

**“Muscular Christians” and “Drama Faggots”:
Some Observations of Male Drama Teachers in Elite Boys’ Schools**
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Abstract:

“...and a man’s allowed to play hard, and a man’s allowed to rest hard and work hard and all those things – but a man’s got to know when to play those different roles, and to jump from one to another. He’s got to know when to turn it on and when not to turn it on.... It comes from the success that these schools are built on.... And if you can turn it on and speak the speak and walk the walk, you’re streets ahead of anyone who can’t. And they know that.”
(“Paul”, Drama Teacher, The Grammar School, 4th August 1998)

In Judith Butler’s seminal article entitled “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory,” she discusses the coercive nature of homogenous displays of gender in any institution, and the above quote illustrates the particularly kind of performance of masculinity and class that take place inside the Great Public School culture (particularly evident in Brisbane).

In these elite boys’ schools there is a level of anxiety about the perceived place of (the subject) Drama and how it might interact/interfere with the iron-clad essentialist and homogenous masculinity promoted by elite all-boys’ schools. The feminization of the Drama and the suspicion of males who “do” drama create a duplicitous tension for boys who take the subject as they walk the gendered tightrope between the expected public display of the “muscular Christian” and the disruptive, yet tantalizing “drama faggot”.

This paper offers some observations on boys who do Drama, with male Drama teachers, inside the colonial male-only worlds of the GPS. What I observed in these schools was that masculinities were constantly explored, disrupted, and discussed (perhaps uniquely) in the Drama classroom. The agent provocateurs, namely the male Drama teachers, provided a space in which to interrogate the masculinity in both intimate and public “performances”. This was mostly playful yet potentially dangerous given the effectiveness of these schools at institutionalizing a normative masculine order.

One Drama teacher at St Joseph’s College, Brisbane (a Christian Brothers institution) was asked to provide me with one story that he felt best summed up his experience as the new drama teacher and boarding master at this large boarding school. He laughed and immediately launched into the following story:

I walked into the place, with grade 12 kids sitting down and they knew I was the drama teacher but I hadn’t really met anybody yet—I’m walking down the hall and they’re in corridors and—total silence—and I hear this “Drrrrrama Faggot!!” (he laughs) down the hallway, and I walked along and I went “Yeeeeeaaah, who wants a bit?” [he yells out in a short, clipped voice]. Like that—and the whole hallway just pissed themselves laughing—and I never had any problem in the dorm.
(“Fraser”, Drama teacher, St Joseph’s College. 21 July 1998)

This anecdote immediately became a golden gestus for my research; a moment in time where all my thinking about the complex and precariousness of perceptions about males who teach drama in all boys’ schools is given clarity and definition. This small vignette suggests the humour associated with “bloke” culture in boarding schools, especially humour that is about someone’s sexuality. The boys had given this teacher a masculinity test, and he had fully passed with flying colours because his answer was unbelievably bold as he immediately summed-up their fears about whether his teaching drama meant he was a “fag” in their muscular Christian world. Regardless of whether the teacher was homosexual or not, his witty answer cut through to the bone of the slur and simultaneously confirmed the stereotype of the drama teacher, while also denying it any power to offend his masculinity; in fact he literally claimed his masculinity in this very brief encounter. This story is one of hundreds that I collected over a four month research period in 1998 where I immersed myself in the “drama-culture” of three Great Public Schools (GPS) schools of Brisbane: The Grammar, Anglican Boys’ School, and St Joseph’s College (school names have been changed).

Upon revisiting literature in the field of the performance of masculinities, I was relieved to find a description of a boy’s life at a boys’ school in Michael Mangan’s *Staging Masculinities* published in 2003. He talks of the “unspoken but clear shared belief” that those students who might perform a masculinity that was contrary to the essentialist one adopted by the school “would probably gravitate towards places like the Drama Society” (3-4). Doing Drama in all-boys’ schools might also involve risk, “since one was aligning oneself publicly with the ambiguous cultural signifiers of a questionable sexual identity” (4). The potentially dangerous “playing” done by Fraser in the margins of the compulsory rugby masculinity at St Joseph’s College made a joke out of the whole “fear-of-the-fag” phenomena that

coexists in these homosocial institutions, and this was a result of the Drama teacher coming into the boys' masculine safety-zone: the boarding house.

There are very few schools in Brisbane, outside the GPS, that are boarding schools: the culture of boys sharing every aspect of their adolescent lives with each other is specifically a GPS phenomenon. GPS in Brisbane are most like the original nine GPS of England¹ and the performance of elitism that emanates from these schools is strangely unmatched in any other capital city in Australia. These schools were established under Queensland's Grammar School Act of 1860 in a response to concerns that the colony had no high schools in which to prepare men for higher education and key positions in the state. The masters who built these schools were well-versed in the pedagogy of Dr. Thomas Arnold, Headmaster at the Rugby School (England) during the early 1800s. Arnold himself was a Winchester graduate and an ordained Anglican priest. He was "the man that his boys would try to emulate in their own lives: a muscular Protestant Christian, militaristically Spartan, moral, and a crusader for the molding of men" (Cole 9). The game of rugby union football had its origins at this school during Arnold's time and he used it as a pedagogical device to perpetuate his movement of "muscular Christianity" which was dedicated to controlling the sexual impulses of male youths (Fotheringham 10).

In the eugenics, fitness, and Empire-obsessed nineteenth century this [Arnold's] education pedagogy became linked to the myth that sexual intercourse saps male energy. . . . Keeping men out of the boudoir and the brothel late at night by getting them on to the playing field early in the morning ensured that they would be fit and ready for the ultimate test of manhood on the playing field of war. . . (10)

If essential masculine acts in GPS schools could be ordered into a hierarchy of events, then playing rugby would be the most recognizable accomplishment of gender by a boy, because heroes are always men of action who triumph in the public field (Nilan 176). To wear the school jersey and play for the school is perceived as a highlight of a schoolboy's life, and any injury or scarring a boy might obtain during a game also has the potential to be perceived as heroic acknowledgment of his faith in the school's notion of masculinity. Sporting events become performative texts that externalize the competitiveness and hierarchy in an all-male environment: aggression can be appropriately performed in a sporting event that is controlled by whistles and adult referees. Here we see Louis Althusser's "ideological State apparatus" at work in the most coercive way: the combined institutions of religion, education and sport overtly maintain a dominant ideology designed to normalize masculine "privilege" through the selecting or excluding of particular types of boy behaviors in these schools.

This reliance and pride in GPS tradition is an agent for a panopticon effect which controls the temptation to disrupt the universally privileged masculine gendering devices in the school. Tradition, in this case, is what R.W. Connell refers to as the "patriarchal dividend" (1995, 79-80). The school's historical and cultural traditions are externalized by all boys wearing uniforms as they publicly display the school colors, the maturity of the student (only high school boys wear long trousers), school values (neatness, privilege), and the students' personal history of achievement, participation, and status in school activities (usually embossed onto the pockets of the school blazer). This phenomenon is so much more prevalent and valued in the GPS because this "compulsory masculinity" (McDonough 5) is the sum of the school's traditions, and Judith Butler reminds us that these gendered acts are constructed by a dominant culture over time (519-520). The performance of a boys' privileged class is also an act that gathers kudos the more it is repeated and acknowledged as a "true" and "official" repetition (Elster 417) by the gate-keepers of the tradition: the school masters and old boys of the school. McDonough states that "what is most desired and most needed is the recognition from other men ... only men can create other men" (13), and therefore the performance of GPS institutionalized masculinity means nothing without a performance that is accepted by an audience. The ability to "turn it on" in public is a particular performative act that transcends the wearing of the uniform and is part of the navigational skills involved in becoming good GPS gate-keepers, and therefore, a worthy adversary of the school. There is a type of elite arrogance in the superior display of "traditional riches" on the boys' bodies: riches in old-school tie networks, riches of "old money", sports facilities, academic excellence, etc. It would seem that the only sympathetic audience is the one that is steeped in the same culture that values the privileged GPS masculine experience as universal and desirable.

Yet in non-GPS society, these schools are popularly seen as promoting a class-based "us" and "them" educational system in Australia, and their perceived elitist arrogance positions single-sex (especially male) schools as places of contrived pederasty. Public school students often make remarks about private schools as places where the "lesos" and "poofs" all reside in an elite communion. In his book *Real Men Like Violence* (1983) Glen Lewis suggests that elitist schools have long been suspected as harbouring a "tradition of homosexual aestheticism [that is] in English high culture" (50-51) which is unregulated by greater societal normativity. Guy Bennett's homosexuality is tolerated by the Eton-esque school he attends in Julian Mitchell's play and film, *Another Country*. And yet when Bennett threatens to truly challenge the system by exposing the details of his sexual exploits to the Housemaster, he is subjected to a caning with no chance of becoming a Prefect. Bennett's performance of his sexuality is punished only after disclosure or discovery, which is a behaviour that often results in the vilification of boys' school traditions in the public eye.

The suspicion of this male-only world was spectacularly brought to the surface in late 2000 when several students of the exclusive Trinity Grammar School in Sydney pleaded guilty to allegations

of intimidation and indecent assaults on fellow boarders at the school. Much to the school's loathing, the media published details of the attacks, including an assault where a boy was allegedly tied up, pinned down and assaulted with a wooden dildo (nicknamed "the anaconda") made during a woodwork class (Wilson). The homosocially constructed image of the "muscular Christian" blurred into homosexual desire and – not unlike this year's gang-rape allegations in rugby league and AFL – the school huddled defensively while the Headmaster (and old boy of the school) blamed the media for sullyng the school's prestigious reputation. Rudely, the culture of secrecy that often signifies male-only worlds (whether it be the Masons or a football team on tour) was flaunted as part of the school's traditions and even lampooned by the press which stated that the scandal was mooted as the subject of a Mardi Gras float complete with wooden dildos fashioned in woodwork classes (*Weekend Australian*, March 9 2002).

It wasn't until the accused boys appeared in court and "turned it on" for the press that the media and public increased its suspicion of arrogance and predatory traditions that they perceive must abound in all-boys' schools. The following description of their performance appeared on page one of the Sydney edition of *The Australian*:

The teenagers seemed to have made a pact about the clothing they would wear to court. Both were dressed in black suits, dark blue-grey shirts and shiny pearl grey ties, like extras in *The Godfather*. The first time the court rose for an adjournment one boy walked over to the other to admire his tie....

But the larger of the two -- who had been a kingpin at Trinity -- kept smirking. Forced to walk through the phalanx of press and television cameras before re-entering Burwood Local Court yesterday afternoon to plead guilty to sexually abusing his classmates, the youth paused and joked with photographers about taking his picture. Another even left his seat to wander over to a court artist and admire a sketch of himself. (Monica Videnieks, *The Australian* Feb 7th 2001)

The very same public scrutiny that boys' schools receive as to whether or not they breed perverse homosocial behaviours, is also present *internally* to these schools. The culture of containment and surveillance used in boys' schools may be a result of a desire to limit public ridicule. Therefore, rogue performances of masculinity such as those publicly featured in the Australian article or those undertaken privately by Guy Bennett in *Another County* can promote great suspicion of potential infidels within the GPS fortress. Carla McDonough (6-7) tells us that male gender is maintained through the kind of "fear-of-the-fag" or "fear of the other" homophobia that pervades colonial male-only worlds, and arts subjects such as Drama come in for particular suspicion. No where is this better illustrated than the following quote from a teacher of English, grammar-school old boy, and rugby coach, at The Grammar School:

. . . it's not my kettle of fish. The kids that do drama and the kids that are good at drama or like drama and that sort of thing I just can't get on with—I find it really hard to get on their level—it's just not me . . . I find it false—I find it very false, that they're "acting" and "out there" and all the rest of it, and it just strikes me as being very untrue to themselves—it's like they put on this mask or they become something that they are not. And it's a place to hide—one thing I like about football—rugby, is that there's no place to hide. And that's why I like the black and white of football, and the fact that there are no—there's nowhere to hide, and you either do it and you perform and you're legend because you made the tackle, or you do it and you miss the tackle and you're a loser for the rest of your life because you missed it. Whereas kids in the Drama kind of things—they can learn their lines and do a good job, but you don't have any real assessment of just how good they're trying for you—and I've had kids spew for me and I know that they're working, but I haven't seen a bloody actor spew. Australians don't see it as acting—Australians don't rate actors as actors—Australians rate larrikins, Australians rate story-tellers, Australians rate blokes who are weird on the piss: "what a great bloke Bazza was when he did that," y'know—that's what we rate. But acting is like, "what's all this bung-on stuff? Something that people in Hollywood do." And the stereotypical Hollywood person is someone that you wouldn't piss on if they were on fire. . . . ("Doug," English teacher. The Grammar. 18 August 1998).

This virulent view exposed and performed by this teacher reminded me of the very real tensions that lurk just below the politically correct surface of the GPS. This teacher had only just told me how important it was to support the arts in an all-boys' school, but Drama came in for a particularly vehement assessment by him, and I do believe that he wasn't the only male teacher to feel that Drama was an agent of lies that could corrupt a boy from the correct and noble "muscular Christian" path. The "us" and "them" this teacher suggests is alive inside the GPS is not class-based but gender-based. Mangan states that "masculinity . . . repeatedly defines itself in terms of its opposites, and the history of gender construction is . . . a matter of marking off the 'other'. Yet...the 'other' comes back to haunt the dominant order which had dispelled it" (11). This "haunting" was an emerging phenomena among the three GPS male Drama teachers who opened up their classrooms to my observation in 1998. They "haunted" the essentialist masculinity which pervaded their schools, not to abolish it or demonize it, but to seriously disrupt its power to oppress the young men in their care. All three teachers had no GPS

history (that is they were not “old boys” or sons of old boys) and this greatly affected how they understood their role in these schools. What McDonough suggests as “compulsory masculinity” was “policed and defended” (7) chiefly by old boys of the schools who acted as the panoptic guardians of masculinity and tradition. These incoming male Drama teachers who had no history were put to the test:

. . . being a beginning teacher here at St Joseph’s—the oldest teacher retired last year, he came to school here and taught here his entire career and retired at the age of 65, and he was a legend . . . he put me in a head-lock at the staff club after the Speech Night, and was telling me that I was a poofster and, this sounds like I’m telling all these hero stories, but I stayed with him until 5 in the morning and drank a bottle of rum with him, and sang songs with him and got spasticatingly drunk, and went down to the oval and watched the sunrise with him—this old bloke—and from that day on I was “Richo.” (“Fraser,” Drama teacher. St Joseph’s College, 21 July 1998).

On the whole, and as the new guard, these Drama teachers were ready to disrupt (by “playing with”) the traditions in favour of a less universal, masculinity. Many old boys felt that “playing” was neither manly (unless it was in performing on the rugby field) nor honourable in the tradition-laden GPS. Yet, what I observed was an *overwhelming* urge to “play” from all three Drama teachers, most often by contradicting their own performances of masculinity in the school’s public eye. One teacher was who was gay (but not “out” at the school) playfully performed the role of the meticulous “straight man” who wore what he called the GPS uniform: chambray, R.M. Williams boots, woven kangaroo leather belts, khaki pants and rugby club tie. He knew the students gossiped about him, and enjoyed the infamy, playing into building mythical narratives about himself at every opportunity:

I was the only new person for a long while, and I was different to everyone else: I was younger by far, I had a different attitude, I was the first trained Drama person here, and I did things differently to how they had been done in the past—and I’ve never apologized for that. So they [the boys] created this persona that they wanted me to be, which I thought was very flattering, so you know, I’d been on *Neighbours*—I’d had my starring TV role on *Neighbours*—and, looking back, I probably should have said “No, I didn’t,” but I was happy to go with that. . . . I’ve also gone with the Real Estate Agent—had a sign in the classroom that says “Paul Riley’s Real Estate” which another staff member gave me as a joke. And as a joke, I said to the boys that the Headmaster had bought his holiday property off me, and that when he met me he wanted me teaching Drama. . . . And in saying all that—exactly how I have just recited to you now—the boys have taken bit of that on board and gone with it. (“Paul,” The Grammar School. 4 August 1998).

In creating this mythological persona, Paul disrupted the school’s desire to have “outstanding professionals” on staff. The other two teachers (Jay and Fraser) were both straight men who played at over-performing their heteronormativity in order to poke fun at non-Drama staff suspicions of their ambiguous Drama-teacher sexuality. Their overt “muscular Christian” performances were self-referential and satirical as they attempted to demystify the authoritarian singularity of a sports-masculinity:

It’s a joke between Richo and myself which I think came out of us bonding together . . . we had to because we are part of a minority, in a sense—we’re both passionate about the subject [Drama]—but realize that the profile of it is difficult to raise in the school. So that the constant joke—as any minority does, is joke about itself. . . . I think it’s a very Australian thing—it’s a very satirical, very dry thing, it’s to say “*Yeah, I teach Drama, yep, I’m not a faggot, well, I could be, but (cough) um, but I couldn’t be with a voice like this*” [said in a comically deep, authoritative voice]. So, yeah, it’s a joke on a joke on a joke—and what’s funny to us is when we’re in a public situation and we start carrying on . . . our joke isn’t understood by anybody else—and that’s a very comforting thought. We can walk into the dining room and say “*G’day mate, how are ya? See the rugby game on the weekend, oh maaaate, I was there*” [said using the same overtly male voice]

(“Jay,” Drama teacher, St Joseph’s College. 21 July 1998).

All three Drama teachers “turned it on” for their students and colleagues in such a way that disrupted and contested essentialist sexual orientation. It would seem that at every school I have ever taught in, the Drama teacher often has an aura of mystery and mythology that surrounds them that harks back to what Mangan suggests is a centuries-old Puritan suspicion that by “doing all this showing-off on stage” is not only a “symptom but also a cause of an imperfectly achieved masculinity” (4). Indeed, the multiple-performances of masculinity that are undertaken not only in the dramatic mode but also as a by-product of aligning oneself with the theatrical world inside a boys’ school is tantamount to what Chris Mclean calls “splitting”, or, the multiple performances of several masculinities, and the tensions and contradictions of doing these, are truly the hallmarks of masculinity:

One of the problems of dominant masculinity, is that it is riddled with contradictions. It is made up of a host of stories and expectations, many of them quite incompatible. . . .we are taught to despise women and desire them. We are taught to

fear other men as competitors, but to worship the idea of mateship. The attempt to integrate these contradictions requires men to perform bizarre operations on their lies, and to develop a form of splitting that has high personal costs. (1995, 296)

The teachers' performances ran not only contrary to the schools' often serious, traditional and business-like public image, but certainly to other staff performances of the essentialist GPS "master" teacher (see Doug's quote). The students found their Drama teachers approachable and very much enjoyed suspecting that their teachers were lampooning the compulsory masculine codes within the institution. As the following quotes state, when these teachers were around the students felt that "something" was about to happen.

I think he's [Jay] great—he's come, willing to lift the subject's prestige and I think he definitely, really is going to be good for the subject. I think, also because he's young - with get up and go - yeah, I think it will be really good ... I think Mr Rose is wanting to lift the status of the subject cos the subject is basically nonexistent, no-one knows about it. ("Mike," Drama student, St Joseph's College. 21 July 1998)

That's what I also like—just an easy going teacher, y'know not such a stiff . . . Mr R is breezy, easy-going—but there's still no slacking off in your work—you have to get your work done. He's just not a prick, whereas a majority of the teachers here are all—even the ladies. ("Allen," Drama student, The Grammar School. 14 August 1998).

There was no doubt that having a male teacher in a female dominated (and therefore feminized) subject such as Drama made them a novelty to the boys they taught. All of the male Drama teachers also acknowledged that they were also novelties in their female-dominated educational field. The female teachers I interviewed at the GPS were far more likely to "play safe" with the boys and infuse Drama with the attitude that it is a serious academic study. But the boys I interviewed clearly and consistently acknowledged that their male Drama teachers offered a very different way of teaching and looking at the world than other teachers at the school. I observed a vast array of students perform and match the obvious ease and playfulness modeled by their teachers. Regardless of the mythology of the Drama teacher, these male teachers created Drama "spaces" that gave students license to play with many of the authoritarian, essentialist masculinities in the institution, but more plainly, a place to be camp and get away with it.

I: I notice you use Spice Girls names with the boys—why is that?

P: Because they love them—because they're forbidden I think. Because they're popular, and they're sexy, and they're women—but they're also "poofy," and you wouldn't *really* like the Spice Girls, you wouldn't *really* know the music—but OH, you'd shag Ginger! . . . when they found out I went to the Kylie concert, they couldn't get enough of it. Y'know—that sort of freaked me out a bit—I thought, "you boys run this parallel, you jump from one to another". . . every time they do that sort of thing they take a risk. ("Paul," The Grammar School. 4 August 1998).

This teacher wanted to make his students aware of the constructed adult-male constraints that monitored them in the school, he opted to hit right at the core of "camp" behaviour and show them that the perceived taboo is actually good, irreverent and fun.

Other more contrived displays of camp-ness occurred in these schools but they tended to err on the side of dressing up as women in quasi-drag, usually to entertain old boys! Anglican Boys' School has a long standing tradition called "Party Day" where mothers and wives of old boys are invited to watch the boarders play at dressing-up in full make-up, skirts, stockings and heels and "perform" musical numbers for their female audience. Photographs of these boys blowing kisses to the camera featured prominently in the 1995 school magazine and their antics were not considered "lame" or "gay" because it was in the spirit of tomfoolery that is "Party Day". Dressing up and laughing at females is safe in these schools perhaps because this was largely undertaken by boys who were *not* Drama students. This wasn't necessarily a contestation of the essentialist masculinity of the school, but titillation and a tantalizing romp in the foray of the "drama faggot". The risk is altogether different when the male Drama teacher asked his Year 11 students to perform an all-male version of Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest* at one of the most prestigious rugby schools in Queensland: St Joseph's College. During the rehearsal, the Drama teacher was very clear about his agenda for doing this particular production.

It's very, very important that this play works for me in a very positive way . . . for the school and for myself in negotiating my spot here. . . and putting blokes in frocks is a way in which I see will raise eyebrows, which will gain a great deal of attention—which I want—but then I want it to go one step further than that, and while the jaws are down, actually get the cogs happening upstairs and say "well, ah, right they did that very well."

("Jay," St Joseph's College. 21 July 1998)

Jay wanted to play with gender and take it out of the safety of the Drama classroom. Opening night was to be a baptism of fire for the cast who performed the play to an audience of 600 boarders who were *made* to attend (in order to show school spirit). Their reception of the play was without incident as the audience seemed to connect with the idea that the cast were taking a great risk in genuinely trying to perform their female roles, not just blokes pretending to be women for laughs. Both

the Drama teacher and student-cast desired to contest the marginality of their subject and offered a different approach to the overall masculinized curriculum in the school. The teacher's enthusiasm about raising the profile of their "Drama-masculinity" seemed to rub-off onto his students, one of which articulated similarities between theirs and other marginalized masculine-performances within his school: . . . [there's a] bunch of guys playing soccer at lunch time . . . Now soccer's a game of skill—soccer is a drama form because you've got to move your feet—whereas rugby's just put your head down, and if you get tackled, well you lose a few teeth. But soccer's a real art-form, y'know you've got to be sophisticated in . . . you've got to be coordinated, y'know what I mean? . . . Well, soccer is like drama in sport. Like if you watch a soccer game—it really is dramatic in terms of the way people move and act towards each other—the tension that's there, and the focus, and like the mood of the whole setting. . . . It's weird, because since they've [soccer teams] started winning premierships, they've gotten the respect—like they actually have to do something well for people to start liking them. It's like drama, so if this "Ernest" thing [St Joseph's College's all-male production of *The Importance of Being Ernest*] goes well—maybe it will elevate our status in drama. ("Carl." Drama student, St Joseph's College, 29 July 1998).

The notion of being a "good bloke" or being respected for "successfully pulling off" something that was risky or dangerous was another kind of masculinity that had a socially just agenda in these GPS. Regardless of the perceived chasms between the performances of the school's "muscular Christian" and "Drama faggot", if a student or staff member performed well the role of the "good bloke" (explained to me as someone who is firm and fair), then there really wasn't a more esteemed compliment. Throughout my field notes and interview data, students (not always only Drama students) consistently referred to the three male drama teachers as "good blokes" and this often brought with it a desire by the student to share very private information with them that other staff were denied. It is as if the Drama teacher had a privileged position as a librarian of the students' risk-stories that other teachers may have felt obliged to reveal to the Headmaster or counselors. This suggested the Drama teacher had access to enormous insight about the complexities of their boys' emerging masculinities, and they put great faith in the abilities of boys to understand and humour the gendered anomalies in their school:

F: . . . oh yeah, they were the leaders—they were Prefects and stuff. Two of them—the two biggest gay guys—hardly any of the school knows that they were gay—the two biggest gay guys used to baby-sit the Headmaster's kids—two girls—but this was the calibre of kid they were: "would you come and look after my kids?" And I've always enjoyed knowing that. That is completely true—that in the biggest rugby school in Australia, the two biggest poofers in Grade 12 used to look after the Principal's kids! They were all elected prefects by the students.

I: It might be a myth, then . . . [that gay students are always bullied]

F: Fuckin' oath—it's a complete myth—it's just another part of society. ("Fraser," St. Joseph's College. 21 July 1998).

The Drama teacher is the guardian of these stories in a lot of cases, many of which are handled with much mirth because of how they contest and disrupt the image that the school thinks it is projecting into the community. What I witnessed was really the emergence of Drama-teacher and Drama-student masculinity in these homogenous school contexts. And yet, it was a specifically masculine mode in which the community of drama was created. Although being camp and playing in the margins of the "Drama faggot" was tantalizing for many boys, actually being truly outed as "queer" was still something considered to be predatory and feared. Even from the previous quote, the "gay" students hid their "queer-ness" from the greater public eye and chose to "turn it on" and perform the normative masculinity of an outstanding "muscular Christian".

Judith Butler reminds us that "gender and sex are unstable and contested concepts rather than inherent 'givens'" (in McDonough, 8), and trying to categorize or approach the term "boy" as a stable gender is unattainable even inside the strictest essentially masculine institution. The multiple masculine performances and the emergent "Drama-masculinity" was dependent upon very tentative contexts such as the personality of the male Drama teacher. All these teachers I observed have now left these schools and the rapport they were able to build has been transplanted to other schools. I doubt very much that they have left a lasting legacy at the schools, however, the impressions they made on communities of boys in their care have probably affected the emerging masculinity of the boys who are now grown men.

I, therefore, stop short of suggesting that what I observed was emancipatory for all boys at these schools. Their privileged class was a great leveler in that boys did not necessarily consider a career in the arts because what they *did* desire was stability, especially the stability of a manhood forged in the schools' promoted "muscular Christian" tradition. The playing in the margins of the "Drama faggot" mostly remained as "play" as boys tended to err on the side of what was tried and tested: just like the boys portrayed in Peter Weir's film *Dead Poet's Society*. Although they love their teacher and the liberation that he alone has engaged them in, by the end of the film they are reluctant to defend him or themselves against accusations of the essentialist male-only world of their school. All students sign away their teacher's precious gift, and he who makes a stand is again punished for his public contestation of the school's image. Perhaps, for boys, the mass-performance of the GPS "muscular

Christian” is a desirable orientation point because it anchors them in what it means to be male in their male-only world, and this may remain more valuable to an emerging privileged young man than the ability to “safely” contest it.

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ⁱ Eton (1440), Winchester (1387), Westminster (1560), Charterhouse (1611), Harrow (1571), Shrewsbury (1551), St. Paul’s (1512), Merchant Taylors’ (1561), and Rugby (1567)