# « But … It's So Beautiful »: Fantasy in *Lilies* and *Les feluettes ou La répétition d'un drame romantique*

By Shannon Brownlee

**Abstract**: *Lilies* (John Greyson, 1996), adapted from Michel Marc Bouchard's play, *Les feluettes ou La répétition d'un drame romantique* (1987), makes the contrast between theatrical and cinematic conventions, histories and ontologies part of its own aesthetic and political strategy. As in the play, male performers play both male and female characters, which denaturalizes and complicates the film's construction of sexuality and gender. However, unlike the play, the film moves between two semiotic registers that represent different time periods, construct different realities, and evoke different modes of desire. Ultimately, the overlapping of different registers of signification constructs a *fantasy*, in the psychoanalytic sense, that multiplies the play's modes of queer performance.

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« Simon may have stretched the truth a bit about his love story, but … it's so beautiful ». The camera is trained on a speaker (Brent Carver) who stands in a coldly lit prison chapel; he has a 1950's haircut and a wears a shabby blouse to represent an early twentieth century gown. He is quietly struggling to explain to the irate Bishop Bilodeau (Marcel Sabourin) why he and his fellow prison inmates have risked punishment and devoted hours to reenacting events from the bishop's youth forty years earlier: they have been moved by the story their fellow convict, Simon Doucet (Aubert Pallascio), has told them – not by its *truth*, understood in a positivistic sense, but by its *beauty*.

Simon, boyhood friend of the bishop's, has told them a love story. On the shores of Lac Saint-Jean in 1912, he, a farm boy, loved Vallier, an impoverished French aristocrat abandoned in Québec by his father. Always hesitant to name his feelings, Simon rejected Vallier when M. Doucet beat him brutally for suspected homosexuality. He sought out a more « appropriate » love object in the person of a wealthy French woman on holiday at the local lakeside hotel but, on the brink of marrying, Simon realized he was making a mistake and returned to Vallier. This provoked Simon's repressed and jealous friend, the young Bilodeau, to orchestrate Vallier's death. Locked in a burning attic, Simon and Vallier fell unconscious, but Bilodeau dragged Simon to safety, left Vallier to die, and framed Simon for his lover's murder. Forty years later, Simon enlists the help of his fellow convicts to stage these events, which constitute the bulk of the narrative, for Bilodeau, now a bishop. The performance aims to extract from the bishop how Simon came to live and Vallier to die. Within the 1952 framing narrative, Bishop Bilodeau debates the accuracy of some moments of the performance, but he is ultimately compelled by its power to confess his guilt for Vallier's death.

This is the love story at the heart of Michel Marc Bouchard's play, *Les feluettes ou La répétition d'un drame romantique* (hereafter *Les feluettes*), which premiered in 1987[1], and of John Greyson's film adaptation, *Lilies*, released in 1996. For cinema and theatre audiences, the *mise-en-abîme* structure of the story – within the 1912 diegesis, Vallier and Simon rehearse Gabriele d'Annunzio's play, *Le martyre de Saint Sébastien* – has presented an epistemological riddle that has added to its appeal since the play's premiere. What is the status of the convict-actors' reenactments? What truths do they tell us, the audience, and how? What does it mean to negotiate not only the meaning, but also the contents, of personal histories? As both film and play underline, what we see are not the dull, dry facts of the past, but a romantic evocation. However, while this evocation might be understood as a work of memory that attains to a certain truth, I argue that the reenactments can more accurately be seen as a *fantasy* of the past that makes not only the characters' subjective perspectives but also their desires and passionate investments central to the production of truth and reality. Moreover, it is a *collective* fantasy that

[1] The play opened on 10 September 1987 at the Salle Fred-Barry in Montréal, a coproduction of Théâtre Petit à Petit and the Centre national des Arts.

represents the passionate investments of both Simon and a group of unnamed convicts, and that elicits the investment of the theatre or cinema audience, just as Simon's staged « confession » elicits the bishop's.

The fantasy that emerges in both play and film does more than make a space for love between men; it places homosexuality at the centre of its constructed universe. This universe is profoundly affected by the homophobia of church and state in the relevant time periods – 1912, 1952 and, implicitly, today[2] – but the mode of performance of *Les feluettes* and *Lilies* trumps that homophobia: male actors play all the convict-actors, who in turn play both male and female characters in the events of 1912[3] and thus queer the heterosexual and heteronormative identities performed in these reenactments. This introduces the crucial question of how we as spectators invest in the performance of gender. In what sense do we take the female characters in the 1912 diegesis to be female, or male, and in what sense do we take the male characters to be male? Does the performance of female characters by male actors denaturalize or naturalize the masculinity of all of the actors? Do we read the male bodies of the performers to be more fundamental to the representation – more « real » somehow – than the female characters they perform? How, in short, does the particular performance strategy allow or inhibit us from reading queerness?

The film adaptation's greatest divergence from the play is the way it multiplies the play's modes of queer performance. Although *Les feluettes* poses the events of the past as a reenactment for the bishop and older Simon by a group of convicts, the film expands this premise with a substantial opening sequence showing the bishop's arrival at the prison, and with the addition of the scene in the middle of the film in which Carver's unnamed character and the other convict-actors get a chance to voice their commitment to Simon's story. In addition, the events of the past are

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[2] The poster for the 1989 production of *Les feluettes* in the archives at the National Arts Centre / Centre national des Arts beautifully encapsulates the story's historical open-endedness. In a small inset graphic, the year « 1912 » is followed not by « 1952 », as one might expect, but by « 19… ». While the programme for this production draws attention to the fact that the reenactments are situated in 1952, the poster more evocatively allows us to think of 1952, 1989, and the rest of the century as overlapping contexts for the *répétition* of the romantic drama at the heart of *Les feluettes*.

[3] I do not want to naturalize the categories « man », « woman », « female » or « male »; therefore, as far as possible, I have designated gender based on self-identification. Lydie-Anne identifies both herself and Vallier's mother as women throughout the play and Simon refers to himself as a man (51), and in the original French the adjectival forms clearly reflect the normative genders of the characters. As for the convict-actors, the list of characters in the published versions states that men are to play all the roles. Similarly, I refer to the actors in *Lilies* as male or men following Greyson confirmation, in conversation with me, that all the performers in the film identify as men. I have not had the same access to self-identifications of the actors in stage productions and have, unfortunately, had to assume that they would identify as men. My reading, however, intends to leave space for information or interpretation to the contrary.

represented, in the film, in two semiotic registers: at times we see them unfolding on the rough stage of the 1952 prison chapel (see figure A), while most of the time the film opens into gorgeous locations including lakesides, forests and 1912 period sets (see figure B). However, the performers are the same in both registers because the story of Simon and the bishop's youth is represented through *reenactment* rather than *flashback*[4] . Each set of signifiers represents a different type of reality rather than a different time: the prison chapel reflects the material reality of the inmates in prison in 1952, while the more romantic register represents Simon and the convict-actors' psychic reality, their fantasies of the past. Furthermore, as they evoke different *realities*, the two registers also construct different modes of *realism* – realisms that draw on what might conventionally be called « theatrical » and « cinematic » strategies and codes. Ultimately, though, the movements of fantasy in *Lilies* destabilize the opposition of the « theatrical » to the « cinematic » and, in turn, destabilize the signifiers of identity.

FIGURE A: The rough stage of the 1952 prison chapel.

[4] The importance of this distinction was reinforced, for me, by speaking with John Greyson about the film. I wish to thank him for his generosity with his time and insights.

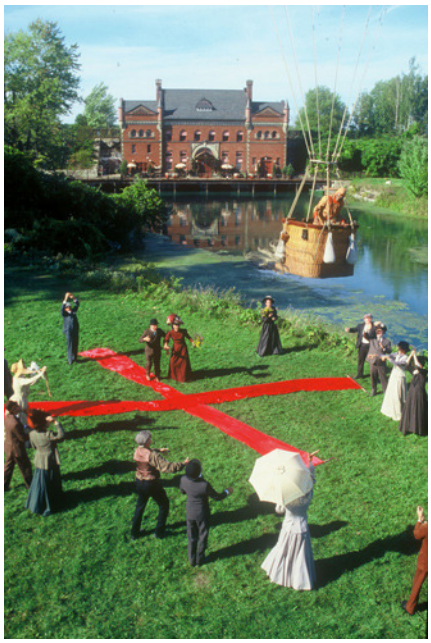

FIGURE B: Gorgeous locations including lakesides, forests and 1912 period sets.

**« Theatrical » and « Cinematic » Realities and Realisms**

By making the contrast between the « theatrical » and the « cinematic » part of its own aesthetic, *Lilies* complicates the incommensurability of the two terms. The most sustained scholarly work on the film, by André Loiselle and Lawrence Howe, draws this opposition out concisely and, to my mind, very rightly poses it as part of the film's appeal. Howe contrasts the « cinematic » and « realistic » (50) on one hand to the « theatrical » representational mode of the « clunky makeshift staging » within the prison chapel (52). Loiselle opposes « stage artificiality » to « screen realism » (124), and defines « theatricality » precisely as the gap between performance and performed, between actor and character, signified place and signifiers of setting, etc. (123-24). Thus, the performance of named, female characters is « theatrical » because they are performed by male prisoners who remain unnamed within the diegesis, and by the male actors – Carver, Rémy Girard, and Alexander Chapman – who play these male prisoners[5] . The disjunction between the male bodies

[5] There are two female extras (both producers of the film) playing women in the opening moments of *Lilies*. It is significant that they are seen during the opening credits, which play over the bishop's arrival at the prison: they are outside the prison and represented by a camera that is apparently not focalized through any character.

performing these roles and the female characters they portray introduces a self-reflexive distance between performance and performer that is seen to be an intrusion of « the theatrical » into « the cinematic ».

FIGURE C: Actors wear wigs and dresses.

Much of *Lilies*, however, transforms the play into something that received wisdom might call more « cinematic ». It « opens the play up » into the natural environment of the woods and lakes of Québec, shortens scenes and cuts dialogue to allow more time for « cinematic » or visual storytelling (all imperative parts of adaptation from stage to screen, according to most how-to guides). The bulk of the action set in 1912 is, at least stylistically, reminiscent of a cinematic costume drama: we see the countess standing on the shores of (what stands for) Lac Saint-Jean; we see an air balloon soaring through the sky; we see hotel lights shimmering in the lake at night. In these sequences, the female characters look less « like men » (an admittedly ambiguous term) and somewhat more « like women »: they wear wigs and dresses (see figure C), rather than sheets (see the actor in the front right of figure D) as they do in the 1952 prison chapel. Most of the film takes place in this romantic, lush and highly saturated register of signification whose nostalgia replaces the sobriety of the prison setting.

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There are also glimpses of unnamed female characters, played by male prisoners, within the 1912 diegesis.

FIGURE D: Actors wear simple sheets as costume.

The contrast between the « theatrical » and the « cinematic » *within the same film*, however, begs the question of whether these terms refer to ontologies, conventions or histories. That is, is something « cinematic » because it is the chemically (or, now, digitally) registered trace of an object that was once before the lens of the camera? Because it exploits the possibility of photographing action outdoors? Because it employs certain conventions of spatial and temporal construction, such as relatively short scenes? Or is it « theatrical » if, as *Lilies* does, it borrows stylistically from the production history of a specific play[6] ? In using both theatrical and cinematic *conventions* in a text that is *ontologically* cinematic yet whose *history* is theatrical[7] , *Lilies* disrupts the coherence of these categories, and its fluid movements amongst different styles and conventions create meaning in a way that undoes binaries on various levels. At the level of the signifier, they unsettle the theatre/cinema binary,

[6] One example of this is the way *Lilies* represents the landing of Lydie-Anne de Rozier's air balloon, in what is perhaps one of its most exquisite moments. In the prison chapel, a small papier mâché air balloon, inspired by a prop from the original stage production, « flies » towards the bishop's confessional window on a laundry line (see figure E). Then, magically, the top of the confessional lifts off and we see blue sky behind a brilliant red aerostat. Would the small balloon on the string conventionally be called « theatrical » because of its rough production values, because it is part of the performance of a play *within* the film, because it is part of the original production of the play, or all of these? Unless we separate out the historical, ontological and conventional, these terms become muddied.

[7] This is not to suggest that *Les feluettes* lies *only* in *Lilies*'s past; on the contrary, the play continues to be produced just as the film continues to be screened.

which in turn unsettles the signifiers of subject identity – most obviously signifiers of gender and sexuality in the performance of female characters by male actors. Loiselle has explicated the implications, for *Les feluettes* and *Lilies*, of ontological differences and intersections[8] ; here, I focus on how *Lilies*'s politics of representation enlist primarily *conventional* differences between classical film forms (continuity editing, synch sound, etc.) and a self-reflexive mode of theatre performance – and audience expectations concerning each. These conventional differences cannot be generalized for all theatre and cinema (since not all theatre is self-reflexive as *Les feluettes* is, and not all cinema draws on classical forms in the same way that *Lilies* does), but they open up questions about the interplay of audience expectations and desires that reach beyond this particular instance of adaptation.

FIGURE E: A small papier maché air balloon.

It is clear, however, that *Lilies* is an exemplary case for thinking through the politics of adaptation, because reviews attest to the difficulty of

[8] Through a discussion of *Les feluettes* and *Lilies*, Loiselle explores a certain, irreducible moment of the intrusion of « theatrical » into the « cinematic »: in the performance of death, the audience knows that the body onscreen is not actually dead, which constitutes a gap between performance and performed. This performed cadaver on screen, for him, allegorically embodies the tension between theatre and film (117).

describing the precise nature of the film's « cinematic » interventions in the play. While *Lilies* has been quite universally praised for its audiovisual beauty and sophisticated storytelling, winning numerous film festival awards and Genies for best picture, art direction, costume design and sound, there is disagreement about what « kind » of film it is. On one hand, many have praised its formal experimentation (see for example Blatake and Sachs); Noreen Golfman argues that its political and aesthetic daring are connected, writing that it is « one of the finest examples of the power of *alternative cinema* to delight and shock an audience out of even its most sophisticated assumptions » (27, emphasis added)[9] . Loiselle points out, though, that others have objected to its formal orthodoxy. He cites Marco de Blois's argument that the film betrays the politics of *Les feluettes*, on one hand, precisely through its introduction of the « pretty » signifiers of costume drama (qtd. in Loiselle 130), and notes that Greyson has been accused of betraying his own radical queer aesthetic with the « more conservative » *Lilies* (Bruce Kirkland qtd. in Loiselle 135). Play and film thematize desire, identity and reality in much the same way: both are striking for their passionate representations of gay love and profound criticism and denunciation of the hegemony of church and law. However, the adaptation raises the question of how the *thematics* of desire intertwine with aesthetic elicitations of spectatorial desire and pleasure. Its modes of representation certainly make its politics very different from productions of *Les feluettes* on some points; however, I argue that its mode of signification performs an equally radical, if dissimilar, alienation of gender and sexual norms.

Spartan production design has had a key role in the play's intervention in normative gender and sexual identities. Although the stage directions do not state that the production design must be simple, both of the productions whose archives I have had the opportunity to study have been staged austerely or abstractly and in a way that deemphasizes the femininity of the female characters. The set of the first full staging (Montréal, 1987) directed by André Brassard for Théâtre Petit à Petit and the Centre national des Arts, consisted mainly of a bare stage with a single riser, a few plain wooden chairs, and some minimal background flats. Costumes were simple: black trousers and plain, white shirts with a few details such as school jackets and ties and a couple of women's hats[10] . The first English language production at Theatre Passe Muraille (Toronto, 1991), directed by Brian Richmond, featured a set that Ray Conlogue dubbed « monumental », with scaffolding in addition to the riser and

[9] From the point of view of distribution alone, the film is hardly mainstream. Greyson stated that *Lilies* had the « biggest audience of any film [he has] ever made and it still only hit two per cent of the screens in Canada » (Monk), and *Take One* reported that it played on only eight screens in seven cinemas in the Greater Toronto Area.

[10] Archival video of *Les feluettes ou La répétition d'un drame romantique*. Dir. André Brassard. Perfs. Jean Archambault, Jean-François Blanchard, René Richard Cyr, Hubert Gagnon, René Gagnon, Claude Godbout, Yves Jacques, Roger Larue, Denis Roy. Salle Fred-Barry, Montréal, October 1987. Théâtre Petit à Petit/Théâtre français du Centre national des Arts. Théâtre Petit à Petit Archives.

costumes that were slightly more elaborate[11] , but the production was still very far from the visually opulent design of much of the film adaptation. Both productions were in keeping with the play's prologue, which underlines the self-referentiality of the piece: the original stage directions tell us that the prologue is set in « Une scène de théâtre » (19) or, in its English translation, « A proscenium stage » (11)[12] , and the older Simon underlines this self-referentiality by chiding the irate bishop that he has merely « invited [his] old schoolmate to a little theatrical evening » (13).

After the prologue, the stage directions throughout most of the play do not specify how elaborate costumes and stage scenery should be, although they suggest a somewhat less ascetic stage than the inaugural French- or English-language productions. Lydie-Anne, for example, is « very elegant » (29), and Vallier's house is « cluttered » (57), if « in a deplorable state » (39). Indeed, the stage directions are not incompatible with *Lilies*'s high production values (which are particularly remarkable in view of the film's modest $2 million budget). The stark theatrical production designs of the inaugural French- and English-language productions, though, serve the play most obviously by ensuring that the female characters look more « like men » than « like women », and thus prioritize the bodies of the male actors, and convict-actors, over the female characters they play. Concurrently, the austere production designs speak to the convicts' minimal means – their economic inability to transform the space into something *other* than a theatre – and this visible economic disenfranchisement opens into their social, sexual and legal disenfranchisement.

It would be naïve to suggest that the attractive production and costume design and picturesque outdoor settings with which *Lilies* supplements the play's design have not been instrumental in its circulation to a relatively wide, mainstream audience; however, this does not mean that its opulence is *nothing more than* a sop to mainstream (and heteronormative) tastes. First, *Lilies does* retain the austerity of its theatrical production history in the register of signification that speaks to the realities of 1952, and indeed begins its reenactments in this register. As the convicts' performance begins, the bishop looks out his confessional window at Vallier (Danny Gilmour) and Simon's (Jason Cadieux) rehearsal of *Le martyre de Saint Sébastien*. They are clearly situated in the prison chapel: they stand in front of the chain link fence that confines the convicts within the space of worship, their costumes are rudimentary, and the canvas backdrop, representing the hills of the Lac Saint-Jean region, is ragged and washed out. Because the 1952 period details are evoked with the same degree of detail as the 1912 period details are, this register of *Lilies*'s representation is not so much less austere than the stage

[11] Archival and Special Collections, University of Guelph Library. XZ1 MS A783069. Theatre Passe Muraille Production Photos. Theatre Passe Muraille Archives.
[12] Citations of the play in French are from the French language publication and those in English are from Linda Gaboriau's translation; page numbers are given accordingly.

productions as less *abstract*. Furthermore, *Lilies* is not self-referential in the same way because the cinema audience expects a film rather than, like the theatre audience, « a little theatrical evening ». However, the film still allows the convict-actors' economic disenfranchisement to dovetail with a range of oppressions, from the legal to the sexual.

In *Lilies* the question is not whether the different modes of signification are more or less realistic, but what reality each mode of signification constructs. Lydie-Anne's (Alexander Chapman) costume in figure D, for example, is not « less realistic » than that in figure C; more precisely, it privileges the realities of the 1952 performance over those of the 1912 woman. André Bazin's essay on « An Aesthetic of Reality: Neorealism » is useful here. He writes that there is no realism that is not constructed; instead, the impression of reality is a function of what would be called, in semiotic terms, the *interrelation* of the signifiers. Bazin uses the term « reality coefficient » (30) to designate this reality effect of a given construction, and to refute the idea of cinematic realism as the simple finding of a preconstituted reality. Although neither Bazin nor the audience of *Lilies* would recognize the film as particularly « realist », the notion of the reality coefficient helps us to see its construction of reality as the working out of a tricky equation rather than as a simple contradiction between the real and the artificial, the cinematic and the theatrical. This tricky equation always involves what Bazin calls a « margin of loss of the real » (29), because any realist choice also necessitates a sacrifice of realism. (One example Bazin gives is that, while Orson Welles's use of deep focus is realist, its technical complexity also requires him to eschew location filming.) The multiplication on the side of the reality coefficient, then, is always countered by the loss of the real on the other side.

In *Lilies*, the realist representation of 1952 – the prisoners' low production values – involves a margin of loss of the realism of the gender of the female characters, if femininity is conceived in terms of a series of normative indicators: dresses, long hair, and so on. Similarly, a more realist representation of 1912 involves a loss of the realism of the (normative) gender of the performers playing female characters. There is no moment in the film in which the female characters could be mistaken for a normative idea of « actual » women, since they are flat-chested and Carver, Girard and Chapman, who play them, do not raise the pitch of their voices. In *Lilies*, realism is relativistic: the reality of each moment is understood through its opposition to the mode of signification of another moment. By negotiating and oscillating between different modes of realism – at times employing « theatrical artificiality » *to create* « screen realism », and vice versa – *Lilies* complicates the normative opposition between masculine and feminine.

While the play's universe is visibly, fundamentally homosocial, the film is less clearly so. However, *Lilies* does not simply « fall back into » heteronormative constructions of gender; on the contrary, the overlapping modes of signification of femininity make it difficult to identify what gender we are seeing at any given point. I would even argue that this *movement* between, on one hand, the film's theatrical heritage which is embedded in

its relatively realist representation of 1952, and on the other hand the deployment of another mode of representation, speaks to one very powerful pleasure of theatre-to-screen adaptation: the heterogeneity and even confusion of registers and conventions of signification.

**The Politics of Illegibility**

Arguments that the film's apparently greater degree of « realism » and « prettiness » betrays the play do contain the insight that it may, on the whole, be easier for mainstream audiences to « take » the mode of realism that speaks to the realities of 1912; this mode is probably less alienating and potentially less politically provocative. However, while *Lilies* conforms to classical cinema signification more than a filmed version of the first stage production would, some aspects of the film have proven to be extraordinarily difficult to read. I argue that the film's politics rest, in part, precisely in this illegibility, in a kind of covert Alienation Effect that produces in viewers not insights, but symptomatic blindness.

First, almost all writers on the film refer to the performances of 1912 events as « flashbacks ». While not necessarily incorrect, the term is certainly misleading because it suggests a *factual*, if perhaps focalized, look back at a previous time, and implies that the events of 1912 have the same status in the film's diegesis as those of 1952. This is never so, because the events of 1912 are always mediated by reenactment, even amidst the 1912 period sets and costumes and outdoor environments. As in the play, the film establishes this fact in the prologue, and *Lilies* further underscores it in the added scene in which the prisoners speak, in their own words, about their investment in the older Simon's story. In spite of this, several reviewers have objected to aspects of the film that make for unsatisfactory flashbacks. Martin Morrow, for example, complains that « it's inconceivable that even 40 years in prison could have aged Cadieux's dark young hunk [the young Simon] into the pale, blue-eyed old Simon of Pallascio ». This incongruity between the « young » and « older » versions of characters – along with the use of male actors to play female characters, which has elicited more objections[13] – is obviously motivated by a plot that establishes the convict-actors as separate characters from the original Simon, Vallier, etc. And while some reviewers, such as Stephen Holden, simply dislike the use of male actors to play women in a costume drama, there is evidence that Morrow and others symptomatically *forget* the plot when confronted with this strategy.

Patrick Z. McGavin in the *Chicago Tribune*, for example, situates the film within Greyson's previous contributions to the « Canadian … gay avant-garde », but writes of *Lilies*: « In a work of provocation, Greyson makes one mistake, having men play all the parts, most significantly the roles of Vallier's mother and [Lydie-Anne], an exotic French madame.

[13] Not all reviewers objected to this. For example, J. Hoberman's *Village Voice* review states that the cross-dressing « enhanced » the drama, and Brent Carver in particular received many glowing reviews for his performance of the countess.

Though the effect is bold, it lends an incongruent camp sensibility ». McGavin's unawareness of the play's production history aside, this statement is even more astonishing in the context of his interest in the co-presence of the two time frames. Earlier in the review, he writes that « [s]hifts in time and space are handled with a brilliant fluidity […] In one virtuoso sequence, the older bishop and Simon are impassive witnesses to a bacchanal involving their younger incarnations ». McGavin understands and, further, is intrigued by the way the 1952 period not only frames, but permeates the 1912 period. *At the same time*, his understanding of the very plot of the film momentarily fails in the face of such a deceptive deployment of « screen realism » as the 1912 period women's costumes affords. Similarly, Jack Mathews, who is concise and perceptive when describing the film's *mise-en-abîme* structure, complains about the « distracting artifice of drag theater ». He states that « with principal characters – Lydie-Anne and Vallier's wounded mother, the Countess Marie (Brent Carver) – portrayed by husky-voiced men, the *illusion* is lost completely » (emphasis added).

While this illegibility is aggravating for some viewers, it is a source of enjoyment for others who, perhaps *because* they enjoy this aesthetic strategy, are more conscious of their forgetting. Golfman notes that at times « we forget we are watching a re-enactment. When the « play » finally returns us to the prison location, it is as if to wake us from a sensually troubled and necessary dream. The effect is at once shocking and exhilarating » (28). And Alain Dubeau encapsulates the pleasure of suspending awareness of the exigencies of the plot, only to acknowledge them again:

> L'apparence et la charpente générale du physique [de Cadieux] font en sorte qu'on accepte difficilement Pallascio en prolongement adulte de ce personnage: les traits, l'osature, les lèvres, bref, les traces d'une jeunesse placée sous le signe d'une beauté irrésistible n'y sont tout simplement pas. Voilà cependant une perception erronée, qui constitue en fait un homage à l'envoûtement qui se dégage de *Lilies*. Car Cadieux *n'est pas* Simon à un plus jeune âge, mais bel et bien sa représentation, sa recréation par un ami du vieux Simon […] Telle est la force évocatrice du film de Greyson. (28, emphasis in the original)[14]

[14] My (loose) translation: « [Cadieux's] appearance and general physical frame make it from the outset difficult to accept that Pallascio is the older version of this character: the features, the bone structure, the lips, in short, the traces of a youth lived under the sign of an irresistible beauty are simply not there. This is however an erroneous perception, which is in fact a tribute to *Lilies*'s bewitching effect. Because Cadieux *is not* Simon at a younger age, but very much a representation, a recreation of him by a friend of the older Simon […] Such is the evocative power of Greyson's film » (emphasis in the original).

We can only speculate that these writers' forgetfulness of the plot, both symptomatic and pleasurable, would not have occurred had the film followed the theatrical production design throughout, but the evidence suggests a *pattern* of spectatorship. Although the romanticized signification of the 1912 period seems to give the viewer more « direct » access to its events – that is, access less mediated by the 1952 performance – this mode of signification only creates an *illusion* that the cinema audience has this « direct » access. By failing to fulfill the expectations this illusion builds, *Lilies*'s realist strategies construct something *other* than a coherent, realist diegesis; they construct a multivalent fantasy.

**Public Fantasies**

The way modes of signification overlap and play double duty in *Lilies* does not sustain a stable opposition of the « cinematic », « realistic » and « realist » on one hand and the « theatrical » and « artificial » on the other. Instead, they point ultimately towards a discourse of *fantasy*[15] . By « fantasy » I do not mean mere make-believe. Quite the opposite; I mean fantasy in the psychoanalytic sense, which is a crucial part of psychic reality. As Teresa de Lauretis writes in her article on « Popular Culture, Public and Private Fantasies », psychic reality is « everything that in our minds that takes on the force of reality, has all the consistency of the real, and on the basis of which we live our lives, understand the world, and act in it » (307). It is affected by our material realities, integrated with them, and in turn affects how we live in them. Fantasy is a specific psychic mechanism through which we narrate our lives; it « animates the imagination and produces imaginary scenes or scenarios in which the subject is the protagonist or in some other way present » (306). Such animation of the imagination is not merely mental, not « all in the head ». As de Lauretis argues elsewhere, fantasy is a semiotic process, and semiotic processes have somatic, material and historical dimensions (« Sexual Structuring » 303)[16] . In short, fantasy is an imperative part of our self-understanding, and an integral part of the way we live mentally, emotionally and bodily in our own subject positions and the world.

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[15] J. Hoberman cites what he calls Greyson's « martial formulation »: « *Lilies* recruits fantasy to subjugate bigotry ». I suspect Greyson does not mean « fantasy » in the specifically psychoanalytic sense, but his word choice is, for me, serendipitous and provocative.

[16] De Lauretis fully explicates this « making sense » of signs, and its implications for the subject's ongoing emotional, bodily, mental and social structuring in her readings of Freud with C.S. Peirce beginning with her essay on « Semiotics and Experience ». There, she writes that in Peirce's concept of semiosis we find a formulation that « need not be stretched to reach into the two semiotic territories marked out, by their respective proponents, as the biophysiological and the social operations of signification. It is already so stretched to span them both and to connect them » (175).

The reenactments in both *Lilies* and *Les feluettes* begin by exemplifying this « taking on of the force of reality ». The performance of 1912 does not plunge immediately into the quotidian concerns of Roberval, but rather opens mid-way through a rehearsal of Gabriele d'Annunzio's *Le martyre de Saint Sébastien*; thus the first lines we hear the young versions of Simon and Vallier speak are borrowed. This does not make them any the less personal to the youths, or imply that they are « only words » as *opposed to* deeds. The local, heteronormative language of romance otherwise available to them cannot express a love that it forbids, so they borrow d'Annunzio's homoerotic words to express their emotions. Furthermore, their story – including Vallier's death – mirrors that of the saint and his lover. D'Annunzio's hagiographic fantasy thus takes on the force of reality in their lives as verbal and gestural actions, which in turn have profound material consequences for each of them.

It is significant that they borrow the words and narrative of a play, a fantasy intended for public consumption. De Lauretis writes that fantasy « is the psychic mechanism that structures subjectivity by *reworking or translating social representations* into subjective representations and self-representations » (« Popular Culture » 307, emphasis added). The individual's fantasy thus has a communal counterpart in what she calls public fantasies, those « dominant cultural narratives » (« Popular Culture » 307) that are told and retold in oral, visual and written forms from myths, sagas and epics to plays, operas, graphic novels and films. These are not *merely* public, or somehow external to the individual. As they are watched, read, heard, and seen, they are subjectivized, and provide some of the materials of individuals' subjectivities. As several critics have noticed, *Les feluettes* and *Lilies* share elements with that most dominant of romantic narratives in Western culture, *Romeo and Juliet*, and yet they translate the story of star-crossed and ill-fated lovers into the context of eighties and nineties queer activism; similarly, Simon and Vallier « borrow » but also rework or translate the materials of d'Annunzio's fantasy to meet the exigencies of their situation.

By *r*eworking d'Annunzio's fantasy, Simon and Vallier point us to the fantasy function of the prisoners' reenactments of the events of 1912. These reenactments are also posed as facts and memories, but I argue that their most important function is as fantasies, and that the film's strategies of adaptation multiply and underline this fantasy function. The play is perhaps slightly more concerned with establishing a truth, understood positivistically. At one point, in answer to Bishop Bilodeau's objections that Simon could not have known about a scene he did not witness, the older Simon produces the diary Bilodeau kept in his youth. Howe notes that here the play displays a rare need for factual evidence to legitimate moments of the performance about which Simon could not otherwise have known (54). Rare, yes, but also pivotal, since the diary is produced again at the end: when the diary entries end, so do the reenactments, and the bishop is called upon to provide the decisive information.

The film does away with this plot point and highlights the reenactments' second purpose in the play, namely, as negotiations of the past through an exchange of memories. The bishop's confession, which on one level is the culmination of this exchange, asserts a cohesive and singular truth: Bilodeau was really responsible for Vallier's death. However, this assertion is signified in the film in a contradictory manner. Howe writes that the moment of transition from the reenactments to the bishop's confession is marked by a change in the film's narrative strategy:

> [J]ust as Simon's play gives way to the bishop's narration of what occurred, Greyson's cinematic technique gives way to a conventional form of film flashback as supplement to the bishop's voice-over narration. […] A knock on the prison chapel triggers the memory of, and the simultaneous crosscut to, Bilodeau knocking on the door of the school attic where Simon and Vallier have spent the night; thus the realistic detail signals a shift of narrative authority and the first gesture towards closure. [… Because] Simon's play has run its course, this succeeding phase of the story is a cinematic flashback that marks the realignment of the film's narrative authority with the bishop's memory. (54-55)

As Howe writes, this is the only time we catch a glimpse of the 1912 period in a way that is positioned as a conventional flashback – as signaled in part by the voice over – rather than a reenactment. He convincingly argues that, when the older Simon produces a photograph of the young Simon and Vallier for the bishop, it performs the role, in the film, that the diary performs in the play: it is the document from the past that finally successfully elicits the bishop's confession (55). Furthermore, as a photograph, it speaks self-reflexively to the visual power of cinema (56). This begs the question, though, of why the performers in the « conventional flashback » motivated by the bishop's confession are those we have seen throughout the film: Matthew Ferguson as the young Bilodeau, Cadieux as the young Simon, and Gilmour as Vallier. The use of the same location sets presents less of a problem to the literal-minded, since we could imagine that these represent the older Simon and Bishop Bilodeau's shared memories of the spaces. But the flashback is intercut with shots of the bishop narrating his story in the prison chapel, surrounded by the convicts whom we *also* see in the flashback. Why, if the photograph is of the « real » Simon and Vallier (and the actors in the photo appear not to be Cadieux and Gilmour, although the faces are rather hard to make out), and if the bishop is providing the truth from his memory, does the flashback accompanying his confession not give us similar access to the « real » Bilodeau, Simon and Vallier?

There is of course a pragmatic answer to this question: had different actors been hired for the flashback (as they may have been for the photograph), the audience would be disoriented and confused about who was whom. This has a less than pragmatic effect on the meaning of the film, though. This casting choice does not only protect and preserve the audience's understanding; it also confirms the status of the reenactments

not principally as memories, but as fantasies by which the bishop is ultimately swayed, and that the audience is called to share. Moreover, it suggests that fantasy trumps both memory and positivistic truth. Far more important than the factual truth the bishop asserts at the end are the questions and issues around desire – those of the characters in 1912 as well as the performers and spectators in 1952 – that are not and cannot be answered by the truth his memory provides. The final moments of both the play and the film thematize this by reopening the closure the bishop's confession offers. In the play, when Bishop Bilodeau begs to be killed, the older Simon tells him: « I hate you so much … I'm gonna let you live » (69); in the film, he kisses him violently, places a knife in his hands, and replies, in response to the bishop's plea to be killed, « Never, Bilodeau, never. » In both cases, the last action is a statement of passion rather than an assertion of truth or an attempt to call on the religious or legal authority evoked in the act of « confession ». Although the endings do not undo the factuality of the confession, they do suggest that the tidy answer to « what really happened » does not have the power to resolve the past in classical closure.

Unlike the assertion of a memory that produces a singular truth, the film's construction of fantasies remains multiple and paradoxical. In her analysis of David Cronenberg's 1993 adaptation of David Henry Hwang's *M. Butterfly*, de Lauretis demonstrates how this film's *mise-en-abîme* structure, which is quite similar to that of *Lilies*, allows various and often contradictory levels of fantasy to circulate. The first level of fantasy she identifies is diegetic, a fantasy acted out by the characters. In *Lilies* this includes Simon and Vallier's use of the d'Annunzio play, the convict-actors' own investment in the reenactments, and the memory-work that the older Simon and Bishop Bilodeau perform in reconstructing the past through the presentation and revision of the performance. The next level of fantasy de Lauretis traces is the film's fantasy, « into which the film invites the spectator as a participant voyeur » (« Popular Culture » 326). Although it has its ironic moments, *Lilies* elicits the spectator's empathy for and pleasure in Simon and Vallier's love story through highly romanticized, strikingly beautiful visual and auditory elements: witty dialogue, superlative production design, fluid cinematography, and a haunting *a cappella* soundtrack composed by Mychael Danna and performed by the Hilliard Ensemble. The film's fantasy converges with multiple levels of the diegetic fantasy in the prioritization of beauty over positivistic truth. As the convict played by Carver says, « Simon may have stretched the truth a bit about his love story, but … it's so beautiful »; this echoes one of the first lines of the reenactment, in which Simon, playing Saint Sebastian, states that his death « shall be beautiful » (14; identical in film).

The last level of fantasy de Lauretis addresses is that of the spectator. If the film's fantasy is a *call*, then the spectator's fantasy is the *response* to the film text; it is « mental and subjective » and remains largely unconscious (« Popular Culture » 326). As we have seen in response to the « flashback » strategy and particularly to the performances of female characters by male actors, at times the spectator's fantasy may be at such

odds with that of the film that even the latter's basic premises are disavowed. Such a gap between a spectatorial and filmic fantasy is not merely a matter of the spectator's having « missed the point ». On the contrary, it points to differences amongst what « animates the imagination » (« Popular Culture » 306) of different subjects, and allows them to identify or « become protagonists » in the story – or not. It allows us to see spectatorship not as straightforward assimilation of a play or film's meaning, but as a complex process of « making sense » of signs, a process that, as de Lauretis writes, bears witness to the « particular configurations of discourses, representations, and practices – familial and broadly institutional, cultural and subcultural, public and private – that the subject crosses and that in turn traverse the subject, according to the contingencies of each subject's singular existence in the world » (« Sexual Structuring » 303) [16]. Spectatorial fantasies are informed – but only ever in part – by cinematic or theatrical conventions or, in the case of *Lilies*, by juxtapositions of both. In the context of these fantasies, one way of understanding the « cinematic » or the « theatrical » is as a changeable and changing array of relations amongst signs and spectators, and not only as « realistic » or « artificial » signifiers inscribed in the film or play text alone.

**Collective Fantasies**

The reviewers who disagree about what *Lilies*'s strategies of adaptation mean – and even what the film's plot is – may seem like a very fractured public, like spectators alienated from one another in a cinema darkened to support the illusion of the *privacy* of film viewing. Both *Les feluettes* and *Lilies*, however, engage this concept of public fantasy thematically by staging the possibility of *collective* fantasizing, as the prisoners together take up and rework the materials of Simon's memory, d'Annunzio's play, and well-known narratives like *Romeo and Juliet*. As it adapts *Les feluettes*, *Lilies* clarifies that the collective fantasy the convict-actors produce does not necessarily imply uniformity of identity or desire amongst them or, by implication, amongst audience members. Specifically, its heterogeneous modes of representation indicate both the collectivity of the fantasy and, obliquely, « the contingencies of each subject's singular existence in the world ».

The sequence that demonstrates best how fantasies play *through* cinematic and theatrical signifiers, and are elicited and rejected or accepted, begins with Lydie-Anne's seduction of Simon (the latter part of Episode 2 in the play text). It has already been well established that female characters being played by male performers are accepted uncomplicatedly as women within the 1912 diegesis. We also know that Simon has been beaten brutally by his father, have seen him refuse Vallier's solicitude, and have heard him tell Vallier that « [i]t's time for [him] to start thinkin' about girls » (35; also in film). In short, the audience is prepared to perceive Lydie-Anne as a woman making advances to a young man who, suffering physically and emotionally for loving a man, is in a state in which the more

« socially acceptable » sexual object might have some appeal. The dialogue then bears this out, albeit ambiguously, as she teases him for his « unusual approach to seducing [women] » (37) and cajoles him into kissing her as proof that he is not gay.

Consider, however, the way this scene was directed, in 1987, by André Brassard. While the countess (René Gagnon) had worn a skirt hiked up a bit in front to reveal trousers underneath, Lydie-Anne (Yves Jacques) looked « less feminine » in trousers, heavy shoes, and a man's shirt partly unbuttoned and pulled down to reveal her shoulders. Previously we had seen her in a hat and scarf, but in this scene her head was bare, her short hair slicked back. In short, the signifiers of femininity – shoulders revealed, hat, scarf – were laid thinly over signifiers of masculinity – heavy shoes, trousers, man's shirt. The dialogue was perpetually ironized by aspects of the performance text, and on one level the scene played quite tenderly as the advice of a more mature, gay man who had learned to inhabit his sexuality and was trying to guide a flailing young man. That Jacques's performance itself was delicate and his line delivery in no way ironic underscored the call to the audience to read the scene *duplicitously* – both as a heterosexual and a homosexual seduction. Meanwhile, although Simon's (Denis Roy) *sexuality* was negotiated in the scene, his *gender* came across as unproblematically, « naturally » male. This was built into the play script, where Simon performs « masculine » sexual aggression by instigating the kiss (into which Lydie-Anne has, in a « feminine » manner, manipulated him). However, his gender appeared « natural » precisely, here, in contrast to the layered performance of gender in Lydie-Anne. Thus, the overall diegetic fantasy that emerged most strongly was of a group of gay *men* collaborating in queering the past of one of its members. It is difficult to know exactly how most spectators responded, what fantasies emerged in their encounter with the text, but I have found no evidence of the kind of symptomatic forgetting of the premise that haunts the reception of the film[17] .

Consider, on the other hand, the filmic version of Lydie-Anne's seduction of Simon. We see the convict-actor who plays Lydie-Anne only twice in the costume that speaks to the realities of 1952, and then only during breaks in the performance and never during the action of the reenactments. As in the 1987 stage production, this Lydie-Anne is clearly not meant to be mistaken for a woman being played by a woman. The convict-actor wears a wig and a dress, but his chest is not padded and he does not raise the pitch of his voice. Furthermore – although it is not necessarily causally related to the degree of « femininity » in the costuming – the scene does not play as tenderly as in the 1987 stage production. This

[17] While I have found to evidence of the *forgetting* of the premise in play reviews, the sole scathing review I have encountered, which is written by Jean-René Éthier, is striking for its contradictions. Éthier protests – perhaps too much – that his objections are based on the execution of the performance, and the play's structure and aesthetic choices, rather than its politics, while at the same time decrying the « prétention théâtrale dite « progressiste » » (79).

more brittle and perhaps more selfish Lydie-Anne wants to show Simon not how to inhabit his sexuality more comfortably, but how to construct an effective lie. As in the play production, Simon's gender is naturalized through the dialogue and also in contrast to the « unnaturalness » of Lydie-Anne's, but it is naturalized differently from the stage actor's because it is contrasted to a different kind of *de*naturalized femininity.

The difference between the fantasies and gender constructions of play production and film is thus one of the degree and quality of separation between the performances and performed characters, rather than simply the presence or absence of that separation. In the performance of women, the play maximizes the visible gap between performer and performed, and constructs a « natural » masculinity in contrast to that highly visible gap. The film takes this gap up at points but also, in the register of signification that pertains more clearly to the realities of 1912, speaks to a different kind of desire in the diegetic characters. Here, we see a desire for a greater but not complete verisimilitude of normative femininity, playing opposite a normative performance of masculinity. Following Loiselle's definition of the theatrical as a gap between performance and performed, « theatricality » is not constructed in binary opposition to the « cinematic »; rather, in *Lilies* we see a *spectrum* of distances between the performances and what they perform.

The difference between the kinds of fantasy the play and film texts construct and elicit is further inscribed in the way the seduction scene ends. In the play, when Simon kisses Lydie-Anne both younger and older Bilodeaux shout « No » (37), but in the 1987 production, at least, the characters of the 1912 diegesis did not acknowledge the interruption. In the film, however, as Simon and Lydie-Anne kiss they hear the bishop pounding his protestations on his confessional door. They look up at the source of the sound and become spectators to his performance of anger; at the same time, their costumes become those that reflect the lower production values of the 1952 performance, and the set becomes the prison chapel. The inversion of the relation between audience and performance coincides with a change in the mode of signification. The power of sexuality – symbolized in the kiss – to destabilize the mode of signification has already been established less dramatically in the first scene of the reenactment, when Vallier first moves to kiss Simon. Bishop Bilodeau raps on the confessional door and demands to be let out, only to be confronted by the prisoner playing the young version of himself. The first shot of this young prisoner inaugurates the romanticized, high production value sets and costumes that efface the reality of 1952. In both scenes, the *switch* between the signifiers of 1952 and those of 1912 – a switch prompted by a display of eroticism – denaturalizes the mode of signification. Sexuality, which is constructed in the field of fantasy (see de Lauretis, « Sexual Structuring » 305-07), thus has the power both to alter and to denaturalize the signification of reality.

At the same time, the bishop's interruption of Simon and Lydie-Anne's kiss opens from the erotic into an exploration of the connections between sexual and other forms of marginalization and oppression. The

interruption is followed by the scene, created for the film, in which the prisoner played by Carver attests to the « beauty » of Simon's story, and which gives us the most extended access to the convict-actors' own investment in the reenactments. It seems intuitively evident that they are part of the performance because they identify with Simon's homosexual desire, and the convict-actor who plays Lydie-Anne implies that at least some of them have engaged in homosexual *acts* in order to be able to perform the play when he says with insinuating humour, « Guess we'd better not tell you the favours we did for certain guards ». However, the film refuses to affirm such an inference of uniformity. The chaplain tells the bishop, « These are the men that they keep separate in the yard! The ones they send away from the dining hall, the ones they piss on », but he does not tell him explicitly why. The persistent ambiguity of the community's ties to each other and to Simon's story suggests that the « ones they piss on » may not be victims of homophobia alone.

The open-ended diversity within this collective of prisoner-actors is epitomized in the linguistic diversity of the film – a semiotic element that is, of course, politically fraught in itself. Loiselle writes that *Lilies* can be seen as a « linguistic co-option » of a French-language play (124). The dialogue is a « lie », he writes, since « French Canadians living in Roberval in 1912 or sharing prison cells in 1952 did not speak English to one another » (126), although he argues that this supports the thematic importance, in the play, of lying (125). It also demonstrates the difficulty of translating the play's national and linguistic landscape. The French play text preserves the specificity of Lac Saint-Jean accents, in opposition to those of French nationals like Vallier, his mother, and Lydie-Anne that underline their exalted status as wealthy or aristocratic tourists in rural setting. Simon's choice of love objects – both Vallier and Lydie-Anne – and his rejection of Bilodeau thus has national, linguistic and class dimensions, evoking the colonial's libidinal attachment to the colonizing nation and the farm boy's love of his social superiors, while their love for him suggests attraction to the lower class, the colonial, the « accented ». Since the convict-actors in the play do not speak « as themselves » we never encounter their « real » accents, only the linguistic identities they perform. In the same way that the performance of both female and male characters by male actors constructs a fantasy of sexual and gender fluidity, the performance of a range of accents constructs a fantasy of social mobility on one hand, and eroticism across national and class difference on the other.

The film, on the other hand, presents a much more amorphous fantasy of linguistic diversity. The cast is composed of both Francophone and Anglophone actors who, apparently, all use their own accents. There is no diegetic motivation for the resulting distribution of accents: one clergyman, Clark, speaks with an Anglophone accent, while the other, Sabourin, is Francophone, and some of the French nationals – Gilmour, Girard – speak with Francophone accents, while others – Chapman, Carver – speak as Anglophones. Most strikingly, the only convict-actor who speaks markedly differently in his 1912 role than in this scene in the prison chapel is Chapman's character: his accent as the prisoner is drawlingly

North American, and as Lydie-Anne is transatlantic (ironically, *British*-Anglophone Canadian). This single disparity throws the « naturalness » of the others' accents into relief and suggests a desire to speak with a certain « naturalness » or « truthfulness » within the « lie » of the English language. It also calls the audience to take pleasure in the diversity of accents amongst a group of performers that includes some of the foremost actors in both Québécois and English Canadian cinema – albeit, again, within the « lie » and economic exigency of the English translation. Rather than construct an internally consistent, realist representation of the way people would speak in Roberval in either time period, *Lilies* constructs a fantasy that subsumes linguistic difference, audible in the range of accents, under the umbrella of English or, conversely, that allows the diversity of the actors' accents to contribute to the texture of the language and provide a constant reminder that *Lilies is* a translation. The film is not a liberal fantasy of linguistic equality. Rather, it fantasizes linguistic difference in a way that both obliquely foregrounds the politics of translation in which it is implicated and deploys these politics as part of its characterization of the prisoners' mode of collective fantasizing.

In its construction of linguistic and national difference as well as its evocation of sexual and gender identities, the scene of the convict-actors' support for Simon is persistently suggestive rather than didactic. It hints at the prisoners' investments in a way that does not put forward a reductive identity politics, imply a uniformity of desire and experience amongst them, or suggest that the performance must mean the same for each. We can only be certain that, while they are all victims of oppression, they have formed a coalition to create this *collective* fantasy that implicitly speaks to – and calls to – a range of desires and experiences. Greyson has stated that the scene in which the convict-actors speak in their own voices is not designed to give the audience definitive answers about their interests in the performance, although it was an opportunity for the actors to consider what they might be[18] . They were asked to construct detailed back stories for their convict-characters, and in fact many eschewed stereotypes when deciding why they were in prison. By avoiding clichés and approaching the scene, as Greyson said, « obliquely », they represent the prisoners' otherness and oppression in more complicated terms than a simple homo/heterosexual binary that constructs homosexuality as a uniform system of desire. In this way, the prisoners mirror the diversity of responses to the film itself, and specifically to its modes of signification. This is not to underestimate either the homophobia of church or state, or the centrality of male homosexuality to the film, but to see the definition and regulation of sexuality as an integral part of a network of oppressions and brutality that also includes but is not limited to class prejudice, national bigotry and linguistic privilege.

If we reread the violence of the bishop's interruption of the « heterosexual » kiss between Simon and Lydie-Anne in light of this multivalency and « obliqueness », it speaks to a range of desires and

[18] Telephone interview with John Greyson.

phobias. First, it is puzzling why he interrupts the kiss between Lydie-Anne and Simon so much more forcefully than that between Vallier and Simon. His first, less passionate interruption could indicate his relatively low investment in the storytelling at that early point, but it could also be a symptom of his own desire for Simon and his consequent, unconscious pleasure in the homosexual kiss. On the other hand, his fury at the later kiss, with Lydie-Anne, could be an indication how deeply disturbing the contradictory layers of signification can be: he is less uncomfortable with a kiss coded homosexual across the board – a kiss that does not destabilize the binary opposition of homosexual and heterosexual – than with one coded homo- or heterosexual depending on the frame of reference to which one relates it. In this he might share some reviewers' discomfort with the performance of women in the film. Finally, there is an issue that is signified in the film only at the level of the visual, namely, the probability that the bishop perceives this kiss to be racially transgressive[19] . While this display of interracial sexuality must be read as pleasurable for most of the diegetic characters and at the level of the film's fantasy, because it is inextricable from the queering of Simon's past, the bishop may not share that pleasure. We cannot, however, pin down Bishop Bilodeau's anger to one phobia or desire; it is overdetermined and perpetually ambiguous. Instead, the ambiguity reflects the texture of the diegetic fantasy, and of the film's fantasies of difference, and calls for a similar richness of response from the audience.

The enigmatic character of the bishop's interruption is emblematic of the way the film constructs different levels of fantasy. Insofar as fantasy remains, as de Lauretis states, largely unconscious (« Popular Culture » 326), it remains uncertain, sometimes paradoxical, and eludes full exposure and comprehension. The *mise-en-abîme* structure of *Les feluettes*, and its ultimate prioritization of passionate investment over the value of positivistic truth, lays the groundwork for the epistemological uncertainty of the fantasy, but *Lilies* amplifies this by recruiting and destabilizing « theatrical » and « cinematic » elements in its adaptation. This is not to say that the film is either more or less sophisticated than the play; it is only to point out that they construct their realities and fantasies in structurally different ways, and that the *interrelation* of signifiers in each – and the way they elicit audience investment and pleasure – takes precedence over the « theatrical » or the « cinematic » conceived as stable, discrete terms. Setting *Lilies* alongside *Les feluettes*, and looking at the process of adaptation, allows this work to come across more clearly. *Lilies* multiplies the *modes* of investment in figures of sexuality, gender, language, nationality, etc. by multiplying the modes of aesthetic *beauty* that, as Carver's character says, is ultimately the most compelling thing about Simon's story.

[19] I am indebted to Gregory Caldwell for his insights here.

*Shannon Brownlee is a Ph.D. candidate in the History of Consciousness Department at the University of California, Santa Cruz.*

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