

A Companion to
Lesbian, Gay,
Bisexual, Transgender,
and Queer Studies

*Edited by George E. Haggerty and
Molly McGarry*

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The Light That Never Goes Out

*Butch Intimacies and Sub-Urban Sociabilities in "Lesser Los Angeles"*¹

Karen Tongson

Take me out tonight
Where there's music and there's people
And they're young and alive . . .

The Smiths, "There Is a Light That Never Goes Out"

This musical citation from 20 years ago, 1986 to be exact, might feel like yet another spasm of memory born of the bustling nostalgia industry epitomized by the endless loop of commemorative programming on cable networks like VH-1, MTV's more mature and sentimental sibling network. Thanks to these clever manufacturers of memory, everything that has made us feel good, guilty, tingly, or strange from the "Totally Awesome 80s" all the way up to just this past week thanks to the rapid-fire reflections on the popular culture digest, "Best Week Ever," is available "on demand" in the flickering, ephemeral archives of our televisions sets, made smarter in recent years by our Tivos, which let us hoard such moments until cluttered and bursting hard-drives insist we make room for more. What, if anything, do such plebian electro-comforts have to do with re-shaping our queer imaginaries, with dreaming new practices of queer studies into fruition? Do I really mean to suggest – in an eerie evocation of the creepy cinematic crescendo in Wim Wenders' *Until the End of the World*, where the film's protagonists glare obsessively at their own dreams on mini TV-sets in playback mode – that "the light that never goes out" might have something to do with a television set?

No, not entirely. And absolutely, yes.

This essay's efforts to trace the contours of sub-urban modes of queer sociability, affinity, and intimacy require that we take several detours through the terrain of sometimes solitary and isolated practices of popular consumption and memory-making that provide the form and content for what I refer to in its broadest sense as "queer sub-urban imaginaries." Before we can launch the movement, however, before (in the spirit of the "Light That Never Goes Out") we can even accept the car ride alongside an other, implicitly so significant that the thought of mutual annihilation *en*

route to a vibrant destination is utterly divine, “And if a double-decker bus / Crashes into us / To die by your side / Is such a heavenly way to die,” we must enumerate the desires that compel the remote, queer, sub-urban subject to seek out that somewhere else “where there’s music and there’s people and they’re young and alive.”

The first section of this essay provides a genealogy for what I have described elsewhere as a queer developmental topos that maps the queer subject’s compulsory relocation from “nowhere” (suburban and rural spaces), to “somewhere,” namely the queer city, which is not always but most often represented in queer historiography as the vertical and bustling metropolis (particularly New York and San Francisco).² I argue that by revisiting genealogies for queer urbanity – a stylistic as well as spatial disposition informed by paradigms of taste – we can begin to see how canonical gay and lesbian spatial histories help produce and perpetuate the classed, gendered, and racialized structures of metronormativity that collaborate, if sometimes unwittingly, with an ethos of urban gentrification.³

I ultimately turn to emergent narratives of queer of color sociability and self-creation beyond the vertical metropolis in lands of sprawl. I will, at various instances, mouth along with Morrissey and The Smiths’ “There Is a Light That Never Goes Out,” as well as a few other pop favorites, that serve as a conceptual soundtrack for the relocations, displacements, and reclamations of space that foment intimacies among remote and sequestered racialized queer subjects – some quarantined collectively.⁴ This critical experiment with a kind of intellectual karaoke, as it were, methodologically mimics and reproduces the trivial exchanges, the social fabrications, and the popular affinities that cohere in the spatially “disadvantaged” queer subject’s profound encounters with media forms like music and television. These are encounters that are perhaps out of time as well as out of place, encounters both vexed and resplendent. If the racialized queer sub-urban subject is presumed to be “out of touch, out of time” (to summon another lyrical echo from the mid-1980s, this time courtesy of the venerable “blue-eyed soul” duo, Hall and Oates), we must nevertheless resist reading such spatially circumstantial anachronism as the pitiable consequence of not being where it’s at. Neither can these anachronisms be easily assimilated into structures of postmodern irony or clever self-referentiality. In other words, not every popular reverberation or citation is accompanied by a wink and a nudge. In some cases the nod to the popular may be distinctly *unpopular* if it comes with tears of guiltless sincerity and (or) a ticklish naïveté.

Insofar as properly inhabiting urban space as a queer subject demands impeccable timing, and an uncanny ability not only to be *of* the moment, but to anticipate the next one, a theory of sub-urban timing, or a lack thereof, would require another take on time and its relationship to style and execution. This essay’s perspectives on a presumed “belatedness” in sub-urban contexts is inspired by Elizabeth Freeman’s work on “temporal drag” and other freighted forms of queer temporality such as her “erotohistoriography.”⁵ Freeman seizes moments of temporal incongruity – written upon and yet sometimes also beyond bodies – to explore “how queer relations exceed the present,” as we grasp toward “pleasurable interruptions and momentary fulfillments from elsewhere, other times.”⁶ Sometimes we come to appreciate the wrong past – even someone else’s past – at the wrong time in the wrong place. If the correspondence between now and then, here and elsewhere, fails to achieve an aesthetic

symmetry and a historical coherence linked to the progress of time and its subtexts of modernity and progressiveness, the pleasure we derive from elsewhere and from “other times,” can fail to signify as enlightened, effective, and radically queer.

Racialized bodies, accented idioms, and the ephemeral material of personal archives sometimes fail to ease seamlessly into what is in-style, “modern,” and of the moment. In his remarkable book *Global Divas: Filipino Gay Men in the Diaspora*, Martin F. Manalansan IV offers a telling anecdote about the uneven material distribution of stylistic effects, affects and temporalities between white gay men and diasporic Filipino gay men in New York. One Pinoy *bakla* remarks that when white muscle fags sport the tattered “grunge look” it’s “trendy,” but “When we wear it we just look poor and dirty.”⁷ The sartorial failure to capture a trend is, to invoke Freeman’s nuanced use of the term, a real “drag” insofar as it makes legible a temporal belatedness reputed to inhere in classed, racialized, and gendered bodies. For Freeman, “drag” resonates as “retrogression, delay and the pull of the past upon the present,” which she locates in the “gravitational pull” the term “lesbian” appears to “exert upon” the more in-touch and innovative “queer.”⁸ This essay extends Freeman’s theorization of temporal drag to reconsider the subjective stances and identities literally left behind, like so much detritus, in the wake of “queer’s” institutionalization. Race, class, and specific incarnations of female masculinity like butchness – especially racialized forms of butchness – continue to “burden” queer with their stubborn attachments to certain styles, forms, histories, and narratives from elsewhere, from beyond the purview of the queer metropolis and its purported innovations.

The primary texts that both inspire and exceed the limits of this essay come from the performance projects of the *Butchlalis de Panochtitlan* (BdP), a southern California-based Latino/a dyke performance quartet featuring Mari “Big Papi” García, Raquel “Raquelito” Gutiérrez, Claudia “C-Rod” Rodríguez, and Nadine “Nadino” Romero.

The BdP explore butch intimacies that transpire amidst the contested landscapes of “lesser Los Angeles” and its aggregate of scattered sub-urban municipalities. In the spatial designation “sub-urban” I’ve used thus far throughout this essay, the hyphen that separates the “sub” and the “urban” admittedly bears a tremendous rhetorical as

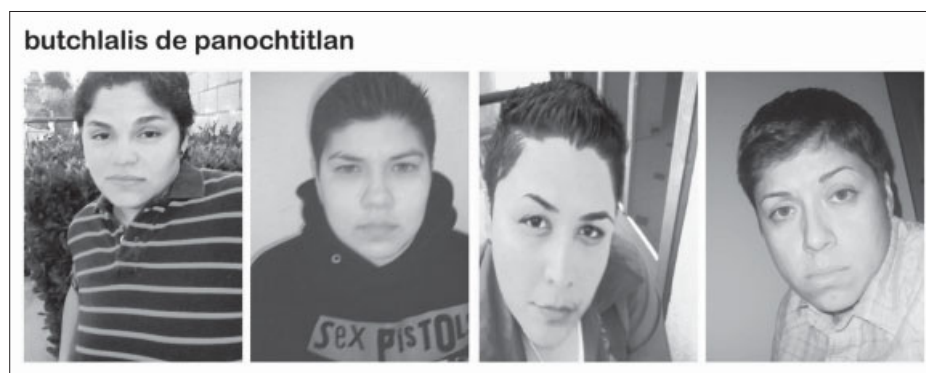


Figure 19.1 “Butchlalis de Panochtitlan” (left to right, Rodríguez, Romero, García, Gutiérrez). Image courtesy of the artists.

well as historical burden. Any discussion of suburban space in the American West, particularly California, can no longer be conceptualized in terms of a more familiar historical relationship between Northeastern suburbs and cities, or between primarily white, middle-class bedroom communities, and the architecturally concentrated urban economies that inspired “white flight.”⁹ Los Angeles, once regarded as an urban anomaly for its sprawling and sometimes acquisitive relationship to neighboring municipalities, is now the paradigm for what Edward Soja has named the “post-metropolis,” as well as its variants.¹⁰ Southern California’s built environments, literally sub-urban and horizontal in character, as well as its post-agricultural military, technology, and service-based economies, have come to inspire the designation “exurb” or “edge city” for many of the sprawling cities throughout the West and Southwest. Furthermore, the intra-national migrations of post-agricultural, post-industrial workers from the East and Midwest to the West and Southwest, combined with the immigration of both “skilled” and “migrant” labor populations from the Pacific Rim, Mexico and Central and South America (among other socioeconomic and historical factors) have led to a pronounced shift in the ethnoracial make-up of southern California’s suburban communities. I lack the space in this essay to elaborate on all of the material conditions that engendered southern California’s racialized and re-demographized sub-urban municipalities. Instead, I focus on the remarkable resilience of traditional “suburban” versus “urban” spatial paradigms in queer studies as part of my own preliminary attempt to re-imagine spaces and temporalities in queer representations.

The ButchLalis de Panochtitlan, for example, characterize their own work as a re-mapping of queer of color social space in southern California. On their website, www.butchlalis.com, the BdP maps the thematic investments of their work onto the specific neighborhoods, “second cities,” and suburbs clustered around Los Angeles, or as Soja describes the sprawling metropolis, the “conurbated city.”¹¹ In their own words, they

explore the liminal space of queer boi-dom and the identities and the neighborhoods we claim and are claimed by. Sketches include gestures toward Working Class Butch Latina/o Identities (City Terrace); Interracial Desire (Montebello); Family Guilt-Latino Queerness (East Los Angeles); Bar Culture/Softball Culture (El Sereno); Gentrification (Silver Lake); Class/Classism (all of LA Metro).¹²

In their full-length programming, such as the Highways Performance Space productions, “Teenage Papi: The 2nd Coming of Adolescence” (May 6–7, 2005) and “Teenage Papi: The Remix” (January 26–9, 2006), the BdP stages a series of responses, some comedic, others decidedly dramatic, to the dislocations that come as a consequence of the bloated southern California real-estate market, and exacerbated by the gentrification of queer of color social spaces by white creative classers.¹³ The gentrification of social spaces and lived environments in southern California has re-demographized not only the city, but also its suburbs and exurbs near and far, from Bell Gardens to Riverside.¹⁴

The rich soundscapes and multimedia enhancements (slides, and both found and original film footage) that accompany BdP’s sparsely adorned stage-sets draw from an expansive repertoire of visual citations and popular and subcultural music. At times their song selections are culturally embedded in what Juana María Rodríguez calls “Queer Latinidad.”¹⁵ At other moments their soundtrack is culled from sources seemingly incongruous, or distinctly Anglo-American, but evocative of circuits of

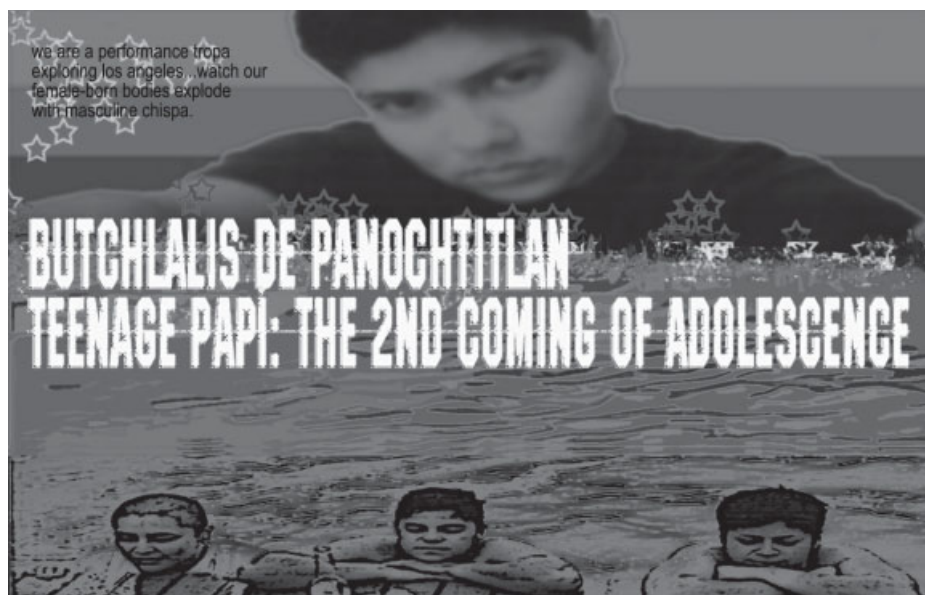


Figure 19.2 Promotional flyer for BdP’s “Teenage Papi: The 2nd Coming of Adolescence” at Highways Performance Space, Santa Monica, CA. Image courtesy of the artists.

affect formed locally after a series of migrations not only between nations but also between freeway exits in the sprawling southern California landscape. For example, the piece “DRRRTY White Girls” features, in BdP head honcho Raquel Gutiérrez’s own words, “Two East LA butches who happen to be aging KROQ flashback party *jotas* still bumpin’ the Smiths [and] wearing Morrissey t-shirts.”¹⁶ The memorialized encounter between east LA butches, and white, liberal-arts educated “Riot Grrls” in Pomona, California – one of BdP’s characters Lolo remarks, “She went to one of those fancy private colleges . . . Vicky Lawrence College or some other lady’s name” – concludes with an homage to Morrissey, or “the Moz” as a musical echo of the encounter between white subcultures, and the communities rendered sub (or beneath) bourgeois cultures both queer and heteronormative.

The *OC Weekly* columnist, Gustavo Arellano likens Morrissey’s tremulous tenor and occasional falsetto to the voices heard in Mexican *ranchera* music, which critiques bourgeois culture from a populist perspective through lyrics soaked in metaphor and passionate imagery.¹⁷ But this explanation – and explanations of this character – presuppose that the racialized youth are transformed into electrified, quivering masses upon first hearing The Smiths and Morrissey, because they already have *ranchera* running through their veins or deeply imprinted in their cultural memory. It presupposes a racially coherent, authentic, and self-aware subject that always has “home” or a diasporic point of cultural origin as an affective coordinate, while presuming that one national context, Mexico, offers the foundation for a broader Latino/a inter-subjective affinity with Saint Morrissey from Manchester, England. For Gutiérrez (half-Salvadoran, half-Mexican and self-identified as “matrilineally Salvi cultured,

not Chicano/a”¹⁸), Morrissey functions as a reference point because he invokes with his own brooding suburban outsiderhood a version of southern California spiritually significant to a spectrum of queer Latinas and Latinos – from “City Terrace to Whittier, Pico Rivera to Lynwood, Long Beach to Maywood and thru the 5/10/101/60 FWY interchanges.”¹⁹ As the BdP’s work demonstrates, such moments of self- and mutual-discovery – through a pop song, through a figure or voice so seemingly remote both spatially and temporally from who “we” are – might make us so okay with staying, so captivated by the company we’ve cobbled together in our nowhere spaces, that we yearn for the “pleasure and privilege” of a “10-ton truck” smashing into us to make it last forever.

Gay Urbanity Makes History

How did “the city” – in particular, vertical cities like New York and San Francisco – come to be viewed as the natural habitat for queers, particularly in the United States? What discursive events and institutionalized histories spawned the movements to, within and beyond the city’s parameters in the queer imaginary? Admittedly, this question in all of its intellectual and historical breadth cannot be answered with any comprehensiveness in the limited space of this essay. Instead I’ve chosen to isolate key moments in the institutional emergence of queer studies, particularly in queer historiography. While we certainly cannot ignore the role European sexology played in constructing “the homosexual” as a cosmopolitan, urban type – sexologists in Britain and on the continent, such as Havelock Ellis, Richard von Krafft-Ebing, Karl Ulrichs, Charles Féré, Max Nordau, and Georg Simmel among others, situated their research almost exclusively in urban capitals from London to Paris to Vienna²⁰ – US histories of space and sexuality in the twentieth century provide collective and community models for gay identity that also establish a special character to queer urban life.

The *locus classicus* of gay urban studies is George Chauncey’s expansive and formidable tome, *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World 1890–1940*.²¹ Published in 1994, Chauncey’s social and cultural topography of New York City surfaced alongside two watershed community studies of lesbian and gay cultures also situated in the state of New York: Elizabeth Lapovsky Kennedy and Madeleine D. Davis’ history of lesbian life in Buffalo, *Boots of Leather, Slippers of Gold: The History of a Lesbian Community*²² and Esther Newton’s *Cherry Grove, Fire Island: Sixty Years in America’s First Gay and Lesbian Town*.²³ Marc Stein, himself a noted historian of local gay cultures in Philadelphia, makes a compelling case for how the nearly simultaneous emergence of these local histories, timed serendipitously if not intentionally with the twenty-fifth anniversary of the 1969 Stonewall riots, indexes decidedly regional responses to an *ur*-narrative of gay identity and activism in the nation-state offered a decade earlier in John D’Emilio’s 1983 book, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities: The Making of a Homosexual Minority in the United States, 1940–1970*.²⁴ Stein writes,

D’Emilio’s book, more than any other, established the framework in which most US LGBT historians have operated for more than two decades . . . Since 1983 US LGBT

historical scholarship . . . has developed in multiple directions, but much of it has taken the form of local studies that respond to D'Emilio's national narrative.²⁵

Stein claims that such focused attention to regionalism and local phenomena from the 1990s on becomes a method for “resisting the hegemony of the nation-state” in the production of gay “minority” histories.²⁶ The critique of the nation-state enacted through regional emendations of the national narrative of gay and lesbian movements (both spatial and political) remains a pivotal dimension of work produced during the nascent days of LGBT studies' institutionalization from the mid-1990s on. Yet there is also a reproducibility to D'Emilio's community-building, national paradigm, which I would argue helped establish “the city” as the exemplary site for queer politics and culture in the United States, and gay men as the exemplary subjects of the nation's spatio-sexual culture.

The topography of organized activism in D'Emilio's *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities* is routed between the United States' emblematic gay cities, San Francisco and New York. In D'Emilio's history, both the gay “movement and the subculture” congealed in San Francisco in the mid-1960s in concert with other leftist countercultural protest movements agitating for civil rights and civil liberties.²⁷ San Francisco's example as a site where political movements cohered and became inextricable from the subcultural life of the city ultimately “set the stage” in Marc Stein's words, for the Stonewall riots in New York City at the close of the decade, while anticipating “transformative mass movements of the 1970s throughout the nation.”²⁸ In the nation-state narrative of gay identity formation and political organization, then, San Francisco and New York come to function as mutual centers where politics and styles of living converge and achieve saliency as mutually constitutive aspects of twentieth-century gay movements, both political and cultural.

As the timeline of US gay and lesbian history expanded to include pre-World War II manifestations of community, more site-specific histories of gay “world making” and culture-building arose as supplements to D'Emilio's history of an emergent gay identity politics. Perhaps more than any other work, Chauncey's *Gay New York* firmly established New York City as the gay cultural capital of the United States.²⁹ The rhetoric of Chauncey's book conflates a “gay world” writ large, and the gay communities and scenes cultivated in New York City from the turn of the century to the beginning of World War II. Throughout his introduction the phrase “gay world” is substituted for New York, implicitly establishing the patterns of association and “cultural style” historically situated in New York City as a template for a national gay ethos and culture. One among many examples of this conceptual slippage between the “gay world” and gay New York occurs when Chauncey describes the parameters of his study:

This book maps two distinct but interrelated aspects of what I call the sexual topography of the gay world in the half-century before the Second World War [and] the spatial and social organization of that world in a culture that often sought to suppress it . . . The first project of the book, then, is to reconstruct the topography of gay meeting places, from streets to saloons to bathhouses to elegant restaurants, and to explore the significance of that topography for the social organization of the gay world and homosexual relations generally.³⁰

The “sexual topography” Chauncey meticulously reconstructs in his history, from the Bowery, to Central Park, to Greenwich Village, to Harlem and beyond is what comprises – to add emphasis to his words – “*the gay world.*” As expansive and brilliantly detailed as his account of the bustling and thriving communities of New York is, his rhetoric of “world making” makes it easy to see how subsequent scholars, writers, and readers have transposed the forms and styles of living he documents in *Gay New York* into a template for archiving the enriching, active, and, by extension, activist modes of queer life. The specific venues and spatial contexts in which the sexual and social transactions of gay men transpire in Chauncey’s narrative – the streets, saloons, bathhouses and “elegant restaurants” of Manhattan – take on an exemplary status, and register a disproportionate impact upon queer spatial imaginaries, upon “the social organization of the gay world and homosexual relations *generally.*”

To be fair, Chauncey insists that New York and its sexual culture cannot be viewed as a “typical” model: “I do not claim that New York was *typical*, because the city’s immense size and complexity set it apart from all other urban areas.”³¹ Yet Chauncey’s study romantically clings to the city’s exceptionalism, its “complexity,” and its “disproportionate influence on national culture.”³² Thus, while no other place could possibly *be* New York City, New York City nevertheless becomes the spatial coordinate and cultural *standard* to which all queer subjects implicitly orient themselves. Despite his cautious equivocation about New York’s representativeness, Chauncey ultimately concludes his introductory chapter by speculating that the city functions as an urban “prototype” for the rest of the nation’s gay communities: “Nonetheless, New York may well have been *prototypical*, for the urban conditions and cultural changes that allowed a gay world to take shape there, as well as the strategies used to construct that world, were almost surely duplicated elsewhere.”³³

By focusing on Chauncey’s *Gay New York*, I do not mean to belittle his crucial contribution to the study of gay and lesbian cultures in the United States. Nor do I seek to underestimate New York City’s cultural value in both national and international histories of queer life. It is precisely because of New York’s well-documented status as the consummate coordinate of queer spatial discourse that we should pay close attention to how queer scholarship orients itself to the city’s *styles* of living. It is not simply the city itself that functions as a conceptual ideal in queer rhetorics but the way the place is experienced, inhabited, and lived that become touchstones for a certain *quality* of queer life. The “cultural style” Chauncey refers to as the primary mode for transacting and tracing gay relations in the city – codes of dress, languages of innuendo, a sophisticated system of looks and stares, a stylistic circumspection mixed with the spectacular – provides, like the city itself, a prototype for the exemplary queer subject, the urbane gay subject, who helps create a metropolitan *milieu*.³⁴

Love among the Ruins: Contact, Creativity, and Klub Fantasy

Vibrant street-life, incidental contact, and the expression of sexual liberty remain the cornerstones of the queer spatial imaginary, even as the corporate redevelop-

ment of emblematic cities like New York threatens to eradicate and reformulate the city's sexual cultures. Samuel Delany's *Times Square Red, Times Square Blue* (1999), for example, mourns the lost interclass and interracial contact that thrived in Times Square's porn theaters and the city streets surrounding them.³⁵ While the first section of the book memorializes the porn theaters that facilitated transient intimacies, the second half offers an impassioned argument on behalf of revivifying urban contact, a concept he borrows from the urban historian Jane Jacobs' work on *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*.³⁶ Contact for both Jacobs and Delany produces an ethics of mutual regard, an incidental empathy and "a web of social pleasantries"³⁷ across race and class boundaries. Contact is a mode of relating and interaction that functions best – for Jacobs and Delany it transpires *exclusively* – amidst the walking cultures, small business sectors, and densely populated neighborhoods of "great American cities" like New York. What Delany doesn't quite register in his eloquent lament for an urban queer sexual subculture under erasure at the hands of bureaucratic and corporate interests, is the extent to which his and others' idealized forms of urban sociability and mobility are complicit with homonormative and neoliberal discourses promoting urban gentrification.³⁸

The sheer density of urban street life and "human capital" great cities have to offer – and here we can think of the incidental, creative exchanges represented as contact in Delany's and Jacobs' work – is precisely what public policy planners like Richard Florida have promoted as an urban "amenity" to the prosperous new "creative class" of highly educated tech-workers and skilled "knowledge-industry" workers.³⁹ Chief among the creative class – or to use Florida's sci-fi phrasing, "the super-creative core" – are "scientists and engineers, university professors, poets and novelists, artists, entertainers, actors, designers and architects, as well as the thought leadership of modern society."⁴⁰ In many respects, the same improvisational modes of life, the same temporal and spatial innovations recorded and championed in historical accounts of gay urbanity have been incorporated into new models of urban planning aimed to entice members of this creative class to revive presumably ailing neighborhoods (primarily working-class and racialized neighborhoods) in American cities. It comes as no surprise that one of the tell-tale indices Florida and his team of researchers use to measure a city's desirability is something called the "Gay Index":

Gays, as we like to say, can be thought of as *canaries* of the creative economy, and serve as a strong signal of a diverse, progressive environment. Indeed, gays are frequently cited as harbingers of redevelopment and gentrification in distressed urban neighborhoods. The presence of gays in a metropolitan area also provides a barometer for a broad spectrum of amenities attractive to adults, especially those without children.⁴¹

At once silly and ominous, Florida's intrepid gay canaries nevertheless speak volumes about how queer forms of inhabiting and transforming space function as "subcultural capital" in urban economies of spatial "rehabilitation."⁴²

The urban queer temporalities I alluded to in the first part of this essay – an anticipatory temporality that innovatively extracts itself from "normative" reproductive and labor logics⁴³ – actually overlaps with what Florida and others have begun to articulate as an idiosyncratic but nevertheless newly normative temporality for a post-industrial economy. The post-industrial creative laborer has, as Florida implies,

much in common with pioneering gay urbanites insofar as the traditional family unit (parents with children) no longer structures her leisure time. Furthermore, the creative laborer eschews the requisite spaces and built environments of “family life” and family entertainment (presumably the suburbs and the single-family home), seeking instead a range of built environments and stimulating activities during precious downtime since the creative labor clock exceeds the industrial 40-hour work week. After conducting focus groups comprised of creative workers, Florida comes to the conclusion that the urban spaces desirable to workers on the creative clock offer easy access to amenities via foot traffic and public transportation: “Many of the young creative workers did not have cars and wanted to locate in regions where they did not need one . . . [C]reative workers working long hours need to be able to access amenities almost instantly on demand.”⁴⁴

Contact with a “diverse” group of others (to use Florida’s formulation) further enriches the lived environments for creative classers and encourages their occupation of spaces otherwise deemed unsafe, or unevenly developed. Diversity itself – a diversity one encounters through walking culture – becomes an “urban amenity,” a crucial component of what provides the grain for, and an experiential quality to, the creative class urban lifestyle: “focus group respondents noted the importance of diversity and the attractiveness of regions that reflect, and are supportive of, diversity.”⁴⁵ The racialized and working-class communities inhabiting the “distressed neighborhoods” rehabilitated by upwardly mobile queers (Richard Florida’s gay “canaries”) and the heterosexual creative classers hot on their heels, serve literally as local color, if they are not immediately displaced and relocated. Residential dwellings are not the only spaces susceptible to this ethos of renovation. Social gathering places like bars and clubs also become “flipped” or turned over (to use the parlance of gentrification), in order to accommodate the economically advantaged communities who choose to re-territorialize so-called distressed urban neighborhoods.

To read Richard Florida’s depiction of diversity and “tolerance” as urban amenities – as expressions of an ethically enhanced taste – alongside Samuel Delany’s and Jane Jacobs’ models of contact is not to suggest that the latter are conscious collaborationists with urban gentrification. Rather, pursuing such connections underscores the intersections that make strange bedfellows of both neoliberal and progressive ideologies, as well as both normative and queer spatial formations.⁴⁶ In the spirit of inquiry Roderick Ferguson has named “Queer of Color Critique,”⁴⁷ this genealogy of the imbrications among queer and normative accounts of space and styles of living reveals how the sometimes conflicting imperatives of race, class, gender, and sexuality frustrate the lifestyle imperatives produced by canonical accounts of queer urbanity and creativity. The cultural value assigned to urban modes of queer life – to its mobility, style, innovation, improvisation, liveliness, and “contact” – has appreciated urban property values while depreciating modes of racialized queer sociability that transpire in other spaces, and that rely on other affiliative practices for “contact.”

Driving in your car
Oh please don’t drop me home
Because it’s not my home
It’s their home and I’m welcome no more . . .⁴⁸

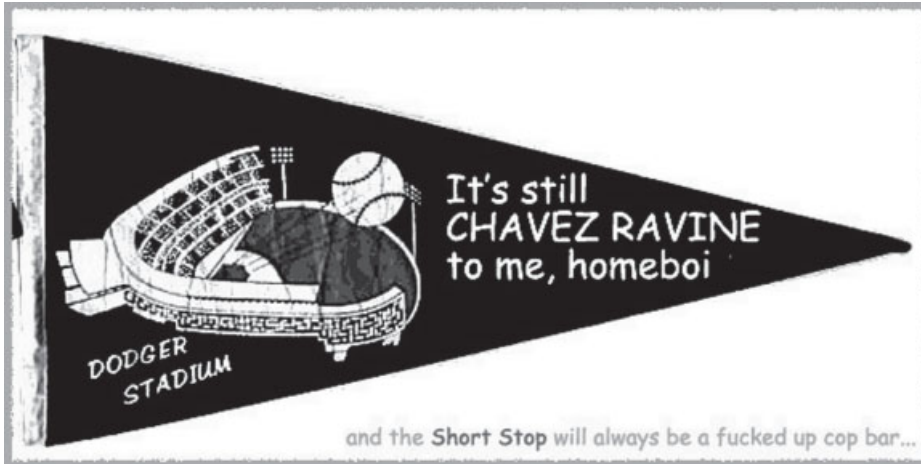


Figure 19.3 “Dodger’s Pennant.” Image courtesy of the artists.

The queer performance group, Butchlalis de Panochtitlan (BdP), responds very specifically to the “diversity fetishes” that inform the queer and creative class gentrification of social spaces in Los Angeles, a city not considered prototypically “queer” because of its sprawling topography, purportedly absent “street life,” and limited walking cultures. The BdP also commemorate the aftershocks of gentrification in the city’s sub-urban peripheries both near and far. For example, the sketch “Softball Diamond Girl (*Me Haces Sentirrr . . .*)” is set in the predominantly Latino, working-class suburb of El Sereno, a community overshadowed by the wealthier white suburb of South Pasadena in the storied controversy over the construction of the I-710 Long Beach Freeway in the 1990s.⁴⁹ Nevertheless, the BdP offers an optimistic vision of sociability, intimacy, and contact stubbornly immune to urbane gay social and spatial economies. The sketch is framed visually with a slide that invokes the infamous Chavez Ravine scandal: Thousands of Mexican Americans, many of whom inhabited the rural valley at the cusp of downtown Los Angeles for generations, were displaced in the late 1940s and early 1950s, ostensibly to provide space for public housing projects. When all was said and done, the site became LA Mayor Norris Poulson’s (1954–61) costly precious housewarming gift to the city’s newest New York transplants, the Dodgers baseball organization.⁵⁰

In addition to commemorating a community literally bulldozed to make way for what Richard Florida would call a “traditional” urban amenity – a sports stadium⁵¹ – the BdP draws a profound historical correlation between the spatial and cultural violence of civic-sanctioned, large-scale relocation projects, and the creative class gentrification of leisure sites in communities of color. The textual aside that appears at the bottom of the slide – “and the Short Stop will always be a fucked up cop bar” – calls out one of Echo Park’s bars of the moment, the Short Stop on Sunset Boulevard. Formerly an off-duty watering hole for the LAPD’s notorious Rampart Division, the Short Stop has since been tastefully renovated with mid-century low-brow accoutrements (like classic Dodgers paraphernalia) for its clientele of scruffily-stylized white

creative classers. As the slide implies, the creative class clientele who self-consciously chug Pabst Blue Ribbon pints for a buck on Dodgers game-nights with never a thought about the communities they've priced out of Echo Park, are no better than the cops who abuse their state-sanctioned power to intimidate the neighborhood's inhabitants of color.

While these sordid and corrupt histories of urban antagonism provide a conceptual frame for the BdP's "Softball Diamond Girl (*Me Haces Sentirrr . . .*)," the sketch itself, set in the Latino working-class enclave of El Sereno, offers a vision of refuge in *sub*-urban venues of sociability. The sketch translates the Chavez Ravine slide's invocation of the fraternal and patrilineal tropes associated with baseball, "the American pastime," into a scene of intergenerational Latino/a butch intimacy that transpires through the venerable lesbian pastime of inter-league softball. In the dialogue between Coach (Raquel Gutiérrez), a stoic, yet heart-scarred older butch, and Jessy (Claudia Rodríguez), a young, aspiring *papi* "player" who is also reeling from a recent heartbreak, the BdP re-evaluate what "contact" might mean for sequestered and forgotten subjects, and for potentially immobile subjects (Coach has a "trick knee" and hobbles around, if rather pimp-tastically, with a cane):

Jessy: Damn Coach, I didn't know you played.

Coach: Been 10 years.

Jessy: So you think you'll ever get back in the game?

Coach: I got a trick knee, but I'm healed now. And you will too.⁵²

Softball in this sketch – a signifier for working-class, old-school dyke recreations with a presumed lack of complexity and stylistic flourish in queer imaginaries – becomes a rich metaphor for love in its variegated forms, a love and regard that persists despite the encroachment of wholesale changes to the spatial and emotional landscape of El Sereno. It is literally about a love among "players," a different kind of affiliative intimacy among dykes who have a love for "the game" in all of its connotations. The conversations that transpire in sports metaphors, and in both popular and cultural shorthand – Jessy, who Coach calls "koo koo for cha cha puffs," only needs to invoke the "Los Bukis songs flooding my head" for Coach to understand that the young player's heart and mind are vulnerable to doing some "crazy *vato* shit"⁵³ – gestures to the multiple circuits of affect foreshadowed by the sketch's subtitle, "*Me Haces Sentirrr*."

The line which translates as "you make me feel," is pulled from the Spanish language disco break in the 1986 freestyle radio hit, "Diamond Girl," performed by Nice 'N' Wild. In the most definitive scholarly account of the freestyle genre to date, Alexandra Vazquez provides an affective cultural topography for this dance-pop form derided for its overproduction and its association with racialized working-class women and queers in "urban and suburban transnational hubs in the US."⁵⁴ Vazquez herself vividly locates freestyle's sonic power "in public spaces outside of the home: on the dance floors of middle schools, at the mall, in youth centers, in headphones, in their parents' cars probably hijacked for the evening."⁵⁵ The song "Diamond Girl," one of the few freestyle mega-hits featuring male vocals, has now become something of a retro staple at Latin clubs and on southern California radio, and provides the soundtrack for the opening moments of the BdP's sketch. "Diamond Girls," with its

tinny beat and synthetic Casio-toned jams, sets the tone for *how* these butches make each other feel through their popular archives of desire, and through their shared regrets about “playing the field,” despite landing the femmes of their dreams. The English lyric that transitions into the Spanish disco break frames the question of who actually makes “me” feel.⁵⁶ A robust, male tenor with an urgent R & B vibrato sings: “I’ll always be your diamond girl. You’re my diamond girl.” The grammatical ambiguity of “I’ll always be your diamond girl,” presumably lacking the comma (e.g. “I’ll always be your diamond, girl”) that would cast the male lover as the “diamond” and not the “diamond *girl*” – such grammatical subtlety is understandably elusive in recordings of dance hits – provides the opportunity to imagine a different set of “lovers” in this scene. There is a transitivity to who is whose “diamond girl” in the modulations of butch feeling rendered in the sketch. In some sense, Coach and Jessy *are* each other’s “diamond girls,” even as their bond is formed in part by a dialogue about the femmes who’ve broken their hearts, like “*la catorce* [#14] in all her chachaliciousness.”⁵⁷ Indeed, Jessy even asks Coach at the end of the sketch, “what are you, some kind of *mom* butch or something?,” to which Coach cockily responds, “Nah kid. I’m all *puro papi!*” as she takes her baseball cap off and holds it over her heart.⁵⁸

Through their conversation soaked in sports metaphor and peppered with idiomatic improvisations on pop phrases in Spanish and English, this intergenerational pair of butches allows each other to feel, to express their sentiments in ways that might otherwise be subsumed in the macho game playing of butch–femme seduction. The BdP also seems to disavow any butch policing around the pronouns used to refer to these characters that are, after all, featured in a sketch titled “Softball Diamond *Girls*.” It’s as if the layered spatialized and racialized memory invoked by their citation of the freestyle song title becomes a more significant expression of the characters’ butch bond than an orthodox articulation of female masculinity through the studious use of English pronouns.

Yet their nonchalance about masculine pronouns paired with their unabashed attachment to the feminized, “disposable pop” genre of freestyle also comes with their insistence on acknowledging the *racialized* masculinities – the *machismo* survival mechanisms – that inform such butch bonds. In their powerful opening piece, “Cockfight,” the BdP actually eschews the butch competitiveness of white masculinities, and asks us instead to consider the *machismo* intimacies that create communities of support and foment different models of contact, be it through structures like “the gang” or the extended family: “*En Lak Ech Tu Eres Mi Otro Yo*” (“Don’t Laugh Fool. You Are My Other Me”), insists the BdP’s own “Big Papi,” Mari García.⁵⁹ Nadine “Nadino” Romero subsequently utters these lines as she gestures to her fellow Butch-lalis, as well as to members of the crowd: “I look for myself in her and him. She is my father and so is he. He is my son and so is she. She is my brother and so is she.”⁶⁰

Indeed, the “you” who makes “me” feel in “Softball Diamond *Girls* (*Me Haces Sentirrr . . .*)” can be the other *macho/a* – whether father, brother, mother, even lover – who offers solace on the softball fields of El Sereno when no one else, when no place else, is there for you.⁶¹

Such moments of simple, yet profound practices of sub-urban affiliation in BdP’s performances – an affiliation that extends “the family” through ethno-racial paradigms, and reframes “incidental contact” through such vehicles as incidental music,



Figure 19.4 A scene from “Cockfight” featured on the flyer for “Teenage Papi the Remix.” Image courtesy of the artists.

be it freestyle or “The Moz” – are nestled among humorously scathing critiques of the gentrification that has left Los Angeles’ eastside in “ruins” for queer of color subjects, even as the area’s built environments have been renovated. The intimacies mediated through “the popular” and “the cultural,” remain the BdP’s touchstones for navigating one’s way through spaces once ignored or disregarded as “nowhere,” and since transformed by creative classers into “somewheres.” The characters Lolo and Perla, the same East LA butches who found themselves surrounded by “DRRRTY White Girls” in the BdP’s first full-length production, “Teenage Papi: The 2nd Coming of Adolescence,” are our intrepid guides through this reconfigured landscape. As Perla laments in “DRRRTY White Girls,” “This was *our* slum, our home . . . not that we had a choice.”⁶² Now that the pricey eastside neighborhoods of Echo Park and Silver Lake are no longer their “slums,” no longer contain their homes, Lolo and Perla in “Teenage Papi: The Remix” commute to their former bar and club haunts from an unspecified elsewhere.

The sketch, “Lolo and Perla Return to Avenge Klub Fantasy” begins with an off-stage voice-over invoking the “ruins” of a Latino/a club space, Nayarit Nite Club in what has historically been the Latino and working-class neighborhood of Echo Park. The Nayarit has since been converted into a live music and dance venue frequented by hipsters and re-christened with minimalist panache as “The Echo”:

Enter with song: “La Chona” by Los Tucanes de Tijuana

(Voice-over: Nadine Romero) Little do our patrons know that we stand on the ruins of a racialized queer space – Klub Fantasy at Nayarit – do you know it? Have you ever been? Were you there?⁶³

As the lights come up, Lolo and Perla are dancing vigorously to a *banda* party anthem, “La Chona.” Clad in a fringe-tastic suede jacket, Perla (Claudia Rodríguez) ecstatically busts her *banda-quebradita* moves, and Lolo (Raquel Gutiérrez) robustly works the *punta* or what she calls “the bastard skanking version of the two.”⁶⁴ Both are thrilled to be in what they presume is still a “lesbian Latina club . . . [or] a Latina lesbian club,”⁶⁵ until the retro-rock refrains of Black Sabbath’s “Paranoid” interrupt their reverie:

Lolo: Uhh, Perla, you sure we’re in the right place?

Perla: (*Looks around, shocked*) Dude, oh my god, I didn’t know it was all dirty punk chicks n’shit! Not again! This sucks!

Lolo: *You think this sucks, I’m the one that looks like a fashion pendejo wearing my dad’s guayabera at a goofy punk rock dyke club! Nobody better order a fuckin’ margarita from me or I swear I’ll wail on their asses. (Pauses, looks around) . . . But you know I love me some punk rock hynas with the titty tats! (stoner laugh)*

Perla: The fuckin’ lady standing outside selling weenies wrapped in bacon threw me off. I thought this was the right place. (*Dramatic pause*) I’m screwed, ‘ey!?

Lolo: (*Smart-alecky*) This is the right place, dude. It’s just the wrong crowd, or at least the *NEW* crowd. This isn’t your *tias lesbianas veteranas* crowd, you know? We ain’t gonna see your mom and my mom in their Sunday best here. We ain’t even gonna see the Lucha Villa and Thalia impersonators either, man!

The BdP’s “Lolo and Perla Return to Avenge Klub Fantasy” not only re-enacts the compressed temporality of spatial turnovers – the bar scene changes as quickly as the bars of one song cover over another – but the sketch also invokes the cross-cultural encounters both fraught and titillating that make legible the classed and racialized politics of competing styles in queer social spaces. Lolo’s quip about wearing a *guayabera* at a “punk rock dyke club” not only captures the sensation of being out of place in a shifting social economy, but also calls attention to the racial significations that are incorporated into the practices of nightlife service economies in southern California. When Lolo remarks, “Nobody better try to order a fuckin’ margarita from me or I’ll wail on their asses,” she underscores the fact that Latino/a service workers are essentially asked to perform some version of racial “authenticity” as part of their service. For Gutiérrez, the contested national origins of the *guayabera* – “Filipinos think they made it, Cubans think they originated it . . . don’t know for sure, and Mexicans think they did too”⁶⁶ – enriches the problem of reading race and nationality through iterations of style as it functions in a “NEW crowd,” in a new social and spatial economy.

Lolo may have chosen to wear a *guayabera* for a night on the town in what she thought would be a queer Latina space, but the shirt risks being read in the transformed spatial context of the *white* dyke club in Los Angeles as a “*Mexican* uniform” – as but another atmospheric amenity (like a good margarita) that conjures up the old “flavors” of a once racialized space, while relegating race itself to the dustbin of

history. Even though she's in the "right place" with "the wrong crowd," and caught in a bourgeois-bohème milieu likely to mistake a Latina butch in a *guayabera* as a Mexican waiter in his service uniform, Lolo eschews a rhetoric of racial victimization, and instead launches her own fantasy scenario about hooking up with an inappropriate object of desire, a white, "punk rock hyna" with slammin' "titty tats."⁶⁷

Lolo's churlish response to the encounter marks her refusal to be the object of consumption for someone else's taste. Lolo instead asserts *her* agency as a subject of taste who consumes the white queer subcultures that have invaded her queer of color venues. Or perhaps more fittingly, Lolo, with her "creepy *cabron* voice," raunchy jokes, and her fraternal butch razzing of Perla ("Yeah dude, you and your feminist politics missed out, 'ey?!"),⁶⁸ produces herself as an agent of *tastelessness* who very literally "acts out" against the club's new social order informed by white liberal curiosity, and filtered through a studied indifference masquerading itself as subcultural cred. In "DRRRTY White Girls," it is Perla who plays the bad subject of taste when she boasts about her rascally intervention in yet another gentrified Echo Park dive, Little Joy's: "They still had that juke box, so me and my homegirl put in \$5.00 worth of Vicente Fernandez . . . he's not Morrissey or nothing; but it was worth it cause it only took \$2.50 to clear out the place."⁶⁹

In both of BdP's Lolo and Perla sketches, the titular butch characters extract themselves from the gentrified space and time that, though seemingly predictable, still manages to catch them off guard ("Not again! This sucks!"). During their nights on the town, Lolo and Perla retrace the path of creative class gentrification "all up and down Sunset," in bars "crowded with young white folks with bed-head hair and wrinkled clothes on purpose," both queer and straight.⁷⁰ How they choose to extract themselves from the languid, if not explicitly hostile takeover of their social spaces, however, does not necessarily take the form of movement, of leaving these places behind or relinquishing their ownership of the social environment. Rather, Lolo and Perla transport themselves from the scenes of spatial conquest unfolding in the present tense by activating their own memories, their own retrospective fantasies about owning the scene back in the day, which in some instances may just have been yesterday, or the day before.

In other words, Lolo and Perla enact their own racialized "temporal drag" upon these gentrified spaces, whether sartorially (the fringed suede jacket, the *guayabera*), musically (through Vicente Fernandez or Morrissey on the jukebox), kinetically (with their *banda-quebradita* and *punta* dance stylings), or sexually (with a cheeky, interracial butch chauvinism directed at the indifferent "DRRRTY white girls," as well as with their lascivious reminiscences about the crushes they harbored for tranny/*travesti* performers who ruled the stage at Klub Fantasy). The broader cultural history they conjure among the ruins of these queer racialized spaces is also a history of love, a history of their friendship as it has been archived in the contours of these spaces, and as it has been transacted through a shared popular and cultural memory that sustains them amidst such alienating topsy-turvy contexts. In lieu of the space that actually was Klub Fantasy, they create their own club through their own fantasies.

Ultimately, all Lolo and Perla can really do is to keep moving on without actually leaving anything behind. "Movement" for subjects like Lolo and Perla does not necessarily connote "choice," "freedom" or "mobility" – the hallmarks of democratic

citizenship – as it so often does in queer urban rhetorics. In many instances, their movements are predicated upon the force wrought by other people’s choices, tastes and desires. “Lolo and Perla Return to Avenge Klub Fantasy” ends with the friends hoping to outpace the movements of the creative class, and preparing to take their car to another place with *their* music, and *their* people who are young (or not so much anymore) and alive (or at least surviving):

Lolo: We’ll just grab the Ranchola and go to this other spot in Pico-Union. No freiges ’cause they only sell beer there, but the *travestis* are fuckin’ FINE!

Perla: Where?

Lolo: (all suspicious) Well, I don’t want to say the name out loud in here. ’Cuz you never know dude (Looking around) . . . we might be in this same, EXACT situation a year from now.

Maybe the light that never goes out is about *never* getting there, never arriving at that *somewhere*. Just maybe it’s about the journey itself; about the desire to be taken out, but never arriving, never finding IT; finding something else instead and gladly risking oblivion in the process. Maybe it’s about studiously avoiding the encroachment of too many somewheres while protecting the nowheres you call your own.

Reading space vis à vis queer studies now requires shifting our spatial fantasies about sexuality from one kind of street-life to another: to the compensatory forms of motion and contact in spaces seemingly (if not actually) bereft of the urban luxury known as “walking culture.” Driving in your car through lonely stretches of Texas, Arizona, California, or elsewhere. Driving in your car with someone else, with significant others (not necessarily lovers – or are they?). Rollin’ deep with your homies, with your bros literal or figurative, desperately seeking excitement elsewhere, *somewhere*, but realizing that it might just be all about the ride, the inevitably aimless transport of accidental reverie – and all about who you’re riding with.

Acknowledgments

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Notes

- 1 The phrase “lesser Los Angeles,” a play on the geographical designation “Greater Los Angeles,” was coined by Sandra Tsing-Loh, and provides the subtitle to her collection of satirical essays, *Depth Takes a Holiday* (New York: Riverhead Books, 1996).
- 2 See Karen Tongson, “JJ Chinois’ Oriental Express, or How a Suburban Heartthrob Seduced Red America” in *Social Text* 84–5, 23: 3–4 (2005): 193–217.

- 3 See Judith Halberstam's *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (New York: New York University Press, 2005). Halberstam discusses what she calls a "metronormative" narrative that tracks the queer subject's movement from "country" to "town" and conflates the urban with political modes of queer "visibility," 36–8.
- 4 The "remote intimacies" I've invoked here are a lush concept inspired by Jennifer Terry's work in progress on information transit, the internet, and surveillance cultures.
- 5 See Elizabeth Freeman, "Packing History, Count(er)ing Generations," *New Literary History* 31 (2000): 727–44 and "Time Binds, or, Erotohistoriography," *Social Text* 84–5 (2005): 57–63.
- 6 Freeman, "Time Binds, or Erotohistoriography," 59.
- 7 Martin F. Manalansan IV, *Global Divas: Filipino Gay Men in the Diaspora* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003): 89.
- 8 Freeman, "Packing History, Count(er)ing Generations," 728.
- 9 Writing about what they have dubbed a cultural, legal, and architectural "third border" or "*tercera frontera*" in southern California suburbs (particularly the San Gabriel Valley east of Los Angeles), Alessandra Moctezuma and Mike Davis contend that "Suburbs are no longer simply the settling place for white flight from the cities, they are emergent racial battlefields." See Mike Davis and Alessandra Moctezuma's "Policing the Third Border," in *Colorlines* (special section on "Race, Borderlands, and The 'Burbs'") 2:3 (Oakland, CA: ARC Publications, 1999), cited from the online edition at http://www.arc.org/C_Lines/CLArchive/story2_3_08.html.
- 10 See Edward Soja, *Postmetropolis: Critical Studies of Cities and Regions* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2000).
- 11 Ibid. Soja opens his "Introduction to Greater Los Angeles" with a provocative reading of the "occupied territory" that comprises southern California: "Nearly 15 million people come together here in five counties: Los Angeles, Orange, San Bernardino, Riverside, Ventura. And embedded in it all is a galaxy of more than 170 municipalities, and agglomeration of agglomerations, each one with its own geohistory, its own special specificity of urbanism," 121.
- 12 Butchlalis de Panochtitlan website, "About Us," www.butchlalis.com/indexbdp.html
- 13 In a series of books, Richard Florida has characterized an emergent "creative class" of workers involved in "knowledge industries" and unbound to the 40-hour work week. An extended discussion of Florida's "creative class" and the lifestyle politics of gentrification transpires in a subsequent section of this essay. See Florida's *The Rise of the Creative Class: And How It's Transforming Work, Leisure, Community and Everyday Life* (New York: Perseus Books, 2002), and his very recent follow up, *Cities and the Creative Class* (New York: Routledge, 2005).
- 14 For a thorough account of how the white, working-class suburbs of southern California (like Bell Gardens and Riverside) were transformed by the displacement of communities of color in Los Angeles, see Becky M. Nicolaides, *My Blue Heaven: Life and Politics in the Working Class Suburbs of Los Angeles, 1920–1965* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2002). See also Raúl Homera Villa's compelling cultural history of Chicano/a communities and their migrations throughout and beyond the city of Los Angeles in *Barrio-Logos: Space and Place in Urban Chicano Literature and Culture* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2000).
- 15 Juana María Rodríguez, *Queer Latinidad: Identity Practices, Discursive Spaces* (New York: New York University Press, 2003).
- 16 See Raquel Gutiérrez's blog from November 3, 2005, "Why do our asses like Morrissey?," raquefella.blogspot.com/2005_11_01_raquefella_archive.html. Gutiérrez's blog, raquefella.blogspot.com, is titled "Thuggery and Skullduggery" and occasionally features

- pre- and post-performance reflections, as well as extended meditations on the themes explored in the Butchialis de Panochtitlan's work.
- 17 Gustavo Arellano, "Their Charming Man," *OC [Orange County] Weekly*, September 12, 2002. Available online at www.ocweekly.com/film/features/their-charming-man/21569/.
 - 18 Instant Message interview with Raquel Gutiérrez, conducted by the author, March 5, 2006.
 - 19 Gutiérrez, raquefella.blogspot.com/2005_11_01_raquefella_archive.html, November 3, 2005.
 - 20 See Matt Cook's work on the sexual topographies of European sexology in his chapter on "The Inverted City" in *London and the Culture of Homosexuality, 1885–1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003): 73–91.
 - 21 George Chauncey, *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World 1890–1940* (New York: HarperCollins, 1994).
 - 22 Elizabeth Lapovsky Kennedy and Madeleine D. Davis, *Boots of Leather, Slippers of Gold: The History of a Lesbian Community* (New York: Penguin 1994).
 - 23 Esther Newton, *Cherry Grove, Fire Island: Sixty Years in America's First Gay and Lesbian Town* (Boston, MA, and New York: Beacon Press, 1993).
 - 24 See Marc Stein's review essay, "Theoretical Politics, Local Communities: The Making of LGBT Historiography," in *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, 11:4 (2005): 605–25.
 - 25 *Ibid.*, 607.
 - 26 *Ibid.*
 - 27 John D'Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities: The Making of a Homosexual Minority in the United States, 1940–1970* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1983): 167.
 - 28 Stein, "Theoretical Politics," 607.
 - 29 George Chauncey, *Gay New York*, 1.
 - 30 *Ibid.*, 23.
 - 31 *Ibid.*, 28.
 - 32 *Ibid.*
 - 33 *Ibid.* Of course, other histories about other cities and regions in the United States both preceded and followed Chauncey's landmark study of New York. The genealogy I am presenting here, and the special attention paid to Chauncey's work are by no means meant to diminish the intellectual impact of these other works, some of which (like Kennedy and Davis' study of lesbian life in Buffalo, and Newton's anatomy of queer leisure cultures on Fire Island), deal more explicitly with lesbian community formations and cultural life that differ considerably from the forms of gay world-making described in Chauncey's book. Attentive to the unevenly distributed modes of power among genders, Chauncey himself explains that "the differences between men's and women's power and the qualities ascribed to them in a male dominated culture were so significant that the social and spatial organization of gay male and lesbian life inevitably took very different forms," hence his decision to limit his study to the lives of gay men (27). Kennedy and Davis' *Boots of Leather, Slippers of Gold* affirms such differences with its attention to bar culture and leisure sports leagues (inter-league softball, etc.), and the working-class modes of sociability that come to define lesbian cultures in "second cities" like Buffalo, NY, that exist beyond metropolitan centers like New York City. See Elizabeth Lapovsky Kennedy and Madeleine D. Davis, *Boots of Leather, Slippers of Gold*.
 - 34 Chauncey writes, "Gay men developed a highly sophisticated system of subcultural codes – codes of dress, speech, and style – that enabled them to recognize one another on the streets, at work and at parties and bars, and to carry on intricate conversations whose coded meaning was unintelligible to potentially hostile people around them" (Chauncey, *Gay New York*, 4).

- 35 See Samuel Delany's *Times Square Red, Times Square Blue* (New York: New York University Press, 1999), a haunting account of Times Square's corporate redevelopment in the interest of promoting tourism and public "safety." Judith Halberstam provides a useful reading of Delany's program for revivifying urban life, and eschewing heteronormative rhetorics of "safety" in her chapter on "Queer Temporality and Postmodern Geographies," in *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (New York, New York University Press, 2005). Elsewhere I have addressed how Delany's own rhetoric about "safety" and "risk," combined with his nostalgic reflections about queer "mobility" perpetuate a hostility toward subjects who inhabit rural and suburban spaces, while exposing a fundamentally bourgeois, racialized, and gendered imaginary at the heart of both queer and normative ideologies about space. See Karen Tongson, "Metronormativity and Gay Globalization," in *Quer durch die Geisteswissenschaften: Perspektiven der Queer Theory* (Queering the Humanities: Perspectives in Queer Theory), eds. Elahe Haschemi Yekani and Beatrice Michaelis (Berlin: Querverlag, 2005): 40–52.
- 36 Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (New York: Random House, 1992).
- 37 Delany, *Times Square Red*, 178.
- 38 For an extended account of the intersection between homonormative and neoliberal discourses of gentrification, see Martin F. Manalansan IV's "Race, Violence and Neoliberal Spatial Politics in the Global City," *Social Text* 84–5, 23: 3–4 (Fall/Winter, 2005): 141–55.
- 39 Florida, *Cities and the Creative Class*, 99.
- 40 *Ibid.*, 34.
- 41 *Ibid.*, 131.
- 42 *Ibid.*, 115.
- 43 See Halberstam's discussion of the subjects who "will and do opt to live outside of reproductive and familial time as well as on the edges of logics of labor and production," in *a Queer Time and Place*, 10. Like Delany, Halberstam focuses on a language of "risk" that defines queer time and space. But I am somewhat more skeptical about how stable the category of "normative time" – or in Halberstam's words, "the organizations of time and space that have been established for the purposes of protecting the rich from everyone else" (10) – remains given the complex disavowals of wealth and co-opting of subcultural ethics in such neoliberal paradigms as "the creative class." A language of "risk" also figures prominently in Florida's creative class rhetoric. Risk is a feature of "creativity," an attribute of innovation, something that is weighed into the ethics of the privileged queer or creative classer who gentrifies a dangerous, "distressed" neighborhood.
- 44 Florida, *Cities and the Creative Class*, 85.
- 45 *Ibid.*, 86. Florida devotes an entire chapter to "Technology and Tolerance." See also his introductory chapter, which explains in dramatically understated language, why the "Gay Index" measures the final frontier for "tolerance" in the United States: "Several reasons exist why the Gay Index is a good measure for diversity. As a group, gays have been subject to a particularly high level of discrimination. Attempts by gays to integrate into the mainstream of society have met substantial opposition. To some extent, homosexuality represents the last frontier of diversity in our society, and thus a place that welcomes the gay community welcomes all kinds of people" (41).
- 46 Martin Manalansan IV's work in particular has traced the "racial violence" that comes with homonormative capitalist impulses that fail to "delineate or complicate intragroup differences" in accounts of queer space and queer identity. Manalansan, "Race, Violence, and Neoliberal Spatial Politics in the Global City," 143.
- 47 See Roderick Ferguson's watershed book, *Aberrations in Black: Toward a Queer of Color Critique* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2004).

- 48 The Smiths, “There Is a Light That Never Goes Out.”
- 49 Raúl Homero Villa’s chapter, “Phantoms in Urban Exile: Critical Soundings from Los Angeles’ Expressway Generation” in *Barrio-Logos: Space and Place in Urban Chicano Literature and Culture* (111–55), shows the extent to which dislocations of Latino/a communities throughout southern California coincide with transportation development projects in the region. See also Norman Klein’s *The History of Forgetting: Los Angeles and the Erasure of Memory* (London and New York: Verso, 1997): 62–3. His “Epilog: Building the White Whale,” offers a brief, if compelling narrative of the 30-year conflict over the path of the 710 Freeway that saw white Republicans agitate against development in the interest of historical preservation: “the litigious Republican town of South Pasadena, still smarting from the builders of the Arroyo Seco Freeway (1940) not fulfilling their promise to protect the old arroyo, simply refused to knuckle under; and forced the California Transit Authority to undergo at least twenty new plans, and at least seven environmental reports, some taking as long as six years apiece. The 710, if built, would also destroy hundreds of historically significant houses, and endanger at least five historic districts; it would also have a profound impact on the largely Hispanic town of El Sereno” (62).
- 50 Klein, *The History of Forgetting*, 133–4.
- 51 Florida, *Cities and the Creative Class*, 35.
- 52 Claudia Rodríguez and Raquel Gutiérrez, “Softball Diamond Girl (*Me Haces Sentirrr . . .*),” unpublished script (2005): 2.
- 53 *Ibid.*
- 54 See Alexandra Vazquez’s, “Latin Freestyle: With Her Black Liquid Eyeliner in Her Hand,” from her dissertation, “Instrumental Migrations: The Transnational Movements of Cuban Music” (May 2006, filed in New York University’s Department of Performance Studies): 175–227, at p. 188.
- 55 *Ibid.*, 186.
- 56 *Ibid.*, 185. Vazquez offers a richer account of the ambivalent racializing function Spanish serves in the freestyle genre: “Spanish-spoken testimonials or short smuggled in phrases (often dirtier or more heartfelt than English allows) make their way into DJ sets on local radio stations and mix tape compilations. There is a kind of musical bilingualism felt through its sound, but as I stated earlier, I belong to the school that is not quite ready to be held accountable in terms of its formal musical structures” (185).
- 57 Rodríguez and Gutiérrez, “Softball Diamond Girls (*Me Haces Sentirrr . . .*): 2.
- 58 *Ibid.*
- 59 Mari García, Raquel Gutiérrez, Claudia Rodríguez, and Nadine Romero, “Cockfight,” unpublished script (2005): 2.
- 60 *Ibid.*, 3.
- 61 Unfortunately, I lack the space here to elaborate on how the BdP explores a range of “butch on butch” intimacies, and tests the limits of their queer audience’s sexual/gender politics with the piece “BDSM.” “BDSM” depicts a butch-on-butch sexual encounter live on stage, while a video in the background unveils butch breasts, unbound, as a voice-over addresses a love poem to “My butch scholar.”
- 62 Claudia Rodríguez and Raquel Gutiérrez, “DRRRTY White Girls,” unpublished script (2005): 1.
- 63 Claudia Rodríguez and Raquel Gutiérrez, “Lolo and Perla Return to Avenge Klub Fantasy,” in “The Butchlalis de Panochtitlan: Teenage Papi, The Remix,” unpublished script (2005).
- 64 Instant message interview with Raquel Gutiérrez, conducted by the author, March 5, 2006.
- 65 Rodríguez and Gutiérrez, “Lolo and Perla Return to Avenge Klub Fantasy,” 1.

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- 66 Instant Message interview with Gutiérrez, March 5, 2006.
- 67 Rodríguez and Gutiérrez, “Lolo and Perla Return to Avenge Klub Fantasy,” 1.
- 68 Ibid., 2.
- 69 Rodríguez and Gutiérrez, “DRRRRTY White Girls,” 2.
- 70 In “Papi Chula!: The Guayabera and Latina Butch Style Politics” (a paper delivered as part of the “Migrating Epistemologies Workshop Series” at the Center for the Study of Women, UCLA, June 2, 2006), Deborah R. Vargas elaborates on the contested origins of the *guayabera vis à vis* the stylistic economy of racialized queer subjects and a politics of butch presentation/re-presentation.