

*section three*  
**typography**





the voice of type:  
context and considerations

*The written word can illuminate or destroy.  
Like still waters, the danger is in what lies  
beneath the veneer.*

Morton, 2003, p. 27

### introduction

*Boy* is a film that speaks with many voices. The way that television, through its distinctive orchestration of sound and imagery tells stories to the viewer has already been discussed in this exegesis. However, the use of typography, as a form of narration in the film requires consideration.

The design of the written voice in *boy* draws considerations from a culture in which Sam lives, a culture that is widely spread across New Zealand, but rarely acknowledged. This is the world of the bogs and the language form associated with cruising in this world is called bogspeak<sup>1</sup>.

This chapter is therefore introduced by a consideration of how typography is used to marginalise. It then looks at the literary and demographic profiles of bog-cruising and follows with a discussion of social impacts on the language form.

From this basis, an analysis of the language is considered in terms of its deployment in developing and refining the typographical voices in the film *boy* with specific reference to two thematic profiles, detachment and ecclesiasticism.

The chapter concludes with a consideration of spatio-temporal typographics as a narrative voice and the ways this form of narration has been embedded in the text.

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<sup>1</sup> Bogspeak is a specific type of argot that has developed to meet the communicative needs of a historically marginalised, socio-political group. Men who use public toilets for sexual contact with other men, constitute this criminalised sector of society.

Bogspeak is a specifically New Zealand anti-language that has been influenced by both British Polari and gay slang.

For a fuller discussion of argot and anti-language see Baker, P. (2002 b) *Polari- The Lost Language of Gay Men*. London: Routledge, pp.11-13 and Cage, K. (2003) *Gayle: The Language of Kinks and Queens. A History and Dictionary of Gay Language in South Africa*. Cape Town: Jacana, pp. 1-2.

## another face

### typography and the marginalised

Much contemporary discussion on typography has focused on the role of typographic form in conveying meaning and the contribution of formal elements like leading, kerning, letter form and kinetics to issues of readability and legibility<sup>2</sup>. While these physical concerns are pertinent to any discussion of meaning, they tend to avoid addressing the wider, contextual concerns relating to the way spaces of cultural inclusion and exclusion are mediated via typographical treatment<sup>3</sup>. Otherness, as presented in the written word, may be considered not only as a construction of word meaning but also as a construct of form. Salen (2001) in her essay *Surrogate Multiplicities: Typography in the Age of Invisibility* suggests that “the display of otherness relies on the historicizing mechanics of cultural standardization” (p. 1).

Her hypothesis may be supported by a consideration of the development of standardised typefaces that have been used to profile a national or international environment. Typefaces like Interstate, Bell Gothic, Arial, Univers, Century Schoolbook, and Times New Roman, have become ubiquitous voices to which we have become accustomed. They are utopian and generic, belonging everywhere and nowhere in a mediated, global environment. They have no dialect and no affiliation to region, and as seemingly non-aligned they have become representations of a graphic form that while inclusive, also acts as a kind of cultural border.

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<sup>2</sup> Indicative of significant writing in this area is Bellantoni, J. & Woolman, M. (2000). *Moving Type: Designing for Time and Space*, and Mealing, S. (2003). *Value added text: Where graphic design meets paralinguistics*. *Visible Language* 37 (1).

<sup>3</sup> It is significant that international organisations like *Typeright* whose *Guide to Ethical Type Design* published in 1998 ([www.typeright.org](http://www.typeright.org)) states “Our aim is to answer some of the ethical questions you might confront when designing type.” However, ethics only addresses the most pragmatic of issues: originality, revival, respect for other designer’s work, remixing, auto-tracing, renaming and piracy.

These typefaces may be considered as part of the process by which a standardised “voice” is applied across an entire range of cultural profiles while simultaneously representing only one dominant and generic form. Salen (2001) suggests that when one considers both the syntactic and semantic elements of the written word,

*an analysis of the systems of subjectivity at play within typographic discourse can reveal a myriad of ways in which visual form supports structures of cultural standardization, marking exclusionary distinctions between standard and non-standard speakers. (p. 2)*

An emphasis on standardisation has been asserted from the earliest days of printing. These demands became highly profiled in the nineteenth century when notions of order and decorum became prominent social values<sup>4</sup>. Michael North (1994) suggests in *The Dialect of Modernism: Race, Language and Twentieth Century Literature* that between the 1880s and 1920s, mass immigration and increasing urbanisation brought together a range of languages, dialects and idiolects previously separated either geographically or socially.

It is significant to note that in the early part of this period Parlyaree, the underground language of traveling circus men, showmen, and itinerant actors in Britain<sup>5</sup> began to develop into Polari, the anti-language of gay men living working in England’s large cities<sup>6</sup>. Also, the development of the 1858 proposal for the Oxford English Dictionary was significant in this period because it ruled out consideration of dialect words more recent than the reformation, and in so doing, established what the dictionary itself cites as the first recorded use of the phrase “standard language”<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> North, M. (1994). *The Dialect of Modernism*. p. 12.

<sup>5</sup> Baker (2002b) contends that parlyaree was possibly introduced into England in the 1840s with the influx of Italian Punch and Judy men, organ grinders and showpeople. He also suggests that the language probably acted as a bridge between thieves’ cant and Polari.

<sup>6</sup> See Partridge, E. (1970) *Slang Today and Yesterday*. p. 249.

<sup>7</sup> North, M. (1994). *The Dialect of Modernism*, p. 12.

North (1994) suggests that,

*the true purpose of the standard language movement was to focus attention on the alien, both foreign and domestic, and to provide a means of discriminating where other methods were beginning to fail. (p. 13)*

However, while notions of correct form were being fiercely defended against the influences of urbanisation, class mobility and immigration, visual representations of non-standard “speakers” flourished in an array of idiosyncratic typefaces. These profiled as exaggerations and embellishments inside what Salen (2001) calls “the narrowly defined borders of the ‘exotic’ and the ‘abbreviated’” (p. 3).

Many of these alphabets were developed and positioned as distances from established and conventionalised notions of legibility and elegance popularised by typefaces like Bodoni, Baskerville and Caslon. In the mid-to-late nineteenth century a number of these “foreign” alphabets developed both through design and nomenclature to reinforce the exoticised other. The designers of these display-faces often employed devices like evocations of calligraphic brush strokes, Arabic writing, broken or disturbed letter forms, or elements of the bizarre or exoticised, (fig. 3:1) to reinforce the alien nature of the text.

Significantly, an analysis of popular “foreign” alphabets generated in the last ten years by Western designers has indicated little shift from this same emphasis on designing the “other” as exoticised and distanced from values of readability and legibility. Many of these faces are made up of orchestrated letterforms that are essentially dislocated from the philosophical and metaphoric values that are integral to the structure of the written language of the culture they purport to represent. In many cases the faces are imitations of culture as seen through the eyes of the west (fig. 3:2 overleaf).

As designs, alphabets like these may balance issues of semantics (meaning) and syntax (form) but because they cannot operate as body text, their use remains restricted to ornamental display faces. Their form is designed to overwhelm the message, so that any potential for

The image displays three distinct examples of pseudo-Asian typefaces. The top example, 'THE FAR EAST', features a bold, blocky font with sharp, angular terminals and a slightly irregular baseline. The middle example, 'JADEX', is a more stylized font with thick, rounded letterforms and a prominent horizontal underline beneath the text. The bottom example, 'GLO-RAY', consists of thick, rounded letters with a slightly irregular, hand-drawn appearance and a horizontal underline.

Fig. 3:1 Pseudo Asian type used to brand a range of products or services in the 1920s. *Chinese Mission Society Monthly Magazine*, December 10, 1929, *Silk Fabrics*, May 25, 1926 and *Lamps*, December 17, 1929.



Sissy boy's play with tensions between bizarre decoration and writhing contortion, its recurring structural contradictions and built-in kerning inconsistencies, contribute to a design that cannot function as body text. This causes it to operate solely as an unstable and relatively illegible display face<sup>9</sup>. Thus, typefaces like this cannot be used to present any significant body of information. They are employed to adorn and appellate but not as part of any extended discourse. If they are deployed for communicating large bodies of text, the content of the written communication is generally overridden by an atmosphere of congestion and confusion.

While representations of otherness in culturally thematic alphabets like Sissy boy might be relatively overt, there exist more subtle instances of written convention being used to indicate ideology through typography. A significant example is the non-capitalisation of the word Negro. In "standard English" usage, the proper names of national groups are traditionally marked with a capital letter. However, up until the ideological debates surrounding the American Reconstruction, the word was always written with a lower case initial<sup>10</sup>.

The relationship between ideology and typography can also be illustrated by the Nazi resurrection of the black letter type Fraktur, as the national typeface in the 1930s. The Nazis first considered the face as the natural expression of the Aryan soul because it symbolised the totalitarian nature of the politics and carried references to historical precedents underpinning the perceived glory of the Third Reich. However, on January 3, 1941, claiming that gothic type had been invented by Jews, German National Socialism chose to replace

<sup>9</sup> In a search of the Adobe, Agfa-Monotype, Berthold, Bitstream, Elsner+Flake, Font Bureau, FontFont, ITC, Letraset, Linotype, P22, Identikaland, Type Associates and URW++ font libraries (<http://www.identifont.com>), sissy boy was the only typeface available containing a gay or gay related branding. Key words used in the search included a list as diverse as: *gay, gay boy, camp, queer, homosexual, homo, queen, quean, drag, fag, faggot, fairy, faerie, bent, pansy, Nancy boy, Nelly, sissy, pouf, poof, pillow-muncher, sodomite, trissy, and bugger.*

<sup>10</sup> Allen, I. (1990). *Unkind Words: Ethnic Labelling from Redskin to Wasp*, p. 74..

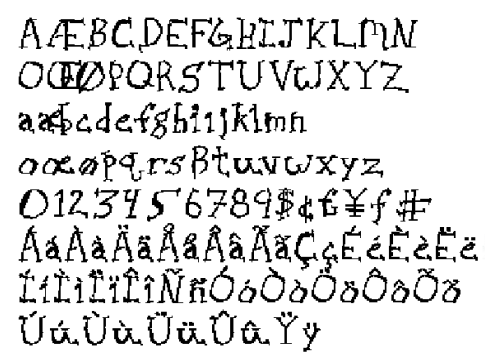


Fig. 3:3 *Junkie*, designed by Dan Ibarra for the T26 Type foundry in 1995.

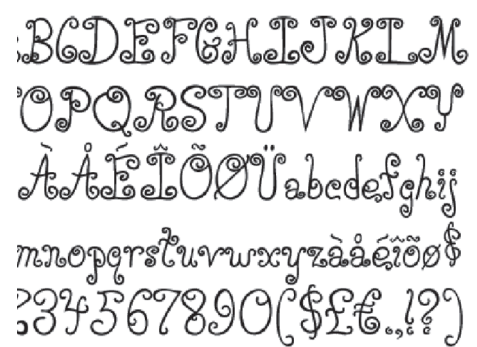


Fig. 3:4 *Sissy boy*, designed in 2001 by Peters for Bitstream, may be considered as pandering to and reinforcing the dominant heterosexist culture's perception the gay man in contemporary society. The dominant culture's perception of the queer sissy is that he "operates as the ornamented party boy of the urban environment, fun yet unstable, an avid consumer and performer, obsessed with make-overs and style, a foreigner to stability and function whose ornateness is excessive and indiscriminate" (Morton, 2003, p. 14).

the face with a small selection of Roman fonts. Ray (1998) suggests that this decision was related to the early victories that “encouraged them to look beyond Germany’s borders” (p. 430). Fletcher (2001) argues that the rejection was related to the typeface’s lack of practicality for use in propaganda. Whatever the reason, decisions regarding the use of typographic forms are intimately connected to the ways that societies communicate essential values, including marginalisation of the other.

Consideration of sociolects<sup>11</sup>, argot<sup>12</sup>, slang and anti-languages<sup>13</sup>, by dominant cultures often profile as typographical forms where we are directed to make immediate value judgments about social class, ethnicity, gender, or regional background. Designers often label letterforms that fall outside of the dominant pantheon of standard typefaces “vernacular” although the term is problematic. This categorisation of form is one based on notions of deviance, although linguistically, dialects are not considered deviant forms of language but different systems with distinct subsets of form<sup>14</sup>. Vernacular letterforms often present a loaded but intended *faux pas* that, in drawing attention to orchestrated, exoticised elements, become simultaneously part of the communication of marginalisation.

Because ideas concerning the sanctity and regularity of language are closely entwined with notions of social order, typographic forms that exist outside of privileged or prescriptive constructs can incite suspicion.

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<sup>11</sup> Wardhaugh (1986) uses the term *sociolect* to describe the speech characteristics of members of specific social groups, as opposed to *idiolects* that represent the speech characteristics of individuals.

<sup>12</sup> Baker (2002b) defines *argot* as language varieties associated with group membership where specific words are used to conceal either the users, or aspects of their communication, from non-members.

<sup>13</sup> Halliday (1978) uses the term *anti-language* to define a language generated by anti-societies. In its simplest form anti-language is partly a relexicalised language, often consisting of the same grammar as the dominant language, but a different vocabulary.

<sup>14</sup> Wolfram, W. (1991). *Dialects and American English*, p. 4.

Levi-Strauss has noted, "in certain primitive myths, the mispronunciation of words and the misuse of language are classified along with incest as horrendous aberrations capable of "unleashing storm and tempest." (Hebdige, 1987, p. 118).

The classification of these letterforms under the relatively benign category of vernacular, has afforded many designers a comfortable and under-critiqued avoidance of the subtle yet cumulative effects of their generation and use.

Ignoring the implications of type-form might have been argued as the dominant state of practice, in the closing decade of the twentieth century.

However, in the 1990s surfaced typographical experiments, (both in print and moving image), that violated authorised codes. They did this by utilising "standardised typefaces" in disruptive contexts. These designs sought to give "voice" to marginalised dialects and argots by creating new approaches to typographic form. Significant among these are the advertisements developed by John Barnbrook for the 1995 B.B.C. Radio Scotland campaign\* (fig. 3:5).

These short television texts used established type, disrupted and re-orchestrated, to aggressively capture the colloquial nature of the spoken dialect. Letterforms were animated over a pre-recorded audio monologue. The typographic designs were successful in translating not only the ethos of aural accents, but also their unapologetic profile as confident, marginalised voices.

#### summary

Typographic design as a system for conveying meaning, may be seen as contributing to cultural exclusion. Historically, otherness has been demonstrated in the establishment of standardised typefaces. These alphabets have profiled national or international values against which the exotic has been demarcated and defined.

Alphabets designed to represent the other have normally been developed by people inside the dominant order. These depictions have often disrupted conventions like readability, legibility, and elegance. Generally these alphabets tend to be dislocated from the philosophical and metaphorical values of the groups they purport to represent.



Fig. 3:5 Stills from *Foggie Bummer*\* (1995)

The conversation is between two men discussing words used in Scottish dialect. The animation was generated by letrasetting directly onto a combination of found footage and footage Barnbrook had filmed himself. Each frame in the piece was hand made. This work was made for the BBC and was aired nightly, just before the station went off the air. Barnbrook's discussion on this work is available at: <http://www.barnbrook.net/films/bbc%20radio%20scotland/radioscotland.html>

Because of this they may be seen as imitations of culture. In general their purpose is limited to ornamentation and display. This is because their decorative nature disables them from presenting any significant body of information; they become unreadable when used as body type.

As token representations, these alphabets are often used to portray the marginalised inside the graphic language of a dominant culture. However, because of their exoticised physical form, they simultaneously represent difference as decorative, difficult and impractical.

Recently, academic and professional discourse has begun to question the nature of this marginalisation. This discourse has raised issues for the present project. This is because the world in which Sam belongs, is generally seen as indicative of the other. Alphabets developed to represent male prostitutes either do not exist, or more importantly, do not draw on any in-depth understanding of these men's language and culture.

The following section of this exegesis therefore, examines the culture and language form of Sam's world. It seeks through this analysis to develop typographical treatments that might more articulately present the subtle and complex nature of his character and the story he tells.

## bog culture and anti-language

### introduction

In the story, Sam's world is a composite of two conflicting diegeses. The first comprises the over-ground. It is the evident world of the small town, with its socially demarcated school, watchful streets, local hotel and undercurrent of comfortable brutality. This is the world in Sam's recollection where *"things were bound by tradition and silence."* Here the boy exists as the beloved child of his grandmother, as a mildly eccentric loner with a strange penchant for collecting broken dolls and junk from the dump. Like many young gays he exists in this world as a performing character, feigning nonchalance or retreat, as needs dictate, but above all covering all traces of any parallel life. He is fifteen, in year eleven at the local high school; he rides a bike and dresses the same as everybody else. He is seen as relatively inconsequential.

The film's second diegesis enfolds a completely separate world to the first, although like the language form that is used within it, it contains elements recontextualised from the over-ground.

Here Sam cruises in the weekends and after school. He turns tricks for money, knows many of the men in the town, the police and a world of networks, language and innuendo that is beyond the comprehension of most of the community.

In Britain, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand a core of the language he uses in this world is called Polari. Though in most urban centers it has all but died out now, Polari is a secret language mainly used by gay men in the first seventy or so years of the twentieth century, however in South Africa, Australia and New Zealand it sits within a context of broader, culturally specific argots. Cage (2003) has recently termed the South African form of this language Gayle. However, in New Zealand and Australia the argot still remains relatively undocumented and certainly unnamed. As an underpinning for this research, specifically the informing of design decisions surrounding the development of typographical treatments for the film, I spent four years collecting and documenting a lexicon of specific New Zealand bog cruising argot (appendix 2). This lexicon contains words related

to, and emerging from, the criminalised culture of bog cruisers. The language variety appears to be made up of three forms, Polari, an anti-language used by gay men in the United Kingdom over the past hundred years, gay slang, and finally words relating to specific locations, events or groups of people involved in the criminalisation or marginalisation of men who operate within the bog cruising community.

### **bog culture**

#### *literary profiles*

Documentation relating to the world of bog cruising demonstrates a long, sparse and little publicised history. Theo van der Meer's (1994) study of the use of public toilets as sites for same sex encounters in the Netherlands in the eighteenth century, provides records of some of the earliest western European profiles of this culture. George Chauncey's *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890-1940* (1994), discusses the historical profiles and meanings of public sex in that city and provides an interesting consideration of both ethnic and class issues impacting upon them. Unlike other aspects of sexual engagement, the subject of bog cruising has not profiled highly in the literary arts. Angus Wilson's *Hemlock and After* (1952) features a memorable scene centered on arrests in toilets in Leicester Square and Roger Peyrefitte's, *The Exile of Capri* (1961), contains one highly comic scene set in public toilets. Bog cruising features in Larry Kramer's, *Faggots* (1978), and in Andrew Holleran's, *Dancer from the Dance* (1978). In theatre the subject profiles in Michael Wilcox's play *Rents* (1979), about two rent boys in Edinburgh and brutally in Nigel Williams' hard-hitting attack on police entrapment, *WCPC* (1982). In film, cruising in public toilets has been significantly profiled in Fassbinder's *Fox and His Friends* (1975), Ripplloh's *Taxi zum Klo* (1981), Stephen Frear's *Prick Up Your Ears* (1987), Ana Kokkino's *Head On* (1998), and in Simon Shore's comedy, *Get Real* (1999).

In New Zealand literature the subject remains relatively avoided, although it features briefly in Barry Nonweiler's novel *That Other Realm of Freedom* (1983), in Welby Ings' short stories, *Pickup* (1980), and *A Matter of Convenience* (1987), and most recently in the documentary by Marion Evans, *Formally Known as James Mack* (2003).

*demographic profiles*

The language of bog cruisers, which I term bog speak emerged as a natural consequence of the societal oppression of a group of men by both the dominant heterosexual community and also significant sections of the New Zealand gay community. Bog cruisers continue to exist as a distinct, clandestine and marginalised group in most towns and in every city in this country. In considering the profile and nature of bog speak, it is useful to have an understanding of the legal and social situation that has accompanied, and to a certain extent shaped, this community in New Zealand. This profile appears as appendix 1 to this exegesis.

International studies in the 1970s gave the first significant profiles of the bog cruising community as one made up primarily of married men. Humphrey's (1970), *Tearoom Trade: Impersonal Sex in Public Places*<sup>15</sup>, suggested that 54% of men using "tearooms" for sex were married men living with their wives. In his forward to the British edition of the book, criminologist D. J. West commented,

*One might have expected that men indulging in anonymous sexual exchanges in lavatories would prove to be lonely, socially alienated, unmarried and possibly ageing homosexuals. In fact, it appears that the majority, were married and predominantly heterosexual. They were seeking an additional sexual outlet that was quick, undemanding and free from social entanglements. Fully committed homosexuals were in less evidence, perhaps because they had better means of making contacts and achieving satisfaction. (Cited in Burton, 1985, p.17)*

In Australia and New Zealand, two more recent studies suggested that non-gay identifying men (heterosexual or bisexual) comprised somewhere between 40%-50% of the men who used bogs for sex.

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<sup>15</sup> This research was first published in 1970 although the data it profiles was the outcome of evidence gathered in the 1960s. Humphrey's research focused specifically on behaviour in toilets. Related research in 1978 by fellow sociologist Edward Delph, *The Silent Community: Public Homosexual Encounters* considered a wider range of public sex encounters in New York City. A traditional sociological model of "deviance" characterised both of these pieces of early research.

The Westmead Hospital study (cited in Goddard, 1990) suggested that 9% of men doing the beats “regarded themselves as heterosexual. Another 39% ... said they were bisexual. Just over half (52%) identified as homosexual” (p. 26).

In New Zealand, Chetwynd’s report (1990a) stated that 36% of her research sample identified as either bisexual or as both gay and bisexual, however the most common identity of toilet cruisers was gay (64%). (It is significant to note however, that her report omitted a category for men who considered themselves to be heterosexual despite the fact that her research of the previous year in conjunction with Horn and Kelleher (1989)<sup>16</sup> stated, “a slightly higher proportion of respondents using bogs in large urban as opposed to provincial areas may be heterosexual identifying”(p. 17).

Her findings also appear to sit uncomfortably against related statistics like Desroches (1990), and Moore (1995), both of whom suggest that “the majority of men who cruise urban and highway beats are ostensibly heterosexual married men with families” (Nardi, 1999, p. 26).

Reid, Hughes, Worth, Saxton, Robinson, Segedin, & Aspin’s, *Male Call, Waea Mai, Tane Ma. Report 4, Casual sex between men* (1997), was an outcome of the first nation-wide survey of men who have sex with men in New Zealand<sup>17</sup>. This report, described among other things,

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<sup>16</sup> Horn, Chetwynd, & Kelleher, J. *Changing Sexual Practices Amongst Homosexual Men in Response to AIDS: Who Has Changed and Who Hasn’t and Why?*, p. 17.

<sup>17</sup> The *Male Call, Waea Mai Tane Ma* project was undertaken because no large scale baseline data on this population was available and at the time men who had sex with men accounted for 80% of New Zealanders who had developed AIDS (Reid et al, 1997, p.1). The method used was a nationwide telephone survey that was conducted over a six-week period between May and June 1996. All men who had sex with another man in the previous five years were able to participate. 1852 men completed the questionnaire in full and the survey attracted a broad cross-section of men who had sex with men through a recruitment campaign that included both mainstream and gay media.

the demographic characteristics and social milieu variables of a sample of 1852 respondents who were men who had sex with men.

The research found that 35% of the 1362 men who said they had casual sex with another man (msc) in the previous year had been to a bog at least once in that period to look for or meet male sex partners. The demographic and social milieu characteristics of these 477 men when compared to the remaining 885 msc who had not been to public toilets to look for male sex partners was characterised by higher proportions of men who:

- were aged over 35 (51%:43%)  $p=0.006$
  - identified as Maori (12.6%: 5.8%)  $p<0.001$
  - did not have any school qualification (15%: 9.7%)  $p=0.006$
  - were not gay community attached (37.3%: 30.7%)  $p=0.02$
  - were in a relationship with another man (29.6% : 24%)  $p=0.04$
- (report 4, p. 15).

Their report also found that ninety of the msc (6.6%) in the survey had been paid to have sex in the previous six months (*ibid*, p. 7), that unlike gay bars and saunas which are generally patronised by gay community-attached men, bogs often are not (*ibid*, p. 11), and that Maori respondents were more likely than New Zealand Europeans to have gone to public toilets in the previous year to meet male sex partners (*ibid*, p. 12).

These results called in to question some of the findings of Chetwynd's *Profiles of Gay and Bisexual men- report no. 6; The Toilets* (1990) that suggested that ... "there were no real differences between the toilet cruisers and the non toilet cruisers on age, ethnicity or sexual identity," (p. 22).

Thus, research would tend to suggest that bog cruising communities are something very different to the wider notions of "gay society". Demographically they have a distinct profile that includes a large proportion of married, non gay-identifying men, who are not gay-community attached.

In this next section of the exegesis we will consider some of the dominant social attitudes evidenced in these communities and how they are expressed in the language form they have developed.



### **the silent language**

The bog-scene as presented in the film *boy* is encoded with a range of linguistic and behavioral features indicative of a scrupulously unacknowledged world. Almost every town and certainly every city in New Zealand has an active bog culture. Because gay and bisexual men are denied the usual support and affirmation from family and society that is available to heterosexual people, Cass (1979), argues that their sexual activity takes on a greater personal meaning. Due to the limited opportunities available to men who have sex with men to meet each other, especially in small towns and rural environments, some of these men make use of public bogs and their surrounding environs for sexual contacts. Risks of exposure or criminal charges are outweighed by the need for affirmation, intimacy and belonging through sexual and social contact.

Hollister (1999), in his analysis of highway rest areas in New York suggests that,

*[o]nly in the most secure sites is conversation likely to be routine, casual and refer to sexual contact. Since tearoom cruising involves so little spoken language, and is so rarely spoken about by its participants, there is no commonly recognized language to talk about it. (p. 61)*

However, his assertion is not supported by the majority of men interviewed as part of this present project. Hollister's belief is not consistent with a very full and descriptive lexicon that surfaced during interviews and conversations with many New Zealand men who use bogs for establishing contact with other men (see appendix 2). While for some people who use these facilities there is a strong emphasis on anonymity and non-verbal discourse, for many others there is a rich and colourful language that affords an exclusive and highly descriptive profile not only on the culture of bog cruising but also on its histories and social emphases<sup>18</sup>.

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<sup>18</sup> In this research, the idea of there being no commonly recognised language was generally expressed only by people living in large urban centres that have seen a diminishing of the numbers of bogs suitable for cruising and the increasing availability of "sex on site" clubs. The opinion also profiled among heterosexually identifying men whose use of the bogs is generally fleeting and silent. Conversely, the language form appears to be very full and in use in many small towns and rural areas of the country. Here smaller numbers of men cruise and exist in loose networks that are often more likely to be known to each other.

Fig. 3:7 Opposite, publicity shot of *Sam in the bogs* (2004)

### **the family**

Smith (1993), argues that the bog-scene forms part of a dynamic that exclusively privileges the heterosexual concept of the family. He says

*the underside of the family is that it is highly resistant to tolerating the existence of social relations outside of its reach. A man desiring sex with another man is not easily integrated into the rigid sexual ideology of the nuclear family. Beats can therefore be seen as an effect in part, of mandatory heterosexuality. The visible, acceptable face of heterosexuality is the institution of the family. But the rigidity of its heterosexual orientation has the effect of producing the beat. (p. 20)*

If the bogs/beats exist as a covert phenomenon running parallel to, but outside of, socially sanctioned notions of the family, it is fear of exposure to this same family that causes the men in these communities to build up the systems of practice that ensure secrecy and anonymity. This fear may be seen as one of the reasons why sentences of diversion (with their inherent non-recording of a criminal record) of prosecutions for offensive behavior, are so keenly sought after by arrested men. Notions of the family as the polarity against which the otherness of the bog cruiser is measured, can be seen in the way that the news media encodes information regarding bog cruising behavior as a fundamental attack on this unit.

Smith (1993), suggests, “in the vast majority of newspaper articles on beats, the legitimizing cry was that the beat activities posed a threat to the children and the family” (p. 20).

This notion of the beat user as encroaching upon the space of the family can be seen in numerous police justifications for arrests of men with other men. *The Northern Advocate's* report on the arrest of two youths aged eighteen and nineteen at 11.00pm on Friday 2 August 2000, for performing indecencies on each other in a car parked near the toilet block of the Whangarei Aquatic centre, quoted Sergeant Murray Stapp's justification for the arrest as:

*Children and teenagers use those toilets and they are entitled to use them without being confronted by these people. We have had a number of complaints about the activities that go on there and the only way to stop it is to give the place a good check out. (Dinsdale, 2000, p.1)*

Although the article questioned whether any children would have been around the toilet block at 11.00 pm on the night that the two men were arrested (in their car) and a request was made for evidence that any children had been approached (by men) at the toilet, no response was forthcoming. A question as to why heterosexual couples who have sex in cars were not similarly arrested was also left without a response.

Yet possibly because of this marginalisation, the culture of bog cruising in rural towns has developed many structures and terms that relate directly to a notion of the alternative family. Nic Andronis (1991), the Rural Outreach Project Officer for the AIDS Council of New South Wales states,

*discussions and observation at beats revealed that there is a loose network of local beat users within a given area. They generally tend to know each other and over time develop a social relationship which includes discussion about aspects of their lives that would not be disclosed elsewhere. This process is extremely important for these men who, for the most part, are in a relationship with a female partner. (p. 2)*

Andronis discusses rural beats as being active day and night with regular peak period patterns known to local users. Within these patterns there exist times when a strong sense of community is evident.

*Men who have sex with men who use the beat during the day are very wary of being exposed and may not acknowledge others. The night time users of town beats tend to become more relaxed and social, with men sitting in their cars and much more social integration (ibid).*

Ulo Klemmer a BEAT volunteer who grew up in the bog scene in the early 1980s, talks about the family structures that existed at that time.

*A young person would be 'adopted' by older, more experienced men, not for sex necessarily, but because the young needed to be shown their way around a society that had its own rules. (Goddard, 1990, p. 28)*

The notion of the alternative bog-cruising family is clearly identifiable within bogspeak's vocabulary. An *Aunty* is the term for an older gay man, generally whose approach to life is conservative. A *mother* generally refers to a gay mentor, protector or advisor who in a community cares for, or is surrounded by younger, gay men with whom he generally does not have a sexual relationship. A *daddy* is an older, generally sexually attractive man. Among more khamp bog cruisers the term *sister* refers to a close gay male friend.

Describing an unfamiliar man as *family* indicates that he is either gay or has sex with other men. The concept of family also permeates derogatory terms like *fish-wife* (the wife of a gay man), *breeder* (a heterosexual man) and *miscarriage* (a discharge of air and semen after anal sex).

Bogs exist as a phenomenon caught in a social tension. Clearly they provide an outlet for sexual satisfaction that involves no on-going commitment to sexual partners, they afford quick sex with some protection from exposure. Within this, the networked and protective environment of bog cruising serves another significant purpose.

The bog cruiser operates in a society where a range of active and substantial censures impact upon him. Ironically he is vulnerable to both criminal harassment (queer bashers and blackmailers) and to the police. Gay men who use the bogs for sex are also stigmatised within significant sections of the gay community, and both gay identifying men and those who identify as heterosexual or bisexual are all vulnerable to the media's construction of their natures and behavior.

#### **the police**

Men who use the bogs therefore act disobediently and in breaking the rules of the dominant culture, either accept the consequences of censure or develop systems of obscurification that enable their choices to exist unnoticed. Smith (1993) says,

*[i]ndividual beats operate within a threshold of local community tolerance that includes local residents, police, the local council, the media and the courts. Once a threshold of tolerance is breached, a mechanism of surveillance is triggered or heightened against beat activities (p. 20).*

When this threshold of invisibility is breached the authorities act accordingly. Vance (1984) argues that this is because,

*the system of sexual hierarchy functions smoothly only if sexual non-conformity is kept invisible... For dominant sexual groups, the appearance of the sexual lower orders.... produces anxiety, discomfort, the threat of pollution, and a challenge to their hegemony. (p. 19)*

It is therefore not surprising that the bog-cruising community has developed a range of words and warnings to alert fellow cruisers to signs of danger thereby maintaining its profile of discretion and obscurity. For men entering the bog scene, signs of police surveillance or entrapment are learnt very early.

Some observations and words are localised and some are more generic. In many cases the same phenomenon has terms or warnings that differ from country to country or across decades. Indicative of a regionally located observation is a term like *lace-ups*.

A *lace-up* meant a suspicious man and alluded to the fact that in the 1970s and 1980s in the Waikato, many plain-clothes policemen, acting as agent provocateurs still wore their uniform [lace-up] shoes when going in to public toilets. A glance under the partition of the *Garden Place bogs* (Hamilton), at the shoes of the person making overtures in the adjoining cubicle, often identified them as entrapment police.

On a national level the term *Commodore* in the 1980s also referred to police activity but more specifically to their cars being parked in the vicinity. The New Zealand Police bought the first of these vehicles in 1980-81 and often the cars were naively parked near bogs, inadvertently alerting cruising men to potential entrapment. In many small

towns, regulars knew the number plates of these vehicles. While the term *Commodore* appears to be national rather than international, an observant eye for specific vehicles is something that is generally imperative. Burton (1985) in his book, *Amongst the Aliens: Some Aspects of Gay Life*, in discussing men who cruise bogs in unfamiliar English towns says,

*those who utilize them for sexual purposes know where to find them and most usually seem to know exactly which is currently popular, which is generally deserted and which is under police observation. There are those who can spot a plain-clothes policeman or unmarked police car with as much facility as any stamp collector could a Penny-black in a box of all-sorts. (p. 6)*

Rogers has also recorded the naming of undercover police cars in America in his 1972, *The Queens' Vernacular: A Gay Lexicon*. The term *ghost car* referred to an unmarked vice squad car generally involved in entrapment operations.

Warnings about the presence of police are also encoded in specific names that not only alert other bog users to activity but also carry insights into the fact that the user is a member of this particular community. Historically many of these names have been feminised and Paul Baker suggests that the feminising of the law was a way of removing some of the police's power, (see Gill, 2003, p. 4). Words like *Alice*, *Dora-D*, *Hilda-Handcuff*, *Lily-Lunchbox*, *Nelly-Law*, *Jennifer-Justice* and *Vivian Vice* all fall in to this category. However parallel to these forms of nomenclature are more brutal terms for the police that reflect the anger and mistrust with which these men are often viewed. *Hilda Boxrot*, *Petunia Pig* and *Tilly Tight-twat* were all in use in New Zealand in the 1960s and 1970s. More current terms include *filth*, *demon* and *bitchsmacker*.

Terms like *urinal-sniffer* (referring to police getting down on their hands and knees at a urinal to look under the doors of cubicles to see if there are more than one pair of feet in them) and *crapper dick* appear to be more recent American imports<sup>19</sup>, and *Waitomo* (in reference to

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<sup>19</sup> Bruce Rogers, in his lexicon *The Queens' Vernacular* (1972), indicates that both of these words were known amongst American gay men in the 1970s although *crapper dick* was in more common use in the 1950s.

the large anuses of police in uniform) is directly related to localised knowledge about the caves in the area<sup>20</sup>.

More recent words like *bagging* appear to have been imported from Britain but refer to an established technique of concealment. Bagging is a method of hiding a sexual partner in a toilet cubicle during sex, thus avoiding police detection. One man sits on the toilet while the other stands facing him with a plastic bag or coat pulled around his feet. If a policeman looks under the gap at the bottom of the door, only one pair of feet will be seen and the direction they are pointing will be obscured.

The term *shaker*, referring to a police officer engaged in entrapment refers to the technique where the officer stands at a urinal shaking his penis suggestively after urinating, in an effort to entice another man to make an “indecent assault” on him.

### **heterosexuals**

Attitudes to heterosexual males and especially queer-bashers are also embedded in bogspeak. While men in the bog cruising community rarely use the word *poofster-basher*, the term *basher* refers to someone who visits gay cruising areas to attack other men. These bashers may engage in sex with a man in a bog and afterwards attack or rob him. It is common practice for men who use bogs for sex to warn other users about bashers and individual policemen who act as *agent provocateurs* by writing clear physical profiles of these people on the walls of individual cubicles. Queer-bashers on the other hand tend to operate in groups, waiting for an opportunity to attack an isolated victim. Generally a man cruising the bogs is cautious of slow moving vehicles containing groups of other men or of accompanying another man back to a location where a group of unfamiliar men are gathered. The phenomenon of queer-bashers is evident in a wide range of countries. In South Africa a term in current use for these men is *bunny-bashers* (Cage, 2003). In San Francisco in the late 1960s a word in common use

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<sup>20</sup> A fuller, comparative description of these words can be found in Appendix 2.

Fig. 3:8 Sam's flash-shot assault on the driver.



was *four-doors*, (Rogers, 1972). This term related to the sound of more than one car door being opened and slammed shut in close succession, signaling the emptying of a car of bashers and the need for a potential victim to escape quickly.

The most familiar words used to describe a heterosexual man are *straight* or *het*, however more derogatory terms include *breeder*, *Carlotta*, *naff*, *naffarella*, *nanti omi*, and *NTBH*.

The noun *breeder* is both a bogspeak and gay slang term for a heterosexual man. The term is one of distaste and refers to these men's abilities being limited to siring children. In the film *boy*, bogspeak infiltrates Sam's world. Derogatory bogspeak words for heterosexuals are used in much the same way that homophobic language is used on gay men. When Sam is angry or insulted terms like *breeder*, *fish* (a word for women that references the smell of their genitals), and *smeg* are flung back angrily at an event. This language is as brutal as its heterosexual equivalent that uses terms like *pillow-muncher*, *pooh-pusher*, *faggot* and *arse-bandit* to insult gay men.

anti-language  
bogspeak

*“No you won’t see that troll around for a while. The filth got him after a milk run. Poor thing dropped in to the Country Club for a bit of cut lunch and there was a demon on the other side of the glory hole, dressed up as the woofy trade of your dreams! Sprung him gutless. But what do you expect? That thing’s so brazen, it thinks because it swans around with the mullet in tow, no one will know it’s into trade! I tell you, a naff beard can only hide so much. You can bet there’ll be no full-house in that bog for a while!”*

What you have read is a contemporary account of an unattractive, married heterosexual man being arrested in a public toilet in the Auckland Domain.

The same story in the late 1950s may have sounded something like this...

*“Ooh sharda! Nada to vada in that cottage! That antique Auntie with the coddly eek tried to charver Alice in there. He thinks the fish and chips hide the fact he’s family. I tell you a ride in the dog wagon down to central and it’ll be all over for the straight and narrow!”*

It is unlikely that a man who cruised the bogs during the two periods illustrated would have used or known all of the words listed in the appended lexicon of bogspeak, but he would definitely have understood at least one of the above accounts.

Put simply, bogspeak is a language form used by men who have sex with other men in public toilets in New Zealand. It has grown and developed significantly in the last eighty years and exists inside of a wider, non-verbal discourse that is used to communicate within this community.

Baker (2002) argues that,

*[i]n the past, linguists who wanted to study what they deemed 'gay language' began with an assumption of difference- that gay people used language in a way that was different from that of heterosexuals. There was also an assumption that there was something intrinsically similar in the way that, as a group, gay men or lesbians used language, (p. 10).<sup>21</sup>*

However, when I began compiling this lexicon as part of the underpinning of the film, I found that this assumption of "intrinsic similarity" was questionable. Many men gave conflicting assignments of meanings to words, different spellings and different contexts for use. My original assumption that that these descriptions were either correct or incorrect, proved to be too simplistic. Therefore, suggesting that bogspeak as a single, absolute, and uniformly defined language form may not be a viable assumption. While many men agreed on the meanings of certain often-used words like *naff*, *glory hole* or *beat*, it was rare that they agreed on every word, particularly if they had been part of the community at different times, had travelled internationally or came from different parts of the country. Similarly gay men who do the bogs often sample a broader gay slang vocabulary but appear less likely to use "straight" words like *slasher*, *wash and leave*, and *faggot*.

In this language form, many words have different spellings. Terms like *eek* (*eke*, *eak*), *taaka* (*tucker*), *joosh bag* (*shoush bag*) and *bona*, (*bonar*, *boner*, *bono*) may have their differences traced to the fact that in general, bogspeak is an oral rather than a written language. Because of its relatively undocumented state, it exists as preferred and unchallenged written forms among its users.

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<sup>21</sup> Much research in this field has focused on the building of lesbian and gay lexicons: Cory (1965), Farrell (1972), Legman (1941), Rodgers (1972), Stanley (1970), and Young (1996). Other researchers have considered a range of impacting factors: Goodwin (1989), Moonwomon (1985), Moran (1991), and Gaudio (1994), *intonation*, Lumby (1976) *stress patterns*, and Webbink (1981), *code switching*. Accompanying these investigations are two more recent lexicons of gay speech, Baker (2002a), has provided a scholarly, in depth consideration of Polari as a language form and Cage (2003), has considered the origins and profiles of gay culture and its influence on speech in South Africa.

The question one is presented with then is how does one define such a language form?

First, unlike Polari, bogspeak is still a living, active language. It is also an argot that (unlike a broader New Zealand gay lexicon) has developed in a world made up entirely of men (both gay identifying and non-gay identifying)<sup>22</sup> whose common community is specifically located in public toilets and their surrounding environs. Because of bog queens' pariah-like status in significant parts of the gay and heterosexual communities, the language is generally not widely spoken away from the beat (except in groups of men who share similar experiences). While bogspeak may have many words that can be also be found in Polari and broader, contemporary gay lexicons, it also has a distinctively New Zealand profile with words like *Taaka/tucker*, *kk's*, *Commodores*, *Waitomos*, *rental box*, and *smeg* all related to specific languages, incidents or locations indigenous to this country.

What is also significant is the difference in words used between men who have sex with men in cities and those who cruise rural or small town bogs. In general, Polari and older gay slang terms appear to be in wider use the further one moves away from the large urban centers.<sup>23</sup> This linguistic profile appears to parallel observations made by men working in the BEATS projects. Goddard (1990), in his essay *The Forgotten World* says of the rural bogs,

*It seems sometimes as if the last twenty years has not happened and we are looking at a carbon copy of a homosexual society which existed in the forties or fifties but which many of us, preoccupied with our post-Stonewall lives, assume has vanished. (p. 25)*

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<sup>22</sup> Men in the gay bars and clubs socialise in communities that often include a diverse range of women including lesbians, fag hags (heterosexual women who are friends of gay men) and transsexuals.

<sup>23</sup> As a result, in the film, words indicative of a more dated vocabulary are used to surround Sam's world and operate in the language of his insults. Fish, bona and smeg are terms that may be unfamiliar to boys his age in larger urban centres. Similarly Sam would probably not be so familiar with terms like docking, felching and barebacking unless he had been reading AIDS Foundation leaflets or accessed other young, gay men via the internet.

While laws impacting on the wider gay community in New Zealand have also affected men who have sex with men in public toilets, separate laws continue to keep bog cruisers' sexual activities and social patterns criminalised and therefore more clandestine. Consequently bogspeak still exists as an active, essentially underground language. Evidence of this fundamental difference between bogspeak and a broader gay lexicon can be seen in the increasingly frequent use of words and expressions from over-ground gay society in heterosexual language. This may be partially attributed to the increasing range of mediated images of over-ground gay identity in mainstream television and film. Words like *girl-friend*, *puhleeze!*, *naff*, *Helloooo?* and *tacky* are now used by many non-gay people. They appear in TV shows like *Will & Grace*, *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy*, *The Block*, *Queer Nation* and *Queer as Folk*. Outside of a few cross-over words between contemporary gay slang and bogspeak, it is unlikely that one would encounter many terms from this more underground lexicon anywhere outside of the community it serves.

#### **language form**

So, if we can describe bogspeak as a New Zealand, sites-specific, living, underground, male-only language belonging to a marginalised group, vulnerable to criminal prosecution of the law, we are able to measure its profile against a range of terms used to describe language.

Hudson (1980) discusses the concept of a *language variety* that he defines as "a set of linguistic items with similar social distribution", (p. 24). He notes that definitions of linguistic items are dependent on a specific theory that a particular linguist believes best supports the language structure. A disadvantage with this definition, Baker (2002b), argues, is that it is so broad that it includes phenomena such as languages, styles, and dialects.

The term *slang* has been used to describe many individual words in bogspeak and often, in discussions and interviews, the term bogspeak was used interchangeably by men with terms like *nelly words*, *gayspeak*, *code*, and *parley*.

O'Grady, Dobrovolsky and Katamamba (1996) describe *slang* as a label often employed to "denote certain informal or faddish uses of nearly anyone in the speech community" (p. 555). However, bogspeak's core lexicon appears to have been very durable<sup>24</sup> and in this differs from the rapid changes indicative of slang. Classifying bogspeak as slang is also problematic because it cannot be said to be used by "nearly anyone in the speech community". Although there are specific words in bogspeak that are familiar to its related (and sometimes interfacing) gay and criminal communities, bogspeak's broader lexicon contains many specific terms that are unfamiliar to men in these groups. The broader gay community would generally not be familiar with terms like *gardening*, *full house*, *shaker*, *joosh*, *glory hole* or places like *the Hanging Gardens*, *the Catacombs* or *Glowworm Grotto*. Similarly, unless they had mixed substantially in either the gay, prostitutes' or bog cruising communities, many criminals would be unfamiliar with words like *auntie*, *cottaging*, *troll*, *woofy*, *breeder*, *cut-lunch*, *HRU* or *docking*. Moreover, within the bog cruising community as a whole, many of the terms would be unfamiliar to all members because some are aligned with regions, sites or specific incidents.

The term *argot* may be a word that more accurately signifies bogspeak's nature. The word refers to "obscure or secret language", (O'Grady et al. 1996, p. 557). However, Baker (2002b) adds, "*argot is essentially concerned with language varieties where speakers wish to conceal either themselves or aspects of their communication,*" (p. 13).

Thus, the term may be used to describe specific predecessors and contributors to bogspeak, including thieves' cant<sup>25</sup>, fairground

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<sup>24</sup> Words like *pick up*, *bona*, *troll*, *cruise* and *fish* all have documented histories of over two hundred years, as parlaree, thieves' cant, or as prison slang.

<sup>25</sup> Cant or pelting speech may be traced back to the eleventh century in Britain (Wilde, 1889), and was a secret language used by criminals in the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. It contained words for the different classes of vagabonds, criminal strategies, names for tools, spoils and legal consequences of being apprehended. Cant may be considered a technical language concerned primarily with a form of business.

parlyaree<sup>26</sup>, Polari<sup>27</sup> and American slang<sup>28</sup>.

Another term, *anti-language*, used by Halliday (1978) refers to language used by an anti-society within a society.

*An anti society is a counter culture... a conscious alternative to society, existing by resisting either passively or by more hostile, destructive means. Anti-languages are generated by anti-societies and in their simplest forms are partly relexicalised languages consisting of the same grammar but a different vocabulary in areas central to the activities of subcultures.* (Baker, 2002b, p.13)

The social values of words and phrases in anti-languages also tend to be more emphasised than in mainstream languages. This is what Halliday (1978) calls "*sociolinguistic coding orientation*" (p. 166). Bogspeak is profiled by many deeply antagonistic, highly loaded words that attack social, political, and sexual systems. It singles out specific groups for special attention, namely the police, heterosexual men and women, and significantly, other bog cruisers.

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<sup>26</sup> Parlyaree, Baker considers acted as a bridge between Cant and Polari (2002b). It is a language form Partridge links with circus people and itinerant actors who until the end of the eighteenth century were a despised and marginalised group. Their language form used a number of words from Italian, Lingua Franca and the gypsies. Parlyaree also contains examples of backslang and rhyming slang, (Partridge, (1950). Parlyaree, Baker (2002b) suggests is the source of some early, twentieth-century prison slang and contributed words to bogspeak including *omee* and *nantee*. Parlyaree can also written *parlare, parlaree, palarie, Parlary* and *Parlary*.

<sup>27</sup> Polari is a term used by writers like Cage and Baker to describe a secret language, mainly used by gay men. Cage (2003) suggests Polari entered the speech of gay men with the disappearance of large numbers of travelling performers in the twentieth century. Polari as a language form used by homosexual men, adopted words like *trade* and *picked-up* that originated in the Molly houses of the eighteenth century.

<sup>28</sup> American slang began to surface significantly in New Zealand bogspeak between 1942 and mid-1944 when more than 100,000 U.S. servicemen spent various periods in this country. Jenkin (1997) cites an oral history recorded in 1993-4 by the New Zealand Lesbian and Gay Archives. It includes a description of an active cruising scene in Wellington during World War II. When the Americans returned home they left behind a legacy of words including *butch, dick, rim, blow-job, tea rooms* and *milk route*.

Thus, while accepting O'Grady's definition of argot, Halliday's concept of the anti-language may be more applicable to bogspeak. Because men who have sex with men in bogs have been stigmatised by heterosexual (and later gay) society they have continued to develop an anti-language as a way of creating and maintaining an anti-society. It is the tensions between two alternative constructions in a bog cruiser's life; the society of the over-ground and the secret, conscious alternative society of the underground, that creates the distance between the language and the anti-language. Baker (2002b) maintains that anti-languages are, "*concerned with the definition and maintenance of alternative (and often secret) identities, organized through ritual participation in alternative social hierarchies,*" (p. 14).

*summary*

While there has been some international academic and creative research into the phenomenon of bog cruising, the related language form has not been widely documented.

Investigations in the early 1990s in New Zealand provided a useful demographic profile of men in this community. However, beyond this research, their appearance in the literature and social history of this country is almost non-existent.

Research has shown that the bog cruising community is made up of heterosexual and gay-identifying men. These men have developed rituals and a language form to protect themselves and the world in which they operate. Bog cruising is still practiced widely in New Zealand but the language form associated with it, is now more evident among men in rural communities and small towns.

This language form profiles clusters of words related to specific issues. There are many words that parody concepts within the nuclear family, and a wealth of descriptions for women, heterosexual men, and the police. Significantly the language also contains many derogatory terms to describe men and their sexual proclivities within the bog cruising community.

The language form continues to change and develop over time. It is both national and location-specific. It is male-only and may be defined as an underground anti-language. This is because it is concerned with describing and maintaining alternative identities. These are organised within a community that has its own distinctive rituals and social hierarchies.

The next section of this exegesis will consider two significant themes within this anti-language and their impact on typographical treatments in the short film *boy*. These themes become evident when the lexicon of bog speak is considered as a whole.

The first theme is detachment. The second is the seemingly unusual profile of parodied ecclesiasticism. These themes are discussed in some depth, both in terms of their origins and profile. They are also considered in relation to experiments developed in the design of the film.

## design considerations

*detachment and ecclesiasticism*

### introduction

*Boy deals with a subject film makers tend to avoid. While young men's emerging sexuality is commonly explored in film and television, their gay equivalent is generally avoided or portrayed as neutral (asexual but camp) or as a victim of paedophilia. Sam is neither. He is a phenomenon in nearly every New Zealand small town with a public toilet. Unable to get in to city pubs or clubs, sequestering his lifestyle from the community, he finds contact through advertisements written on walls and through 'glory holes' burned or drilled through the partitions.*

*I grew up like this, as did many of my mates. We were tough, quickly matured and caught in a value conflict between what was preached and what was practised. We learned early that intimate relationships were something detached, silent, impersonal and anonymous. We learned the biting humour and the rituals that kept us safe from the police and the queer-bashers. We learned that invisibility and a double life meant survival.*

*Nobody talked about us and nobody told our stories, as a result our world remains a vacuum in the literary construct of this country.*

(Ings, Feb. 2001, precursor to director's notes for *boy*.)

A fundamental design problem in this film was the effective translation of Sam's underground language into complementing typographical treatments. These treatments needed to operate effectively in both the over-ground and the underground worlds of the narrative. They needed to draw on the ethos of bogspeak but use this to make two distinctively different typefaces, one lyrical and one abject.

### **detachment and the underground face**

Peter Burton (1985) in his essay *Tearoom Trade: public convenience or private grief*, discusses some of the implications of transgressing the protective rituals that surround bog cruising. He says,

*one of the major tragedies of cottaging is the number of ostensibly straight men who find themselves arrested or confronting the horror and embarrassment of explaining their actions to wives (primarily) and employers; an equal part of the tragedy must be the same or similar situations which face gay men in the same position. (p. 16)*

An example of the consequences of such exposure, cited in Jenkin is taken from a news story *Witch-Hunt Causes Stirling Suicides* that featured in *Scotsgay* late in 1996.

*Eleven men have been arrested, two of whom have since committed suicide, following a cottaging blitz in Stirling. A third man has attempted suicide.... First to die was Michael Cummings, 60, a divorced rigger, who threw himself 200 feet to his death from the Forth Road Bridge after being arrested in the Beechwood toilet. A month later, Cameron Daisley, 48, a youth and community worker based at Balfron High School hanged himself in the woods on Sheriffmuir after police took it upon themselves to inform his employers, Stirling District Council, of his arrest. Despite his not having been convicted of any offence, his Equal Opportunities employer, a Labour controlled council, intended to suspend him. Mr Daisley was a member of the Dunblane Cathedral Choir and the Scottish National Orchestra Chorus as well as being an Elder of the Cathedral where his funeral service was held on 22nd November. He had lived with his partner, John Rooney, for 21 years. (1997, p.12)*

This is a story from Scotland, though it has little publicised parallels in New Zealand every year. It is indicative of a miasmatic fear that hangs over men who have sex with other men in bogs.

One set of ritualistic behaviours adopted to deal with this situation involves detachment. In general, sex between men in these sites is silent and rituals of contact, though complex, are enacted using a series of highly engineered cues and responses. The use of written notes, glances and displays through glory holes, the sounds of toilet-paper being rapidly pulled from dispensers, coughing, the shuffling of feet, all operate as cues for contact and all replace the intimacy of speech. Foucault discussing this detachment in the attraction of anonymous sex between men says, "*you stop being imprisoned inside your own face, your own past, your own identity. It's not the assertion of identity that is important; it's the assertion of non-identity,*" (Foucault, 1978, cited in Macey, 1993, p. xv).

This non-identity in bog cruising is embedded in rituals of detachment designed partly for protection. It is also evident in specific linguistic (and paralinguistic) profiles. It is these profiles that are of interest to this research.

Salen (2001) discussing the translation of invisibility into typographical form, talks about the importance of considering "*the phenomena of the typographic 'voice over' which constitutes a 'national symbolic environment'*" (p. 132). She suggests that, "*the typographic voices we are accustomed to are utopian, belonging, nowhere, regionless, without accent*" (ibid.). Designing a typographical treatment for a double life that exists inside, yet separate from a dominant repressive culture, posed a complex and difficult problem.

#### **the dictionary experiments**

The first creative experiments I trialled worked outwards from a culturally empowered lexicon, the *Concise Oxford Dictionary*. This is a text that might arguably be considered to represent an established profile and conventional recording and styling of English. It is an accepted voice of a national symbolic environment, where all elements are standardised, and accompanying patterns of typographical treatment are absolute.





Fig. 3:10 Unaligned type with the inclusion of symbols. The disruption of the privileged grid was inspired by the particular disorderliness of written words as they appear on toilet walls. These, I noted, often flow in more organic, curved lines than in the mechanically leaded strips of formal writing.

Fig. 3:11-12 Large images above and right. Early photographic indicatives for *boy* (2001) showing applications of disrupted type. The word *innocence* in the first image was the original title of the film and appears dominantly in typographical trials during the early stages of the its design. The word alluded to the fact that innocence might be entirely relative, Sam's innocence, social isolation and prostitution being pitted against the embedded and corrupt traditions of a dominant over-ground society. The second image shows the use of the disrupted Oxford dictionary background. It was trialed as a metaphorical reference to the boy's dislocation, however the idea was too abstruse to be effective.

Letters were cut out of the dictionary, pasted together, enlarged and reduced on poor photocopiers to distress the edges (fig. 3:10). They were then scanned into the computer and laid up over thumbnail images, to assess their potential to operate as detached elements in the same pictorial environment (figs. 3:11-12).

The detached aesthetic of these typographical experiments in both their organic form and dislocation of identity is evidenced in the personal (but anonymous) bog wall writings and scrawled notes that pass back and forwards between participants during rituals of contact.



With these experiments I was wanting to capture something of the fleeting, disconnected contact indicative of Sam's world in the bogs. This is why the type is transparent and ill defined. It acts as dislocated whispers and gestures, rather than as clearly spoken language. Although these experiments with reconstituted type from dictionaries proved problematic<sup>29</sup>, the image of small blocks of apparent and obscured writing was a powerful influence on the typographical voice

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<sup>29</sup> The type was difficult to animate and failed to adequately capture the anger and bristling cruelty of bogspeak. The composite letterforms were also too passive when placed over the images.

adopted in the film. While this kind of writing is a ubiquitous feature of bog walls, (fig. 3:13) it has parallels in both the underground and over-ground of the film because Sam carries its language with him.

Type is used generally to express dislocated thought that is sometimes Sam's and sometimes so disconnected even from him, that it appears to be words coming from the environment itself, (fig. 3:14). In both of these cases, the type sits outside of the constraints of the grid. It flickers inside the image as a kind of angered dislocation, attached to the idea yet not integrated with it.

#### the anger experiments

The nexus between dislocation and anger that is evidenced in the language of the bogs was a challenge to interpret in type. This is especially because this feature of the language is often turned both outwards and inwards on the user himself. The anti-language of bogspeak demonstrates a clear hostility to regulatory and punitive agencies but the language is also scornful of intimate relationships of other men who also use the bogs for sex. Cage (2003) talks about this as a form of linguistic, dehumanised, detachment where,

*people are not viewed as individuals when referred to... but are relegated to the level of sexually consumable commodities, without hopes, feelings and needs. They merely become featureless units in a noxious swarm of past, present and potential sex partners. (pp. 31-32)*

Cage suggests that this can be attributed to the fact that living in an environment characterised by persecution, rejection and frustration, marginalised men do not hold their peers within the co-culture in high esteem. He suggests that historically "a combination of psychological maladjustment and homophobia laid the ground for them to attack and manipulate each other"(ibid) 31.

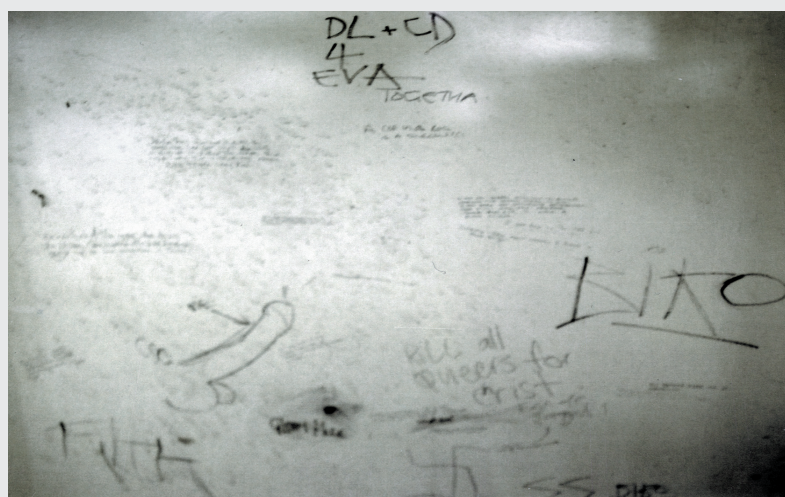
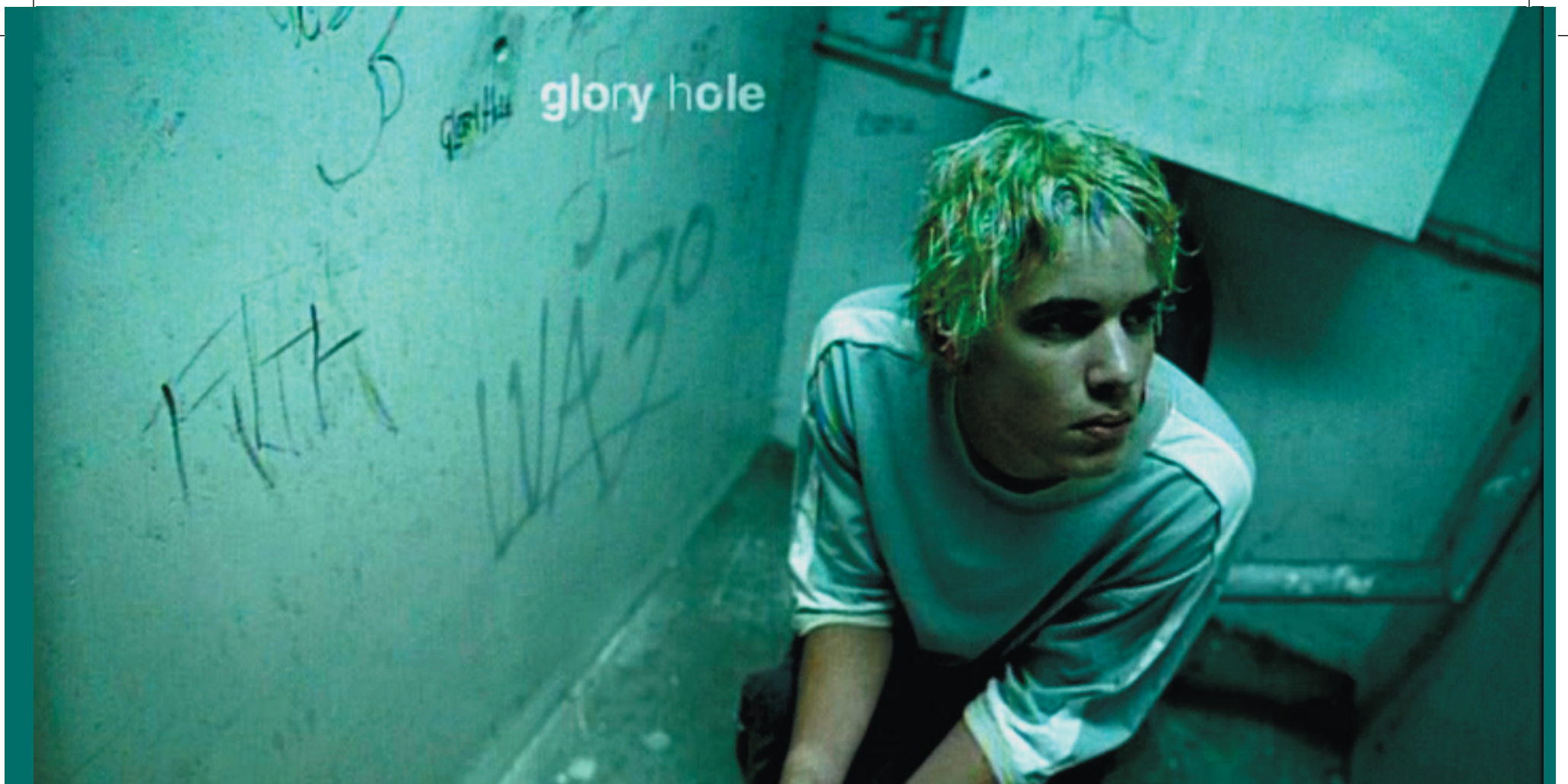


Fig. 3:13 Bog writing, Te Awamutu. The potential for translating the layout of bog wall writing with its apparently arbitrary positioning of text, its unusual and dramatic emphases and its obscured and sometimes over-written words, provided significant stylistic influences to the design of the underground typographical treatments.



This sense of attack may also be exacerbated by the state of powerlessness that men in this world find themselves. They are generally unable to retaliate against the queer bashers, or the police, or the media, and as a result suffer not only retribution but also negative reconstructions of their identity in the public sphere. Smith (1993) states that,

*those beat users who find themselves before the courts will tend to follow the course of least resistance... In the absence of an effective counter discourse, beats fall victim to the paranoia of heterosexuals. Beat users become compliant but unwilling participants in (as in the case of a court action), or an imaginary subject of (as in exaggerated fears of child safety), the fantastic stories that are woven in and around the beat. (p. 21)*



Fig. 3:14 Six stills of Sam in the bog with type surrounding him. This is the language of the bogs. It talks about how he is seen and also references some of the features in the environment. The voice here is not Sam's. It is a separate disconnected commentary that only operates in this environment.



Fig. 3:15 Stills of experiments using handwritten words on glass held in front of the camera during filming. While the effects were dramatic, they over emphasised the individualism of the typographic voice. They also created too broad a style palette to integrate cohesively with the more ornate and ecclesiastical typographical treatments in the film.

*handwritten voices*

The capturing of this suppressed anger was trialed initially through a range of scrawled and scratched typographical experiments. The first approach was to capture the nature of Sam's muffled rage by applying rapidly written words onto the surface of the film, either as text scrawled on transparent sheets, or as words scratched directly onto the negative (fig. 3:15).

Mealing (2003) suggests that

*handwritten text speaks of its author ... and variables such as proportion, evenness, slope, slant angle, size, spacing, width and weight are all considered and used to extract information beyond the remit of the text. (p. 45)*

However, while handwritten typographical treatments had a strong, author's voice they did not animate flexibly across images. They also gave too strong a personal voice to the speaker.

The difficulty I encountered was essentially one of balance. The typographical voices in the film were not only Sam's. The written language needed to be flexible enough to operate across a range of scenes.

Furthermore, handwritten text speaks so clearly of the writer that the approach demanded different signature hands for each speaker in the film. This proved too congested and confusing.

*animating behind letterforms*

I needed to create a typographical treatment that was angry but still oppressed and dislocated from the viewer. It had to avoid the intimacy of a personal signature, yet still contain feeling. The difficulty, therefore, lay in orchestrating the emotional intensity of the written form. Too much expression of rage, over-impassioned the voice, but purely typographic letterforms seemed to formalise and over-subdue the emotions I wanted to underscore.

The seeds of a solution surfaced eventually in the experimental treatment of an image that was finally dropped from the film.





Fig. 3:16 Still from the animated flash shot, *Red car*. The image was designed to suggest an emerging khamp, kind of fury; something florid but as yet unrefined (immature) in its assault. The sequence was dropped from the final cut of the film because it did not add anything significant to either the narrative flow or Sam's already established anger.

For a moment after keying (scratching) the red car with his flick-knife, Sam was to turn back and look at it. The car was to appear as a flash shot that scratched and then melted like a burnt negative (fig. 3:16).

The rapidly animated, distressed surface built on the anger that had motivated Sam's attack on the car. A white scratch, separate from the image, was animated over it and continued to crackle as the picture of the car burst into flame and turned into a melting negative. This device, which sat between the worlds of the type and image, I realised could operate as an independent emphasis. It was flexible in

that the technique could be transported across images. The crackling, frustrated texture could become a background rather than a letter form. This technique had the ability to punctuate. It could also contrast letterforms against their backgrounds, and create a variety of animated textures that could be independently orchestrated in terms of discord. Thus, the dislocated, background of the letterform became a significant device in determining the intensity of a word.

This may be likened to the way that Baker (2002b) suggests the background (environment) of an anti-society becomes a determining agent in the intensity of an anti-language.

The creation of an intermediary surface that was neither letterform nor an actual pictorial element, meant that the level of frustration and scratchy brutality could be animated quickly behind words. This resulted in the kinetic nature of the typography containing the aggression rather than the actual typeface (fig. 3:17).

#### outcomes

The anger that runs through the distressing of individual words and animated sequences in the film, is a translation of the tone of specific words in bogspeak. The emotion in the typographical design picks up on the hostility and aggression felt towards the key regulating social forces that collectively and individually position bog-cruisers as the demonised other.

The placement of this type in the film, specifically in the bog sequences, references the way that the written word and graphics interplay on toilet walls. Both are separate but mutually involved in describing the social and historical atmosphere of the location. Words from bogspeak flicker in and out of the time that Sam spends waiting for a trick. They form around him or around features in his environment as a silent commentary, in the same way that stories, warnings and advertisements are presented on a bog wall.

The readability and clarity of the letterforms have been preserved because despite the unfamiliarity of some of the words, bogspeak



Fig. 3:17 Film stills.  
This flash frame from Sam's notional attack on the girls at his school plays an over-ground insult (*bitches*), off against the underground bogspeak term (*fish*). Both words vibrate because of the scrawled graphic behind them. However, the letter forms remain stable.

is an anti-language not a foreign language. It integrates the known grammar of the dominant society with the obscured lexicon of the underground. The letterforms are recognisable, as are the words. It is simply the meaning and context that is unfamiliar. Bogspeak like any anti-language is identifiable because words from it can be used in over-ground speech (discerningly) to ascertain the nature of another listener<sup>30</sup>.

Sam's story has a number of voices and it was necessary to design a composite typographical treatment that would demarcate yet integrate these into the cohesive aesthetic of the film.

The dislocated and angry type that operates in the bogs also becomes part of the anger that flows out from them. Thus, the driver's threats, his wife's confrontation with him regarding the bloodied shirt, the boys who threaten Sam in the changing rooms, and the pictorial insults Sam flings at those who hurt him, all carry versions of this typographical profile.

However, there is also an alternative voice; poetic, reflective and gentle, that opens and closes the narrative. It also appears in the story's sequences that deal with loss: (when Sam talks about his mother's death from cancer, when he mentions the angels in the summer grass, and during the funeral of the hitch hiker).

The design for this alternative type drew on a seemingly contradictory feature of bogspeak, its unusual metaphorical emphasis on ecclesiasticism.

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<sup>30</sup> While Cage's comments related directly to gay men living in the repressive South Africa of last century, some parallels can be drawn with the currently marginalised and ostracised men in contemporary bogculture. Bog cruisers continue to exist in a fundamentally criminalised environment with little empowerment in terms of opposition or redress. This parallel may explain why many (especially rural and suburban bog communities) are seen as operating as almost anachronistic "snap shots" of gay society before the liberations and decriminalisations of the 1970s and 1980s. Martyn Goddard's essay *The Forgotten World* (1990) offers an interesting analysis of this phenomenon.

## ecclesiasticism

### introduction

The second typeface developed for the lyrical voice in this film, also had its origins in the anti-society of the bogs. However, it drew on a seemingly antithetical feature of the language form. Its source lay in bogspeak's parodying use of the ecclesiastical.

Ecclesiastical metaphors are a significant feature of bogspeak that can be evidenced in specific terms like *glory hole* (a hole in the wall between two toilet cubicles), *having church* (to kneel in order to perform oral sex), *Christ and two apostles* (a dated expression for the genitals of prudish or shy men) and the names of specific toilets like the *Chapel* (Pitt Street Auckland), the *Catacombs* (Auckland Museum), and the *Wailing Wall* (Sydney Hospital in Kingscross). This religiosity also profiles in the names of well-known bog queens like, *Fatima Foetid Fuck*, *Mother Superior Posterior* and *Gloria Hole*.

### cultural profiles

Perhaps the most exposed, contemporary socio/political appearance of this parodied ecclesiasticism is the chapters of the *Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence*. The New Zealand chapter of this order first made an appearance in the Wellington Gay Pride Week in 1984. While it had links to other international chapters, this group of radical gay men was called the *Sisters of Sodomy*. Members of this chapter included *Sister Angel Thighs* and *Sister Trevor-Marie*. In an interview with the Wellington Gay Newspaper *New Zealand Pink Triangle* (1984), *Sister Trevor-Marie* articulated the significance of the chapter that paralleled the rationales adopted by other, international groups. She said,

*It's a parody of the Catholic Church, which is a major institution of oppression of lesbians as well as gay men. We are consciously being blasphemous and sacrilegious. That takes away some of the power of the church by mocking its holy symbols. Nuns are supposed to be celibate.... From a political point of view as well it breaks down the barriers you couldn't otherwise get through, in much the same way as the clowns on the 1981 Springbok tour protests did. (Issue 46, p. 4)*



Fig. 3:18

Early indicative for Sam's heterodiegetic site of narration.

Initially Sam was designed to appear in the opening frames as the writer of the story. The pictorial style drew on the eclectic and ecclesiastical nature of the poetic verse that framed the narrative. A combination of animated, swirling lines and fusions of *Apple Chancery*, *Brush Script* and *Caflish Script Pro*. typefaces, flickered across the surface of the image. This typographic treatment proved too frail to animate successfully and also led to a competition for primacy between the voice of the type and the voice of the image. The background texture seen in the window behind Sam was developed from the initial typographic treatments taken from the dictionary.

The design however, had too much detail. Because I was wanting the written voice and the images to work harmoniously in the opening of the film, I decided to pare back the use of clutter and detail in both areas.



Fig. 3:19

The Wellington Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence.

The photograph by Gavin Young features, Sisters Trevor Marie [Douglas Jenkins], Angel Thighs [Robert Lake] and an unnamed sister, (Robert Beard), LAGANZ-MS-Papers-0607-396.

In 1993, a second New Zealand chapter profiled in Auckland comprising Sister Sheep-Fucker, Sister Inviolator of the Immaculate Conception and Sister Due to Media Attention. While the New Zealand chapters had relatively short-lived profiles, their Sydney and San Francisco equivalents were highly prominent in the early 1980s. The Australian chapter that included Sisters Sit-On-My-Face, Third Secret of Fatima, Joy of Man's Desiring, Fuck-Me-Silly, Fellatio Obliviata, Mary Azaria-in-a-pram and Mother Inferior, [later known as Mother Abyss aka Fabian Loschiavo] were noted for such political events as performing a formal exorcism at the Gates of Parliament on March 29th 1982. Mother Abyss also walked the highly documented tour of "Gay Sydney", dressed in a pink habit, singing *Volare*, accompanying herself on a squeeze box and being preceded by "a holy relic of gay matrimony, the urinal from a destroyed popular cruising toilet, where so many unions were consecrated." (Cohen, 1999, p. 4).

An extensive profiling of this group of Australian activists is available in the LAGANZ Archives MS-0230.

Baker (2002a), discussing the significance of the London chapter of this organisation, points out that apart from being politically active they are also linguistically revivalist. He notes significantly that they "use 'High Polari' in their blessings, sermons and canonizations- adding a bit of religious mystique whilst acknowledging gay history within their ceremonies" (p. 6).

Reconstituted Christian ritual has historical precedents in the English working class Molly Houses of the eighteenth century<sup>31</sup>. These were taverns and clubs where men met to have sex with other men, and were profiled by the subversion of traditional heterosexual and religious customs and rituals. Norton (1992), refers to Molly marriages that occurred when two men paired off and had sex in another room known as the Chapel. He also offers a description of a "lying in" where a wooden baby was christened after being mock birthed between a man's legs.

Baker (2002a) suggests that this mocking parody of religious convention

*was a response to mainstream society's attitude to the Mollies. Sodomy was illegal and punishable by imprisonment... The Mollies were effectively criminalized, partly because of the growth of the Societies for the Reformation of manners, and many of them were driven underground, mixing with criminals or being forced into their company in prison. (p. 22)*

Ambivalent attitudes to Christian ritual are a complex feature of men marginalised or ostracised by the church. Among the men who "do the bogs", Humphreys (1970) suggests, are a significant proportion of church affiliates who because of their positions, cannot afford to be seen involving themselves in sexual relationships.

<sup>31</sup> Among some men in the interviews this language is called "code" and many suggested that it is an old, secret way of finding things out while you remain safe. Wedding (2004) states "it formed initially... to cover up what people were doing so they could carry on a conversation in a coffee bar where there might be elderly ladies having a cup of tea or a cup of coffee" (p. 8).

One of the reasons that Humphrey's data was so controversial when it was first published, was that it profiled Roman Catholicism so disproportionately among men who used public toilets for casual sex. He says

*data indicates that Roman Catholic religious affiliation is a causal factor in tearoom participation, because that church's prohibition of the use of artificial contraceptives limits the sexual outlet in marriage. Of the married men in my sample of tearoom participants, 50 percent are Roman Catholic or married to a Roman Catholic, as compared to 26 percent of men in the control sample. (p. 62)*

Morton (2003), in his discussion of the phenomenon of cruising codes, says

*ritual is an important aspect of the way a society identifies and affirms itself. Many oppressed groups react against their oppressor by donning elements of the same ritual 'dress' that excludes them. Thus some gay men will often fetishise the attire and behavior of the police and rough trade inside their own cruising rituals. While on the surface this may be seen as a form of parody of an oppressive, regulatory body, on a deeper level it also operates inside the cyclic dynamic evidenced in many abusive relationships; the abused adopting elements of the abuser's behavior and profile as a form of identification. Politically however appropriation of elements of oppressor's identity also serves to constantly reinforce the status of the marginalised other. (p. 104)*

Thus, elements of the church ritual are reconstituted and repositioned into the metaphors of bogspeak in much the same way that identities of other oppressors (heterosexual men, the police, women, the family and bashers) are<sup>32</sup>.

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<sup>32</sup> Trumbach (1991) says that in the 1660s and 1670s, sodomy was committed by "rakes" who were libertine in religion and republican in politics. Sexually they were interested in sex with younger men, were not effeminate and were also sexually interested in women. Fops, who were effeminate, did not have sex with men. By 1710 a new identity, the Molly had emerged, one who was effeminate and also engaged in sex with other males.



Fig. 3:20

Early design for Sam's shrine. The artwork was not used in the final version of the film.

This shrine sequence was developed to profile key characters in the narrative, inside a religious environment that expanded upon the ecclesiastical references of the opening titles. Words were designed to flank each character and the typeface developed for them needed to masquerade in the over-ground while carrying references to the typographical treatments of the bogs.

The problem posed then was how does one create a complementing typographical treatment for a voice coming from a similar synthesis of oppressed elements, but profiling in the film as an interior, lyrical voice?

#### **the lyrical voice**

For the design of this typographical treatment, I initially worked outwards from Baker's (2002a) contention that, "*It is the tension between the two alternative constructions of reality (society and anti-society) that creates the linguistic distance between language and anti-language,*" (p. 14). He suggests "*both sets of concepts should be considered as notional extreme ends of a continuum based on a social system, with considerable overlap occupying the middle-ground,*" (ibid.).

Early in the development of the shrines that were designed to create a pause in the narrative, I considered integrating typographical elements into the pictorial structure (fig. 3:20).

The intention was to develop a typeface that carried references to ritual and ecclesiastical ornateness and at the same time remained introspective. Thus, Baker's society (over-ground) and anti-society (underground) needed to be established as poles on a continuum on which Sam's narrative could move backwards and forwards. Linguistic equivalents can be found in terms like "*having church*" or "*visiting the sisters*" that have flexible meanings to a bog cruiser depending where on the gradient of social intercourse the term is used. In a restaurant, away from the cruising community, these words would mean something very different to what they would represent if they were used in discussion between fellow cruisers in the front seat of a car, parked outside the bogs.

The typographical treatment used in the poetry of the titles needed (in a similar way to the treatment designed for the bogs) to seep out from the world of its original appearance, and into elements of the narrative where the implications of events happening in one world caused actions and reactions in the other.



Fig. 3:21  
Angel Chancery.  
Designed by Welby Ings, June 2003.  
The face is profiled by a stiffened lyricism, destabilised by distorted ascenders and descenders, pinched terminals and an absence of uppercase letters.

Fig. 3:22  
Opening title, (opposite)  
A decision to remove images of Sam from the opening of the narrative meant that I could focus the viewer on a dislocated voice. The Angel Chancery type was used to offset the gritty, distressed treatment of the strange, damaged toys.

#### *the times experiments*

The initial typographical experiments operated inside a font family (Times). This typeface was used as an over-ground reference and its appearance was disrupted by its own alternative weightings, italicisations and symbols (cf. anti-language). Words developed from this reconstructed typeface were then stretched and warped so they gained an unstable but decorative rhythm. While this worked as single words, the face had a diminished level of readability when it was animated. It was also too similar to the type I was designing at that time for the disconnected and angry bogface. An application of this experiment can be seen in figure 3:20.

Legibility and readability became important concerns as I began to condense the duration of words appearing within the narrative. What will often work in print does not operate the same way as moveable type. While issues regarding the influence of time and motion on the typefaces in this film will be discussed later in this exegesis, the establishment of a new typeface that would animate effectively was a parallel concern of these early trials.

#### *the chancery experiments*

Following the discounting of the reworked Times face, a second set of experiments was trialed involving the subtle corruption of chancery typefaces.

Modern typefaces based on these handwriting scripts developed during the Italian Renaissance, are often used in vernacular religious print media (newsletters, funeral service programmes, the printing of religious tracts). The face I developed which drew references from Holmes' *Apple Chancery* (1994), Slimbach's *Poetica Chancery III* (1992) and Penner's *Rendezvous* (2003), was designed to contain a subtle level of instability within its letter-forms (fig. 3:21) and was employed in experiments where I animated it over filmed footage of broken doll/angels (fig. 3:22).

The new *Angel Chancery* typeface with its additional disrupted tracking and kerning, provided an isolated, introspective, almost delicate voice that pulled itself apart as the animated sequence progressed.



However despite its distortion it proved to be too delicate and while beautiful to watch, had a frailty that belied both the strength of Sam's character and the acerbic nature of bog speak's ecclesiasticism.

The gritty treatment of the angel-dolls had been filmed at this point, and set a confirmed "volume" for a pictorial voice against which the typographical design could be orchestrated. The development of the film's introductory sequence came from a reconsideration of three profiles of Sam's personality: dislocation, eclecticism and ecclesiasticism. These themes had driven much of the development of the typographical experiments to this point. Now they were revisited and combined with different emphases into one composition that carried both graphically and typographically, a sense of the ornamental and the abject.





Fig. 3:23  
A comparison between a Nickelodeon slide c.1900 and a narrative commentary subtitle for *Frontier* (1925) demonstrate how the ornamental devices designed in the early part of the century had been developed into linear scroll works, more indicative of typographical flourishes than pictorial borders. It is significant to note the few gay-themed title cards of the period were often profiled by a comparatively over-ornamented design, when compared to those designed for contemporary heterosexual-themed narratives.



Fig. 3:24  
Preliminary title sketch for boy. The use of caps throughout the design was too dominant and removed some of the innocence and vulnerability from the design. The regularity of the letterforms was also too stable.



Fig. 3:25  
Refined design for title. The lower case b was developed to reinforce the youthful and vulnerable nature of the word. The title has integrated ecclesiastical flourishes and eclectic lower case letterforms.

#### *main title experiments*

After discussions with Marcus Ringrose<sup>33</sup> a design for the word “boy” was developed that integrated a range of typefaces and kept the decorative elements on separate layers. This allowed the individual elements to be animated separately.

These devices were influenced by ornamental designs on the borders of early, silent movie commentaries and their graphic relatives, the theatrical Nickelodeon warning slides of the 1900s (fig. 3:23).

During some tangential investigation I had discovered that in many of these commentary frames, it was not necessarily the typeface that had been exoticised (probably for reasons of readability) but the ornamental flourishes surrounding the written text<sup>34</sup>. In a similar fashion to the way that graphic symbols had been used to intersect the typographical voice in the Oxford dictionary experiments, these subtitle decorations were now disconnected from their original context and purpose and relocated inside the letterforms of the title. Experiments using this approach are illustrated as figures 3:24 and 3:25.

The main title of *boy* was refined from these experiments. The final design contained adaptations that allowed it to reverse out, contain a graded fill, or operate as a positive. In the film’s original promotional graphic (opposite), a diagonal flow of calligraphic flourishes is used to suggest continuity between the three distinct letterforms .

The title heralds the movement that will become the constantly drifting, lyrical voice of the film’s opening.

<sup>33</sup> Marcus Ringrose is the founding member of *Heat Interactive*, a New Zealand design company that specialises in animated type. He formed one of the members of the thesis’ reference group during the post-production work on the film.

<sup>34</sup> Griffith and Mayer (1970) suggest that these “voice of God” editorial comments and “spoken titles” were designed for the producers rather than the director. The authors also offer interesting insights into how the design and wording of these were used to significantly change the tone or meaning of the original sequences.

# boy



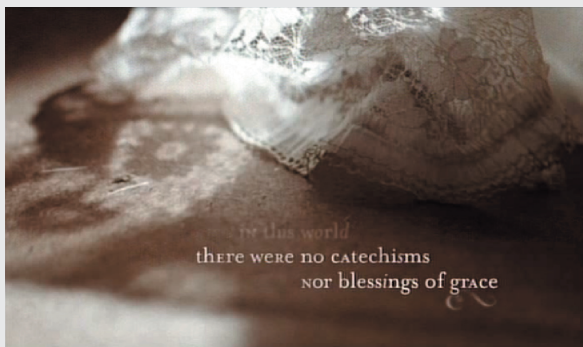


Fig 3:26  
Opening poem letterforms. Words are constructed as ornamental forms, using a variety of replaceable upper and lower case letters.  
An analysis of the still demonstrates how both upper and lowercase versions of the letters n [N], e [E] & r [R] are integrated in different ways in each word. The letter A remains consistently as an uppercase form.

### final ecclesiastical typeface

The film's final, ecclesiastical typeface was eventually made up of serif letterforms taken from across Zuzano Liko's font family *Mrs Eaves* (1996). This eclectic mixture enabled a more delicate construction of words that remained cohesive because all forms came from the same family. The final palette of letterforms included Roman, italics, petite caps and fractions. These were orchestrated into a typeface that provided more than one letterform for many of the alphabet letters (fig. 3: 26). The distorted kerning in each word, affected by the integration of letterforms with varying postures, enabled the words to breathe internally and remain open and lighter.

The result afforded a delicate solution that unlike the Angel Chancery experiments, could breathe inside the time and motion applications. The typeface was quickly legible but still gave a sense of dislocation and eclecticism.

### conclusion and applications

The experiments discussed in this section of the exegesis were essentially concerned with translating profiles of Sam's world into typographical voices. I selected two significant themes, drawn from the language and culture of the bogs. They were detachment and ecclesiasticism.

From a consideration of detachment in both behaviour and language, the abject typographical voice was developed. This voice was used to communicate the rage, dislocation and dehumanisation in the story. Conversely from a consideration of the origins and profile of ecclesiasticism in bog culture, a lyrical voice that generally appeared as recollection was developed. In most cases, this voice operated in the heterodiegetic spaces of the film.

Experiments involving disruptions of Salen's (2001) "cultural standardisation" of type, included the dislocation of words and letters from the Oxford Dictionary and the creative consideration of non-grid-based layout, sourced from writing on toilet walls. These experiments contributed to the placing of words around a picture rather than embedding them on grids or in linear sequences.

A consideration of the angry undercurrent that runs through bog-speak, lead to treatments used behind words. This meant that their background environment bristled with hostility while the letterforms themselves, remained undisturbed.

Experiments involving distortions of the *Times* font family, and the development of an *Angel Chancery* face, capable of animation, were both influential in refining the lyrical voice of the film. However, it was the creative application of decorative elements inspired by early movie subtitles and warning slides, that contributed most significantly to the nature of the lyrical face. When this type appears at the opening of the film, its rhythm is graced with small dissolving flourishes. These ornaments also form the distinctive serifs on the film's title.

#### adaptations in application

Disconnected ornamental features (as angry textures in the bog face and dissolving flourishes in the ecclesiastical face), and eclectic word forms operated as complementary stylistic devices common to both faces. These features gave room for alterations to be made to the two type designs as they moved out from their respective positions (the bogs and the poem).

In terms of their use in the film, both the ecclesiastical and the abstract typographical treatments vary in how they are applied. While they maintain their individual emphasis, they alter subtly in terms of placement and the animation of their background textures, (fig 3:27-30).

#### *adaptations to the ecclesiastical face*

In the funeral scene (fig. 3:27), the ecclesiastical face that was employed in the opening poem resurfaces. While the treatment of the type maintains the mixture of upper and lower case letterforms, individual words are now placed on slightly different levels. This is a treatment taken from the dislocated underground face.

The animated flourishes adorning the opening sentences have also been removed. I made these adaptations because, although the scene was part of the film's storyline, the typographical voice was Sam's



Fig. 3:27  
Flexibility in over-ground and underground faces.

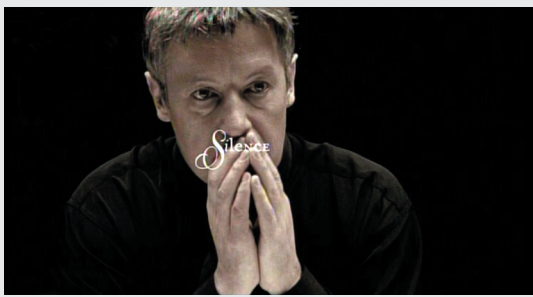
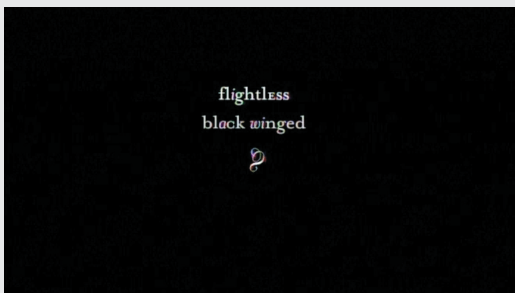


Fig. 3:28 & 29  
Changes in application of the ecclesiastical typeface.

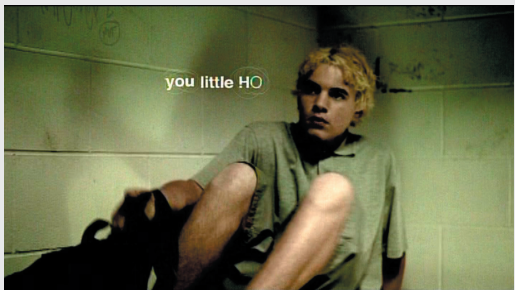


Fig. 3:30  
Abject typeface as used by the boy in the changing sheds.

heterodiegetic commentary. With the smooth drift of sound and imagery towards an ecclesiastical ending in the film, it was also necessary that I introduced the adaptation as a transition. *Boy* was now moving from the harsh reality of the over ground into an emerging ecclesiastical environment. This environment held the narrative's resolve. Stylistically this environment also needed to bracket the text<sup>35</sup>.

In the Last Supper sequence there are two subtle adaptations to the ecclesiastical face. The poem that opened the film has had its words slightly changed. Because the narrative has now been through the brutalising effects of the story's telling, I removed the gentle animation of smoky tones from behind the lettering (fig. 3:28). By doing this, the words became more stable and direct.

The other change can be seen in the final frame of the story. Here, in the closing word, the once separate flourishes that decorated the ecclesiastical written voice, connect (fig. 3:29). The scroll becomes the letter S in the word Silence. What was embellishment now becomes substance. This action brings a form of closure to the typographical journey. The voice has been brought into unison with itself.

#### *adaptations to the dislocated face*

The dislocated face designed for Sam's angry underground world, undergoes changes when it is used by other people. A significant example can be seen when Sam's peers threaten him in the school changing rooms (fig. 3:30). Here the underground face has a more open texture operating behind the words. Where individual letters in the earlier bog face were disconnected from a stable base line, now whole words take the same treatment. This brings aggression to snatches of sentences. Its violence is more overt and confrontational. Earlier letter continuity is disrupted to reflect a level of brutality approaching that experienced prior to a queer bashing.

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<sup>35</sup> *Boy* begins and ends in ecclesiastical environments. In the opening scene broken dolls are presented as angels. In the closing scene we encounter a "Last Supper". The written words are almost identical in both places. The use of monochromatic colour palettes, pace of type, and the employment of low-relief backgrounds also connect these scenes.

The exegesis has now discussed the design of two, distinctive, typographical treatments in the film. These treatments draw on themes inherent in bogspeak, and are able to operate with degrees of flexibility across the text.

Therefore, it is useful at this point, to consider the unique relationship that type has with narration in the film. This next section of the exegesis considers three distinctive features of type as they appear in *boy*.

Drawing on developments in music video and television advertising design, it discusses how type *contributes alternative voices*, *transfigures current information*, and is *embedded inside the pictorial elements* of the text.

## type as narrative voice

### introduction

The decision to renegotiate the traditional role of type in a short film was deliberate. It surfaced from the rise of more sophisticated applications of the written word in music video and television commercials at the close of last century.

While theorists like Kellner (1995) observe that there has been a “*steady decline in the use of text or copy in ads and an increase in display and illustrations*” (p. 2), and this would seem to confirm claims by Baudrillard (1975 and 1983), and Boorstin (1962), concerning the increased importance of images in contemporary culture, there has also been a renegotiation of not only the purpose of written text, but also its appearance as an integrated, illustrative voice.

Traditionally type has had slightly different roles in film and television and definitely different roles within the arenas of television advertising and music video.

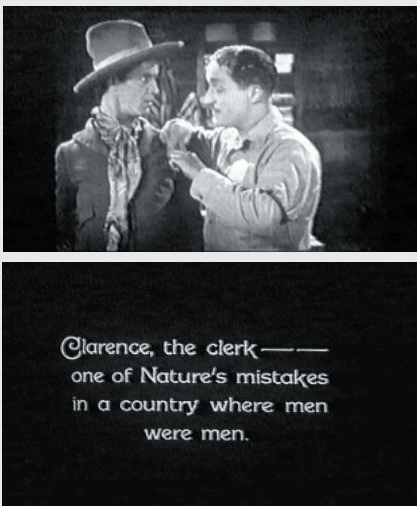


Fig. 3:31  
 Type card from *Wanderer of the West* (1927)  
 My intention with *boy* was to reclaim a typographic device that had historically been used to marginalise the other, and employ it as a contemporary system for describing the world of the bogs in their own language. In the bog scenes in *boy*, type is dislocated from the plot. It makes judgments about a world, in a language that turns most viewers into the marginalised because only elements of it can be understood. (Only a seasoned bog cruiser would understand the significance of the word *bona* positioned next to a *gloryhole*.)

In early film, title cards were initially the only method of putting written words onto the screen<sup>36</sup>. However, despite the increasing range of methods developed for generating type on film, in general the role of the written word as a filmic voice has been restricted to five key functions.

Type's most common use is as titles and end credits. However, it is also commonly employed as a translatory device. Translatory devices generally appear as subtitles that allow the spoken word of one language to translate the written word of another. Its most common deployment is in foreign language films or in films like *Trainspotting* (1996) where dialectal profiles are so strong that written translation acts as a concurrent affirmation of meaning. Other common uses of type have been as documenters of time and location, as written prologues and epilogues, and occasionally in traditional silent film, as a commentator on values associated in the action. (See figures 3:23 and 3:31).

In television, type has generally functioned as a device in the first three arenas, but its use for extended prologues and epilogues is often not effective. Bellantoni and Woolman (1999) suggest that this is because in broadcast television,

*the pace of editing is often quick, the type duration is often short, and functions more as image. The type is meant to be seen, not read (with the exception of credits, which are rarely read). Broadcast typography is presented in a predetermined voice, with the intention of leaving an impression. (p. 54)*

<sup>36</sup>Type was printed on to a card and filmed directly into the camera. Supercards, and key cards that allowed printed text to be superimposed over imagery were later developments of this. Line negatives, burn-in titling, and text applied through character generators (and more recently hardware platforms and software packages for animating and compositing typography) have been developments of this. Current high-end systems include *Avid Media Composer*<sup>TM</sup>, *EditBox*<sup>TM</sup>, *Alias/Wavefront*<sup>TM</sup>, *Softimage 3DTM*, *Maya*<sup>TM</sup> and *Flame*<sup>TM</sup>. All of the compositing in the final version of *boy* was done on *Flame*<sup>TM</sup>. However, experiments leading up to the final embedding of the typographic treatments were developed on the desktop applications *Premiere*<sup>TM</sup> and *Director*<sup>TM</sup>.

While type's necessity to leave an impression rather than be read, might be arguable in terms of its most acknowledged use (as either titles or programme and channel identities), Bellantoni and Woolman's (1999) contention ignores a diverse range of innovative uses of type that have profiled in the last fifteen years in the design of music video and television advertising commercials.

Three significant uses of type that have developed substantially in the arenas of music video and television commercials have been influential in the design of the film *boy*. They are type as an *additional narration*, type as a *transfigurer of current narration*, and type as a *pictorial element*.

#### **type as additional narration**

This term is used in this exegesis to describe designs where type is employed to speak tangentially to images but is not the primary narrator of the story. In other words, while the pictures might be telling one story, the type is telling another, or adding additional information to the narrative.

This specific treatment of written text profiled in Hollywood's silent cinema as a distinctive form of type-card (fig. 3:31). These cards were not integral to the development of the plot, but rather offered a perspective on events or characters. The insertion of these cards Griffith and Mayer (1971) suggest, allowed for the inclusion of scenes that might contain a socially undesirable character. This is because producers, following a viewing of the cut of the film, could still exert control over aberrant decodings by introducing additional judgmental emphases. In many cases these cards were inserted without the director's knowledge or approval.

With the decline of type's position in film, following the advent of sound, this form of narration remained relatively undeveloped, even in contemporary cinema. However, in music video design, with these texts' inherent ability to present pluralistic meaning, the device developed significantly in the work of directors like Jake Scott. In his video directed for REM, *Everybody Hurts\** (1993), Scott developed a parallel, internal commentary that allowed the viewer an insight

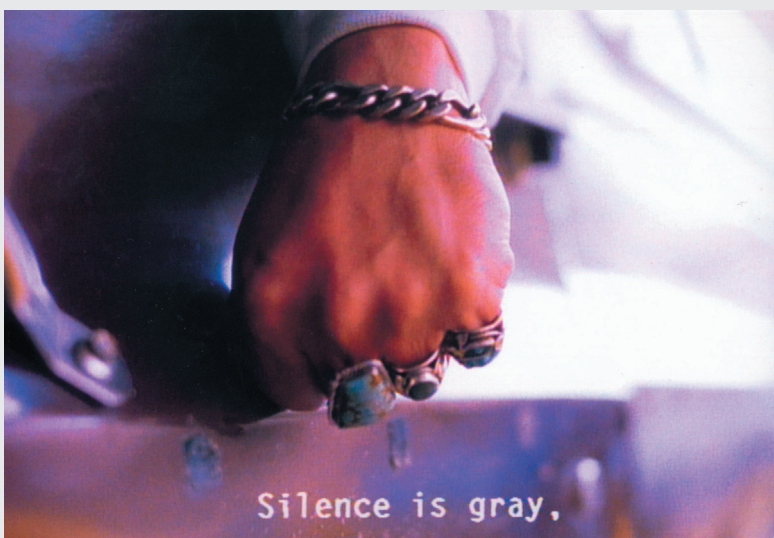


Fig. 3:32 Scott Jake. *Everybody Hurts*, August 1993.

into the thoughts of the people appearing in the visual narrative. The video's narrative concerned a gridlock in an urban environment and the eventual decision of the drivers to leave their cars and walk away from the congestion.

The song's lyrics were not about this event, nor did they concern themselves with the director's depiction of the small thoughts of people caught in the traffic jam. Visually one saw a story about gridlock. Typographically one read the flickering thoughts of people caught in the situation, and aurally one heard lyrics about a man's encouraging words in a time of grief.

However for cohesion, at certain points in the video, Scott connected the typographical thoughts of the people in the cars with the lyrics of the song. His treatment of the typographical voice enabled an additional form of narration (small stories within stories) to bridge the diverse audio and visual narratives.

This approach to additional narration inside music video texts, primarily unfolded by images, was preceded by Mark Pellington's work in the early 1990s for bands like *Pearl Jam*, *INXS* and *U2*. In these videos, Pellington integrated type as a non-subtitling device that while speaking tangentially to the images, avoided direct engagement with either the lyrics or storyline of the video. His enigmatic *Jeremy*\* alluded to the suicide of a young boy, but used type to flicker in additional ideas of religious domination and interior frustration (fig. 3:33). Type in this video was used as a parallel voice that oscillated between heterodiegetic and homodiegetic positions in the narrative.

In *boy* the use of type as an additional voice, separate to the primary narration, profiles in two ways. It is immediately evident in the bogs where words describe Sam's world using the anti-language form associated with it. These words describe his waiting and perhaps the way he sees himself or other men see him in this world.

### type as a transfigurer of current narration

This term describes type that speaks *directly* to the visual narrative. Its voice is actively involved in “telling the story”. In advertising this device allows a director to condense volumes of information into a limited time frame, as often both the type and the image are being read concurrently. At its most sophisticated level, this use of type as part of a shared system of narration, is a form of concurrency; a method that relies on the reader of the text being able to absorb more than one linear unfolding of information at a given time<sup>37</sup>.

In general this may be seen as a very sophisticated extension of subtitling, where related information about the image is given to the viewer at the same time the image is speaking. The approach may be best typified by a distinctive commercial from Brazil: Revista E’ Paca’s television commercial for EPOCA magazine (2001) (fig. 3:34) [overleaf].

This design employs type as a concurrent narration that explains a distorted “voice-over”, describing the meaning of a week for different forms of life. Moving time appears as a unifying graphic device comprising a moving grid of weekdays along the top of which words flicker and dissolve.

<sup>37</sup> The term concurrency in this exegesis refers to a system of presenting different bodies of information simultaneously on the screen. In music video this appears as functional devices like dedications scrolled across the bottom of broadcasts, promos for up-coming presentations inserted into the text, and brandings overlaying images. As a device concurrency has profiled in works as stylistically divergent as Godley’s design for Sting’s *Fields of Gold* (1993) [left] and Fitzgerald’s *Candle in the Wind* (1997) [below].



Godley’s *Fields of Gold* presents a “split time” narrative about a man walking through a deserted town.

In this video we see two separate periods of time run concurrently, one inside the silhouette of the singer and one in the environment surrounding him.

Fitzgerald’s design for Elton John’s homage to the death of Diana Princess of Wales imports the device of scrolled text used in dedications, and employs it as a concurrent translation of audio lyrics in a similar way to karaoke’s presentation of words to accompanying music. Because this music was an adaptation of an earlier song by Elton John, the revised version enabled people to learn the words quickly so the anthem was able, in the space of a few days, to become a popular valediction, familiar to a global audience.



Fig. 3:33  
Stills from Pellington’s 1992 production of Pearl Jam’s *Jeremy*. In this work typographical interruptions layer a parallel level of meaning over the visual narrative. While the emotive, naïve treatment of the type supports the video’s atmosphere of childhood angst; it also heightens the sense of enigma by its seemingly unpredictable and irrational intrusion.

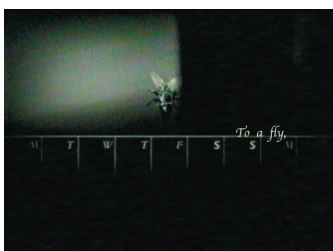
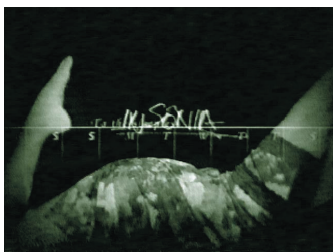


Fig. 3:34  
 Revista E' Paca's television commercial for EPOCA magazine (2001). Type is used to transfigure narration provided by the images and audio track. However, the type also expands the texture and emotion of the commercial's voice.

Sequences within the narrative are sometimes interrupted by distressings of type over still images. Without the type, the commercial would be a series of still images accompanied by a relatively inaudible oral commentary. The dominant typographical voice not only clarifies the meaning but also creates the texture of the narrative; its role is therefore both syntactic and semantic. The tone of the type becomes a significant determiner of the atmosphere and meaning of the unfolding narrative. Thus it may be seen as transfiguring and embellishing the image-based narration.

This use of type as a transfigurer of current narration was employed significantly in sections of *boy* that dealt with the Driver. I used this approach as a very subtle way of keeping his character integrated yet antagonistically positioned in relation to the flow of the film's narrative.

The Driver always remains slightly "out of synch" with the rhythm of the film. In the dump scene when he looks for Sam, the type is not a direct translation of what he is mouthing. While some words intersect, if you look, his silenced speech contains expletives. Conversely, additional threats are added to what the images of him speaking suggest he is saying. Type is used here as an unsettled, transfigurer of current narration. It tells us what he is saying, using the convention of the subtitle, but it is out of time and incorrect in its literal translation. It becomes a device for heightening the discord in his character.

Similarly in the kitchen scene where the Driver and his wife are arguing, type is again masquerading as translative, when in fact nobody has said the words that crackle between the two characters. Type is speaking to us across a dramatic sequence as a transfigurer of the pictorial narration. It is not the written form of the actor's words.



**type as a pictorial element**

Type that operates simultaneously as a narrator and *pictorial element* has established precedents in film, most significantly in the area of title sequences and credit design. Artists like Kyle Cooper, Saul Bass, Ridley Scott, Robert Dawson and Nick Livesley<sup>38</sup> have been

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<sup>38</sup> See Saul Bass, credits to *Psycho* (1960) and *West Side Story* (1961), Robert Dawson, credits to *Kiss of the Spider Woman* (1985), Ridley Scott, credits to *Altered States* (1980), Kyle Cooper, credits to *Se7en* (1996) and *Mimic\** (1997), and Nick Livesley, credits to *The Hunger* (1997).



Figs. 3:35 & 36 The driver's voice. As the film develops, the way the driver speaks, and is spoken to, uses type as a transfigurer of information, that on close analysis reveals a disconnection from the words that are actually being spoken by the actors in the film. The subtle discordance is used to add to the internal conflict building in these scenes.



Fig 3:37  
Still from No Surprises (1997).



Fig. 3:38  
Marcus Nispel's design for George Michael's  
*Killer/ Papa was a Rollin' Stone* (1993).

instrumental in pushing the potential synergy between image and typographic message to the point where the traditional divisions between the two once separate elements have begun to dissolve. Cooper's designs for Del Toro's 1997 film *Mimic*\* build on his groundbreaking work, in the preceding year, for Fincher's movie *Se7en*. *Mimic*'s title sequence orchestrates a gritty, eclectic and disturbing composite of cutout, translucent text blocks, insect parts and pinned images. Cooper's animated collage combines both the type and pictures into a composite message of obsession, paranoia and escalating panic. Careful attention has been paid to issues of scale, transparency and letterform and this has enabled the designer to cohesively edit images and type at an increasingly rapid rate as the sequence builds to a climax.

Concern with the synergetic interface between type and image as a potential for narration has profiled increasingly in a music videos. Significant research into this area was refined in the work of Grant Gee, whose design for Radio Head's *No Surprises* (1997), used reversed, highly leaded copy as a fluid, scrolling, subtitle over the face of the narrator. The type became a translatory voice but also an integrated pictorial element. Lyrics were projected on to the face of the singer and filmed *en situ* (fig. 3:37).

Type as a pictorial element that renegotiates the cinematic subtitle, was popularised in 1993 in Nispel's *Killer/Papa was a Rollin' Stone*\*. This video took the concept of the commodified brand as a graphic element and applied it to translative narration of the song's lyrics. Nispel's parodies on brand signification were inserted between sophisticated monochromatic images of people, moving in slow motion through, around and over urban landscapes. The interspersing of these contrasting graphic treatments (filmed images of people and lyrics as colourful brands) operated as a graphic parallel to the composite nature of the music, which linked two stylistically different songs into one production (fig 3:38).



The pictorial treatment of translative text in music video can be traced as an emerging phenomenon since D.A. Pennebaker's design of hand held type-cards for Bob Dylan's *Subterranean Homesick Blues* (1965). These cards were reminiscent of both silent film and the hand-held music hall cue cards of Edwardian theatre. In more recent music video design, translation of audio lyrics into type, as a distinctly pictorial element, has been profiled in by two highly distinctive designs. The calligraphic treatment of Suv & Tali's, *Do you Remember Me* (2002), placed a man in a room where he experienced the words of the singer as text which wrote itself across the walls, and Michael Gondry's *Bachelorlrette* (1997) integrated the narrative voice as writing on the pages in a book (fig. 3:39).

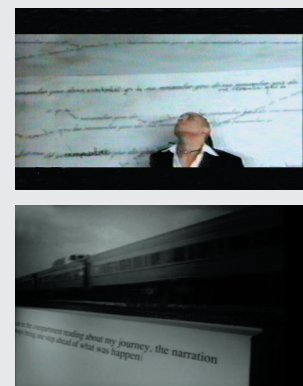


Fig. 3:39  
 Stills from videos featuring translative type.  
 Dan Pennebaker's *Subterranean Homesick Blues*  
 Paul Morris' *Do You Remember Me?* and  
 Michael Gondry's *Bachelorlrette*.

*experiments with type as pictorial form*

Because *boy* is a highly integrated film, relationships between type and image became a central concern early in its design. Although directors like Gee and Nispel, and credit designers like Livesley and Cooper have tended to use type as a dominant graphic element inside highly pictorial designs, I wanted to explore the potential of type as an undercurrent. In other words, I was interested in how type might be used as subtle a voice inside images.

A set of experiments developed in October and November of 2002 were relatively successful in creating this undercurrent (figs. 3:40-41). In an early treatment of scenes dealing with the lines “*In the long summer grass there were angels...*” I experimented with the idea of Sam being watched. The preceding images had depicted his ride through the streets of the town where he lived. Here, early morning locals noted his every move.

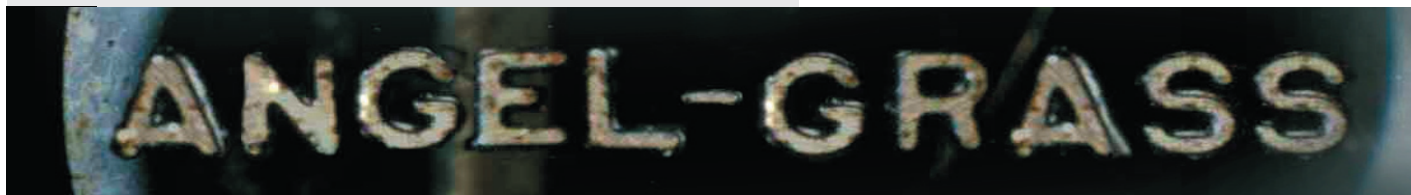


Fig. 3:40 Dispalpy face, Angel Grass. Welby Ings 2002.

I had tried punctuating each of these vignettes with the audio of a camera shutter clicking. The idea was to build the sense of

being watched through an audio treatment and resolve it pictorially in the scene that followed. As he rode through the grass words like *KODAK*, *filter* and *shutter*, sourced off old lens braces, were dissolved in and out of transitions between cameras and skeletal birds. This afforded a subtle integration of narrative voice and pictorial elements that achieved cohesion through the use of related colour palettes.

The design however was eventually rejected because stylistically its darkness overstated the angst level in this early part of the narrative.



Fig. 3:41  
 Animated sequence from:  
*In the Long Summer Grass There Were Angels*.  
 Film stills using Photo-shopped images and animated type, 2002.  
 I used original, damaged letterforms on the cameras as a template for the development of a new display face called *Angel Grass*.  
 Letters from this face were refined and worked back into the image, (a close analysis shows how words like *stigmata*, *angel* and *summer grass* are actually integrated into the labeling on the camera). A refined and simplified proportioning of this face enabled me to develop the lowercase face for the narrating voice that animated across the dissolving images.



Fig. 3:42  
One of five border designs made up of reprocessed type.

This experiment however proved important because of a technique I created in the design of the images' frame (fig. 3:42). The distressed type used for the border of these images I made by cutting words and letters off the negatives of old film stock, cello taping them together, and dropping them over the final filmed images. The device gave a gritty, reprocessed look that established a damaged sense of the cinematic. In the film, these devices are not designed to be noticed, although they do appear in an enhanced form in accompanying print media. Their purpose is as a pictorial element, used to heighten the sense of texture and gritty instability of the images. The borders were designed to operate as a complementing undercurrent for the unstable typefaces that would later be animated across them. Adaptations of these cello taped borders were used in the final version of the film as surrounds for both Sam's angry flash shots and the sentinel doll/angels that intersect the narrative.

### summary

Thus, in the film *boy*, type is used in three relatively distinctive ways. These methods of speaking with the written word are drawn from experiments developed in television commercial and music video design.

Sam's story is introduced by animated type that creates a first person, lyrical monologue. It offers an additional narration. Words appear over images of broken dolls but are telling us something far more than the pictures of the toys. The typographic voice is not only adding to the visual narrative but is in fact carrying the primary body of information.

Type also operates as a transfigurer of current narration at various points in the film. The technique is mainly used to build the sense of discord around the Driver. Normally this treatment of type purports directly to represent what is being said, but in fact transfigures and distorts the message provided by the images.

Type used as pictorial form is widely represented in the film. It appears subtly in images of the sentinel dolls, surrounds the film's three flash shots, appears as hand-drawn graffiti on toilet walls, and is embedded in the texture that flickers behind words given prominence on the screen. Generally this form of type is used to create undercurrent in the story rather than to profile as a dominant prominent pictorial element.

These three treatments of type, as a form of narration, may be fully understood when considered in relation to the final area of this exegesis.

Timing and movement of the film's written voices enables one to approach the paralinguistic potential of spoken language. It allows the written word to gather life, to float or to bristle, to dance in harmony with, or grit itself in discord to, the unfolding story. In this regard, spatio-temporal considerations provide the final key to the way type operates as a voice in *boy*.

## spatio-temporal typographics

### introduction

Spatio-temporal type as used by Bellantoni and Woolman (2000) refers to type that moves through space and time. They argue that the dynamic nature of type is able to take on “*the intonations and voice of the spoken word, the emotional characteristics of dance or music, or the narrative qualities of film*” (p. 6).

*Boy* is a film that relies heavily on the integration of moving type and image into a rhythmic flow. This is partly as a foil for the volume and rapidity of the image changes and also a way of creating a visually dense text that, while heavily weighted, does not become cloying or overly turgid. As part of achieving this continuity, type moves in a variety of ways. It has a personality and an ability to react to its environment.

### the paralinguistic nature of type

Mealing (2003),<sup>39</sup> suggests that the meaning of written language can exist in something more than its static form. The written word has the power to communicate emotion through its changing shape and movement. This power he calls the paralinguistic nature of type. Mealing suggests that particular treatments of the written word, can reinstate “*the semantic nuances lost when transient ‘phonic substance’ is translated to immutable ‘graphic substance’*” (p. 47). Thus, he argues that

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<sup>39</sup> Mealing’s (2003) research into value added text (VAT) and the relationship between paralinguistics and graphic design is concerned with attempts to visually extend the semantic potential of a message further in a computer-based environment and to render the process both algorithmic and dynamic. The principles behind his research, he suggests, are applicable to both typographic and iconic text.

spatio-temporal type can be a re-humanising element in the treatment of text derived from spoken language<sup>40</sup>.

In *boy* all elements work towards a common goal. Image, sound and typographical treatments are influenced by common themes and through this, meld together into a cohesive whole. Type becomes the voices of the film. It has personalities and undergoes transformations in the same way that characters and events do.

Sam's lyrical, ecclesiastical voice is graceful and nebulous. It moves like contemplation; silent, rhythmical, tentative, sometimes remembering itself by repeating a thought, sometimes by speaking in unconventional ways<sup>41</sup>.

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<sup>40</sup> The potential for animated type to capture atmosphere and personality can be evidenced in the work of agencies like *Why Not Associates* (2000). Their visual "soundbites" use typography and imagery to visually communicate the personalities of musicians. These works presented at the Virgin Music Group Conference in 1999, marked a significant turning point in the way spatio-temporal type is applied to meaning. (See Woolman, *Sonic Graphics*, 2000, pp. 53-55)

This agency's experiments with the personality of moving type sit alongside expectations among designers that animated typefaces demonstrate the essence and nature of a voice, rather than simply be a series of letterforms that animate effectively. Indicative of this is the fact that among type foundries like *Lettererror* and *T-26* it has become practice to market typefaces inside mini-narrative films. Joyce-Rutter (1998) says "these films, viewed on computer screens, are highly edited amalgams of ambient images and sound that provide an interpretive environment to explore the typeface's personality which cannot be fully realized in print." (p. 42)

<sup>41</sup> Examples of unconventional treatments of sentence structure can be seen in the repeating of words at the end of a thought ("*Just things bound by tradition and silence... tradition and silence... silence... silence*"). The disruption of order is also evidenced in approaches to memory where a sentence is begun with the dominant thought and meaning is filled in later. For example when Sam tells us of his mother's death, the type appears as, "*Cancer... [there is a pause, then]... my mother died of*".

Conversely, the abject voice in the film bristles and crackles. It has an undercurrent of emotion that disrupts its own eclectic and unstable letterforms. Its words and letters do not sit in lines and in general it speaks in short, pithy statements.

Emotion embedded inside the movement of type, enables the film to communicate subtle tensions beyond the normal syntactic abilities of its words.

A consideration of the paralinguistic potential of the film's typefaces, enabled me to complement and expand some of the more nebulous tensions embedded in the story. It also meant that by graphically heightening the emotive content of the words, I was able to design a system that more easily communicated meaning across languages.

*talking across barriers*

Mealing, (2003) suggests that a designer may "*communicate more in a typographic message than the literal semantics of the user's native language.*" He believes that paralinguistic type can "*offer potential assistance in cross cultural design*" (p. 43).

The decision to integrate movement with type in the film *boy* was therefore, useful in developing a more expressive and broadly communicative way of speaking.

For an English-reading audience, the film's use of a relatively unknown anti-language (bogspeak), does not result in a significant loss of understanding. This is because paralinguistic treatments still communicate the feeling of a word or phrase. The use of a paralinguistically styled anti-language can at once distance the audience from a word's meaning while simultaneously communicating its spirit.

*Boy* has been produced for an international market. The narrative is designed as a "non-spoken" film.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> "Non-spoken" refers to the fact that the narrative contains no audio narration. Typographic treatments of written words are used to replace the aural and emotional content of speech. The film cannot be termed "silent" however, because it contains sound and this is integral to its discourse. (Sound appears as stylised atmos., heterodiegetic foley work, and as an embedded and highly mixed music track.)

The film has screened at more foreign language festivals than festivals where English is the audience's first language<sup>43</sup>. It is designed to reach across language barriers because it carries most of its story in pictures and the "look" of words.

Each frame is carefully composed and where it appears, type is finely balanced inside the overall construction of the image. This means that compositional elements are severely disrupted if additional subtitles, (normally required for foreign screenings), are added.

*the speed of thought*

The voices in *boy* are silent.

Their power lies in the way they speak through their form. This is because Sam's world is essentially covert and introspective. His intimate sexual contact with others is silent, his interactions with the over-ground are silent, even his attacks on those who hurt him are silent. As a result his narration of the story was pitched at a level closer to the safety of internal thought than the confidence of projected speech. The opening words of the film establish this through the appearance of ornate type, floating across the soundscape of a crackling record.

There are two distinct paces of thought in *boy*. The first is poetic, retrospective and contemplative. The second is sudden and fleeting. Because the speed of this second kind of thought is rapid, the pace of type is similar.

Bellantoni and Woolman (2000) argue that,

*[m]oving type is more often than not most successful when presented*

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<sup>43</sup> Up until March of 2005, *boy* had screened in seventeen international festivals. Ten of these were in countries where English was not generally spoken and only two of these festivals asked to subtitle the film. (This request was politely declined and the film still screened). These official selections included international festivals in Albania, the Czech Republic, Finland, Norway, Sweden, Germany and Belgium.

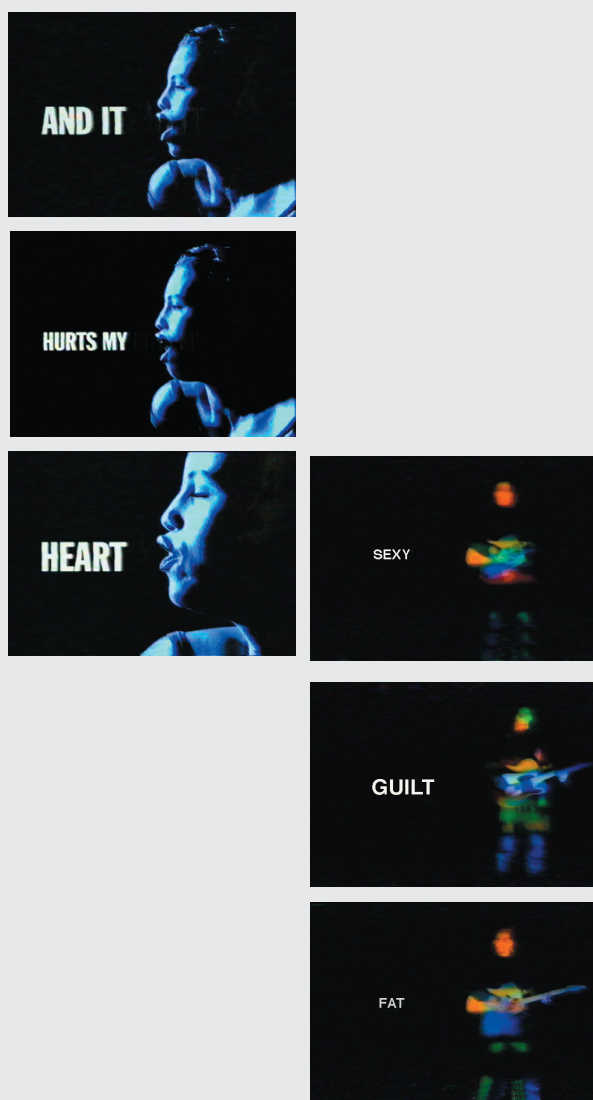


Fig. 3:43  
Three and five frame-rate type treatments.  
Mondino's (1990) design for Neneh Cherry's *I've Got You Under My Skin* (1990) [left], used type as a method of rendering rapid, assertive lyrics while concurrently translating the rhythm of rap into visual form. The opening of this video uses a split screen where the extremely rapid pace of the words was able to operate on a passive background as a way of minimalising any visual disturbance. Pellington's (1993) design for INXS' *Beautiful Girl* [right] used the readability of single-words at three frames per unit. This meant words that offered an alternative commentary as a counterpoint to the song's theme of beauty, were able to flicker very rapidly against images in the video.

*in individual word or phrase sequences because computer and television screens are an inferior medium for reading long and involved text... Text that is divided into phrases and words, engages in a sort of dialogue with the viewer, giving the experience of being spoken to. Larger bodies of text appearing on the screen [are] closer to the experience of print, and the experience is one of reading. (p. 17)*

In *boy*, I was concerned with how pace and form might shift a typographical voice from "the spoken" to "the thought". Definitely thought is faster than speech and the issues this presented in this present project, gave rise to experiments relating to the pace of type in the film.

#### *analysis*

Work by music video designers like Jean Baptiste Mondino and Mark Pellington demonstrated in the early 1990s<sup>44</sup> that single words or very short phrases were able to be read in music videos at a rate of between three and five frames per unit (fig. 3:43)<sup>45</sup>.

In videos where type moved very fast, one was left with the impression that what had been witnessed was a series of notions, rather than cohesive sentences; type appeared to communicate a form of rapid thought.

<sup>44</sup> A reason why these typographical experiments have occurred in the arenas of music video and television commercials may be because these genres offer an environment where word meaning does not have to be established on first "reading". This is because these music video and television commercials, unlike film, are structured to encourage multiple viewings. A word can be suggested and recognised but not integrated into the context of a wider structure. Because of this, television commercials and music videos offer more flexibility than cinema, in what they demand of type. Generally cinema still maintains its traditional emphasis on readability, legibility and closed translation.

<sup>45</sup> The term *unit* refers to a single word or graphic appearing in the film. Traditionally, certain rates of exposure have been set for unit readability in film. For example, if set in a clear sans serif face, scrolling credits and animated crawls of type traditionally take between 7-10 seconds (or 168-240 film frames) to move from their entry to their exits on the screen. 35mm film and video have different ratios of frames per second of stock running through the projector. 35mm film runs at 24 frames per second (24 fps) and video is 29.97 (30) and 25 fps.

Bellantoni and Woolman, (2000) may offer a reason as to why the speed of type in these early experiments worked so successfully. They suggest that “our mind’s eye holds on to the images for a slightly longer duration than they are actually seen by the retina,” (p. 42). Key frames and in-betweens for these short bursts of type have tended to be almost identical and the typeface selection followed the convention of avoiding script and serif typefaces with thick-thin stroke variation. It was also common practice when pacing type this quickly, to use caps from bold sans serif faces because they maximised text legibility.

Bellantoni and Woolman (2000) suggest that,

*when we read a word that exists within a complete sentence, two types of connotation exist. In the first we compare the letters of the word to each other, to form the word. We then compare the word to other words in the sentence to form a complete thought. (p. 32)*

While I would argue that a single word is in fact capable of conveying a thought, it is the authors’ signalling of the difference between these processes of word recognition and sentence readability that is of interest to this present project. The demarcation between the times it takes to perform these two processes definitely appears to be at the base of the effective frames-per-unit ratios for readability on the screen. Discussions with other directors and designers currently working in the arena of title design and music video<sup>46</sup> appears to confirm that rapidly moving words can be identified in three to five frames, but anything more than three words becomes difficult to read at this pace.

In *boy*, single words animate on average, across three to ten frames. This is because I wanted built into them, internal discords like scratched backgrounds, alternating positions and alternating versions of the word.

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<sup>46</sup> Marcus Ringrose from HEAT Interactive, Brenton Cumberpatch from IMAGES, and Paula Simmons from MARK-MAKER.

Because of this unit-frame ratio, single or compound words are recognised as fleeting but emotionally charged intrusions in the visual narrative. They appear and disappear like notions or half-captured thoughts. They move so quickly that they are noticed rather than contemplated. When words are used as transfigured current narration (the driver in the bog and later in the dump) they bristle like language where the emphasis is more important than the syntactic meaning. We remember the Driver's angry words, but not the details of his sentence.

Establishing a pace for these parts of the film was comparatively straightforward when compared to designing the pacing of longer, lyrical and more reflective voices in the film.

### **experiments**

#### *readability*

Between June 2001 and March 2002 I began testing time frames to see if there was any significant difference between readability of sentences on a small screen compared to projections of type on to European and American standard widescreens<sup>47</sup>. My curiosity had been aroused when in 1998 I watched on video, Len Cheeseman's animated type commercial, *The Riot of Spring*\*. This complex and evocative animation was made for the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra and was designed specifically for screening in cinemas. Although the scale of the video viewing took away some of the intensity of the type, the work also appeared to lack the sense of "breathing conversation" it had when I viewed it in a theatre; something appeared to have happened to its pace. I rang Saatchi & Saatchi in Wellington to check that the work on the show-reel I was looking at was in fact the original and they confirmed that it was.

Using Bellantoni and Woolman's (2000) seven-to-ten second industry standard pace for revealing and dissolving type, resulted in a reading pace very similar to a voice that speaks clearly and legibly.

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<sup>47</sup>The European Standard widescreen for 35 mm film has a ratio of 1:66:1 and the American Standard 35mm widescreen for film has a 1.85:1, or a 16:9 ratio. The projection screens I used for these experiments measured 2.2 x 1.2 meters (DVD projection) and 10 x 6.2 meters (full, wide-screen).

The type looked as if I was watching a slow and deliberate conversation. This ratio of exposed type-to-motion also presented two other significant problems. Firstly it was out of rhythm with the rapidly edited and flowing structure of the film, and secondly it lacked the intangible and ethereal quality of thought.

Film editor Brenton Cumberpatch states,

*Editing pace, music and pictures all tie in to determine what length is necessary for the audience to read a written word. If the audience has been experiencing fast paced, quick cuts then you're able to have smaller frame durations and not jar them. The chances are they will be able to read the writing. If the pace is more languid, and you use small frame edits, the chances are they will have difficulty catching them.*

B. Cumberpatch, e-mail communication, (February 2, 2004).

This readability of type pace is also affected by a range of complementing variables including typographical style, text style, text colour and background movement. As a general guide in editing film, editors like Cumberpatch use *“three words per second when trying to establish how long a voice over will be”* (ibid.).

A slightly faster version of this ratio was trialed with the lyrical type sequences in *boy*. This decision was made following a series of experiments that pared down the duration of segments of sentences (in a similar way that a poem breaks ideas into lines).

By revealing thoughts in small sections, I was eventually able to establish a reading pace closer to lyrical thought. I found that holding type in a state of dissolve as I brought on new information, dictated a reading pace that also allowed some variation in the reading speed (fig. 3:44).

These experiments took a long time to refine because of calibration issues between reading time on large-scale projections and the fact that I was developing the type animations on a small computer.



Fig. 3:44

Experiments with pacing reading. Two techniques are evidenced in these early experiments (February 2002). The system at the top used a three second exposure for each line of text and factored in an additional buffer of two seconds as the words faded off and a new line of text emerged. I found it was necessary to edit together slow, tracking shots or images that had similar colour palettes to avoid any undue conflict between the pictorial background and the emerging type. I also used descriptions like *“adrift with mourning”* in the poetic text to draw a subtle relationship between the image and the flow of type.

The second technique evidenced in the last three images, was less successful (although interesting to watch). It faded a new line of words, up through the letters of the old phrase. The problem with this was that one had to factor into the reading time, a period of where neither line of text could be deciphered. In the context of the tightly edited pace with which I was working, this technique was ineffective because it extended the time required to read the words. It also broke the rhythmic flow of the written voice I was trying to develop.



Fig. 3:45  
Type wiping in relation to moving imagery.  
Sentences tend to wipe off from left to right because within the reduced time available to read the text, this method affords maximum exposure.  
To accommodate this design, sequences that were to contain this kind of wipe were all shot with dominant visual elements moving from left to right.

#### *type wiping*

By allowing type to wipe on and off in relation to the movement of specific objects in the film (fig. 3:45), I was able to integrate the graphic form of thought with the smooth flow of the visual narrative.

This not only afforded greater concord between text and image but also, because type was dissolving and sometimes reappearing, it captured the nature of thought over speech.

As a result of these experiments, if *boy* is viewed on a computer screen or television set, the pace of the written text appears very fast. On a cinema screen however, the pace, because of the change in scale, appears to be slightly slower.

#### **summary**

The pace of type in this film is faster than one would normally encounter in cinema, and it behaves in significantly different ways.

*Boy* is designed referencing texts that invite multiple viewings; it draws on some of the conventions of type pace, placement and emphasis, from music video and television commercials. It seeks to apply these approaches to a unique way of storytelling.

The film employs type as a system of narration, in three distinctive ways. As additional narration, the typographic voice appears in concord with the images it is discussing. Generally in these sequences it is adding related information to what is unfolding.

As a transfigurer of current narration, type is often in discord with the images, either through its content or its movement. In the film *boy*, transfiguring type is generally used to unsettle the information provided by the imagery.

Finally, as pictorial form, type is used as a subtle addition to the iconography of the film. It is integrated into the imagery as an undercurrent of detail. It is also designed to be revealed in repeated exposures, or recognised in stills used in publicity and print material<sup>48</sup>.

<sup>48</sup> The main images used to promote the film: *the child with the coat on the open road* (fig. 3:25), *the twin girls in the shrine* (fig. 2:7), *the skinheads in tutus* (p. 26), and *the angel/dolls* (chapter headings) all contain examples of this embedded type. As print media, these images are looked at for much longer periods of time, and in a fashion that allows a greater level on contemplation on their detail.

Four international festivals [*The Telecom New Zealand International Film Festival 2004*, the *Vinokino International Film Festival 2004*, the *Cork International Short Film Festival 2004* and the *Verzaubert International Lesbian and Gay Film Festival*] used these images from *boy* to promote their festivals.

Moving type has been used to enhance the film's voices in a manner similar to the way paralinguistics augment speech. This expansion of the normal syntactic abilities of type, gives the written language in the film a heightened level of personality.

One of the reasons for the building of the paralinguistic personality of type was the need for the text to operate effectively as it moved across language barriers. However, the treatment was also important in bringing type into concord with the rhythmic and spatial considerations of the film.

The final set of concerns, in relation to the design of spatio-temporal type, was the capturing of thought. This was done to renegotiate cinema's traditional use of the written word as a representation of speech. This process involved experiments with pace and scale, so that ratios could be fine-tuned for single and compound words. It also aimed to develop a distinctively internalised voice for much of the film, a voice that communicated the isolation and disconnected nature of Sam's being.

Type is not a separate veneer on *boy*. It is not laid over the visual text in the manner of some subtitles. It is a carefully constructed contribution to the film's aesthetics, ethos and narrative discourse. It speaks like thought, it develops and changes in relation to the currents of the story, and it draws its forms and expressions from the very core of the film's diegesis.

Complete and intersecting typographical treatments have been developed from a consideration of the culture and language of Sam's underground world. Bog cruising and its profiles have contributed as much to the written voice of the film as they have to its storyline and imagery.

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Having now considered some of the important influences on, and developments of, type in the short film *boy*, this chapter is now drawn to a close.

In concluding the exegesis of this project, the final section will reflect on the completed text, the key experiments and processes employed in its development and the impact of the project on further research.

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