised on the object of futurity and the cult of the child (Edelman 80).

The Gay Shame movement attempts to derail these normative pretensions on the part of sexual minorities by re-invoking shame as a unifying category. Shame has a dual function, it is both that which makes one acutely aware of what they are, but it also brings distinct relief to relationships. In this sense shame can also function on a group level, or a person can intimately identify with another's shame.[4] This is an ideal category for a movement that attempts to bring an ethical dimension of universal human rights and struggle back into the queer struggle.

Shame is also closely connected to Julia Kristeva's theory of abjection. Kristeva understands abjection as a psychic process

through which the subject eliminates the parts of themselves that threaten their existence. Shame is part of the process of abjection.

Abjection occurs at the threat of disappearance, where self and other dissolve and subjectivity is forever lost. For Julia Kristeva this is always the threat of death, the corpse and contamination that drives us away in revulsion (Kristeva 2-3). Facing the threat of dissolution we carve out what cannot be part of us in order to maintain the illusion of coherence and integrity. Abjection is a core function of identity and subjectivity construction, but identities are always forged within and in relationships to nationalities, racial formations, sexualities and gender. Shame is the *modus apurandi* through which abjection is performed.

It is through shame that abjection proceeds, through a process of getting rid of what is unwanted in identity. For Kristeva this is most pronounced when one is confronted with death. "No, as in true theater, without makeup or masks, refuse and corpses show me what I permanently thrust aside in order to live" (Kristeva 3). This process of abjection occurs for Kristeva in a performative space, a "theater without makeup or masks." Abjection and shame are experienced always in the presence of others, or in the awareness of other's presence when one is alone. Abjection is therefore always performative.

Gay pride works to extricate Shame, to deny it by claiming its opposite affect, *pride*. This process not only acknowledges shame's great power, but also attempts to ignore shame, throwing out its important beneficial attributes, while accepting its significance. Shame and abjection both work as normalizing tactics, when they are not openly addressed, embraced and re-worked.

The radical queer and Gay Shame movements do not refuse shame, or abjection, they embrace them openly. In this sense they also assume that shame can be useful, that it can tell us something. Specifically shame can help us to feel empathy and to understand why it is important to work toward ethical humanism and multiple causes that are not just our own. It also allows us to question prescribed identity categories, such as nationality, sexuality, gender, race and class and to question how these categories are often co-articulated.

Ultimately an open acceptance and celebration of shame and abjection is also a gesture toward an acceptance of death. The denial of shame and abjection denies the need to consider death and the drive toward disappearance. Embracing these same categories embraces death as an important aspect of life and acknowledges our drive toward absolute communal dissolution.

Which allows for a critique of identity as an always over stated gesture against the drive toward disappearance that constitutes the antithesis to identity.

EuroPride:

In early July of 2006 EuroPride was held throughout London's West End. I attended not only the celebrations and parade on July first, but also many of the two weeks worth of events that EuroPride and London Gay Pride organized around the primary Saturday parade. I went to EuroPride London primarily because of my interest in EuroShame the anti-pride event organized by club duckie as an artistic critique of both EuroPride and the European Union. By attending the pride events I was less than sure exactly what I was looking for, but I quickly discovered the connections between national citizenship, sexual citizenship and the EU. They are connected through the narrative of pride and futurity, a modernist narrative that demands participation in the corporate nation state, even if that state is primarily an economic unity. Pride is the desire to do away with shame, to buy into abjection and to demand full citizenship. It is within the appeal to the post-national EU and the global as embodied by the city of London that the sexual minorities demand citizenship, because that citizenship is never fully possible within the hetero-normative and masculinist narratives of the nation-state itself. These were the processes I discovered through

my attendance at the EuroPride events in London and the riot that followed.

The centerpiece of the EuroPride events was the parade on the morning of July 1st. The "Prides Against Prejudice" rally held in Trafalgar Square the afternoon of the parade intended ostensibly to get people together and to bring in speakers to contest the continuing discrimination against sexual minorities throughout Europe, especially in Eastern Europe. This event focused primarily on the recent violence at the Gay Pride parade in Moscow. As well as the bans on pride events in several Eastern European countries and the homophobic violence that had occurred in Belgrade and elsewhere in previous years. The violent events at Riga's pride would come several weeks after EuroPride. While these issues are extremely important, they were buried behind the glamour, spectacle and marketing that comprised the bulk of the rally. The theme of GLBTI tolerance throughout Europe was a central idea of the entire Pride. The most politically visible manifestations of this theme were the conference organized before Pride and focusing on discrimination against sexual minorities in Eastern Europe and the rally itself. If there was any heady politically minded discourse during the rally, I must have missed it. As I discuss below, the parts I saw were a combination of sales pitch, watered down queer aesthetics and weary activist chants.

The rally in Trafalgar Square is a clear manifestation of EuroPride's attempt to espouse a gay post-national cosmopolitan European identity. One in which the consumption of Broadway and West End shows, such as the Blue Man Group and others that performed short previews at the rally, is part and parcel of a strange sort of gay activism.

The rally itself seemed to perform "rally," with worn-out rhetoric about outing oneself: "Turn to the person next to you and say I am Gay or Lesbian." This became a mantra for one of the speakers. The performance was complete with commercial breaks, advertising West End shows and with musical numbers. Radicalism had been completely extricated from the ranks of this rally and the attendees were fenced in and contained within a *liminal* space inside the square.[5]

The rally espoused a pan-European attitude, which called for a unity between GLBTI attendees in London and their brothers and sisters in Moscow and Warsaw. What more appropriate flag could there be for the European Union than a rainbow flag, representing diversity under unity. England's loss of the World Cup game could only register as a drop in the bucket of pan-European Pride that the rally demanded. A ripple of nationalism in the sea of the post-national. Just as the rally cried out for abjection of the national:

Shame is not in being gay, the rally argued, shame is in still being attached to a nationality. Sexual identity is the nationality of the future and you exhibit that identity through mass consumption.

As Kristeva reminds us, abjection is the repulsion from the flame that would melt our identities. Sexuality can happily co-exist along with cosmopolitan neo-liberal inter-nationalism. What is abjected through the formulation of Prides Against Prejudice? The rally assumed that coalitions should be formed across national borders by those sharing sexual minority status, but that these common forms of identity were the single reason for forming coalitions and not because of identities as oppressed groups.

It was incidental that England lost the 2006 World Cup the same day as EuroPride, but that loss unleashed a violent conflict. Football fans gathered in swathes around the perimeter of Trafalgar Square. These were exclusively men, mostly in their teens and twenties. The game had ended twenty minutes earlier and they were emptying out of tube stations and pubs from all directions. They looked like a Maoist mob, decked out in white and red uniforms to honor the English team. The police quickly formed a human barricade to hold back the mob that had begun to coalesce. First one man broke away from the group, ran around the police line, hopped the metal barricade and dashed into the square. This met with cheers from the

others. He turned to face them as he neared the fountain in the center and laughing, he made an overly dramatic homophobic gesture, large enough for them (and me) to see from several hundred feet away. He swung his wrist and twisted his body in a mock "limp-wristed" dramatization of gay effeminacy, a sudden caricature. I wandered away for a half-hour to see if similar events were happening elsewhere, but when I returned. As I rounded the gallery and the square came into view, I could see that it was entirely empty. Only scores of green bottles, flyers and debris littered the ground. It seemed uncanny that the crowd had dispersed so quickly, but I assumed the event had simply ended a while ago. At the base of the square there were a good number of vans and cars parked and as I came closer, I realized these were all ambulances and police cars blocking the road. There were several stretchers in the road and two paramedics were lifting a person on a stretcher onto one of the vans. This person's face was barely visible, I could not make out whether they were conscious, their body was completely strapped in and they were covered up to their head in a blanket. A man walking by had stopped and was talking to a woman with her two children. As I passed her, I asked,

"What happened?"

"The Footballers attacked the gays"

"How many were injured"

"Quite a few, from what I could see."

"That's Horrible"

To this statement she gave me a look of ambivalence, with no response, no clear agreement or disagreement. I noticed that she wore an "England" emblazoned red and white shirt and that the entire family wore the red and white uniforms of football fandom in England. I backed away and continued on. Suddenly I was suspicious of this woman's investment in the whole thing and aware that her entire explanation had seemed cold and calculating, instead of upset, or concerned.

I had gone to EuroPride looking for something in particular, the degradation of the subversive festival atmosphere of the Gay Rights movement of the 70's and 80's. I expected to find no bigotry, no anti-gay sentiments (at least not openly) and certainly no homophobic violence. What I had found instead were all three, tied up with a macho-nationalism, at an event that was supposed to celebrate the post national Europe. I had to rethink all of my assumptions going in.

In this riot the national became co-articulate with a masculine hetero-normative violence, in which sexual citizenship became oppositional to Englishness. The football fans used shame in order

to reclaim the space of the city. They attempted to both metaphorically and literally expel the sexual minorities from the square.

This is especially interesting in light of how these events were carefully stricken from the media. Football riots were heavily covered in the press; however, this riot was completely omitted. The gay press and local news sources lauded EuroPride as a resounding success. London's construction of itself as a cosmopolitan, tolerant and European city seemed to have no rhetorical room for nationalist violence against GLBTI folks.

Freud argues that all organisms are driven toward death, but that each organism is also driven to maintain its own life in order to die in its own way and at its own time.[6] The binary Freud sets up between the sex instincts and the death instincts lays the groundwork for a scientific theory of all human activity. The sex instincts are driven toward the new, toward the creation of life and ultimately change. They are also driven toward the continuation of the organism. On the other hand, the death instinct is driven toward the old, from the living to the dead, from animate to inanimate. The ego in this constellation of instincts is driven toward death. The ego longs to be subsumed by the inchoate matter of pre-life (Freud 40).

For on our hypothesis the ego-instincts arise from the coming to life of inanimate matter and seek to restore the inanimate state; whereas as regards the sexual instincts, though it is true that they reproduce primitive states of the organism, what they are clearly aiming at by each possible means is the coalescence of two germ cells which are differentiated in a particular way (38).

This formulation suggests that sexuality is exclusively concerned with cellular reproduction, while the ego is solely attempting to de-materialize the organism and the subject. The Ego desires the end of its own subjectivity in the annihilation that returns the self to object. Sexuality is also a drive through immortality through the sexual germ cells. Abjection threatens dissolution, the dissolving of the self in the other. Lee Edelman eloquently describes the drive toward annihilation when he states that "[...] the joissance of passing beyond the limit of the human and dissolving into the drive that insists beyond the subject's desire" (Edelman 81). One desires the release that comes from moving beyond subjectivity.

In order to maintain the integrity of the ego, the subject must constantly re-abject that which was previously abjected. "The abject has only one quality of the object - that of being opposed to I" (Kristeva 1). The procedure of re-abjecting creates an increasingly violent process through which the subject performs greater feats of

abjection. This is precisely why the subject abjects that which it sees as perverse. However, it is important to mention the artificial and arbitrary nature of abjection. Queer sexuality is not abjected from national culture because it is inherently wrong or perverse, but is selected as an arbitrary object to oppose to the national subject-citizen. Queer sexuality is selected as a characteristic that cannot exist within the nation, therefore it must be something alien, or extra-national. All that has been abjected by the subject must remain an object. Something that has been made abject cannot be understood as a subject.

For the football hooligans the process of acting out aggression and mockery toward the queer pride goes enacted a public process of abjection. Communal acts of abjection are nothing new, but each relies on a cultural logic of what is and is not shameful. The effeminacy associated with queer men, an effeminacy that is referenced through gestures such as hanging the wrist, or walking with the arm limp and outstretched at the elbow, is associated with the shame of being outside of normality. Historically the warning signs for queerness have been sought in these sorts of gestures and performances of identity. Strategies for removing homo-desire in men have often started with the removal of these gestures and outward "signs" of queerness. The removal of the gesture was thought to be directly linked to the psychic abjection of the queerness

altogether. The football hooligans were threatened both in their masculinist and nationalist identity positions. It became urgent that they define themselves in clear contrast and opposition to the GLBTI attendees at Pride or else face the threat of dissolving into that queer mob, becoming part of it and losing their subjectivity.

Abjection threatens dissolution, the dissolving of the self in the other. Kristeva understands this to be the biggest threat to the ego. Death stands in opposition both to meaning and to being. Existence is a form of coherence and abjection is a necessary psychic procedure that enables coherence. "...what is *abject*, on the contrary, the jettisoned object, is radically excluded and draws me toward the place where meaning collapses." (2) Abjection could be compared to the narrative impulse as it produces and concretizes meaning.

The riots at Trafalgar Square ultimately attempted to concretize the difference between the football hooligans and the queer pride attendees, by spatially and violently abjecting the pride goers from the square. Having missed the actual riot, I can only deduce the events after I left. It is clear that queer bodies became a threat to the hooligans, who imaged these bodies as a literal threat to the nation that needed to be abjected. The football hooligans understood their very existence as subjects to be threatened by the queerness of the

pride goers. They therefore felt the necessity to abject the queerness from England both literally and psychically.

EuroShame:

EuroShame, the night of grotesque instillations organized by Club Duckie, did something entirely opposite from EuroPride. From the minute you entered the large vacant warehouse the event took on a feeling that stood quite at odds with the atmosphere of earlier that day. For one thing, this was Vauxhall and not the trendy West End. The warehouse in which Euroshame took place gave a feel of decay and ruination. It did not shine with the glimmer of capitalism today, but had the flecked paint and dark entrance of capitalisms hazy past. This may have been a cannery or upholstery shop in its day, perhaps a shipyard. The gray doorway stood completely non-descript and I would have had no idea that anything at all was happening there if there had not been a line of people outside the door. Inside the space was vast and dark and it felt like a rave in the 90s. Upon entering one felt they must be doing something bad, or secretive, the building made you feel that way.

When you entered you were handed a passport full of pink euros, in increments of five. This was given to you, by a nice but flamboyantly dressed woman. Behind the window, a different woman in a blue and white European "customs officer" uniform took our passports,

stamped them and our hands. At this point you were ushered into the large central stairwell. You had the choice to go up, or to walk directly out into the main dance floor on that level.

All the way at the top of the stairs stood a small room that was crowded by this point. In it were a whole series of booths, many of which were difficult to even get close to, owing to the long lines. In a booth representing "Italy" people were asked to take communion. Two nuns with a lot of lipstick on were crouched in the small makeshift booth surrounded by white curtains and backed by two small cardboard "confessionals". One asked you to kneel down and close your eyes. Instead of a wafer the other placed a piece of mushy pineapple in your mouth and asked you to tell her what it was. "The body of Christ," I responded to which they smiled and said "very good," seductively. They handed you a cup of what appeared to be a fruit punch and asked you to drink. I didn't drink it. I grabbed the cup from them, brought it up to my lips and mimed drinking from it. This seemed to satisfy them. They then asked you to step into a cardboard booth and to write your sins on the wall.

The act of taking communion, while satirical, was also a therapeutic attempt to embrace and work through the normalizing shame religion imposes on bodies. As one of the most successful installations at EuroShame, the Communion booth managed to

sexualize the act of taking the Eucharist. To transgress this boundary in the act of mock communion, though a sinful act, felt less sinful than simply transgressing normalized boundaries of sexuality and gender.

Shame is also related to Freud's death instinct and Kristeva's concept of Abjection. It is through shame that abjection occurs, through a process of getting rid of what is unwanted in identity. For Kristeva this is most pronounced when one is confronted with death. "No, as in true theater, without makeup or masks, refuse and corpses show me what I permanently thrust aside in order to live" (3). This process of abjection occurs for Kristeva in a performative space, a "theater without makeup or masks." Abjection and shame are experienced always in the presence of others, or in the awareness of other's presence when one is alone. Abjection is therefore always performative. Communion functions as a performance of shame and supplication for non-normative bodies.

Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick argues that shame can be a site where acute awareness and learning can occur and where a strong sense of belonging or being ostracized can profoundly affect identity construction and future decisions. Shame works to tell us what to identify with and what to make abject or to deny. Religion performs the labor of shaming sexual deviance, in the service of normality.

Through shame non-normative sexual behaviors are supposed to become abject, leaving the individual dejected, merely a normative deject.

Recuperating shame has the potential to reawaken the sense of shame, but for the purpose of critical engagement and feelings of belonging. Instead of shirking off shame as merely the stuff of religious antagonism and normative discipline, shame can be used as a site of critical ethical engagement with the world. While the EuroShame baptism stall maintained a light and satirical air, it still held the potential for re-encountering religious shame. The process of being fed the pineapple and juice mirrored the act of taking communion. The experience even maintained an aura of shame, yet this shame was transfigured. Shame itself became the object and question of this performance.

Next I wandered downstairs to the second floor. An expansive table stood in the middle of the room, surrounded by people. They were talking into a microphone and this was all projected onto a screen against the back wall, in simultaneous broadcast as a man circled with a video-camera. The man in the center (Simon) asked me to have a seat. He said, "Hello, if you're just joining us this is Talkeoke and we are here at the center of the EU in Brussels. What should we talk about? Please take a hat." We were each asked to wear a hat to

represent a particular country; I ended up wearing a German cap to go with Lederhosen. Each hat was stereotypical of that country and cartoonish. For example, Viking horns for Denmark, a beret for France, etc.

Peter Thatchel the outspoken Gay Rights activist sat down next to me. He asked that we talk about how to publicly "Out" the pope. I would later learn that in the Pride parade earlier he had carried a banner claiming that the pope was gay and needed to be forced out of the closet. Pictures of him holding that sign now dot people's blogs all over the internet. Interestingly he had put specific and elaborate thought into this process. He knew where the pope was vacationing in southern France and I wondered if he wasn't actually planning to do it.

The idea of "Outing" the Pope foregrounds the reclamation of Shame and abjection. Within Catholic moral doctrine non-conforming sexuality and gender are considered sinful and shameful and must therefore be made abject. In the act of confession, as well as supplication and self loathing, the mind and body are made to inhabit the realm of constant shame, in which the subject is always sinful, always shameful and must constantly re-abject the parts of themselves that give them shame in order to be forgiven by the church, the priest, the pope and god himself. The

process of shaming and humiliation, as well as self humiliation and mutilation "cleanse" the soul and the body. However, shame is always present to remind the subject of the threats that lay in wait for shameless thoughts and behaviors.

I proceeded on to the "Czech Republic" installation. A booth was set up there that looked like a house; there was a window with bars. People inside, one at a time, were asked to remove their clothes and once naked they were photographed, while people crowded in at the windows to see. They kept all the pictures they took. In this case, they paid you 50 Euro. There was only the woman, directing, and a man with a large Polaroid, taking the pictures. He took a bunch of pictures, she asked you to turn around, and he took some more pictures. I looked at some of the other pictures as they had been piled up on the small table off to the side. A few people looked as though this were a mug shot, others posed in flamboyant, self-conscious, or fashion show poses.

The naked body, put on voyeuristic display, worked as a form of public shaming. The manner in which the director spoke was terse and dehumanizing. She asked you to "turn around, bend down, show more skin," etc. The cameraman tried to find unique angles and they filed all the pictures away when the participant was done, not showing them the photographs and with no clear indication as to

what they would be used for.

This undoubtedly attempted to shame the Czech Republic, as their inclusion in the EU was a means of selling themselves. Meanwhile it also drew attention to the sex industry. In this sense the voyeuristic display of nudity was actually invoking shame both for the participant and for the audience crowding in to see. Voyeurism as a passive act created through the neo-liberal exchanges of the sex industry was made active through the return of the gaze. The audience and the participant were on the same level and were forced to face one another, allowing shame to be experienced and questioned by both the viewer and the participant.

If we assume that abjection functions through shame, through getting rid of what one is ashamed of, then shame also represents a fear of death. Abjection is the process through which the subject sheds that which it sees as objective. The fear of returning to the state of object causes the consciousness to defend itself through abjecting anything that threatens the state of individuality.

Simultaneously the ego longs to return to the divinity of objecthood. Stasis brings the subject back to oneness. In shaming the shamer labors to dis-identify with the person or group they are shaming and to re-establish their individuality and subjectivity. The person who

feels shame also feels identification. They strongly identify with someone or something that causes them to feel ashamed. They can either choose to use shame as an opportunity to identify, or an opportunity for abjection.

Freud's structural approach to sex and death pits the two against each other as opposing terms, while simultaneously heteronormativising them. Similarly, Kristeva's construction of abjection, makes it into a process of pure repulsion. Bataille brings the element of desire and play into this equation. When sex and death are not discrete terms then shame and abjection must both be a form of repulsion and desire. A pushing away and a pulling toward. As Kristeva states, "It is thus not lack of cleanliness or health that causes abjection but what disturbs identity, rules, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules" (4). We do not only abject things that are undesirable, but we primarily abject that which threatens our construction of identity.

The Gay Shame movement works to recuperate that which has been abjected from identity. Shame has been seen as threatening to community and identity, while Gay Shame attempts to greet shame on its own terms and to accept the bad attributes with the good ones.

Bataille takes Freud's concept of the Death Drive and turns it around.

The drive toward death is in essence the drive toward stasis and this is a recurrent theme in Bataille's work, in "The Solar Anus" daily sleep becomes the metaphor for the drive toward death. Still, Bataille's formulation of death does not deprive it of an essential erotics, meaning that death is not in opposition to sex, but contained within it. In "The Language of the Flower," Bataille states that "love smells like death" (Bataille 13).

The flower becomes the perfect metaphor for the cyclical connection between life death and sex. If humans are drawn toward the flower in its already partially decayed form, then they must also be drawn toward the beauty of death, or at least its placidity. However, the flower is also the root of the sexuality of the plant. The stamen as the flower's phallus is not attractive to people, as Bataille argues, instead we ignore the stamen in favor of the petals, the seemingly less significant outward manifestation of the flower.

For Freud Eros is in opposition to the Death Drive. The Pleasure Principle progresses always toward movement, change and reproduction. In Bataille's case the relationship of the low and the high is that they are always drawn together with a magnetic force that attracts the sun to the night as its solar anus. This grand play of celestial phalli and orephi is marked by a desire of the most garish and visible manifestations of Eros to always be submerged in and

buried by the opacity of the Other. This drive toward disappearance can be seen as a physical and universal rule of the Death Drive. Sex and death are related terms in Bataille's formulation.

Gay Pride attempts to deny shame and therefore also denies death. The gay shame movement accepts shame and in some sense also death as necessary parts of existence and subjectivity. The experience of feeling shame forces us to reconcile ourselves with the very fact of existence which allows for the experience of shame. Shame as an emotional state forces an encounter with death that can only be reconciled by abjection or acceptance. Similarly, an acceptance of shame also acknowledges the death instinct as a powerful and interesting manifestation. The embrace of shame demands a critical engagement with subjectivity, that moves beyond individual or group identification, toward a higher critical subjective experience. Shame is also powerful as a mechanism of critique, because it flies in the face of inherited wisdom by aiming to accept, or even embrace shame. This makes an acceptance of shame part of a project of questioning perceived understandings of power and normalization.

EuroShame mobilized shame in multiple ways. In one instance the Gay community was being shamed for its normative embrace of corporate branding and an identity politics model. Yet, shame was

also being embraced for its possibility of empowerment, knowledge and for promoting an ethics that does not view overcoming shame as its primary object.

Buying into corporate models of GLBTI identity allows for greater visibility, but the price is in sacrificing the communal and individual complexity that leaves room for questioning systems of power and oppression. The neo-liberal European Union allows for divergent sexual identities that are excluded from masculine national identities. Still, these formations foreclose on identity, making tolerance a form of conservative assimilationism. With shame seen only as a force of negation, neo-liberalism works to turn pride into a type of branding where queer bodies are heavily disciplined, so that their lifestyles fit the corporate agenda and not the other way around. Shame is still given its powers of normalization, but aimed at the neo-liberal marketplace.

Kristeva's theory of abjection functioned in multiple ways within EuroPride and EuroShame. While queers are accustomed to shame and abjection as a form of hetero-normalization, EuroPride invoked pride as an anti-shame in the service of Homo-normalization. Meanwhile nationalist violence and bigotry by World Cup rioters brought back an all too familiar form of shame that worked to extricate and abject queerness from English national

identity. These two instances continued to replicate the normative nature of shame and abjection, reproducing the binary between shame and pride.

In a move reminiscent of Bataille EuroShame worked to tear apart Freud and Kristeva's binary, embracing shame and the abject as sources of knowledge rich with beneficial attributes. If the binary between shame and pride is also the binary between life and death, then EuroShame attempted to re-connect to the death instincts as a way of knowing what it means to be alive and to be human. Queer sexuality became neither a representation of pride, nor one of shame. Instead it became a means of questioning shame and its assumed role as exclusively a normalizing tool.

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[5] See Victor Turner's *The Ritual Process, Structure and Anti-Structure* (1969) for a full description of liminality.

[6] Freud lays out this argument concerning the death instincts most clearly in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*.

Jonah Winn-Lentsky

[1] This idea is developed in Roderick Ferguson's book *Aberrations in Black: toward a Queer of Color Critique*. Jose Esteban Munoz put forward the concept of *Disidentification*, in his book of that title.

[2] For more information on the Gay Shame movement consult, *That's Revolting: Queer Strategies for Resisting Assimilation*.

[3] This statement comes from the introduction to Richard Schechner's book, *Performance Theory*.

[4] As Eve Sedgwick has characterized shame in her book *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity*.