

Diffy Looks

RACE D'EP

le film



Lionel Soukaz and
Guy Hocquenghem

Race d'Ep!, 16mm on Video,
95 min., 1979

Friday, May 18, 2012



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55 Walker Street
New York
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Preface to Race d'Ep

I was walking down a lost street on the outskirts of the city, looking for a public restroom of ill repute. Two hoods were hanging around under a bridge, leaning against their motorbikes. As I walked past, they yelled out (not nastily): "Race d'Ep!"

As I was drunk, it took me a while to get it—inverts do not speak *verlan* [French slang that involves inverting the syllables of words]—"Rasdep," for "pédéraste" [homosexual]. At that moment, I felt flittering behind me the shadow of another species. I experienced their appellation less as an insult than as the evidence of my belonging to another world, another History.

That History is not so long—barely a century old—and its origins could be recounted by people still living. The birth of a new identity, which in one hundred years has become a quasi-nature: they appear a little before the turn of the 20th century, the mutant children of the photographic arts and of medical science, discovering themselves as a species bit by bit through their representations. Between the wars, in the upheavals of pre-fascist Germany, they proliferate wildly, constructing their own destiny to the point of forming a new definition of the human being; a dispersed people; a people without memory, equally forgetful of lived experiences and of exterminations. A consciousness of being other which is not timeless, but also not simply born in the American liberation movements of the 1960s. Half a century ago it had its golden age, a lost world effaced by the totalitarian bloodbath.

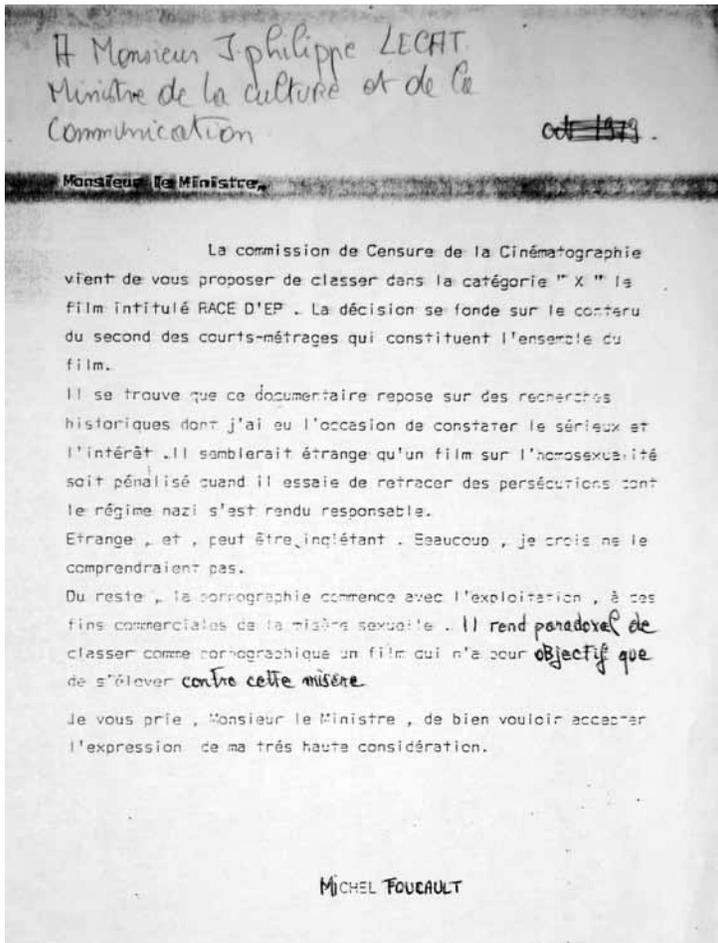
It is this unknown history that this book attempts to make visible, through the images that belong to it: the History of "race d'Ep," the breed of faggots.

That history is bound up in the history of photography, that medium through which another memory, another skin is given to beings. They seized it. It is the sign of their modernity: since their origins, they have made of this smooth surface where dreams are etched the privileged confidant of their nascent culture. Thanks to photography, they have dared on the male body all that reality makes difficult. From Gloeden to contemporary pornography, they have always favored this sensitive skin [*pellicule*], and that is why this book is first and foremost a photo album—the latest excretion of that photographic History.

They are born along with the contemporary notion of childhood, from which they are carefully distanced. The mutation which produces them is simultaneous with the one that tears the child from the grip of age-old naiveté in order to make of it the great untouchable myth, the inverted mirror of adult frustrations. But they, disguised as doctors, or draped in the language of art, they lay image-traps where adolescents get snared, prisoners of the mirage, immobilized forever at the peak of their desirability for the collections of lovers of childhood. Tireless investigators of the form of the adolescent body, they seek there the golden mean of forbidden beauty.

Through these artists, these poets, these photographers, these designers, these doctors enamored of the body of youth, something seeks itself out which still refuses its name, which will never be a concept but rather a motley ensemble of representations: homosexuality, as one says.

— Translated by Damon Young



To Mr. J. Philippe LECAT
Minister of Culture and Communication

Dear Minister:

The Cinema Censorship board has recommended an X rating for the film titled RACE D'EP. This decision is based on the content of the second short film which makes up the whole of the film.

This documentary actually rests on historical research that I have been able to certify the seriousness and interest of. It seems strange that a film on homosexuality should be penalized for attempting to retrace persecutions that the Nazi regime was responsible for.

Strange, and maybe worrisome. Many, I think would not understand.

Moreover, pornography starts with exploitation, for the purposes of commercial sexual misery. It is paradoxical to class as pornographic a film whose purpose is only to speak out against such misery.

I beg you Mr. Minister to please accept this expression of my very high consideration.

Michel Foucault

France in Autumn: *Race d'Ep* and the End of the Seventies

With the exception of the 16mm *Race d'Ep* (1979), Lionel Soukaz shot all his films of the 1970s in Super 8. He can therefore be counted among the filmmakers of the *Ecole du corps* ("School of the Body"), a loose set of queer Parisian artists who made lushly erotic films in the "amateur" format during the mid- to late 1970s. At the same time, Soukaz stands apart from the group (which included Téo Hernandez, Jacobois (Jacques Haubois), and Stéphane Marti, among others) because of the strong political charge of his films. *Boy Friend 2* (1976) and *Le Sexe des anges* (1977) are similar to the voiceover-drenched first two parts of *Race d'Ep*. In them, the image track serves as illustration and counterpoint to passages read aloud from the work of Tony Duvert, Guy Hocquenghem, and René Schérer. Other solo works, such as his first film, *Lolo Mégalo blessé en son honneur* (1973), made when he was nineteen years old, and the devastating *Ixe* (1980, 16mm), a *cri de coeur* against the government censorship of *Race d'Ep*, largely eschew voiceover. They achieve their political impact instead through a rhythmic montage of transgressive images, often paired with looped sounds, which together build to a fever pitch that seems designed to propel the spectator out of complacency.

In his survey of the first twenty years of gay and lesbian movement cinema, Richard Dyer ranks Soukaz with Rosa von Praunheim at the top of a very short list of gay activist filmmakers who pursued a "confrontational" approach instead of the "affirmational," or positive-images, approach more widely favored and practiced by gay cultural activists. At the same time, Dyer distinguishes the French filmmaker's work from the West German's on the grounds that, in the former, pleasure always ultimately trumps argumentation. He notes that three image-banks are regularly conjured and celebrated in the films of the 1970s: drag, porn, and pederasty.

Each poses a threat to the social order: drag as a refusal of male privilege, porn making present the polymorphous perversity of desire, pederasty undermining the authority of the bourgeois family. What is distinctive, however, is not these arguments in themselves, which had their counterparts throughout the international gay movement, but the way they are fuelled not by political correctness but by pleasure itself. Other pro-drag, -porn, and -pederasty positions seem to imply that one should get into these things in order to smash male and familial power, but the French polemics starts from wanting them.

Race d'Ep is no exception. It too mobilizes these three sites of bourgeois-convention-shattering *jouissance*, from the pederastic orchestrations of Baron Wilhelm von Gloeden (played by Schérer) of Part 1, to the gender transgressors posed and prodded by Magnus Hirschfeld and his colleagues in Part 2, to the pornotopic 1960s youth fantasia of Part 3. Soukaz made the film in collaboration with activist intellectual Guy Hocquenghem, who was a founding member of FHAR (*le Front homosexuel d'action révolutionnaire*; in some ways France's equivalent to the Gay Liberation Front) and a writer of both political essays and queer theory (this last *avant la lettre*). Soukaz did not meet Hocquenghem until 1977, though he had seen him speak at rallies before then and was already familiar with his writing. The two became lovers and would remain close friends and artistic collaborators until Hocquenghem's death from AIDS in 1988.

Race d'Ep suggests that the history of homosexuality is bound up with the history of photography. In this respect, the film adds an image track to Michel Foucault's discourse-based history of sexuality, which had just been published in 1976. Foucault famously argued that when the medical category of "homosexuality" was created in 1870, so too was a new species (or, perhaps, "race") of homosexuals. *Race d'Ep* layers the "Time of the Pose" onto Foucault's late-nineteenth-century origin story. But having



followed the film's chronological journey from Gloeden's 1890s art photography through Weimar and the swinging sixties all the way to the filmmakers' present, I am uncertain as to whether the film means to make a historical argument *per se* or if its diverse content should be understood instead as snapshots assembled in a loose-leaf scrapbook. Soukaz suggested as much in a 1981 interview, when he stated, "*Race d'Ep* n'est pas l'Histoire, mais seulement quatre histoires."

The film is an artifact of the conflicted, transitional moment that was the late 1970s. Schérer has written that Soukaz's films express both the exuberance of the *après-mai* generation (Hocquenghem's term for those who came of age after May 1968) and the "glaciation of sensibilities and human relationships" that was to follow, during what Felix Guattari referred to as *les années d'hiver* ("the years of winter"). Perhaps then we are right to think of Soukaz's films, *Race d'Ep* included, as autumnal in both their historical conjuncture and their political concerns. In them, we can sense the waning of the halcyon, early-1970s days of gay liberation and the mounting chill as the commercialization and assimilation of gay life sets in (though something far more chilling was on the horizon). In his 1977 book *La Dérive homosexuelle* ("The Homosexual Drift"), Hocquenghem expressed profound concern over what was becoming of the gay revolution in the face of a late-1970s "movement of closure which is founding new sexual bourgeoisies."

We feel the contradictions of the era most clearly in the fourth and final part of the film. Here Hocquenghem plays a gay man who, while hanging out in a bar with his friends, decides to cruise an attractive blond foreigner who has wandered in off the street to buy cigarettes. As we watch their encounter, we hear two competing, retrospective accounts of what transpired that night. The off-camera voice corresponding to the blond man is that of a straight-identified American businessman who somehow took a wrong turn and ended up spending the night talking and walking, but no more, with a French gay guy. By contrast, the off-camera voice corresponding to Hocquenghem's character is that of a queen ("folle") telling a tall tale of sexual conquest over the phone to a friend the next day. But only the American's version of events seems to correspond to what we actually see happening on the screen.

According to the American's account, he spent the night listening to the Frenchman hold forth on queer life and politics. However queeny his voiceover, the Frenchman seems to the American, as well as to us watching the film, to be calmer than the other bar



denizens, and somehow both of the milieu and apart from it. The American says he is touched by the Frenchman's expressed desire to resist assimilation and to maintain a connection and identification with more marginalized queer people. (The Frenchman seems to have the option of assimilating into mainstream society in a way that the other queens do not.) Being familiar with the more visible and commercialized gay culture of New York, the American finds the Frenchman's adherence to the role of Genet-ian outsider quaint. The pathos of the scene is heightened by the fact that Hocquenghem is clearly portraying an activist-intellectual much like himself, yet he is discoursing about homosexuality to a straight foreigner who, while mildly curious, on one level couldn't care less.

As we watch Hocquenghem's character struggle with his conflicted, self-designated role of *porte-parole* ("spokesperson") for the gay community, a structuring logic of the film falls into place. From Gloeden to Hirschfeld to Hocquenghem, the film traces a historical lineage of privileged, cis-gendered gay white men who play the role of patron-doctor-writer-activist on behalf of more marginalized queer subjects. In its historical and narrative arc, *Race d'Ep* seems to testify to the passing of this paternalistic dynamic. Perhaps the film suggests that a more pluralistic time is at hand, in terms of who gets to speak as and on behalf of queer subjects. But it also suggests the dawning of a more banal era, as queer relationships rooted in differences of age, race, gender, and class are pushed to the margins by a mainstreaming movement anxious to present affirming images of gay citizenship and relationships not riven by imbalances of power and knowledge. At the end of the film, the photographs that we see onscreen are oddly mute. They present an image of two men happily walking together side by side yet seldom if ever touching. The men are close in age, non-erotic in their behavior, and rather normative in their expressions of gender. And in the final moments of the film, when they have parted from each other presumably never to meet again, we watch as the photographic record of their encounter floats away, unmarked and unremarked, down the Seine.

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THREE BILLION PERVERTS ON THE STAND

1. Prefatory Note

The object of this file—homosexualities, today, in France—cannot be approached without questioning again the standard methods of research in the social sciences where, under a pretext of objectivity, all care is taken to maximize the distance between the researcher and the object of study. To arrive at the radical decentering of scientific enunciation that is required for the analysis of such a phenomenon, it is not sufficient to “give voice” to the subjects concerned—which at times amounts to a formal, even Jesuitical, intervention. Rather, it is necessary to create the conditions for a total, indeed a paroxysmic, exercise of that enunciation. Science should have nothing to do with just measures and compromises for the sake of good taste! It is not readily apparent how to break through the barriers of established knowledge, in fact of dominant power. At least three sorts of censure must be thwarted:

— that of the pseudo-objectivity of *social surveys*, in the manner, for example, of the Kinsey Report transposed onto the “*sexual behaviour of the French*”—which contain a priori all possible responses, and in such a way as not to reveal to the public anything that does not accord with what the observer and the director of the study wish to hear;

— that of *psychoanalytic prejudices* which pre-organize a psychological, topical and economic “*comprehension*”—in fact a recuperation—of homosexuality, such that, with the persistence of the most traditional sexology, will continue to be held within a clinical framework of perversion, which implicitly justifies all the forms of repression it has suffered. Here, then, there will be no question of “fixation” at the pre-genital, pre-oedipal, pre-symbolic or pre-anything stages, which would define the homosexual as lacking something—at the very least normality and morality. Far from depending on an “*identification with the same-sex parent*,” homosexual maneuvering effects a break with all possible adequation to a prominent parental pole. Far from resolving itself by fixation on the Same, it is an opening into Difference. For the homosexual, refusal of castration does not indicate a shrinking from his or her social responsibilities, but rather, at least potentially, indicates an attempt to expunge all normalizing, identificatory processes—processes which are, fundamentally, no more than the remnants of the most archaic rituals of submission; — that, finally, of *traditional militant homosexuality*. Likewise, in this domain, the period of the “Case of Uncle Tom” has passed. Here, the defense of the legitimate and unassailable claims of oppressed minorities will no longer be at issue; and no question, either, of a quasi-ethnographic exploration of a mysterious “*third sex*”... Homosexuals speak for us all—speak in the name of the silent majority—by putting into question all forms, whatever they may be, of desiring-production. Nothing in the order of artistic creation or of revolution can be accomplished in ignorance of their questioning. The era of homosexual geniuses, who set about separating and diverting their creativity from their homosexuality, forcing themselves to conceal that their creative spirit originated in that very break with the established order, has now passed.

Incidentally, for the deaf: the gay, no more than the shizo, is not of himself a revolutionary—the revolutionary of modern times! We are simply saying that, among others, he *could* be, *could* become,

a site for an important libidinal disruption in society—a point of emergence for revolutionary, desiring-energy from which classical militantism remains cut off. We do not lose sight, insofar as it also exists, of an infinitely unfortunate commitment to asylums, or an indefinitely shameful and miserable oedipal homosexuality. And yet, even with these cases of extreme repression, one should stay in touch.

May '68 taught us to read the writing on the walls, and, since then, we have begun to decipher the graffiti in prisons, asylums, and now in urinals. There is a “*new scientific spirit*” to recapture!



2. A Letter to the Court

In recent years, the position of homosexuals in society has greatly evolved. In this area, as in many others, one observes a discrepancy between reality and psychiatric theory, medical-legal and juridical practice. Homosexuality is less and less felt to be a shameful malady, a monstrous deviance, a crime. This evolution has become increasingly pronounced since May '68, when the forces of social struggle took on previously neglected causes, such as life in prisons and in asylums, the condition of women, the question of abortion, of quality of life, etc. There has been, moreover, a homosexual political movement which, considering homosexuals to be a marginal minority, has defended their human dignity and demanded their rights. Some of these movements, in the United States for example, have joined forces with other protest groups: movements against the Vietnam War, civil rights movements for Blacks, Puerto Ricans, feminist movements, and so on.

In France, this evolution has been different. The revolutionary movement, the FHAR [*Front homosexuel d'action révolutionnaire*], was launched with a political agenda right from the start. There was no conjunction of marginal homosexual movements with political movements: the problems of homosexuality were immediately posed as political questions. This spontaneist Maoist movement, formed around the journal *Tout*—the product of May '68—refused not only to accept that homosexuality was an illness or a perversion, but advanced the view that it concerned all normal sexual life. Similarly, the women's liberation movement, the MLF [*Mouvement de liberation des femmes*], argued that feminine homosexuality was not only a form of struggle against male chauvinism, but also a radical questioning of all dominant forms of sexuality.

Homosexuality would be, thus, not only an element in the life of each and everyone, but involved in any number of social phenomena, such as hierarchy, bureaucracy, etc. The question has thus been shifted: homosexual men and women refuse the status of an oppressed minority, and intend to lead a political offensive against the enslavement of all forms of sexuality to a system of reproduction, and to the values of bureaucratic capitalist and socialist societies. This is, in fact, more about transsexuality than homosexuality: at issue is the definition of what sexuality would be in a society freed from capitalist exploitation and the alienation it



engenders on all levels of social organization. From this perspective, the struggle for the liberty of homosexuality becomes an integral part of the struggle for social liberation.

The ideas arising from this line of thought were explored in the issue of *Recherches* for which I have been charged—as the director of the publication—for “affronting public decency.” In fact, the problems raised by this issue of *Recherches* are fundamentally, and only, political. The charge of pornography is merely a pretext, all too easily invoked in this particular domain; the main thing is suppression for the sake of “an example.”

Recherches, in addition to a number of current publications, endeavors to break with the practice common to radio, television, and most print media of selecting information according to reigning prejudices, of making themselves the judges of decency and indecency, of transposing the voice of those concerned by a particular problem into a language deemed acceptable, in short, of substituting themselves. On the situation in prisons, for example, one would solicit commentary from a judge, a policeman, a former prisoner (one of exceptional character—one, for example, who had committed a crime of passion), but never from an average prisoner. The same applies for mental illness. At a push, one might bring forward an insane genius, but never would one seek out actual witnesses to the miserable life of a psychiatric hospital.

We wanted, therefore, to give direct voice to homosexuals. And the result? We are reproached for our impropriety. But of what nature is this impropriety, if it is not political? In fact, what is said in this issue of *Recherches*, and in the manner in which it is said, is clearly less than what can be found not only in publications for sex-shops—our goal was hardly to compete!—but also in scientific publications. The originality of the issue—that which shocks, and for which we are charged—lies in that for perhaps the first time, homosexuals and non-homosexuals speak of these problems for themselves and in an entirely free manner.

3. 17th Magistrate's Court (Notes for the trial)

— I will not repeat the terms of my letter to the court; it seems, as Mr. Kiejman has advised me, that this would have a negative effect,

— I am summoned as the director of the journal *Recherches* for its special issue on homosexuality: “Three Billion Perverts: An Encyclopedia of Homosexualities,”

— what does the fact that I am held responsible for this issue signify?

- *Recherches* is the expression of a group
- this issue, in particular, was collectively produced
- all of its participants asked to be charged

— what does the fact of holding someone responsible for something signify?

- I am responsible, I represent *Recherches*
- you represent the law
- members of Parliament represent the people
- the President of the Republic: France
- universities: knowledge
- gays: perversion

— *Recherches* wishes to have done with this sort of representation, with all the bad theatre to which officials and institutions resort. What we want is to give voice to those who never manage to be heard.

— At CERFI [*Centre d'études, de recherches et de formations institutionnelles*], we are often questioned on the issues surrounding these problems. It is, undoubtedly, for those who are interested to seek answers themselves! Sometimes, however, we cannot restrain ourselves from expressing our own ideas.

— Recently, the Minister of justice asked us if we would agree to study what the “spatial disposition of a Law Court” could be. There is at least one comment that I could make at the moment: that is that judges should be in the room, and that speakers, whoever they may be, should *face the public*.



— Can one speak seriously in a Court?

- when I was a young militant, I would have refused to participate in this “masquerade,”
- I would have said to you: “So, now, to express myself freely in a journal, one must pay. Fine. Write up the bill and we won't waste any more time.” And I would have thrown you a fistful of bills or change for the bailiffs to pick up. Then you would have sentenced me with contempt of court and everyone would have been satisfied!
- now I think a bit differently. I know that things go on everywhere, even in the magistrature, even in the police, even in the prefecture,
- finally, then, this trial interests me: I would like to know if everything was played out in advance, if everything was already inscribed in the “pharmacopoeia” of laws In this case, then, I grant you, in advance, that this issue of *Recherches* is indefensible. (Even though, I am sure, Mr. Merleau-Ponty, Mr. Kiejman and Mr. Domenach would know how to prove otherwise!)

— What purposes do texts serve: whether it be a text of law or a text of *Recherches*? Are they not inseparable from the social relations that underlie them, and from what linguists call the context, the implicit? Isn't the important thing to look at life itself, at the evolution of what one could call the “jurisprudence of everyday life”? One would see that homosexuality has evolved in recent

years—at the very least, its “customary law”—and it is of that which we must speak.

— But before continuing, I would like to ask you two things, Your Honour, for the enrichment of our proceedings:

1. have all the witnesses, up to the present, enter together,
2. give free voice to everyone in the room who asks to speak.

This affair has two sides:

- a ridiculous side,
- a serious side.

The ridiculous side: In April of 1973, I was in Canada participating in an extremely interesting conference. Unfortunately, I could not delay my return to France because of consultations that I could not reschedule. Arriving home in Paris, suitcases in hand, I found several people with whom I had appointments sitting in the stairway, in front of my padlocked door.

It took me a moment to realize that the padlock, roughly screwed on the door (which cost me 150 francs to repair), had been put there by the police after searching the premises. The two statutory witnesses to this search had been, in my absence, my upstairs neighbours and ... the locksmith! All of my papers and my clothes had been gone through, and the bathroom turned upside down. During this time, ten police officers had undertaken a similar search of the clinic of La Borde where I work. *Dozens* of search warrants had been issued To what end? It defies belief! To find copies of



the seized issue of *Recherches*, while that same issue was on sale in bookstores, and had been for weeks!

When I protested these proceedings to the examining judge, I must say that he remained largely perplexed. I thought then that there had been a mistake and that the case would be adjourned *sine die*.

The serious side: What exactly caused such a commotion? The content or the form?

a) *The content of the issue*

The content is certainly exceptionally rich, particularly insofar as it involved:

- the position of the homosexual in society,
- the way in which different immigrant groups from North Africa live their homosexuality,
- the sexual misery of young people,
- the racist fantasies which are sometimes invoked in relations of sexual dependence, etc.
- masturbation: some extremely interesting accounts of this relatively unknown subject were brought together. But it would

require at least three hours for the witnesses summoned today to deal with these different subjects.

b) *The form of the issue*

It is the form that was the target of repression, undoubtedly because the issue doesn't fit into any pre-established category:

— it's not an "art" book—nor is it a porno magazine—nor an erotic novel for the elite,

— and nor is it a text that austere presents itself as a scientific communication.

We dispensed here with the notions of an author and a work. When the examining judge asked me, for example, who had written this or that article, supposing I would even answer, I was notable to do so. More often than not, the articles were, in effect, made up of reports, discussions, and montages of text, which makes it impossible to determine individual responsibility! Even the layout was done collectively, and certain sentences were taken directly from graffiti! How can the law determine who is responsible! Rather than asking questions regarding the substance, one has opted for the ease of holding responsible: the legal director!

— Is it irresponsible to allow people to speak, without precautions, without supporting documentation, and without a pseudo-scientific screen? (Even though scientific research, at a second level, works with documents as up to date).

How otherwise to conceive of a study, whether it be in psychiatry, pedagogy, or in areas that concern justice?

Is it really dangerous to let people speak of things as they feel them, and with their language, their passions, their excesses?

Must we institute a police for dreams and fantasies? For what good do we suppress the public expression of popular spontaneity on the walls—or in the subways, as in New York ... How can we not understand that to forbid expression, on this level, is to favor a transition to actions that will present undoubtedly larger inconveniences to the social organization?

We think that the expression of desire is synonymous with disorder and irrationality.

But the neurotic order that forces desire to conform to dominant models perhaps constitutes the real disorder, the real irrationality. It is repression that makes sexuality shameful and sometimes aggressive.

Desire that can open itself up to the world ceases to be destructive and can even become creative.

This trial is political. It makes a cause of a new approach to daily life, to desire, and the new forms of expression that have irrupted since 1968.

Will we finally allow people to express themselves without having recourse to "representatives"? Will we allow them to produce their own journals, their own literature, theatre, cinema, etc.?

Violence engenders violence.

If we repress the new forms of expression of social desire, we will head for absolute revolt, desperate reactions, even, indeed, for forms of collective suicide (as was, in certain respects, Hitlerian fascism).

Thus, it's for the judges to choose as well. Do they situate themselves, a priori, on the side of the dominant order? Or are they capable of giving a hearing to another order that seeks to build another world?

— Translated by Sophie Thomas

DAMON YOUNG

Program Notes, *Race d'Ep*

"Homosexuality haunts the 'normal world'." So wrote Guy Hocquenghem in his dazzling 1972 work, *Homosexual Desire*, a book—written when he was only twenty-five years old—that anticipated many of the concerns of what would come to be known, some two decades later, as queer theory. Like Wilhelm Reich and Herbert Marcuse before him, Hocquenghem argued that the social and economic structures of capitalist modernity are sustained by its system of sexual repressions. But unlike those thinkers, he understood the central role played by the fear of homosexuality within that system. A social and political system based on patriarchal power—thus enamored of the phallus—is necessarily, Hocquenghem suggested, haunted by the specter of male homoeroticism. Within such a system, the figure of the male homosexual carries a particularly corrosive charge, since it names the possibility that must be defended against at all costs—the thrill of the man's "de-virilization" at the hands of another man—and gives an all-too-manifest form to the otherwise strictly latent erotic dynamics of patriarchy as a system of relations, as Eve Sedgwick would later put it, "between men."

Homosexual Desire is really a book about heterosexuality: it lays bare the "complex knot of dread and desire" that attends the figure of the homosexual within a system of normative heterosexuality. At the same time, given the position homosexuality occupies within that system—at once repudiated and phantasmatically central—the book celebrates its corrosive and socially transformative potential. Homosexual desire, embraced and realized, opens the possibility of a rupture with the stultifying Oedipal family structure that capitalism depends on; in terms inspired by his hot-off-the-press reading of Deleuze and Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus*, Hocquenghem writes that "homosexual production takes place according to a mode of non-limitative horizontal relations, heterosexual reproduction according to one of hierarchical succession." Thus homosexuality, conceived as a force and not an identity, suggests what Michel Foucault called "new relational possibilities," a reinvention of the social order in terms outside the heterosexual, Oedipal family drama assumed (by psychoanalysis) to be the foundation of all human sociality. Bristling with political energy and composed at a moment of intense theoretical innovation in France, *Homosexual Desire* is a giddy work of speculative theory, polemical and utopian, as well as a rallying cry for a radical activism that would apprehend the connections between manifold forms of oppression, the impossibility of separating anti-homophobic struggle from the anti-sexist and anti-racist struggles with which it is necessarily (though this is a lesson the contemporary gay and lesbian movement seems sadly to have forgotten) bound up.

If *Homosexual Desire* is a work of theory, speculative and utopian, *Race d'Ep* — released in 1979 simultaneously as a book and a film — is a different kind of work. Hocquenghem now turns his attention to the historical production of the homosexual as a separate "species." The emphasis here is on the forms of self-fashioning through which homosexual subjects, starting in the late nineteenth century, have embraced their interpellation as such. That self-fashioning, Hocquenghem suggests, has taken place primarily through the production of images: the history of homosexuality, he asserts, is bound up with the history of photography; though "the homosexual" as a category is first produced through the disciplinary regime of medical taxonomy, its history becomes the history of its own self-representation. Thus is *Race d'Ep* rich in still images—it amasses a photographic archive of the historically variable iterations, in Western modernity, of homosexual identity: the members of this "species" are the "mutant children," Hocquenghem writes in his preface to the book, "of the photographic arts and of medical science."

As the film progresses—from the early homoerotic photographs of von Gloeden, to the “golden age” of Weimar Germany, the liberationist efforts of Hirschfeld and the violent totalitarian repression that ensued, through to the spring-like, utopian adolescence of the 1960s, with sexual liberation in the air — we might think the story Hocquenghem and his cinematic collaborator Lionel Soukaz are recounting is one that moves in the direction of liberation, vindication, and even revolutionary possibility. But unexpectedly, the film skips over the 1970s entirely, and thus the moment of Hocquenghem’s own activist efforts with the FHAR (*Front Homosexuel d’Action Révolutionnaire*), which he cofounded in, as well as its American progenitor, the Gay Liberation Front. But in place of a tale of political triumph, the final section, which stars Hocquenghem himself (though the voice we hear is not his), offers us something quite different: the melancholy story of a failed seduction. The theme of the “breed” remains—now as the group of *folles* who populate seedy bars on the outskirts of Paris, and who form, the narrator tells us, an alliance with “criminals and Arabs,” a community of the marginal. But now the historicizing narration is gone, the documentary as history lesson, and we have the story of a failed pick-up, told from two conflicting perspectives. The gay man’s narration is bitchy, dishonest, even desperate; the straight man offers what seems the more reliable account of the men’s night together, clarifying that “nothing [sexual] happened, of course,” and that Hocquenghem’s *folle* “seemed resigned to defeat in advance... If I had accepted what he wanted, it would have been



out of kindness or pity, [but] I don’t make love out of pity.” Thus from the Edenic portrayal of endlessly reciprocated gay adolescent desire in the 1960s, we have returned to what we might rather have assumed was a now-anachronistic model of homosexual desire as non-reciprocal, as the hopeless desire of a gay man, feminized as *folle*, for a straight man who would entertain him, if at all, only out of “pity.” Since Hocquenghem himself has taught us, in *Homosexual Desire*, not to take such protestations at face value, we are left wondering what “complex knot of dread and desire” leads the allegedly straight man to assert so defensively, at the end of his narration, that “when I come back to Paris, I will avoid the Avenue de l’Opéra in the evenings”—at all costs, it seems. In weighing up the plausibility of this assertion, and the mechanisms of disavowal and phobic dread that produce it as the necessary conclusion to the tale, it seems we have left the history of the “species” and returned to where we—and Hocquenghem—began: with the homosexual desire that, posing as anything but that, can no sooner recognize itself than speak its own name.

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This program has been initiated by Artists Space, and organized in partnership with *Dirty Looks*. It forms part of a weekend symposium curated by Artists Space under the title *Public Bodies, Private Parts*. As an element of Artists Space’s curatorial programming partnership with Whitney Biennial 2012, this weekend of talks and screenings looks at representations of hidden and transgressive biographies, particularly in relation to notions of “perversion”.

DIRTY LOOKS is a roaming series held on the last Wednesday of the month. Curated by Bradford Nordeen, *Dirty Looks* is a screening series designed to trace contemporary queer aesthetics through historical works, presenting quintessential GLBT film and video alongside up-and-coming artists and filmmakers. A salon of influences, *Dirty Looks* is an open platform for inquiry, discussion and debate.

About the filmmakers:

GUY HOCQUENGHEM is often called “the father of queer theory.” A critical theorist, polemicist, novelist, and activist, Hocquenghem is a key figure in the history of gay liberation and in the development of a revolutionary queer politics and culture. Born in 1946, Hocquenghem participated in the 1968 student rebellion in France, joining the Communist Party, before being expelled for homosexuality. A founding member of FHAR (Homosexual Front for Revolutionary Action), Hocquenghem had a significant impact on leftist thinking and queer movements in France. Hocquenghem drew on the work of Michel Foucault and of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari to develop a revolutionary and liberating theory of sexuality. His *Homosexual Desire*, published in 1972, is frequently cited as the first work of queer theory. *The Screwball Asses*, an infamous treatise on homosexuality anonymously published in a 1973 issue of the journal *Recherches* entitled “Three Billion Perverts,” was published in English for the first time in 2010 by Semiotext(e) attributed to Hocquenghem. Hocquenghem died of AIDS related illness in 1988, at the age of 41.

LIONEL SOUKAZ, born in 1953 in Paris, is an unrestrained originator of the most radical queer cinema. He began making underground short films in Super 8 in 1973, at the age of twenty. Merging pornography and social criticism, these politically and sexually radical films reflect and take influence from the burgeoning queer movements of the post-1968 period. Soukaz organized several gay festivals, of which a 1978 edition was shut down by the French Ministry of Culture. His 1979 film collaboration with Guy Hocquenghem, *Race d’Ep*, similarly faced state censorship. He responded with the deliberately scandalous *Ixe*, made as a pure provocation against censorship, flouting all the possible grounds for censorship and featuring heroin fixes, sodomy, zoophilia, pedophilia, blasphemy. Soukaz continues to make uncompromising and provocative films. Recent films and video essays include his 2002 indictments of criminal American imperialism, *I Live in a Bush World* and *Texas Political Chainsaw Massacre*, the boldly sexual *Our Assholes Are Revolutionary* and *Porno Industriel*, both from 2006, and a portrait film of acclaimed author Abdellah Taia, *Portait d’un Ecrivain Marocain a Paris*, 2010.

All images from *Race d’Ep*, 1979, courtesy Lionel Soukaz and Estate of Guy Hocquenghem.

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