

SOME LIKE IT HOT: SOME LIKE IT QUEER

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"There's something funny about those new girls." (Sweet Sue)

"I hope my mother never finds out" (Daphne)

To speak about Billie Wilder's *Some Like It Hot* (1959) as a queer film is not just to attribute to this tremendously droll film an avant-la-lettre status that threatens to burden it down with the freight of a sometimes dully stifling critical apparatus; it also serves to mark it off as somehow profoundly different from the general texture of Wilder's filmmaking. If Wilder was interested in making a film that could in any measure contribute to revising Hollywood's by then rather dismal and to judge by another 1959 film like Joseph L.. Mankiewicz's incoherent *Suddenly Last Summer*, hysterical account of homosexuality it is an effort that seems to have been lost on the community of queer scholarship.

Certainly, Wilder was probably not specifically interested in contributing to what we would today call "gay" or "queer" rights: there is, at least, no evidence to this effect in the biographical material available on him or on the making of the film. What is more likely the case is that Wilder, interested in, of course, making a successful film, hit on the idea using a narrative of cross-dressing and gender ambiguity as a successful cinematographic ploy. As I will argue in this essay, this ploy results in a very serious contribution to queer studies. Even though Wilder may not have come at the film from a queer perspective, he unquestionable did from a transgressive one, one that invested heavily in the mutability of identity (in this case, gender identity), always a refreshing American option for a Jew weighted down by the inherited and grimly enforced identities of the Old Country. In effect, this essay will suggest the continuity of the sort of insouciant, jolly transgressiveness of Wilder's film and the eventually seriously theorized investment in the emergence of queer studies in which Jews have played such a prominent role. It is not so much that Jewish intellectual life has any particular investment in queer culture or queer studies (pace the image of the Jew as the feminine passive Other that Daniel Boyarin analyzes; see below). Rather, it is the consequence of the enormous impact of Jewish intellectuals in post-war U.S. culture and a natural tendency to tread waters that the staid (heterosexist) WASP establishment had tended to shy away from.

Wilder is not even listed in the index of directors in *Images in the Dark; An Encyclopedia of Gay and Lesbian Film and Video*, and the film is only included under the heading of Marilyn Monroe as a gay icon (cf. Dyer on "Monroe and Sexuality" 19-66). Yet, I will insist here that *Some Like It Hot* is advantageously read as a queer film text, not in an agenda sense of the word, but as a project that, whatever its motivating force may have been, whatever its organizing principles may be, ends up addressing issues that, forty years later are pertinent to queer scholarship. In order to do this, one must go against the current of propositions that appeal to a principle of farce, such that none of what really happens in the film has any real social implications: it's just there to be funny, and part of the fun derives from the off-the-wall implausibility of the whole undertaking in the first place: that two men with no experience in gender-bending or cross-dressing could successfully impersonate women, not only in order to escape from the Mob and to blend into an all-girl orchestra, but that one of them could, so to speak, at the same time re-impersonate a man in order to win Marilyn Monroe, while the other could win and retain the attentions of a rambunctious playboy first as a woman and then as a revealed man. Nothing in the horizons of knowledge of American culture, and certainly much less in the homophobia of the film industry, could provide the basis for such propositions, and, therefore, one simply must assume that any purposeful meaning of what happens in the film must be dissolved away by seeing it as silly farce.

But, of course, farce is a serious matter (see Pavis's entry, especially the third category on "The Triumph of the Body"). Farce allows for the contradictions of the social text to become manifest in such a way that the lived human experience displayed by farce is what our reality would be like if those contradictions were not negated, repressed, or in some other way controlled which is precisely what happens so that the inconveniences of such deviations from the social norms involved do not become manifest. Farce derives its efficacy as one form of the return of the repressed, and the function of farce as a dramatic genre is arguably that it ensures the repressed returns as a cultural production that can be bracketed off of whatever is considered actual reality, where such a return could indeed be quite messy. Farce, therefore, is a psychosocial necessity as a form of mediated containment of what cannot be accommodated by social conventions. In this it is a genre that is parallel or perhaps a subcategory of comedy. However, where we expect in comedy for social equilibrium as fictional and arbitrary as it may be to become reestablished so that life may proceed, or continue to appear to proceed, in an orderly fashion, farce has no expectation of restoring such an equilibrium. Rather, instead, it may up the stakes such that an even greater disruption of the social text begins to emerge. This is precisely what occurs at the end of *Some Like It Hot* with the unresolved implication of Joe E. Brown's famous line delivered in relation to Jack Lemmon's confession that he is a man, virtually a motif of contemporary gay culture, that "Well, no one's perfect."

I will assume that it is not necessary to rehearse the details of Wilder's film. Suffice it to say that, as an example of cross-dressing in a film text, *Some Like It Hot* is really quite unique in deriving from such a potentially stereotyped enactment a trove of implications for gender identity in American culture that is quite unparalleled in any film contemporary to it or any film since made based on a similar proposition: the use of cross-dressing as a masquerade of survival during whose circumstantial utilization a series of identity transformations begins to take place that take the plot toward really quite surprising implications. Part of the hilarious nature of the film is the incorporation of a degree of Jewish vaudeville references and allusions that allow for one to view the film on one level as

one set-up after another, between a straight man, the Tony Curtis, born Bernard Schwartz/Joe/Josephine character (I will have more to say in a moment regarding the dual significance here of the phrase "straight man"), and his fall guy, the Jack Lemmon/Jerry /Geraldine-Daphne character. While there is a vague plot line to the film the efforts by two minor musicians to escape from Spats Colombo's men, whom they have accidentally seen carrying out the St. Valentine's Day massacre in Chicago the principal texture is a series of narrative nuclei whose farcical logic derives from the ploy of masquerade through cross-dressing. As my colleague Jack Kugelmass has observed, quite felicitously, *Some Like It Hot* manifests the Jewish appreciation of the low as a kind of Jewish version of "épater le bourgeois" as if it were "épater les goyim."

By the same token, it should be unnecessary here to rehearse in detail the now basically accepted principle in gender studies that 1) gender is a social construction that depends on a conventionally accepted correlation between presumed binary primary sexual characteristics (female vs. male genitals), secondary sexual characteristics (other nonreconstructed and nonreconstituted bodily manifestations that are controlled by hormones linked to the genitals), and tertiary sexual characteristics (clothes, adornments, and cosmetics that are distributed along a binary axis understood to correlate with the presumed biological sexual binary); 2) sexual identity is equally a conventional construct that extrapolates a series of behaviors, attitudes, deportment, and comportment considered to reinforce, as a performative enactment, the accepted, normalized binary of male vs. female; 3) because constructive, normative, and conventional, sexual assignment and gender identity are perpetually undergoing elaboration and manifestation, are fundamentally precarious and require strategies of overdetermination in order to be convincing or "authentic," are constantly subject to external vigilance and self-correction in order to remain convincing or authentic, and are thus more a question of a reality effect than they are essential characteristics; which 4) exposes individuals to unremitting anxiety as to the efficacy of the extent to which they are able to comply with the overwhelming, unrelenting demands of the sex and gender edifice; finally, 5) inability to conform to the demands of the sex and gender edifice, whether through physical handicap, insufficient socialization vis-à-vis the conventions of the edifice, social discontentment, or as a deliberate project of gender nonconformity, results in the sorts of deviations that get loosely bundled together under the rubric of the queer, whether the term is deployed as a pejorative epithet, as a badge of courage, or as theoretically principled interpretation. It is against this Butlerian constellation of principles that I wish to discuss the vaudevillesque sketches that are far more the substance of *Some Like It Hot* than any coherent or interesting plot regarding evasion of the Mafia.

When Joe and Jerry find themselves compelled to cross-dress as Josephine and Daphne, they find, as does the spectator (although perhaps not always in equal measure), that they have undertaken to situate themselves in a circumstance that, while perhaps not as mortally dangerous as their having happened to be in the garage where the St. Valentine's Day massacre takes place, is no less a terrain of perpetual menace as much for the risks involved in assuming the social position of an exposed subalternity as for the consequences of failing to sustain the affiliation that they have assumed. Although the two dangers again coincide when Spats and his henchmen show up in Florida for a mafia meeting billed as Friends of the Italian Opera, the sustained risk Josephine and Daphne face is to be discovered not to be women.

This risk is multifaceted. In general terms, the consequences of being discovered would be humiliation and discredit. Cross-dressing to the degree of attempting to achieve total masquerade is, in a society that abides by strict adherence to the gender binary, a very serious business (as opposed to drag, which is a sort of metacommentary on the construction of gender in which part of the metacommentary is to sign the fact that gender transgression is taking place). Were *Some Like It Hot* a tragedy rather than a comedy, the consequences of being found out would add gay-bashing and even death to the initial phase of humiliation. However, since it is a comedy, embarrassment would likely be the extent of the price paid. Nevertheless, even in the context of comedy, it would not do well to underestimate the potential cost of cross-dressing, especially when it involves male-to-female masquerade: as in the case of being gay in general, at least when gay is understood to mean adhering to traits conventionally understood to belong to the realm of the feminine, with a concomitant loss of traits conventionally understood to belong to the realm of the masculine. For a man to assume the feminine is an outrageously inexplicable investment in the devalued and the demeaned, a deliberate purchase of inferior social stock: illicit gender transgression is compounded by the incomprehension of why one would want to be a woman (which, conversely, means that female-to-male cross-dressing is, while still an act of illicit gender transgression, still more "reasonable," since to want to be a man is understandable). When Daphne gets pinched on the elevator, Josephine responds to her outrage with the wry, "Welcome to how the other half lives."

An accompanying risk of being found out is the frustration of the subplots of the respective sexual desire or, better, personal agenda grounded in sexual desire that Josephine as Joe and Daphne as Jerry come to pursue. In an act of additional cross-dressing, Joe as Junior undertakes the sexual conquest of Sugar Cane (Marilyn Monroe), while Daphne, still as Daphne but inwardly contemplating being able to revert to Jerry, perceives the advantages of acquiescing to the advances of Osgood Fielding III (Joe E. Brown). Both of these projects involve considerable gender trouble and deserve commentary in some detail (writing in a pretheoretical mode, French must settle for the concept of androgyny to explain the gender disruptions of the film).

Joe's project is complex one. It does not merely involve reverting to his identity as Joe the saxophone player, but rather requires the construction of a new masculine identity: thus male-to-female-to-male cross-dressing is involved in his case, and it is the theater-of-the-ridiculous complications of the quick changes that are involved here that raise the relatively simple vaudeville base of the guffaw that elementary cross-dressing might provoke to the high theatricality Joe engages in (see "Female Impersonators" *passim*). Joe is shown from the outset to be pretty much of a cad in his relations with the receptionist at the Sig Poliakoff booking agency, and while both he and Jerry are attracted to Sugar Cane, Joe is the one who first comes up with a plan to become her sixth or seventh saxophone-playing beau, although in a new disguise.

Joe's new disguise is that of Junior, scion of the Shell Oil Company fortune. What is particularly interesting about this disguise, at least viewing the film from the perspective of current Hollywood gossip, is that Joe appears to use as his model Cary Grant's upper-

crust roles. Not only is his whole look and manner Cary Grant, but he even adopts the slightly faggy lisp that was part of the Cary Grant persona. Moreover, and this is where things begin to become quite fascinating, Joe as Junior pretends to be a man with a sexual problem. As a subroutine, he describes loosing his fiancée because of a misstep on the edge of the Grand Canyon and of becoming frigid as a result of the shock of her death. The choice here of words is a malapropism that Sugar does not catch: frigid is not an adjective that can be applied to men impotent, perhaps, but not frigid. Perhaps impotent would have been too phallic a word for a 1959 film, and perhaps frigid is as good a euphemism as ever to describe a circumstance that, within the confines of the patriarchy, simply does not occur to real men. Indeed, on a second level of meaning, frigid appears to be being used here as a euphemism for gay: Junior has turned gay because of the shock of his fiancée's death. Or, at the very least, a man who is unable to function sexually is necessarily, inevitably construed as gay.

Marilyn Monroe's major appearance in the film (along with the conversation with Josephine in the rest room of the sleeper car, in which she explains to her, as she chips away at the ice to make cocktails, the bad luck she has had with saxophone players) is to "defrigidify" Junior, to make a man of him once again, both in the sense of arousing Junior sexually and in the sense of allowing Joe to be the man with Sugar that he cannot be with her as Josephine. Monroe does a veritable parody of Monroe in this long sequence of the film (Haskell notes that she is as much in drag as Curtis and Lemmon are [257]). If one has always had the impression that Monroe's acting was always a parody of heterosexism, it is never more obvious than here, as Sugar enacts one of the fundamental axioms of compulsory heterosexism: all a man needs to arouse him sexually is a real woman, and its corollary: the degree to which a woman is able to perform as a real woman, she will be able to make a man perform as a real man (such an ideology also, of course, holds the converse to be true, bringing fearful symmetry to the fearsome binary). *Some Like It Hot* is only listed in Raymond Murray's *Images in the Dark* under Marilyn Monroe, in the section devoted to gay icons (269).

Monroe was a gay icon, I would propose, less for the embodiment of the hyperfeminine that is a component of one dimension of gay culture. Rather, Monroe's ability to enact in a highly overdetermined manner the Hollywood pin-up version of female heterosexuality has always lent itself to the parodic reading I am interested in underscoring here. A parody of heterosexism not only highlights the way in which sexuality is a construct based on a series of semiotic conventions or, alternatively, on a series of heavily freighted fetishes. It also demonstrates by implication the virtual impossibility of anyone other than a Marilyn Monroe of coming even close to attaining the demands of the heterosexist narrative: Monroe is a feminine sexual ideal precisely because it is so unlikely that the vast majority of women could even begin to touch her.

However, this raises another iconic function attributable to Monroe: the absurdity of a model of ideal femininity that is so exaggeratedly overdetermined that it begins to insinuate a deconstruction of that which it proposes to model. It is at this point that Monroe as a figure of the queer enters in. The fancifulness, as far as sexual identity and gender roles go, becomes evident as Sugar begins her seduction of Junior. As Joe pretends to fail to respond to her initial attempts, Sugar intensifies the caliber of her seductive moves. This is all very fanciful in terms of what the Hayes Code was going to permit as a reasonable program of erotic seduction, because the idea that Junior and Sugar are going to proceed fully clothed and with no other erotic acts than intensive, but yet still rather quite prim, mouth kissing simply stretches the imagination as to what is likely to be effective in arousing Junior. If the absurdity of the limits on the representation of erotic arousal are made evident here, so too is banal conventionality of feminine seduction which the film is spoofing. There is another point to be made as well: both Sugar and Joe are acting parts in a drama within a drama, and in Joe's case it is a double enactment. Not only is Joe pretending to be Junior, but as Junior he is pretending to be frigid in order to increase Sugar's ardor, obliging her to do what heterosexism tells her she must do with a man. Sugar, in turn, is willing to abide by the rules of the heterosexist seduction (her very name, of course, is a metaphor for female sexuality), because she sees in Junior the opportunity to break out of her grim cycle of caddish saxophone players. At the end of the film, as Sugar and Junior disappear in an erotic clutch below camera level in the stern of Osgood's speedboat, Sugar continues to play her role as seductive woman (although, in good romantic Hollywood style, she appears to have begun to love Junior, so it's all okay), while Junior continues to enact his part as the reconstitutedly masculine millionaire.

As interesting as all of this is, and as well acted as it is for its potential for hilarious absurdity regarding the patterns of heterosexuality, Jerry's gender enactments are particularly complicated and cross over from being absurd to directly threatening to the imperatives of compulsory heterosexuality. In the first place, Jerry plays second fiddle (literally, bass) to Joe's caddishness, which extends to the power relations that exist between them as fellow professionals, buddies, and roommates. If Jerry is always passive (i.e., "feminine") with respect to Joe's schemes and, indeed, he could be taken to be less than paradigmatically masculine in any conventional sense he is also the one who most takes seriously their cross-dressing. At first, he is worried that Joe's scheme will not work ("We're not going to get away with it"), and he complains about the problems of attempting to enact the female body, to which Joe responds insouciantly, "It's a whole different sex," precisely as they are about to embark on an adventure in which sexual difference, the dominant identity binary, comes to be called so much into question. But Jerry begins to get the hang of it, and rather than using the feminine form of his name to which they have agreed, Geraldine, in a gesture of sublime inspiration, he identifies himself as Daphne, thereby evoking one of the most feminine names of the classical repertoire, that of the nymph who was changed into a laurel tree to escape from Apollo's amorous pursuit. As Daphne, Jerry is both the most successful of the pair as a woman and the one who is most taken with suddenly being thrown in with a train car full of women. Evoking the image of a child being locked in a candy store, Jerry is suddenly awakened to a sexual frenzy by Sugar, although when all of the other women begin to pile into his berth in the belief that a girls' party is in progress, his ardor is considerably dampened. But later, it is Daphne who will be pinched in the elevator, a sort of definitive confirmation of the successful assimilation of female identity.

Making good on her name, Daphne begins to be pursued by Apollo in the person of Osgood Fielding III. As elsewhere throughout the film, the various sequences concerning the relationship between Daphne and Osgood are built around vaudeville routines regarding the pursuit of the reluctant woman by the persistent man, with Osgood's repeated "Wows" an index of the effect Daphne has on him. If Daphne at first sees in the wealthy Osgood's ardor a ticket out of penury and, incidentally, an escape from her

impersonation as a woman (Jerry intends to wed Osgood, and then demand an annulment and a cash settlement in exchange for not revealing to his mother that he has married a man), her compliance with the narrative of compulsory heterosexuality that Osgood imposes on her holds her firmly within the realm of conventional femininity, and the camera moves back and forth between the sequence of Junior's thawing under the pressure of Sugar's lips and Daphne dancing the tango in Osgood's arms. Although they have gone to a night spot featuring what Osgood describes as a hot Cuban band, it is actually the tango that they dance, the Argentine dance built around a woman's compliance with the erotic moves of the man: more than any other conventionally heterosexual dance, the tango involves a highly charged sensuality, albeit greatly attenuated in the Fred Astaire/Arthur Murray versions that become popular in the United States. An important aside: as much as the tango is now associated with compulsory heterosexuality, in its origins it was danced by two men, and the homoerotic implications of this fact resurface in recent films on the tango by Carlos Saura and Sally Potter. The fact that, after all, the tango is danced by two men (only if only one of them knows that this is so), in *Some Like It Hot* is not inconsequential if one knows it is the tango they are dancing, and what the homosocial origins of the tango are.

However, where the relationship between Daphne and Osgood becomes serious gender trouble is in the famous ending of the film, an ending that is constructed to be maximally funny, so much so that the way in which it raises the ante of gender transgression easily gets lost. As Junior and Sugar continue their reaffirmations of the former's newfound erotic potential, safely out of sight in the stern of the speed boat (where one hopes, for the good of Junior's [not Joe's] sexual history, Sugar has quickly gotten beyond kissing), Osgood presses the point of marriage, having gone so far as to enlist his mother's approval. Daphne, sensing disaster, despite the scheme originally motivating her to accept Osgood's attentions, begins to bring forth the litany of reservations that culminate in her pulling off her wig and confessing that she is a man. Osgood's famous reply, "Nobody's perfect" can still bring down the house, but precisely in doing so, it overlooks the implications of his having accepted this important detail, and the film does well to stop there, since there is no way a Hollywood film made in 1959 could even begin, not with the most fulsome incorporation of the rich vein of innuendos of vaudeville and not with the highest degree of comedic perfection, to consider the implications of one man agreeing to wed another. Lieberfeld notes this when he says "In the end, Jerry's identity and his relationship with Osgood are left dangling outside either social or narrative convention. In Judith Butler's formulation, the two characters remain outside the matrix of culturally intelligible gender identities" (133; Lieberfeld, however, does not detail the queer implications of this exclusion).

The fact that Daphne is a man is an important detail, since gender identity is always of the highest order for the heterosexist patriarchy, and no amount of good-fun laughs can dispense with this crucial fact. To realize this is to understand how the cross-dressing in *Some Like It Hot* is far more than just funny: gender impersonation involves a serious defiance of the imperatives of the heterosexist patriarchy, and no amount of joking can dispel the consequences that such a transgression can have. Daphne's decision not to go through with her scheme to extort money from Osgood would seem to be a realization that escaping from the Mob which is, after all, a homosocial society of men bound by their guns is one thing, but going all the way with gender transgression is quite something else again. When Jerry first explains her plan to Joe, the latter asks "And what will you do on your honeymoon." The response Jerry gives, a typical example of vaudeville *méprise*, is to say that the two are not in agreement as to where they want to spend their honeymoon.

This is most definitely *not* the information Joe is getting at, and as funny as the misunderstanding is, it foreshadows what the film, in the end, cannot resolve: the fact that, while same-sex marriage for Jerry has become too dangerous a proposition even as the culminating enactment of femininity, Daphne as bride, Osgood is totally unconcerned that is, he is totally willing to accept the proposition of same-sex marriage: after all, he has been through a half-dozen female wives, and perhaps he is ready for something different. Cardullo's analysis of what he calls the "dream structure" of *Some Like It Hot* has the force of denying the implications of Osgood's position. Cardullo would have us understand that female impersonation has been a good thing for Joe and Jerry, allowing them to revise their masculinity, get in touch with their feminine side, to see the woman's point of view, that sort of thing (which Tony Curtis underscores in his statements in *The Celluloid Closet* about the role he played and the great fun he had, how masculine and feminine are relative concepts, including his work on Josephine's pouty or bee-stung "Eve Arden" lips). All of this may be true: one certainly expects that, when Joe reveals to Sugar that he is really a saxophonist, it is with the conviction that he will be a different man to her than his predecessors: "Transvestism is used in the service of [the fulfillment of a desire for better social relationships between members of the opposite sex], not to make a point about latent tendencies [I assume here, Cardullo means latent homosexual tendencies] in Jerry and Joe."

That may be true. From Jerry and Joe's point of view, *Some Like It Hot* is not a gay film, as much as it is a queer film, for no other reasons than it promotes a contemplation of the workings of the narrative of compulsory heterosexuality and its fundamental investment in the line drawn in the sand by the gender binary. But I repeat, it is not a gay film *from Jerry and Joe's point of view*. So, what about from Osgood's point of view? After all, he has the final line in the film, and the last laugh he has cannot totally cover over the fact that not Jerry/Daphne, not the film as a discourse about sexual relationships, and certainly not any straight viewer has any response to give to his affirmation that it does not matter that he will be marrying another man.

What, then, is one to do with Osgood's closing, and ringing, affirmation? Certainly, it does not mean that Billy Wilder produced the first commercial gay film in American cultural history, which is why I agree with Lieberfeld that there is nothing liberating about Wilder's ending (133). But what it does mean is that, whether it was his intention or not, Wilder, by relying on a comedic routine of female impersonation, has introduced into *Some Like It Hot* an element of gender queering that is irreducible to a standard romantic denouement. Since this is a comedy that spoofs romantic commonplaces, perhaps a romantic resolution is not necessarily to be expected. Yet there is equally no other way for the film to dissolve, or to imply a dissolution for, the closing proposition uttered by Osgood. The trappings of female impersonation have been abandoned, including Junior's abandonment of his secondary impersonation, but the consequences of that impersonation, at least for Daphne, remain very much in place. Once again, Jerry is the fall guy, and Joe's disappearance from view in the arms of Sugar, leaves Jerry holding the bag very much so once again. But the

bag this time carries all the weight of the heterosexist gender system, which is certainly likely to have greater consequences than to be left coatless in the February snows of Chicago or to be pursued by the Mob.

Much of Wilder's humor derives from the Jewish vaudeville tradition, and it is possible to view the film as one such sketch after another (the Jewish dimensions of the film are discussed briefly by Sikov 415-16). This tradition, like music-hall variety in general, is characterized by the license to slip below, often way below, the horizon of bourgeois decency. One realm in which this is evident is in humorous routines built on sexual allusion, and within this realm, routines that make reference to sexual deviation, to a form of erotic farce in which that which is repressed by the taboos of polite society, committed as it is to enforcing a highly specified version of compulsory heterosexuality, may regularly emerge as the content of the comedic text displayed to the audience. This sort of vaudeville farce, unlike high comedy, as I have suggested before as a characteristic of farce in general, does not seek to reestablish social order, and the embarrassment of vaudeville for those who subscribe to the taboos, as much as it is the guffaw of those who have little need for, and indeed seek to resist, the strictures of decency, is that the "ta boom" that punctuates the routine and marks the punch line deliberately leaves the micronarrative suspended in the contravention of sexual decency or legitimacy that it proposes, and it is in this sense that the essential substance of the sexual jokes and innuendos of vaudeville depend on the queering of patriarchal heterosexism (concerning the vulgarity of vaudeville, see Cohen).

The fact that subaltern cultures in general are customarily viewed as lying on the fringes of social decency also raises the question as to what extent they also propose an inherent or implicit queering of the heterosexist patriarchy. Daniel Boyarin has examined in detail the "invention of the Jewish man" as someone/something less than fully masculine, in as much as Western notions of aggressive masculinity are grounded in ideologies of Christianity triumphant, while Judaism (and other cultures/religions as well, it must be noted) have assigned to them aspects of the feminine passive (i.e., fag, pervert, queer) Other. Numerous Jewish lesbian writers have alluded to the double helix of Jewish marginality and queer marginality. As Evelyn Torton Beck says in the introduction to her anthology *Nice Jewish Girls; A Lesbian Anthology*:

I am a Jewish lesbian. The truth is that it is extremely difficult to identify oneself as a Jew outside the long shadow of anti-Semitism. It is like trying to imagine what it would feel like to be a lesbian in a non-homophobic world. (*Nice Jewish Girls* xxix)

Lev Raphael, who also quotes Beck, says at the end of the introduction of his his collection of autobiographical writings, *Journeys & Arrivals; On Being Gay and Jewish*:

Coming out as a Jew ultimately made it possible for me to come out as a gay man and then work at uniting the two identities. . . .

It was almost twenty years ago that I started exploring my Jewish past and wondering about a Jewish future. That search has been inevitably interwoven with coming out and finding love. In that dual journey, writing has been both a catalyst and a laboratory for change. (31)

*Some Like It Hot*, following this train of cultural affiliations, is, thus, doubly marked as Jewish. It is Jewish in the filmic elaboration of vaudeville routines of the sort that old Borscht-Belt performers like Jack Benny and Milton Berle had already taken, first, into their radio performances and, then, into their television work, and one is confident that it would be relatively easy to enumerate a long line of films in which vaudeville routines are the basis of the narrative line: after all, this is what George Burns was doing right up to the very end of his career not so many years ago: *The Sunshine Boys* (1975) is both vaudeville and metavaudeville. However, so much of vaudeville material that is taken out of the old music halls to do service in radio, television, and the movies must necessarily lose its commitment to the realm of sexual innuendo. Wilder's film appears to be the relatively innocent utilization of female impersonation, in the sense that it is a disguise for self-protection and not an affirmation of deviant sexual behavior. Yet, this presumed innocent utilization of drag unleashes semiotic processes that Joe and Jerry are unable adequately to contain, and in the process, that the film is unable adequately to diffuse.

One has no way of knowing to what extent Wilder was conscious of this fact, whether he expected the overlay of *The End* to serve as an equivalent of the "ta boom" punctuating the line delivered by Joe E. Brown now serving as straight man while nevertheless delivering the queerest line of the film, and it is probable that he assumed that its humor would be completely innocuous, given how the general sense of the film comfortably asserts heterosexuality and even reinforces it in the character of Joe and his relationship with Sugar. But the processes of meaning are never so reassuringly clean. In the process of elaborating for comedy purposes the aspects of Joe's and Jerry's masquerade in drag, Wilder releases one hilarious depth charge after another against the foundations of the heterosexist edifice. In the end, too many transgressive questions have been raised that are left unanswered: why, indeed, would a guy want to marry a guy?

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