# 1AC

// denotes the words that are said over audio

Full link to the interview, all audio is cut from here - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IeMIWCxHgQk>

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#### Did you see what she did to him, did you hear what they said?

#### Just a New York conversation rattling in my head

#### Ooh my, and what shall we wear, ooh my, and who really cares?

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#### Sexuality operates within a regime of truth through transparency that locates itself in the speech act of moving outside the closet. The only acceptable position within the confessional space of media is to formulate yourself within modes of categorization for the voyeuristic enjoyment of others from your exhibition. The question of sex now becomes the trial of the subject.

Villiers 12 Villiers, Nicholas de. Opacity and the Closet: Queer Tactics in Foucault, Barthes, and Warhol. University of Minnesota Press, 2012. Project MUSE muse.jhu.edu/book/24737.Nicholas de Villiers is associate professor of English and film at the University of North Florida. He is the author of Opacity and the Closet: Queer Tactics in Foucault, Barthes, and Warhol (Minnesota, 2012). [https://muse.jhu.edu/book/24737 Pg 1-8](https://muse.jhu.edu/book/24737%20Pg%201-8) //avery

The metaphor of “coming out of the closet” is indeed hegemonic—propounded not just as a manner of being truthful but also as the quintessential gesture of acknowledging who one is. To “come out” is first and foremost to locate identity not just in a speech act but in a speech act by which one presumably discloses a previously closeted “secret.”3 “Coming out of the closet” is thus the seemingly ubiquitous metaphor for understanding the connection between homosexuality, identity, and speech (usu - ally conceived as authentic, true, and free expression of a formerly repressed sexuality). Foucault has detailed the manifold ways in which sexuality has become “the truth” of a person, a truth that must be made to speak, ceaselessly, in ever-new permutations of the confessional.4 Christian confessional and modern psychoanalysis both take on the task of deciphering sexuality through the medium of speech. There is a fundamental connection between the “hermeneutics of suspicion,” which distrusts appearances, and the suspicious hermeneutic impulse whereby sexuality is understood as concealed meaning that can nonetheless be made transparent to scrutiny.5 The operation described by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick as “the epistemology of the closet” makes sexuality into a secret that can be known, causing certain types of privileged “knowingness” to circulate.6 (Think for example of the Saturday Night Live cartoon sketch “The Ambiguously Gay Duo,” in which homoerotic sexual ambiguity gives rise to virulent speculation and the exchange of rumor, seeking confirmation of a unanimous suspicion.)7 The closet and coming out, in fact, expose the double binds and incoherence of the structure of public and private. In this regard, legal trials have proven that homosexuality can have neither the privilege of being public nor of being private.8 Privileged knowingness might best be understood as reserving the right to speak (even if confidentially) about another’s sexuality, and this is indeed what acts of coming out are in - tended to disrupt (with varying degrees of success). While I do not wish to downplay the importance of such speech acts as coming out, Sedgwick and others have indicated the ways in which this is by no means a simple operation of truth telling, and such critics as David Van Leer have questioned the privilege accorded to the metaphor itself in its emphasis on selfrevelation, conversion, and confession.9

Why might someone refuse to tell the truth of his or her sexuality? According to the dominant logic of the closet, such behavior can only betoken closetedness, a lack of truthfulness-to-oneself and a crippling complicity with homophobia. Therefore, it is worth asking, first of all, if homophobia is always a will-to-ignorance and silence, and whether it might in fact include a fear of not knowing everything about a person’s sexuality. It is important to consider the ways that homophobia often insists on knowing rather than refusing to know about the sexuality of gay people. Indeed, as Sedgwick points out in Epistemology of the Closet, the subject can be faulted for not disclosing enough rather than disclosing too much about her or his sexuality. This disclosure is “at once compulsory and forbidden.”10 “Outing” has been criticized for its controlling impulse, whereby, as Silvia Bovenschen has argued, “Someone who refuses to render himself universally accessible and classifiable, even though according to general opinion he belongs to a type that may become an object of a discussion, is suspect. In outing he is categorically categorized.”11 Roland Barthes, in his preface to Tricks, Renaud Camus’s novel of gay cruising, claims that there is one thing that “society will not tolerate,” namely, that “I should be . . . nothing, or, more precisely, that the something I am should be openly expressed as provisional, revocable, insignificant, inessen - tial, in a word irrelevant.”12 This emphasis on “insignificance” has been critiqued by those who see Barthes and others as complicit with a homophobic logic of erasure and absence.13 But what if we were to take seriously these “intolerable” and “suspect” behaviors and consider them distinctly queer strategies, strategies of opacity, not necessarily of silence or invisibility? Barthes clarifies that the problem is not that I should be nothing, but rather that the something I am might be impertinent. Following Foucault’s remarks in “The Subject and Power,” I see this as a struggle against subjection (assujetissement) and against a form of power that “categorizes the individual, marks him by his own individuality, attaches him to his own identity, imposes a law of truth on him that he must recognize and others have to recognize in him.”14 This form of power makes individuals into recognizable subjects by imposing a categorizing and interpretive regime of truth.

Michel Foucault, Roland Barthes, and the Pop artist Andy Warhol each made sustained efforts in their lives and works to “shake off” the closet and the epistemological, ontological, and political presuppositions on which it is based. These three important queer figures in postwar French and American culture were responding critically to the discursive formation of the closet, and all found ways to vitalize its critique through creative self-enactments by which they relocated themselves against the massively overdetermined rhetoric of the truth, of secrets revealed, of bringing into the light, of clarity, of transparency, hence of confessional self-inspection, of self-rectification.

Saint Augustine’s Confessions—often seen as prefiguring modern autobiography—is perhaps one of the best illustrations of this rhetoric. Addressing himself directly to God—but with his contemporary readership in mind—Augustine proclaims, “What could be hidden within me, even if I were unwilling to confess it to you? I would be hiding you from myself, not myself from you. Now, however, my groaning is witness that I am displeased with myself.”15 In “Technologies of the Self,” Foucault explains the ideal of permanent verbalization espoused by Cassian: “self-examination is subordinated to obedience and the permanent verbalization of thoughts.”16 Foucault shows the consequences of this approach, “Confession is a mark of truth. This idea of the permanent verbal is only an ideal: it is never completely possible. But the price of the permanent verbal was to make everything that could not be expressed into a sin,” hence what is known as “the sin of omission.”17

Foucault explains that “from the eighteenth century to the present, the techniques of verbalization have been reinserted in a different context by the so-called human sciences in order to use them without renunciation of the self but to constitute, positively, a new self. To use these techniques without renouncing oneself constitutes a decisive break.”18 A striking ex - ample of the technique of verbalization without self-renunciation appears in the Confessions of Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Rousseau asserts that “as we have seen, never throughout the whole of my life has my heart, as transparent as crystal, been able to hide for a single moment any feeling of any intensity that has taken refuge there.”19 According to Paul de Man’s deconstruction of Rousseau in “Excuses (Confessions),” “shame is primarily exhibitionistic” and this (literary) structure is self-perpetuating: as we move toward deeper shame, each confession gets harder to tell and more necessary and satisfying to confess.20 Ironically, then, “the excuse consists in recapitulating the exposure in the guise of concealment,” and “guilt is forgiven because it allows for the pleasure of revealing its repression.”21 This self-perpetuating operation, whereby shame allows for the satisfaction of self-exposure through confession, has a mechanical quality about it to de Man. He therefore insists that “the text is not a figural body but a machine.”22 He argues that writing or language as mechanical (grammar) threatens the autobiographical subject, and that this points to “a radical estrangement between the meaning and the performance of any text.”23 He points out that the machine performs anyway, so we supply the guilt to make the excuse meaningful: “Excuses generate the very guilt they exonerate, though always in excess or by default.”24 De Man calls this excess that results from Rousseau’s use of figural language “irony,” and notes that, “far from closing off the tropological system, irony enforces the repetition of its aberration.”25

The common tropes of confession found in Augustine and Rousseau are chiefly those of transparency (to God or the reader’s gaze), the ideal of continual self-disclosure through verbalization, and the way in which the confession quickly becomes an excuse or justification of one’s shameful behavior displayed exhibitionistically for others. But beyond this, I would like to follow de Man’s critique of Rousseau in examining whether we might consider confessional discourse a “machine” that exceeds the autobiographical subject.

The closet as a modern form of confessional discourse strikes me as particularly “mechanical” in its operations. The guilt and shame associated with sexual secrets often seem to be supplied in order to make the closet meaningful, which distracts us from the way it “performs anyway” (as de Man puts it). Foucault famously voiced his doubts about the Repressive Hypothesis, asking, “Suppose the obligation to conceal it was but another aspect of the duty to admit to it (concealing it all the more and with greater care as the confession of it was more important, requiring a stricter ritual and promising more decisive effects)? What if sex in out society, on a scale of several centuries, was something that was placed within an unrelenting system of confession?”26 Both de Man and Foucault acknowledge the way in which this operation is like an unrelenting machine. So the question then becomes how to throw a spanner in the machine of confessional discourse?

What if we were to look at speech as nonrevelatory, outside the parameters of confession and truth, the humanist desire for reflection, and the ideal of transparency? What if we were to attend to its opacity? What would such an opacity look or sound like, and what would be its function? This book interrogates the viability of the metaphor of the closet and puts forth a concept of “opacity” as an alternative queer strategy or tactic that is not linked to an interpretation of hidden depths, concealed meanings, or a neat opposition between silence and speech.27 To this end I examine queer appropriations of forms typically linked to truth telling, the revelation of secrets, authenticity, and transparency, namely, the interview, the autobiography, the diary, and the documentary.28

I use the term “strategy” here to indicate a certain relation to particular “games of truth” and to indicate the simultaneously ludic and regulated nature of language. Strategies are specific to particular historical, cultural, and discursive situations and can have different intentions and effects. It may well be that a strategy’s “motivation” is part and parcel of a homophobic logic of shame, self-loathing, and a petit-bourgeois concern for privacy.29 But this does not prohibit its effects from being productively queer. This tension may, in fact, be the enabling condition for any consideration of queer opacity whatsoever. It is my conviction that strategies should be considered less for their reactive or protective abilities (that is, a reading in terms of the closet, in terms of what the strategy is intended to prevent or protect against), but rather more for what they might enable, creatively and politically. Indeed, what is remarkable about opacity as a discursive strategy is its productivity (including the remarkable number of attempts to make sense of it, which perhaps makes it an ironic productivity).30

The figure of Bartleby with which I began exemplifies what I suggest is a queer strategy of opacity.31 What follows is an elaboration of three other instances of opacity, designated by proper names that refer to actual historical individuals, but I am using those names here as figures indicating specific strategies: Michel Foucault, Roland Barthes, and Andy Warhol. My readings of these figures suggest that they invent and deploy different strategies and tactics for specifically resisting both the closet and the confessional discourse associated with it. They also suggest alternatives to the essentialist concepts of the subject and the author on which these depend.32 These figures are in fact the strategies of opacity they perform, strategies that like Bartleby’s linguistic formula are not quite affirmations or quite completely negations, but rather indicate resistances to a type of epistemology that can only seek the truth. Like Bartleby’s formula, these linguistic strategies stymie the speech acts used to interrogate the person that might otherwise seem to be behind them.

One problem I can foresee here is delimiting the difference between what I am calling opacity and the (modernist) strategy of “myth-making.” For example, if we were to consider the persona of Oscar Wilde, it is difficult to separate out the cult image of the mythic figure (as emphasized in Todd Haynes’s Velvet Goldmine [1998]), the actual historical individual (which is sought by the film Wilde [1997], in an ironic but effective search for truth), and the strategies of opacity that can be found in the Wilde trials, precisely at that moment in which the categorizing homophobic impulse wishes to play the mythic persona off against or alongside the civic individual, and wherein it became increasingly obvious that tell - ing the truth does not set you free.33

The notion of being “on trial” (and thus of answering for oneself) will therefore be a recurring motif.34 I suggest that there is in fact a structural homology between the trial and the interview (and in some cases the biography) insofar as that each of them consists of operations that have as their goal the production of truth. Brian Winston has traced how the interview is “causally related to Benthamite legal reforms because, almost as soon as the new ‘natural’ legal interrogatory was in place in the courts, it was borrowed for journalism,” noting that “newspaper interviews were to become common practice in the 1870s, the word itself with this specific journalistic connotation being dated to 1869,” and that this interrogatory was also used “for social science, and then borrowed again for radio and the cinema.”35 In Giving an Account of Oneself, Judith Butler likewise identifies what she calls the “juridical model” of self-narrative, though she speaks of the subject’s opacity to itself, in a different sense than I am using the term.36

This homology between the interview and the trial is especially evident in the interviews and posthumous “trials” of Foucault, Barthes, and Warhol. I have chosen to focus on a rather narrow but pivotal moment in postwar U.S. and French history, both the history of “out” gay politics (post-Stonewall, post-’68), and the evolution of mass-media communications featuring the celebrity and intellectual interview (plus the formation of a “gay press” in France and the United States, which combines these two historical strands).37 Indeed, mediation is a major theme in what follows, particularly in the conclusion. I emphasize these figures’ collaborations (some posthumous or not fully voluntary) with biographers, interviewers, and literary or visual artists, as well as their individually authored publications, in order to link opacity with technological mediation. I consider them both in their original historical context and in terms of their transatlantic circulation, translation, and “afterlife.”

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#### It said, it said in your release that we were given this morning that you like lying to the press. Why is this and are you doing it now?

#### I didn’t say that the release did.

#### Is it true?

#### No.

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#### The demand of the visible confessional subject rests on the securitization and policing of gender transgressions. The discourse of surveillance politics generates a locus point of violence against those deemed as transgressive under the name of public safety.

Beauchamp 19 Going Stealth: Transgender Politics and U.S. Surveillance Practices Author(s): Toby Beauchamp Publisher: Duke University Press Toby Beauchamp is Associate Professor of Gender and Women's Studies and affiliate faculty in the Unit for Criticism and Interpretive Theory at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. Pg 8-18 <https://www.dukeupress.edu/going-stealth> //avery

Consider, for example, an American Express national advertising campaign launched in mid-2008. In response to other companies’ turns to consumer-chosen designs for credit cards, the campaign sought to showcase the professional look of American Express Business Gold cards. To this end, one commercial features a white man dressed in a suit, who approaches an airline ticket counter for a business trip to San Francisco and presents a credit card adorned with images of kittens. The ticket agent looks at him suspiciously, confirms that this is a business trip, and motions to two security personnel, who immediately flank the customer from behind. The Black male security guard asks the customer to come with them, and the white woman snaps on a latex glove. As they whisk this customer away, another white man steps to the counter, also requests a ticket for a San Francisco business trip, and presents his professional American Express Gold card, which creates no disturbance.

In this case, a person not specifically marked as transgender is nonetheless subject to gender regulation because of the ways his gender is interpreted through consumer objects. The introduction of a latex glove (notably edited out of later versions of the commercial) suggests that this person is also subject to a physical form of state violence for his gender transgressions. That the security guard wearing the glove is a woman adds another gendered layer to this scene: in response to public anxieties about inappropriate and nonconsensual physical contact during security checks, government officials have repeatedly issued assurances that physical searches will be conducted by an officer of the same gender as the individual being searched. Along with the too-feminine credit card design, the gloved search conducted by a woman positions this airline customer as breaking from normative gender in ways that provoke (and, the commercial implies, justify) serious scrutiny. Importantly, the second customer—the man with the properly professional and masculine credit card—is also part of this system, as is the at-home viewer, for whom these regulatory practices may be internalized. Here, the privileges of good citizenship are arrived at through normative gendering, which is read in part through class status and consumer practices. The policing of gender transgression, though often occurring most overtly in relation to transgender-identified people, casts a much wider net. At the same time, those transgender-identified people who can comply with the regulatory norms of race, class, ability, and citizenship through which proper, nonthreatening gender is read may escape these most obvious forms of scrutiny.

A central argument running throughout this book, then, is that surveillance of gender-nonconforming people centers less on their identification as transgender per se than it does on the perceived deception underlying transgressive gender presentation. Just as the telling of a lie and the omission of information are two different forms of deception, I move between an interrelated set of terms to show how this broad link between gender nonconformity and deception manifests: through accusations of fraud, through claims that certain bodies or identities do not match as they ought to, and through demands for disclosure or transparency, among others. State and public actors may justify surveillance practices by focusing on a specific form of deception, according to which form best supports the goal of maintaining normative gender. For instance, claims of fraud—a form of deception linked to personal or financial gain by taking something from another person—appear repeatedly in debates about identification documents,particularly regarding the use of false id to gain citizenship or voting rights, which conservative discourse frames as stealing from true citizens. Yet the rationale for intensified airport security screenings more often rests on the language of concealment, which can discursively merge concealed weapons with concealed sex or gender under the rubric of public safety that justifies airport surveillance.

Crucially, the implicit anxieties about terrorism in the American Express commercial suggest that nonnormative gender presentation is cause for alarm and suspicion on the level of national safety. Indications that something is amiss or doesn’t match up increasingly signal a much larger danger, producing anxieties fueled by public safety campaigns like the directive, “If you see something, say something,” circulating widely in public transit stations and airports. Against the cultural and political backdrop of the war on terror, government policy and public discourse produce an atmosphere casting full disclosure as the primary avenue to security and safety: only the duplicitous terrorist would balk at providing information to state agencies, and citizens with nothing to hide have nothing

But the panic at Cranbrook and the anxieties conveyed in the American Express commercial—as well as the gendered and racialized contours of surveillance practices ranging from biometric identification to airport screenings— illustrate that the perception of fraud clings more tightly to some than others. Although this perception undoubtedly creates material problems for many transgender-identified people, the appearance of gendered duplicity can be exacerbated or mitigated according to the ways that categories including race, class, citizenship, sexuality, and disability mutually constitute gender and various readings of it. That is to say, state actors and policies may interpret transgender people as threats to national health and safety, often in ways that connect to broad anxieties about terrorism and immigration, but such an interpretation of gendered deception extends far beyond the transgender-identified, as the early chapters of this book demonstrate. I have therefore had to make some complicated choices about the language used to describe gendered bodies, identities, and practices that transgress dominant standards. It is partly because surveillance practices apprehend a wide range of gendered subjects as transgressive—whether such subjects are intentionally breaking from gendered norms or not—that simply defaulting to transgender as a catchall term cannot suffice. Where I use transgender in SUSPICIOUS VISIBILITY 11 this book, I refer to those bodies and subjects that identify or are identified in ways that exceed normatively bounded categories of man and woman. Relatedly, I use transgender-identified to mark the ways that people identify themselves or are identified by others, denoting a specific claim to transgender itself as an identity category.15 In general, I avoid the term transsexual, which is rooted in and still typically associated with Western medicolegal classifications; where this term does appear here, it references its particular employment by certain scholars or its specific use as a codified medical or legal category. Most often, I rely on gender nonconforming as a broader term encompassing many (though certainly not all) transgender subjects as well as those bodies and subjects that break from idealized gender binaries or are interpreted as breaking from them because of the ways gender norms are read through mutually constitutive categories such as race, class, sexuality, religion, disability, and citizenship. Roughly, then, in this book transgender gestures more toward identity and identification, whereas gender nonconforming addresses a relation to norms that may involve but need not rest on identity and identification.16 These broader and less rigid terms are useful precisely because surveillance measures produce and affect not only those specifically identified as transgender but a wide range of gendered practices, identities, and bodies beyond that formal category. The term cisgender, increasingly used to mark non-transgender identity, poses related problems for this book. First introduced in the early 1990s, the term draws on use of the cis- prefix in the biological sciences to designate something that does not change property or orientation; applied to gender, in a basic sense it describes remaining aligned with assigned gender/ sex designations and related boundaries rather than changing or crossing them as the trans- prefix indicates. Although cisgender has recently gained quite a bit of purchase in transgender scholarship and activist discourse, and although it can do important work in denaturalizing normative gender, I do not employ it here for several reasons. The term’s reliance on biological frameworks—both the biological definition fueling the prefix itself and the implicit investment in a biological grounding for gender—limits its usefulness for a project intent on exploring the ruptures and contingencies of those frameworks themselves. Following A. Finn Enke’s analysis of the term, I also question the mechanisms by which trans- is distinguished from cis-, and how this additional dichotomy may close down new avenues rather than opening them up.17 For instance, how might the circulation of cisgender as 12 INTRODUCTION an identity category further naturalize and stabilize the categories of man and woman, even as it may be intended to highlight their constructed nature? Might cisgender status simply become equivalent to normative gender, and, if so, which transgender-identified people might it include, if any (i.e., once identified as transgender, must one always remain in that category)?18 Meanwhile, as Che Gossett succinctly argues, the term cisgender “can’t really account for how the gender binary was forcibly imposed on black and native people through slavery and settler colonialism. In American society, black people have always been figured as gender transgressive.”19 Inasmuch as the term centralizes a form of gender privilege that emerges through normative race, class, sexuality, and ability, but generally fails to name these relationships, can cisgender properly attend to the nuances of gender difference and the complexities of gender transgression? Because these questions are central to my examination of the surveillance mechanisms that assess gendered bodies, identities, and behaviors, cisgender cannot serve as useful shorthand in this project. Likewise, I avoid naming particular groups non-transgender, except when doing so indicates the particular assumption of non-transgender status within surveillance practices and discourses. Rather than attempting to collect knowledge about a particular identity category or bounded group of people, this book engages the transgender of transgender studies as a mode of critique. I draw here in part on Susan Stryker’s explanation of a transgender critique as one that “takes aim at the modernist epistemology that treats gender merely as a social, linguistic, or subjective representation of an objectively knowable material sex. Epistemological concerns lie at the heart of transgender critique. . . . Transgender phenomena, in short, point the way to a different understanding of how bodies mean, how representation works, and what counts as legitimate knowledge.”20 Building on this, Stryker and Aren Aizura forward an intellectual approach that uses the critical lens of transgender studies to put “as much pressure on the categories of man, woman, and homosexuality, as on transgender,” cautioning that “those terms are no less constructed than transgender itself, and they circulate transnationally in discourse and analysis with no less risk of being conceptually colonizing.”21 In these senses, a transgender critique is concerned less with producing knowledge about a particular class of people identified as transgender and more with understanding the social, political, and material conditions through which those identifications emerge and that knowledge itself is produced. SUSPICIOUS VISIBILITY 13 Nor is a transgender critique limited to a clearly circumscribed category called transgender. Rather, it is most useful when leveraged to unseat those categories of gender and sexuality that might be normalized and taken for granted through their assumed contrast to transgender. When taken up as an analytic rather than as a bounded identity category, transgender can also usefully intervene into the naturalization of race, disability, and citizenship. The term gender-nonconforming proves especially productive for this work, by moving away from an analysis of identities themselves (which would risk further naturalizing those identities) and toward an analysis of the production of, investments in, and breaks from those identity categories and related regulatory norms. In this book, a transgender critique enables an analysis of gender nonconformity that may or may not be (or be perceived as) transgenderidentified, and it provides a critical framework for examining relationships between many different gender-nonconforming practices, bodies, and identities, and the knowledge frameworks and institutions through which they are produced. In her classic essay “Punks, Bulldaggers, and Welfare Queens,” Cathy Cohen observes that queer political work thus far has failed to enact transformational politics in large part because it has relied on a narrow understanding of queer that turns on sexual identity rather than on shared political commitments and connected relationships to heteronormativity. While she does not advocate eliminating identity categories, she argues that “it is the multiplicity and interconnectedness of our identities that provide the most promising avenue for the destabilization and radical politicization of these same categories.”22 In this book, I do not discount the material effects of surveillance on transgender people, but I am primarily concerned with tracing the ways that different surveillance practices directly or indirectly rely on a gender-nonconforming figure that, as I show, may well not correspond to a transgender-identified subject. In this way, I also follow what certain queer and ethnic studies scholars have called a “subjectless critique,” which “disallows any positing of a proper subject of or object for the field.”23 Likewise, my approach is indebted to queer of color critique, which Roderick Ferguson describes as a mode of analysis that “extends women of color feminism by investigating how intersecting racial, gender, and sexual practices antagonize and/or conspire with the normative investments of nationstates and capital.”24 A critical lens that situates queer studies as inseparable from processes of racialization and the uneven transnational circulation 14 INTRODUCTION of bodies, capital, and knowledge, queer of color critique approaches questions of gender and sexuality not through narrow conceptions of identity but as political and cultural formations mutually constituted with race, nationalism, and global structures of power. Accordingly, while this book examines surveillance enacted by U.S. government agencies and segments of the U.S. public, it does not suggest a bounded United States operating in isolation. On the contrary, the surveillance practices examined here emerge and proliferate in relationship to racism, colonialism, and border anxieties, particularly (but not only) as they structure the war on terror.25 Relatedly, the question of citizenship animates many of the forms of surveillance that this book considers. A contested term encompassing many interrelated definitions, citizenship can be a formal legal status, a mechanism through which to access rights, a descriptor of morality and productivity (as in “good citizenship”), or a “range of everyday activities through which people claim political and social belonging within the national territory they inhabit” (as in cultural citizenship).26 This book engages each of these meanings, which both overlap and contradict one another, indicating one reason that surveillance measures are so frequently instituted to regulate citizenship. Drawing on Ferguson, Gayatri Gopinath explains that queer of color critique “enables us to trace the convergence of what seem to be radically distinct and disparate ideologies as they shore up heteronormativity.”27 Applying this intellectual practice to transgender studies makes it possible for this book to investigate a wide range of regulatory mechanisms producing gender, even—or perhaps especially—if at first gender does not appear central to their workings. Thus the book critically addresses dichotomous frameworks not only concerning male/female and man/woman, or even transgender/non-transgender, but also deviant/normative, terrorist/citizen, security/insecurity, and us/them. A transgender critique, as I pursue it here, offers a way to read various anxieties about gender nonconformity with a particular focus on their relationship to racism, xenophobia, ableism, and securitization

If, following Michel Foucault, power is not simply repressive but is productive of knowledge and categories of identity that work to manage life and regulate behaviors, then this book understands transgender not as a prede-termined category into which identities or bodies are slotted, but as a shifting discursive category produced in part through practices of surveillance. In this sense, it is not that surveillance identifies bodies or subjects that are already inherently deviant, but that surveillance is one mechanism through which gender nonconformity is produced as such. This theoretical approach usefully moves away from medical, legal, and cultural frameworks that have often sought to determine the truth of transgender identities and bodies; it asks instead how the very notion of transgender enters into discourse and why its truth becomes important.

Key to both the form and content of this book is Foucault’s argument in Discipline and Punish that the institutionalization of examinations and inspections—through spaces such as the school, the hospital, or the military —transformed mechanisms of power beginning in the late eighteenth century. These meticulous and obligatory examinations mark a shift away from sovereign power, which made itself most visible, to disciplinary power, which Foucault contends “is exercised through its invisibility; at the same time it imposes on those whom it subjects a principle of compulsory visibility. In discipline, it is the subjects who have to be seen. Their visibility assures the hold of the power that is exercised over them. It is the fact of being constantly seen, of being able always to be seen, that maintains the disciplined individual in his subjection.

Much scholarship regarding transgender people has sought to make them more visible, to investigate the truths of transgender lives and bodies, and to promote recognition and legibility of transgender individuals. Work in fields including psychology, law, sociology, and anthropology has aimed to discover and articulate what transgender bodies, communities, and identities entail. Such scholarly endeavors occur alongside transgender representation in popular culture: mystery novels, medical dramas, and daytime talk shows regularly position transgender people as hiding a dramatic secret that audiences are meant to uncover, often in the most literal sense of the word. We might say, in fact, that one of the most common characteristics of work on transgender topics is the framing of transgender bodies and identities as opportunities to make visible what is otherwise tantalizingly hidden.

Although visibility projects can create spectacles and further marginalize gender nonconformity, in many cases these efforts are intended as beneficial steps toward social change. But as Evelynn Hammonds reminds us, “an appeal to the visual is not uncomplicated or innocent. As theorists we have to ask how vision is structured, and, following that, we have to explore how difference is established, how it operates, how and in what ways it constitutes subjects who see and speak in the world.”29 These tasks are crucial to a critical engagement of surveillance practices—practices that should remind us that visibility is not a panacea but rather, as Foucault famously remarked, a trap.30 This is in part because one’s visibility to surveillance mechanisms can allow those mechanisms to work more effectively. At times this can even seem desirable, as when individuals enroll in preferred customer tracking programs or register as precertified travelers under new airline screening policies; these surveillance practices may not even register as surveillance, but rather as convenient privileges for the compliant consumer-citizen. Heightened visibility of some populations, particularly those marked as deviant or undesirable, can also allow others to feel or appear untouched by surveillance (even if this is not actually the case). All of these instances tend to focus on the problem bodies that must be overtly scrutinized and deflect attention away from surveillance practices themselves, much as Foucault notes that visibility shifts away from the workings of disciplinary power and onto those subjects being disciplined. David Lyon explains this in the context of increasingly automated and digital surveillance technologies: “Surveillance practices enable fresh forms of exclusion that not only cut off certain targeted groups from social participation, but do so in subtle ways that are sometimes scarcely visible. Indeed, the automating of surveillance permits a distance to be maintained between those who are privileged and those who are poor, those who are ‘safe’ and those who are ‘suspect.’”31

With these concerns in mind, this book seeks not to uncover particular information or truths about transgender subjects, but to understand how these subjects, and the shifting category of transgender, are produced in concert with a range of nonconforming gender practices and made visible through modes of surveillance that may never even name transgender as a category of concern. If, as Foucault argues, power is exerted not in a onedirectional, top-down manner but through diffuse networks, then this book is concerned with the ways that practices of surveillance extend far beyond their most obvious forms—the usa patriot Act, the National Security Agency—into the more quotidian aspects of our lives. These surveillance and security practices of the everyday produce and refine normative gender even when they may appear disconnected from it, as the first two chapters make clear.

Likewise, although this book pays special attention to U.S. state surveillance, it does not assume that surveillance practices originate in the state or that the state itself can be considered a stable and unified entity. Rather, in Wendy Brown’s terms, we might best understand the state as “a significantly unbounded terrain of powers and techniques, an ensemble of discourses, rules, and practices, cohabiting in limited, tension-ridden, often contradictory relation with one another,” and yet despite this somewhat unwieldy and shifting set of practices, also as “a vehicle of massive domination.”32 In this framework, surveillance can be analyzed as a constellation of mechanisms that may support but also exceed state power, while also illustrating the incoherence of and fractures in what we call the state. By addressing state surveillance, this book seeks to understand how surveillance practices move through and beyond formal state apparatuses and to explore how those practices put the state itself in question. Thus as Margot Canaday writes, “the state does not just direct policy at its subjects; various state arenas are themselves sites of contest over sex/gender norms, and therefore structured by those norms.”33 Accordingly, while I examine the ways that U.S. state surveillance works to regulate gender, I also address these practices as fraught struggles over the very gendered categories that such surveillance claims to bring under control.

Because surveillance practices proliferate to pervade all aspects of our lives, extending well beyond those specific measures that state agencies lay claim to, the scope of my primary source material here is necessarily both broad and incomplete. In many cases I look to facets of surveillance clearly connected to specific government agencies, such as congressional hearings and formal legislation, that set in motion and maintain security mechanisms. But I also take seriously Foucault’s caution against conceiving of the state and civil society as a dichotomous and “antagonistic pair” in which the former is domineering while the latter is “something good, lively, and warm.”34 If power has no single origin or hierarchy, but consists of “the manifold relationships of force that take shape and come into play in the machinery of production, in families, limited groups, and institutions,” then my archive also traces surveillance through capillary networks of power not confined to the arenas commonly associated with the state itself, as the third chapter particularly illustrates.35 But it is also for this reason—that power “is produced from one moment to the next, at every point, or rather in every relation from one point to another”—that the archive must always be par-tial.36 I bring together a combination of formal and informal surveillance mechanisms, tracing their connections through the everyday to better understand how surveillance, the state, and the category of transgender come to seem legible and stable through one another.

I also consider transgender advocacy organizations’ responses to U.S. surveillance practices, responses that reflect a tension between these organizations’ different political frameworks. Aligned with a mode of scholarship that promotes visibility and recognition, some organizations have urged a rather patriotic compliance with state policy while seeking to reform security measures to more accurately and sensitively address transgenderidentified people. This strategy emerges out of a larger investment in existing institutions such as the legal and penal systems, understood here as granting rights and protection, provided they can be taught to properly account for and include transgender-identified people. Although intended to alleviate particular harms, these inclusion campaigns rest on claims of good citizenship that both presume equal access to that status and help legitimate surveillance practices by working within the frameworks they provide. As Jasbir Puar argues, the queer subject is often incorporated into normative white citizenship through the production of a contrasting racialized figure of terror, creating figures that appear both exceptional and binarily oppositional. But crucially, these figures can work together to deflect attention from the ways that queerness is thoroughly entangled in and produced through the biopolitics of war, militarism, and security

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#### Do you like press interviews in general?

#### No.

#### You shun publicity?

#### No.

#### //

#### How can one be objective in the interview if you aren’t the one giving it? The movement of identity games within the journalist’s interview upsets the desired objectivity of the regime of truth production. These tactics of disruption makes the possibility of a manipulation of the impersonal to generate the subject themselves as an untraceable position. (42 Seconds)

Villiers 12 Villiers, Nicholas de. Opacity and the Closet: Queer Tactics in Foucault, Barthes, and Warhol. University of Minnesota Press, 2012. Project MUSE muse.jhu.edu/book/24737.Nicholas de Villiers is associate professor of English and film at the University of North Florida. He is the author of Opacity and the Closet: Queer Tactics in Foucault, Barthes, and Warhol (Minnesota, 2012). [https://muse.jhu.edu/book/24737 Pg 104-108](https://muse.jhu.edu/book/24737%20Pg%20104-108) //avery

Warhol’s tactics for questioning authorship, identity, and property had multiple permutations. Reva Wolf addresses the question of forged artworks, forged signatures, and impersonation in her chapter “Artistic Appropriation and the Image of the Poet as Thief”: “Warhol developed myriad activities as the 1960s moved forward: Allen Midgette appeared at lectures as if he were Warhol, Warhol claimed that his friend Brigid Polk (Brigid Berlin) made his paintings, and so on. On one occasion, at a midnight film screening, Warhol reportedly introduced Malanga as ‘Andy Warhol,’ and Malanga then signed autographs for Warhol.”66 Edie Sedgwick was another partner-in-crime in several such situations. The reporter Mel Juffe is quoted in POPism as pointing out that “one of your favorite jokes at the time was shoving different people forward and saying they were you.”67 These “pranks” are not without their consequences; as Warhol explains in POPism, the colleges to which Allen Midgette was sent as Warhol’s standin were not happy when they discovered the stunt:

These antistar identity games were something we were doing anyway, as a matter of course. It wasn’t until about four months later that somebody at one of the colleges happened to see a picture of me in the Voice and compared it to the one he’d taken of Allen on the podium and we had to give them their money back. . . . But the whole situation got even more absurd. Like, once I was on the phone with an official from one of the other colleges on that tour, telling him how really sorry I was when suddenly he turned paranoid and said: “How can I even be sure this is really you on the phone now?” After a pause while I gave that some thought, I had to admit, “I don’t know.”68

It is worth noting that Warhol’s desire to challenge star identity (with antistar identity games) contradicts the orthodox view of Warhol’s allegedly uncritical obsession with stardom. Warhol admits that these “no-fault put-ons” were not allowed when contracts were being signed, and “what we thought of as a joke was what some people would call ‘fraud’”; regarding Brigid Polk doing his paintings for him, he acknowledged that “the wrong flip remark in the press can cause just as many problems as a broken contract.

But despite the legal issues, this tactic was obviously crucial for Warhol. In one of the funniest passages from POPism, Warhol simultaneously asserts his artistic “hand” and exhibits an incredible humor and candor about his image: “One afternoon as I was silkscreening some Jackie canvases, I watched Lou answer the phone, then hand it over to Silver George, who identified himself: ‘Yes, this is Andy Warhol.’ That was fine with me. Everybody at the Factory did that. . . . Anyway, it was more fun to let other people take the calls for me, and I’d sometimes read interviews with me (supposedly) that I’d never given at all, that had been done over the phone.”70 Silver George displays great relish in his “objective” description: “I have a slightly faggy air, and I do little artistic movements.”71 But Warhol remarks that “it didn’t matter, I was 99 percent passive in those days, so I just let Silver George go on describing me—whatever he said couldn’t be worse than the way a lot of journalists described me anyway. . . . When Silver George hung up, he said they were really thrilled because they heard I never talked and here I’d just said more to them than anyone they’d ever interviewed. They also said how surprised they were that I could be so objective about myself.”72 This game of impersonation is one in which Silver George and Warhol both seem to take pleasure, Warhol’s “passivity” also providing a space to undermine the presumptions of the interview and objectivity while facilitating collaboration. David Bailey’s 1973 documentary Warhol contains further examples of Warhol allowing others to impersonate him, including Tony Zanetta made up as Warhol reading famous Warhol interview quotations, and a “ventriloquist” interview where a friend answers Bailey’s interview questions while Warhol just moves his lips.73

The sort of objectivity remarked upon by the phone interviewer above also appears in a passage from Philosophy written and recorded collaboratively by Bob Colacello, Warhol, Brigid Polk, and Pat Hackett, which features a phone call between Andy as “A” and Brigid as “B”:

“I have to look into the mirror for some clues. Nothing is missing. It’s all there. The affectless gaze. The diffracted grace . . .” “What?” “The bored languor, the wasted pallor . . .” “The what?” “The chic freakishness, the basically passive astonishment, the enthralling secret knowledge . . .” “WHAT??” “The chintzy joy, the revelatory tropisms, the chalky, puckish mask, the slightly Slavic look . . .” “Slightly . . .” “The childlike, gum-chewing naïveté, the glamour rooted in despair, the selfadmiring carelessness, the perfected otherness, the wispiness, the shadowy, voyeur - istic, vaguely sinister aura, the pale, soft-spoken magical presence, the skin and bones . . .” . . . “It’s all there B. Nothing is missing. I’m everything my scrapbook says I am.”74

This demonstrates an intense awareness on Warhol’s part of the image he claimed he didn’t have in the interview with Gretchen Berg. These “objective” descriptions of Warhol are remarkably reappropriated through his publication of them in his books (which can be thought of as contributions to Warhol’s “image”). The “image-repertoire” that so vexed Roland Barthes is here pushed to its limit (the imaginary—the set of masks—is invoked repeatedly, but in a phone conversation that importantly gives only the voice, not the face).75 Sedgwick has read these passages as revealing the “holographic space of Warhol’s hunger to own the rage of other people to describe him—to describe him as if impersonally, not to say sadistically. The effect of this shy exhibitionism is, among other things, deeply queer.”76 Sedgwick’s analysis questions too neat an opposition between these queer affects—shyness and exhibitionism—and identifies their proximity as an intensely queer effect

We can find perhaps the best examples of this sadistic rage to describe Warhol in Nat Finkelstein and David Dalton’s book of ranting and photography, Andy Warhol: The Factory Years 1964–1967, and Stephen Koch’s Stargazer: The Life, World, and Films of Andy Warhol.77 Both of these texts are remarkable in the degree of ressentiment and disavowal they express when describing Warhol and the activities/personages of the Factory. Despite his sometimes acute awareness of Warhol’s opacity, it is Koch who desperately tries to “capture” Warhol’s presence, and he gives us the phrase “A childlike gum-chewing naïveté.”78 He also enacts a disavowal of the 1960s that appears in many of the testimonies (“recovery narratives”) of the surviving superstars in Superstar: The Life and Times of Andy Warhol. It seems that when these texts reflect on the “Times,” they need to make sober(ing) denouncements, in Koch’s “The End of the Other World,” for instance, of “those unreproduceable parties of the 1960s, irresistible and grotesque,” or assessments like “as the 1960s began to fall apart . . . the precious Aquarian Age of Innocence turned out to be another self-flattering lie. Perhaps, if people had looked carefully enough in the mirror, they would have seen that.”79 These are all rather boring and traditional denunciations of narcissism—its supposed nonproductiveness80—and that truly Victorian sin: vanity.

Koch’s rhetorical style is reminiscent of Susan Sontag’s notorious “Notes on ‘Camp,’” which shares this problematic concern for “objectivity”: “I am strongly drawn to Camp, and almost as strongly offended by it. That is why I want to talk about it, and why I can. For no one who wholeheartedly shares in a given sensibility can analyze it; he can only, whatever his intentions, exhibit it. To name a sensibility, to draw its contours and recount its history, requires a deep sympathy modified by revulsion.”82 This revulsion is what D. A. Miller and others have identified as Sontag’s phobic de-homosexualization of camp.83 The major problem with the ob - jectivist standpoint is that in dissecting the sensibility of camp, Sontag is aware that “to talk about Camp is therefore to betray it.”84 As in the case of Sontag, we should be aware of the intense homophobia in much of what constitutes the “urbanity” of those writing about Warhol’s world.

But the responsibility we are supposed to gain in the 1980s accounts of the ’60s represents nothing other than a disavowal. (This disavowal is quite in line with the more general Reaganite revisionism about the social upheavals of the 1960s.) What is remarkable, then, is that Warhol refuses to moralize in his reflection on “The Warhol Sixties,” and actually em - braces Koch’s book with his quotation from it and his statement quoted on the back cover: “Stargazer is to die over!” What is brilliant about this endorsement is its phrasing, whereby the conventional phrase “to die for”—in all its camp flavor—is reconfigured as “to die over” which in fact accentuates the way in which Warhol is treated as a corpse by all of these historical documents (as Barthes puts it, “a relationship which adjectivizes is on the side of the image, on the side of domination, of death”).85 But I would argue that what is remarkable about Warhol’s reaction to those who attempt “to describe him as if impersonally” is his productive manipulation of the im-personal (im-personation). This is quite close to what Barthes finds in “Figures of the Neutral”: the possibility of “the vacancy of the ‘person,’ if not annulled at least rendered irretrievable.”

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#### Is it true for instance that you attacked your fans in England and were arrested for obscenity on stage?

#### No.

#### Well, who writes these things about you if they aren’t true?

#### Journalists.

#### And is this perhaps why you don’t like journalists?

#### Oh, I love journalists.

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#### I don’t know, what does that have to do with me?

#### Well could I put it bluntly, and pardon the question, are you a transvestite or homosexual?

#### Sometimes

#### Which one?

#### I don’t Know, what the difference?

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#### We forward a method of the opaque. In a world where we are forced to be made visible, we desire to become invisible. Strategies of queer opacity challenge and question the normative operations of truth telling within and through media technology.

Villiers 15 Published on April 18, 2015 Afterthoughts on Queer Opacity Written By Nicholas de Villiers Nicholas de Villiers is associate professor of English and film at the University of North Florida. He is the author of Opacity and the Closet: Queer Tactics in Foucault, Barthes, and Warhol (Minnesota, 2012). <https://ivc.lib.rochester.edu/afterthoughts-on-queer-opacity/> //avery

Like Barthes’s fascination in The Neutral with the tactics employed by the Skeptics to evade the direct statement, Foster did not say exactly what she was expected to say (after years of evasion and speculation dating back to The Silence of the Lambs[30](https://ivc.lib.rochester.edu/afterthoughts-on-queer-opacity/#fn-3843-30)). I also appreciate the Warhol connection: despite Warhol’s own love of gossip, he consistently practiced the art of the anticlimax in interviews and on film. There is something to be said here for queer failure.[31](https://ivc.lib.rochester.edu/afterthoughts-on-queer-opacity/#fn-3843-31)

We can compare Foster’s desire for privacy to the posthumous “outing” of the “elusive and enigmatic” astronaut Sally Ride when an official statement from Sally Ride Science named Tam O’Shaughnessy as her partner of 27 years.[32](https://ivc.lib.rochester.edu/afterthoughts-on-queer-opacity/#fn-3843-32) In fact, thinking tactically about the sometimes surprising effects of queer opacity, I appreciated the ironic way that Twitter managed to spring a trap on anti-gay conservative politicians who patriotically praised Ride as a hero, as covered in the Huffington Post, “Mitt Romney Tweets Condolences on Sally Ride’s Death, Drawing Fiery Response from Gay Advocates”: “The indie-rock group Mountain Goats were among the first to respond, noting: ‘Kind of despicable & grotesque that her partner of 27 years will be denied federal benefits, don’t you think?’”[33](https://ivc.lib.rochester.edu/afterthoughts-on-queer-opacity/#fn-3843-33)

“Elusive and enigmatic” are often code words for queer women, and this might best be demonstrated by the queer opacity of Vivian Maier, the posthumously discovered genius of street photography, in the documentary Finding Vivian Maier (2013).[34](https://ivc.lib.rochester.edu/afterthoughts-on-queer-opacity/#fn-3843-34) In calling Maier “queer” I am not necessarily outing her as a lesbian (in fact her “asexuality” is queer enough), simply noting that this is the unsaid and unsayable in the documentary (which speculates a great deal about why she was so private), and, paradoxically, this is what makes her a fascinating example of queer opacity. Rose Lichter-Marck’s “Vivian Maier and the Problem of Difficult Women,” is a brilliant response to those who see Maier’s “purposeful obscurity” and the way she “actively cultivated her own unknowability” as a tragedy or a problem that needs solving.[35](https://ivc.lib.rochester.edu/afterthoughts-on-queer-opacity/#fn-3843-35)

But given the legacy of the deployment of sexuality whereby one’s sexual identity is seen as the core truth of one’s being, and the attendant confessional discourse of “coming out,” such forms of privacy, invisibility, or silence often look like “the sin of omission.” This was echoed in Ellen Page’s recent coming out at the Human Rights Campaign’s conference “Time to Thrive” benefitting LGBT youth, where she stated “I am tired of lying by omission.”[36](https://ivc.lib.rochester.edu/afterthoughts-on-queer-opacity/#fn-3843-36) Page’s speech is also somewhat roundabout at first, but then includes the declarative (actually performative) “I am gay” missing from Jodie Foster’s speech. She argues that she feels a sense of responsibility, but also that her motive for coming out is “selfish” because she is tired of hiding and lying by omission. Her voice shakes and she performs an interesting generational reversal and act of humility in which she thanks the young people and advocates at the conference, inverting the apparently privileged position accorded to the HRC guest speaker. While clearly experienced as liberating, her televised coming out is a timely response to the “responsibilization” of the individual in the current regime of gay visibility represented by the HRC (or the surveillance of GLAAD as a “media watchdog”[37](https://ivc.lib.rochester.edu/afterthoughts-on-queer-opacity/#fn-3843-37)).

My last example is another moving HRC speech, in which transgender film director Lana Wachowski received a “Visibility Award.”[38](https://ivc.lib.rochester.edu/afterthoughts-on-queer-opacity/#fn-3843-38) What I appreciate about Wachowski’s speech is her inclusion of metacommentary on the constraints and format of the speech itself and the ambivalent meanings of visibility in the lives of transgender people.[39](https://ivc.lib.rochester.edu/afterthoughts-on-queer-opacity/#fn-3843-39)

While she narrates the emotional turmoil and suicide attempt that we have sadly come to expect in such a heartfelt “coming out” speech, she also challenges many assumptions about how visibility, outness, and transition work: like Foster she explains that she has already been out to those close to her (her wife, family, and friends) for a decade, and she questions the gender binary implicit in the term “transition.” Like Foster, she is critical of the discursive conventions of coming out:

I knew I was going to come out but I knew when I finally did come out I didn’t want it to be about my coming out. I am completely horrified by the “talk show,” the interrogation and confession format, the weeping, the tears of the host [applause] whose sympathy underscores the inherent tragedy of my life as a transgender person. And this moment fulfilling the cathartic arc of rejection to acceptance without ever interrogating the pathology of a society that refuses to acknowledge the spectrum of gender in the exact same blind way they have refused to see a spectrum of race or sexuality.[40](https://ivc.lib.rochester.edu/afterthoughts-on-queer-opacity/#fn-3843-40)

Needless to say, I fully agree with this critique of confessional discourse. I also find her comments regarding anonymity and visibility to be quite complex in ways that resonate with what interested me about Foucault, Barthes, and Warhol’s queer experiments with the value, effects, and tactics of anonymity in response to the press machinery that demands interviews with authors and directors. Wachowski explains how, for her and her brother, “Anonymity allows you access to civic space, to a form of participation in public life, to an egalitarian invisibility that neither of us wanted to give up.”[41](https://ivc.lib.rochester.edu/afterthoughts-on-queer-opacity/#fn-3843-41) Like the coming out stories above, her decision to sacrifice her “private civic life” is due to an overwhelming sense of kairos: confronting news of anti-trans violence and recollecting the need she felt to see others like herself as symbols of possibility. She poetically explains “Invisibility is indivisible from visibility; for the transgender this is not simply a philosophical conundrum — it can be the difference between life and death.”[42](https://ivc.lib.rochester.edu/afterthoughts-on-queer-opacity/#fn-3843-42)

In “Trans, but not like you think,” Thomas Page McBee cites an understated appearance by Wachowski before this more cathartic speech as an example of a shift away from conventional ways of framing transgender narratives that resort to “dumbed down” formulas about suffering in the “wrong body”: “As gender transitions become more visible, it’s tempting to think all our stories are the same. They’re not.”[43](https://ivc.lib.rochester.edu/afterthoughts-on-queer-opacity/#fn-3843-43) Like McBee’s rejection of cliché narrative formulas and knowingness associated with “more visible” gender transitions, I wrote Opacity and the Closet against what I perceived as the routinized aspects of the closet’s confessional discourse. But as Barthes noted in the interview I quoted above, tactics must always be in response to a specific historical situation, and perhaps the queer tactics of opacity deployed by Foucault, Barthes, and Warhol are no longer possible in quite the same way; they are no longer seen as a timely critical hesitation but will be perceived as irresponsible or “backward” by the gay critics in Gawker and Out. But along with Marlon Ross, I want to question this teleology (and the race and class biases it often implies).[44](https://ivc.lib.rochester.edu/afterthoughts-on-queer-opacity/#fn-3843-44) Moving away from famous white subjects but still considering the uniquely paradoxical “public privacy” of celebrities: Must we see Queen Latifah’s stated refusal to talk about her sexuality on her new talk show as a sign of her lack of courage, lying by omission, the glass closet, or the “open closet”?[45](https://ivc.lib.rochester.edu/afterthoughts-on-queer-opacity/#fn-3843-45) What about André Leon Talley, who dis-identifies with the label “gay” but is undeniably queer?[46](https://ivc.lib.rochester.edu/afterthoughts-on-queer-opacity/#fn-3843-46)

My book offers queer opacity as an alternative to the hermeneutic tendency of “the closet.” These afterthoughts are my attempt to think about how the queer tactics of opacity might meet new challenges and thus function differently in our contemporary time. My focus thus far has been primarily on discursive tactics and textual practices, but queer opacity is indeed a visual metaphor, and tries to envision alternatives to commands to be “visible” but also “transparent” to a gaze that seeks a clear, responsible identity. I am happy to see that one of the most “visual” but also “opaque” engagements with the theory of queer opacity in the present also questions the demand for easy legibility in a new historical context marked by new regimes of surveillance. In “The Facelessness of Tomorrow Begins Today,” Alicia Eler interviews Zach Blas about his Facial Weaponization Suite:

Certainly, an older queer politics was concerned with creating a coherent presence, a visibility, that was crucial for survival and existence. Yet, today, in light of global surveillance/datavaillance and other surreptitious forms of recognition-control, there is a burgeoning political investment in opacity, imperceptibility, and escape. You can think of queer critiques of gay marriage here, as refusals of the neoliberal recognition and visibility offered by the state to legitimate homosexuality. Or take Dean Spade’s transgender theory and activism that articulates a critical trans resistance that strives for a transformative justice that does not aim for state-based forms of recognition but something more utopian, even “impossible.” In queer theory, recent conceptualizations like Nicholas de Villiers’ queer opacity, Jack Halberstam’s queer darkness, and José Muñoz’s queer escape all gesture toward the illegible and nonrecognizable. I am exploring a queerness that invests and takes seriously such refusals of recognition and visibility; here, queerness is an illegibility or opacity, a refusal that remakes visibility and regimes of recognition outside of standardization through speculative and utopian experimentation and fantasy.[47](https://ivc.lib.rochester.edu/afterthoughts-on-queer-opacity/#fn-3843-47)

#### The role of the ballot is to position ourselves within the interview and the Neutral space, fed up with being placed within the confessional booth we operate within the game of the interview. Our strategies upset the in/out epistemology of the closet that operates under the will to knowledge of modern media technology. Instead we operate where queer subjectivity is produced through a displacement of the closet itself.

Villiers 12 Villiers, Nicholas de. Opacity and the Closet: Queer Tactics in Foucault, Barthes, and Warhol. University of Minnesota Press, 2012. Project MUSE muse.jhu.edu/book/24737.Nicholas de Villiers is associate professor of English and film at the University of North Florida. He is the author of Opacity and the Closet: Queer Tactics in Foucault, Barthes, and Warhol (Minnesota, 2012). [https://muse.jhu.edu/book/24737 Pg 152-163](https://muse.jhu.edu/book/24737%20Pg%20152-163) //avery

A filmed interview between David Bailey and Warhol reveals a stark contrast.6 They lie in bed together and talk, with the covers pulled up, though we can tell that Warhol is fully clothed, while Bailey has taken his clothes off. It is reminiscent of Warhol’s discussion of his ideal sex life in The Philosophy of Andy Warhol in which couples get in bed and tell jokes (“But I’d rather laugh in bed than do it. Get under the covers and crack jokes, I guess, is the best way. ‘How am I doing?’ ‘Fine, that was very funny.’ ‘Wow, you were really funny tonight.’ If I went to a lady of the night, I’d probably pay her to tell me jokes.” In this he resembles Woody Allen, but Warhol’s speculative heterosexuality is itself a punchline).7 Warhol is his usual noncommittal self but is quite good at turning the interview situation around, even joking about whether David is a “closet queen.” Unlike the wrestling match between Frost and Nixon, Warhol de-virilizes the interview while still homoeroticizing it.

This interview is from Bailey’s documentary about Warhol that was originally banned in 1973 for being “offensive,” and was more readily available as a written transcript, in which the term “closet queen” is turned into “closet cleaner.”8 A reading attuned to the Repressive Hypothesis would no doubt point to the censorship and taboo clearly involved, but Foucault might help us notice the “will to knowledge” and “will to truth” that motivates Bailey and the aptly named director William Verity, but is frustrated by Warhol. Take, for example, the following exchange: david: “I suppose now we’re in bed we might as well talk about your sex life.” andy: “Oh, OK.” david: “Well do you want to tell me about your sex life.” andy: “What do you want to know about it.” david: “All the dirt.” andy: “Dirt, um. I believe in fantasy.” david: “um.”

This is in the transcript but not in the final cut of the film, of course, which seems to reinforce the Repressive Hypothesis. But as Bailey and Warhol predicted, when audiences finally saw the documentary—the censorship scandal was of course good publicity—they were disappointed and bored, which is really Warhol’s finest achievement: the art of the anticlimax.9 I am also interested here in addressing the questions of mediation and remediation provoked by the fact that until recently this interview was available primarily as a transcript and as an excerpt in another documentary (Kim Evans’s Andy Warhol). In Pop Trickster Fool: Warhol Performs Naivete, Kelly M. Cresap argues that it is most likely that Warhol’s press and media interviews were a sort of “put-on”: During the 1960s the put-on interview became like a compulsory event for many emerging careers, a backhanded way of announcing one’s seriousness as an artist. The practice had precedents in earlier decades—artists such as Picasso and Salvador Dali had both dabbled in the form—but its potency in the public sphere waited until the era of hipsters and youth rebellion. Dissimulating for the press was a way of pointing up the inanity of interview questions, of thwarting an audience’s search for full access and 360-degree disclosure, and of declaring one’s distance from the Establishment power bloc.10

Cresap argues that others who adopted this stance (John Lennon and Yoko Ono, and Bob Dylan) are rather easier to decipher, finally revealing a degree of earnestness quite foreign to Warhol. Their antiestablishment motives are tied more directly to the political engagements of the decade, yet, she argues, “Regardless of the worthiness of their causes, and despite the liberating energies they unleashed, they lacked the urbane complexity and eerie clairvoyance that has sustained the Warhol mystique into the new millennium.”11 Like Cresap, my goal has been to explain how and why the “mystique” of Foucault, Barthes, and Warhol has continued into the new millennium, where the media’s desire for “full access and 360- degree disclosure” is perhaps stronger than ever.

As we saw in Barthes’s comments on the interview wherein the journalist is a kind of “cop who likes you” (precisely the role that Frost attempts in the Frost/Nixon interviews), the question is how to demystify the situation of the interview.12 Barthes acknowledged the necessity of the interview as a kind of “social game” he could not refuse, despite his misgivings about journalism and the privileging of speech over—and after—writing.13 This game is also a kind of “game of truth” that produces, as one of its “truth-effects,” what Foucault called the “author function,” whereby the unity of a work is located in its author, both a biographical and legal answerability.14 One of the ironies of my own project, then, is that at times it might seem as if I have been treating these authors as people and not as figures. This is particularly ironic when dealing with the authors of “What Is an Author?” (Foucault) and “The Death of the Author” (Barthes), and the artist whom many see as killing off the idea of the artist as the unique author of the work (Warhol).15 But again, I want to take their resistance to these author functions seriously. On my reading, Foucault (and Guibert), Barthes, and Warhol made significant interventions in the otherwise smooth functioning of “confessional discourse,” the image-system, and the celebrity interview. Despite national differences (however much both France and the United States can be analyzed as “petit-bourgeois societies”),16 they share a common postwar historical period that witnessed the rise of the “intellectual interview” and the mutual dependence of celebrity culture and media culture.

Régis Debray notes that in his earlier works, The Scribe and Teachers, Writers, Celebrities, there is not “a distinction made among mediaspheres,” but he points out how “certainly in the France of today, what presents itself to view is but a milieu of sociability structured by three poles: univers - ity, publishing-editing, medias. And certainly these poles co-exist in any given one of them and at present, with all sorts of well-known connecting bridges between them.”17 Debray defines a mediasphere as a “milieu, structured by its foremost technique and practice of memory-formatting, [which] structures in its turn a type of accrediting of the discourses in currency,” and he describes “the passage from hand-written and oral public communication (logosphere) to the mechanical reproduction of text (graphosphere),” and, following that, to the analogical and computergraphic “recording of sonorous and visual signs (videosphere).”18 The history of educational television—what was to become PBS—in the United States suggests a similar set of “connecting bridges” between the poles and mediaspheres outlined by Debray.19 Remediation The Grain of the Voice: Interviews 1962–1980 includes “most of the interviews given in French by Roland Barthes,” and the editor notes that “the best possible preface would have been a description by Roland Barthes himself of what an interview is.”20 Since it was published after Barthes’s death, “we will never have that description now, but we do have a few pages where Roland Barthes analyzes, with admirable clarity, the passage of the spoken word to the word transcribed . . . where the stylet of writing interlaces with the grain of the voice.”21 In this prefatory text, “From Speech to Writing” (mentioned in my earlier chapter on Warhol’s opacity), Barthes describes the situation as follows: “We talk, a tape re - cording is made, diligent secretaries listen to our words to refine, transcribe, and punctuate them, producing the first draft that we can tidy up afresh before it goes on to publication, the book, eternity. Haven’t we just gone through the ‘toilette of the dead’? We have embalmed our speech like a mummy, to preserve it forever. Because we really must last a bit longer than our voices; we must, through the comedy of writing, inscribe ourselves somewhere.”22 This concern for the process of mummification might re - mind us of Warhol’s attention to the work of the Time Capsule, but we should also recall that Warhol preferred untidy secretarial transcription, and wanted to hang on to all the scraps of “phatic” language in conversa - tion and interviews, which Barthes notes usually get excised in the process of transcription (the passage from speech to “the written”).23 But Barthes also wants to challenge the idea that “speech is in itself fresh, natural, spontaneous, truthful, expressive of a kind of pure interiority,” noting that on the contrary, “our speech (especially in public) is immediately theatrical” and culturally coded.24 Barthes continues this attention to theatricality when he argues that in transcription “the speaker’s image-repertoire changes space” in the desire to set up an argument, “the sentence becomes hierarchical; in it is developed, as in the staging of a classic drama, the difference of roles and stage positions; in becoming social (since it passes to a larger and less familiar public), the message recovers a structure of order” and into this new order are added the typographical artifices of parentheses to indicate digression and punctuation.25 Barthes thus identifies and relates three practices: speech, the written, and writing. He concludes by arguing that “the development of broadcasting—that is, of a speech at the same time original and transcribable, ephemeral and memorable—now brings a striking interest” to these varia - tions.26 Indeed, Debray makes note of “recursive curlings,” whereby media - spheres “have not succeeded one another as substitutions, but rather as complications in a perpetual game of mutual reactivation” since there is “no zero sum game between written and oral, there being several sorts of writing and orality.”27 How then does the videosphere reactivate the problems of speech and writing discussed by Barthes? Barthes addresses the television interview and its transcription in “Responses: Interview with Tel Quel”: Jean Thibaudeau had the kindness to prepare for me a long, precise, direct and well-informed questionnaire, bearing at once (as was the rule) on my life and work, for a series of televised interviews, recorded under the generic title “Archives of the 20th Century,” which will probably never appear, unless perhaps in the event of the death of the author. . . . The interview took place, but it was only possible to reproduce a few of the numerous questions asked. The responses were rewritten—which does not mean that we are dealing with writing, since, given the biographical material, the “I” (and its litany of verbs in the past tense) must be taken as if the person speaking were the same (in the same place) as the person who had lived.28 Barthes’s humorous literal quotation of his own famous title (“the death of the author”) also recalls his opening to Sade, Fourier, Loyola, in which he imagines the amicable return of the author and speculates that, “were I a writer, and dead,” then he would love it if his life were to be reduced to a set of details, preferences, and inflections, which he names “biogra - phemes” (clearly the justification for Louis-Jean Calvet’s “friendly and detached” biography Roland Barthes: A Biography).29 Yet Barthes notes that his interview with Thibaudeau was a “game” they were not very taken in by, and reminds his readers that “the quotation marks which are pertinent for any naively referential statement should thus be implicitly reestablished” in the printed interview that follows.30 At the end of the interview, Thibaudeau asks, “What is this interview? What is the ‘posterity’ to which, in its televisual guise, it would appear to be destined?” As noted in chapter 1, Barthes uses this opportunity to “put the interview on trial,” not this particular interview, but the “everyday interview, spoken, recorded and then transcribed (but not written),” which he notes is very much in vogue (in the early 1970s, arguably still today). Barthes explains that “the reasons are presumably economical (if not directly financial): the interview is a cheap article. ‘You don’t have time to write a text? Well give us an interview.’”31 Here we glimpse the political economy of the publishing industry, part of what Barthes envisioned studying in a vast schematic analysis of the activities of contemporary intellectual life (one of his many unfinished project sketches, this one was perhaps fulfilled by Pierre Bourdieu’s Homo Academicus).32 Addressing the question of posterity, Barthes is nonplussed: “As for ‘posterity,’ what can I say? It’s a dead word for me, which is giving it its dues since its validity is only established on the basis of my death.” Insisting that he is “no more than a particular contemporary,” “destined while I live to the exclusion of a large number of languages, and subsequently destined to an absolute death; buried in the archives (of the twentieth century), perhaps one day I will re-emerge, like a fugitive, one witness among others, in a broadcast of the Service for Research on ‘structuralism’ ‘semiology’ or ‘literary criticism.’ Can you imagine me living, working, desiring, for that?”33 In fact, Roland Barthes 1915–1980: Archives de XXe Siècle was produced in 1988, featuring footage from 1970–71 of Barthes answering the Jean Thibaudeau questionnaire.34 Yet Barthes’s rejection of eschatology as a motivation for work is perhaps inconsequential to the purposes of the archive in which he foresaw himself being buried. As we saw in chapter 5, the role of the archive is in fact always ambivalent vis-à-vis “the death of the author.” A new kind of Time Capsule is created in the form of the digital archive. My research at the Bibliothèque nationale de France in Paris revealed a different kind of digital memory with its own pleasures of playback. Carolyn Steedman notes that following Jacques Derrida’s Archive Fever and his “speculation about the future of the archive, as the register, ledger and letter are replaced by the e-mail and the computer file,” “the arkhe appeared to lose much of its connection to the idea of a place where official documents are stored for administrative reference, and became a metaphor capacious enough to encompass the whole of modern information technology, its storage, retrieval and communication.”35 The Institut national de l’audiovisuel (Ina) and Inathèque audiovisual archives at the BnF repre - sent an awe-inspiring endeavor to archive the history of postwar French national broadcasting. What it allowed me to consider was the odd place— from my contemporary American point of view—of the intellectual “profile” and the intellectual “variety show” (such as Apostrophes). Certainly, 1960s North American culture also had its share of well-known public intellectual figures, such as Susan Sontag, Noam Chom sky, and Marshall McLuhan. But there is something unique in Foucault’s and Barthes’s positions as authors of “bestselling” academic books: Foucault’s The Order of Things and Barthes’s A Lover’s Discourse.36 This perhaps conditioned their role in the “televisual economy” of French broadcasting, which is clearly closer to British television in its state-subsidized and public educational function, comparable to the BBC broadcast of John Berger’s materialist art historical intervention Ways of Seeing.37 In her important historical study, Turning On the Mind: French Philoso - phers on Television, Tamara Chaplin draws on the resources at Inathèque to challenge the common assumption that television and philosophy are antithetical, or that mass culture and intellectual discourse have no traffic between them.38 She claims that “due to the performative nature of their discipline, founded in the Socratic dialogue and rooted in embodied oral practice, philosophers are in fact uniquely suited to the demands of television.”39 Yet she also insists that “such claims for a rapport between tele - vision, philosophy, and embodiment also require historicizing, since this connection necessarily carries historically particular effects. While philo - sophers may ‘embody’ their oeuvre on French TV (incarnating philosophy as practice), there is no doubt that by the 1970s, in response to the growing impact of the audiovisual field on the commercialization of intellectual goods, they were increasingly lured onto the small screen simply to sell books.”40 Apostrophes is perhaps the best example of this marketing factor in the televising of public intellectuals: “Apostrophes was a marketer’s dream: it both encouraged the consumption of books and was itself a marketable product.”41 Host Bernard Pivot was less interested in extended Socratic dialogue and more with instigating arguments between guests specifically chosen for their divergent points of view: “It produced entertainment by producing conflict.”42 This is what Barthes identified as the French taste for debates, and this style came to dominate French television (and is arguably still the case, likewise for American television “pundits”). Chaplin discusses Foucault’s appearance on Apostrophes, in which (as Guibert noted) he surprised audiences by not talking about The History of Sexuality (the book he was there to “promote”) but addressing instead a recent political event known as “l’affaire Stern.”43 Chaplin explains that Foucault managed to “hijack” Pivot’s program, and ironically was able to use the Stern affair to illustrate The History of Sexuality’s larger concerns regarding the relationship between sexual discourses, the power/knowledge nexus, and the production of truth.44 She argues that “in embracing the media, annexing the topic of discussion, and in shifting the terms of debate from a book to the discursive production of knowledge, Foucault challenged contemporaneous arguments about the growing power of tele - vision—and especially of Apostrophes, to dictate the contents of the intellectual field.”45 Why, then, did Pivot submit to Foucault’s agenda? “Because he knew that controversy makes good drama, and good drama makes good television,” Chaplin explains.46 Foucault made several television appearances, and Chaplin uses each of them to illustrate the range of approaches to philosophy on television from the 1950s through the 1970s (a period of varying state control of public television). In 1966, the “book show” Lectures pour nous (a precursor to Apostrophes) provided a platform for Foucault to dynamically explain The Order of Things. The educational television program L’Enseignement de la philosophie featured Foucault in dialogue with other “master” philosophers in 1965 (which, Chaplin observes, “represents philosophical thought as patriarchal, traditional, Western, and, in its universalizing evocation, fundamentally French” despite the attempt to address the postcolonial, multiracial student body in the opening credits).47 Foucault appeared in a 1972 portrait of Gaston Bachelard on Un Certain regard, which contributed to the creation of a new genre for French television programming, the biographical documentary.48 Chaplin’s concluding chapter addresses the transition from public, state-controlled television to private, commercialized channels in the 1980s, but notes the interesting fact that “it was just at the moment that public television was floundering that a series titled Océaniques was created,” which, during its run from 1987 to 1992, “presented some of the most sophisticated, compelling, and now best-known philosophical television ever produced,” including shows on Foucault and Barthes.49 While Chaplin mentions Barthes’s appearance on these programs (Apostrophes,50 Océaniques), he is primarily listed as an example of an “intellectuel mondaine (worldly intellectual)”—in opposition to the “intellectuel savant (learned intellectual)”—during Chaplin’s discussion of television’s role in exacerbating “longstanding debates about the proper purview of the French philosophical field.”51 Yet Chaplin notes that French philosophy’s autobiographical tradition (exemplified by Rousseau) “lent itself easily to fresh incarnations (documentary biographies, interviews, and publicity appearances) compatible with the virgin technology of television, whose focus on personality was critical to its appeal.”52 This is clearly where Barthes’s biographical interview with Thibaudeau for Archives of the 20th Century fits in. Guibert’s appearance on Apostrophes and the many Warhol documentaries discussed in the previous chapters are also prime examples of this aspect of television’s focus on biography and personality, wherein, as Chaplin notes, they are called upon to “embody their oeuvre.”53 Like the audiovisual archive of Inathèque, the film and video archive of the Warhol Museum acts like a Time Capsule to preserve Warhol’s films and experiments with video and television. Though his films are widely respected, less attention has been given to his television soap-opera pilots; his variety show for MTV, Andy Warhol’s Fifteen Minutes, starring War - hol beside the equally “blank” and opaque persona of Debbie Harry; and the vérité-style Factory Diaries, about the life of the office, featuring Candy Darling answering the phone and Warhol writing endless checks. In each of these examples, like the famous “Screen Tests,” Warhol emphasizes his concern with photogenic but opaque and “blank” people, rather than psychological depth.54 The archives of L’Institut mémoires de l’édition contemporaine (which have moved from Paris to l’Abbaye d’Ardenne)55 also represent an important resource for studying the work of amassing and organizing the “corpus” of Foucault, Guibert, and Barthes: the oeuvre proper, but also the manuscripts, lectures, correspondence, and fragments (such as Barthes’s use of index cards, some of which are reproduced in Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes). Like the Warhol Museum archives, this work is ongoing and results in a number of interesting offshoots in publishing: the lecture notes for Foucault’s and Barthes’s courses at the Collège de France continue to be published and translated into English,56 and each author has had an exhibition dedicated to him drawing on the manuscripts and audiovisual resources at IMEC and Ina.57 Even more interesting is an issue of Genesis: Revue internationale de critique génétique dedicated to Roland Barthes, presented by Pierre-Marc de Biasi and Éric Marty. It consists of a series of “inédits” or handwritten manuscripts, including marginal notes and corrections, from the Barthes archives at IMEC, along with essays on the process of “textual genesis.”58 The audio recordings of Barthes’s lectures at the Collège de France have also been published, allowing the listener to enjoy the particular “grain” of his voice.59

In contrast to the “open file” presented by these archives and the course notes, the function of Œuvres complètes (in France) is to act as a kind of capstone to this work of compilation and editing.60 One unique effect is that interviews are “elevated” somewhat to the status of essays, and they are also removed from the original context of their publication (thus becoming unmoored from a sense of historical “timeliness”: either the time of the recent publication of a book or the time of historical eventsand debates). But as we have seen, Foucault and Barthes both hoped to use the interview as a chance not to “traffic in opinions” but to question the role of the interview and the function of the intellectual (a label about which they both expressed ambivalence, given the history of maligning this figure in French debates).61

What we can see is that the “social game” of the interview is also a game between the public intellectual and “the media.” But it is a game that involves a certain degree of “blackmailability” when the social subject is queer and known to have leftist politics. In The Neutral, Barthes describes the situation of the French intellectual after Sartre, and identifies the weariness of the position (as in “What is your position in this debate?”): “The present-day world is full of it (statements, manifestos, petitions, etc.), and it’s why it is so wearisome: hard to float, to shift places.”62 Yet Barthes insists that out of weariness is created the Neutral, that “the right to wear - iness . . . thus shares in the new: new things are born out of lassitude— from being fed up.”63

I would argue that this “new” that Barthes calls the Neutral also forms part of what I have been calling queer opacity. From being fed up with confessional discourse, with the epistemological games of the closet in which coming out is a disclosure at once compulsory and forbidden, we discover the possibility of “baffling” and “outplaying” the power of in - quisition that is built into the interview. We also see a challenge to the biographical fixations of the author function, along with what Foucault identified as the “old prophetic function” of the intellectual. In his “The End of the Monarchy of Sex” interview, Foucault echoes Barthes’s desire for the ability to shift positions and to displace oneself:

In a general way, I think that intellectuals—if this category exists, if it should exist at all, which is not certain nor perhaps even desirable—are renouncing their old prophetic function. And by this I’m not thinking only of their claim to say what is going to happen, but also of the legislative function which they’ve aspired to for so long. . . . The Greek sage, the Jewish prophet, and the Roman legislator are still models that haunt those who practice today the profession of speaking and writing. I dream of the intellectual destroyer of evidence and universalities, the one who, in the inertias and constraints of the present, locates and marks the weak points, the openings, the lines of power, who incessantly displaces himself, doesn’t know exactly where he is heading nor what he’ll think tomorrow because he is too attentive to the present.64

My argument has been that queer opacity is one way of locating and marking the weak points in the system known as the “epistemology of the closet,” and of finding an opening for the creation of a queer public persona that manages to resist confessional discourse. The closet would therefore represent some of the “inertias and constraints” of the present, but queer subjectivity is produced through a kind of displacement vis-àvis the closet itself.

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#### Ooh, how sad and why do we call, ooh I'm glad to hear from you all I am calling, yes I'm calling just to speak to you For I know this night will kill me, if I can't be with you If I can't be with you

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