Playful transgressions: male drama teachers in elite boys' schools

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> *A man's allowed to play 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* [...] *; 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, interviewed 4 August 1998)[1]

This quote illustrates the performance of masculinity and class that takes place inside the Great Public School (GPS) culture in Brisbane, Australia. In the GPS, there is a level of anxiety about the perceived place of Drama (the subject) and how it might interact/interfere with the apparent veneer of an iron-clad essentialist and homogenous masculinity promoted by elite all-boys' schools. The feminisation of Drama and the suspicion of males who 'do' drama create a tension for boys and teachers as they walk the gendered tightrope across the gap between the expected public dis-

[1] The names of all teachers and students interviewed for this chapter are pseudonyms.

play of the 'muscular Christian' ('playing it straight') and the disruptive instabilities of the 'Drama faggot' ('camping it up').

Dramatic masculinities

Carla McDonough suggests that hegemonic masculinity is maintained through the kind of "fear-of-the-fag" or "fear of the other" homophobia that pervades colonial male-only worlds, such as GPS schools (1997: 6-7). Arts subjects such as Drama come in for particular suspicion and nowhere is this better illustrated than the following quote from Doug, a teacher of English (also a GPS old boy and rugby coach) whom I encountered at a GPS school in Brisbane:

> 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. (Doug, interviewed 18 August 1998)

The attitude 'performed' by Doug—for he was literally jumping out of his chair during the interview—exposed the very real tensions that lurk just below the politically correct surface of the GPS culture. He 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. I believe that he wasn't the only male teacher to feel that Drama was an agent of falsification that can corrupt a boy from the correct and noble 'muscular Christian' path. The 'us' and 'them' attitude Doug suggests is not class-based, but gender-

based as those who do not perform the hegemonic masculinity 'correctly' must be inferior or 'failed' men: homosexuals or women (Buchbinder 1998: 126; Symes and Meadmore 1996: 184; Mangan 2003: 4).

If we take Judith Butler's position that gender is performative, then Doug's quote provides further insight into the complexity of young masculinities in the GPS context. According the Butler, the body is a medium "signified by an inscription from a cultural source figured as 'external' to that body" (2004: 104). The boys' bodies then become a surface of 'cultural inscription' that acts upon the body and can be read (and judged) as either an appropriate or distorted representation of the GPS 'boy'. Performativity creates the illusion of an interior organised gender core which is maintained for the regulation of sexuality, a desire for a coherent understanding of gender (Butler 2004: 110-11, 113). Doug's abhorrence at the 'masquerade' performance of the Drama students is palpable, and yet their performance of their Drama-bodies is not dissimilar to the rugby students' public 'spewing' to prove their corporeal manliness. The rugby boys supply the overt physical action to satisfy this teacher's definition of essentialist masculinity, one which is set up in opposition to the subversive 'falseness' of the Drama students.

If gender is performative, then the stability of masculinity is not guaranteed. In order for institutions like schools to more effectively 'manage' young masculinities in schools, a solid and essential gender narrative needs to be prepared and made desirable through repetition. David Morgan states that essentialism is equal in effect to reductionism in that it "implies a loss of complexity and diversity" in favour of homogeny and a myth that masculinity is a coherent entity across all social situations (1992: 41-2). Michael Mangan argues that "masculinity [...] 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" (2003: 11). What constitutes the "other" in a GPS school are those performances which make masculinity messy, yet it is not always in opposition to the dominant order; most often it co-exists or "haunts" the dominant order. This "haunting" was a "work in progress" for the three GPS male Drama teachers who opened up their classrooms to my observations in 1998. They "haunted" the essentialist masculinity which pervaded their schools, not to abolish or demonise it, but to expose it as a fraudulent, humourless and narrow depiction of masculinity.

Public muscular Christian performances

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 a specifically GPS phenomenon. The GPS in Brisbane are most like the original nine GPS of England[2] 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 of the Rugby School during the 1830s. 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 1986: 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, among other things, to controlling the sexual impulses of male youths (Fotheringham 1992: 10).

If essential masculine acts in schools could be ordered into hierarchical events, then playing rugby would be the most recognisable accomplishment of gender by a boy, because heroes are always men of action who triumph in the public field (Nilan 1995: 176). Much of the rhetoric about patriarchal masculinity revolves around men's overt performances of their bodies; men's bodies are physical, rough, strong, capable, dominant, aggressive, rugged, controlled and so on; they are public bodies that are publicly read and consumed (Swain 2005: 224). A man's success is still often contingent upon how he navigates and maintains this gender order; men and boys define the notion of 'man' through action (Swain 2005: 224). Accordingly, masculine performance is always an externalised phenomenon in the GPS; 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 externalise the competitiveness and hierarchy in an all-male environment: aggression can be appropriately performed in a sporting event that is regulated by whistles and adult

[2] Eton (founded in 1440), Winchester (1387), Westminster (1560), Charterhouse (1611), Harrow (1571), Shrewsbury (1551), St. Paul's (1512), Merchant Taylors' (1561) and Rugby (1567).

referees. This 'hyper-boydom' or '*über*' masculine model is a result of the combined institutions of religion, education and sport which were designed to normalise masculine 'privilege' through the selecting or excluding of particular types of boy behaviors in these schools. The repetition and externalisation of this type of boy body 'naturalises' or 'normalises' the performance. Repetition of acts that become tradition is what Connell refers to as the 'patriarchal dividend' (1995: 79-80), and a school's historical and cultural traditions are externalised by all boys wearing uniforms as they publicly display the school colors, the maturity of the student (only senior 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). All of these actions create a powerfully coercive masculinity that is functional, ornamental and homogenous; this is how masculinity is made visible (how it is 'done') at the GPS.

Foucault describes this kind of bodily domination by hegemony as rendering "docile" bodies that are regulated and controlled for public consumption (2001: 129-31). This "compulsory masculinity" is the sum of the school's traditions: that "what is most desired and most needed is the [heterosexual] recognition from other men", that "only men can create other men" (McDonough 1997: 13). The ability to 'turn it on' both internal and external to the school is a particular performative act that transcends the school's ownership and surveillance of the boys' bodies; wearing the uniform becomes a vital part of the promotion of the school in the public eye. In this way, the boys' bodies are complicit in their embodiment of the school's ideals. They are not passive objects, but active agents in the repetition of hegemony both in the school and in public. There is a type of 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, and so on. The behaviours are 'public' and have the most effective meaning *inside* the school. Public displays of hegemony *outside* of the school gates might be read very differently.

Performing the GPS culture in public

In non-GPS society, these schools are popularly portrayed as elitist; their perceived arrogance positions single-sex (especially male) schools as places of contrived pederasty. Public school students often make remarks about private schools as places where 'poofs' all reside in an elite communion. In

Real Men Like Violence Glen Lewis suggests that elitist schools have long been suspected as harbouring a "tradition of homosexual aestheticism in English high culture" (1983: 50-1) which is unregulated by greater societal normativity. The suspicion of the 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 assault on fellow students. Much to the school's discomfort, the media published details of the attacks, including an incident where a boy was tied up, pinned down and assaulted with a wooden dildo (nicknamed the "anaconda") made during a woodwork class (Wilson 2001). The homosocially constructed image of the 'muscular Christian' blurred into an almost unthinkable homosexual event; the school huddled defensively while the Headmaster (an old boy) blamed the media for sullying the school's prestigious reputation. Embarrassingly, 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 ("School's latest lesson" 2002).

When the accused boys made their public appearances in court, effectively 'turning it on' for the press, the media and public increased its suspicion of arrogance and predatory traditions that allegedly abound in all-boys' schools. The following description of their performance appeared on page one 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. (Videnieks 2001)

This visible masculine performance was probably not applauded by Trinity Grammar. In fact, the report focuses on the students' dramatic use of performance and also positions it as false, unsavoury and open to public

ridicule. How then might GPS students and teachers who actually 'dabble in the dark arts' of Drama be regarded?

Private 'drama faggot' performances

In 1998 I asked one Drama teacher at a GPS in Brisbane to sum up his experience as both the new Drama teacher and Boarding Master at his school:

> I walked into the place, with Grade Twelve 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 "Drrrrama Faggot!!" [he laughs] down the hallway, and I walked along and I went "Yeeeaaah, 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, interviewed 21 July 1998)

This small vignette reveals how these boys gave their teacher a masculinity test, which he fully passed because his answer went straight to their fears about whether he was a 'fag' in their 'muscular Christian' world. His wit cut to the slur and simultaneously confirmed the stereotype of the Drama teacher, yet also denied it any power to offend his own masculinity. He literally exposed the absurdity of hegemonic gender narratives and his 'playfulness' made a joke out of the daily interface between the school's compulsory rugby masculinity and the boys' "fear-of-the-fag" phenomena that co-exists in such homosocial institutions as boarding schools.

Mangan in *Staging Masculinities* (2003) discusses his own experiences as a boy doing Drama in a boys' school; he states that there was an "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); that doing Drama in all-boys' schools might involve risk, "since one was aligning oneself publicly with the ambiguous cultural signifiers of a questionable sexual identity" (4). The three male Drama teachers I observed were keenly aware of these perceptions of their subject, and instead of creating a siege mentality about Drama in their schools, they chose rather to playfully disrupt their schools' respective traditions by engaging the boys in reflecting upon their surroundings. What I observed was an *overwhelming* urge to 'play' from all

three who most often contradicted, by their own performances of masculinity, that expected by the school. One teacher (who identified as gay but not at the school) playfully performed the role of the meticulous 'straight man' who wore what he called the GPS uniform: chambray shirt, 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 apologised 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 '[*His Name*] 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 a bit of that on board and gone with it. (Paul, interviewed 4 August 1998)

In creating this mythological persona as a repeatable performance (letting the false blur into the actual), Paul contested the school's desire to privilege "serious, outstanding" professionals on staff, which is how the Headmaster first introduced Paul to the students on assembly. From interviews with Paul, his playfulness was seen as a deliberate critique or a 'queering' of the expectations of the GPS. The other two teachers, Jay and Fraser, identified themselves as straight and often 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 almost satirical as they attempted to demystify the authoritarian singularity of a sports-masculinity:

> It's a joke between Fraser 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 realise 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, interviewed 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 these male Drama teachers often had a student-driven aura of mystery and mythology that surrounds them (the 'is he?' or 'isn't he?' phenomenon). Mangan suggests this harks back to a centuries-old Puritan suspicion that "doing all this showing-off on stage" is not only a "symptom but also a cause of an imperfectly achieved masculinity" (2003: 4). Each of the male Drama teachers I interviewed understood the inherent confusion they caused by being a male teacher in a female dominated subject such as Drama, and this not only made them a novelty to the boys they taught, but also to their educational field:

> I've been constructed and taught by female Drama teachers, because I've never had a male Drama teacher in my life. Female Drama teachers, female Drama lecturers—I've never come across a male teacher—ever [...] Teaching is such a female thing in—and men, boys have told me "are you going to get married and have a family? Are you in the right job to do that? Surely you'd be better off to marry a teacher than *to be* a teacher?" (Paul, interviewed 4 August 1998)

Indeed, the playful multiple performances of masculinity undertaken by the teachers suggest deliberate transgression across masculinities; what Christopher McLean calls "splitting" (1995: 296). He states that this multiple performance of several masculinities, and the tensions and contradictions inherent in these actions, are really the hallmarks of masculinity. However,

they take place mainly in the Drama classroom which is a private space for exploration that might not ever be manifested publicly. This invisibility or hiddenness about Drama and its actions increases Drama's position as false and untrue inside the GPS masculine fortress. How then can this playfulness impact upon the education of boys doing Drama?

Body-reflexive practice

Frosh, Phoenix and Pattman's *Young Masculinities* states that while boys' accounts of their actions in a context give "access to performance", they are generally unable to interpret these performances as their daily practice of masculinities is "perhaps only partially conscious" (2002: 51). What I observed was the Drama teachers encouraging boys to be self reflexive in their school context; pointing out the myths of the hegemony and playing within its margins. Connell states that body-reflexive behaviours provide for boys and staff to simultaneously experience themselves in and as their bodies, being "both objects and agents" of gender practice (Connell, 1995: 61). Such behaviours could provide fertile ground for transgressions that may well contest the "docile" bodies that the school attempts to publicly produce (Swain 2005: 224, quoting Foucault). This reflexivity also becomes a source of great humour (224). The 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'—which the *Macquarie Dictionary* defines as an exaggerated behaviour, "often amusing and effeminate in style" (1997: 318)—and get away with it.

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

PAUL: 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. (Interview, 4 August 1998)

In desiring to make his students aware of the constructed adult-male constraints that monitored them in the school, Paul opted to hit right at the core of 'camp' behaviour and show them that the perceived taboo of playing in the margins of hegemonic masculinity is actually good, irreverential and fun. The teachers' playfulness 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 the epigraph to this chapter). The students consistently described their Drama teachers as approachable and they enjoyed suspecting that their teachers were lampooning the compulsory masculine codes within the institution:

> Drama teachers treat you more as a friend than as a student—I mean, Paul knows that we're seventeen year-old guys in an all-boys school—he give us that sort of freedom [...] Because he realises, "oh yeah, that's just an outlet for your hormones" [...] And that shows that he respects us—and in turn, I don't know, we respect him back. (Ben, interviewed 11 August 1998)

> That's what I also like—just an easy going teacher, y'know not such a stiff [...] Paul 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, interviewed 4 August 1998)

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 drag. One 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 school's annual 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 tantalising romp in the tradition of the 'drama faggot'. I believe it temporarily disrupted the dominant masculine structures, but actually ended up maintaining them (not unlike the high jinks displayed weekly on *The Footy Show*). The risk was altogether different when the male Drama teacher asked his Grade Eleven 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 Australia. During the rehearsals, Jay 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". (Interview, 21 July 1998)

Jay wanted to take the 'private' Drama gender-play out of the safety of the Drama classroom, and into the school's internally public gaze. 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 being just blokes pretending to be women for laughs. Both Jay and his student cast desired to contest the marginality of their subject and offered a different approach to the overall masculinised curriculum in the school. Jay's enthusiasm for raising the profile of his students' masculine reflexivity encouraged the following student to articulate similarities between their own and other marginalised masculine performances within his school:

> [There's a] 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 *Earnest* thing goes well—maybe it will elevate our status in drama. (Carl, interviewed 29 July 1998)

The boys' growing awareness of the significance of their physical and theatrical 'bodies' in the school was due to the body-reflexive practice demonstrated consistently by their male Drama teachers who made visible the underlying masculine hegemony of the school.

'Playing it straight' and 'camping it up'

Throughout my field notes and interview data, students consistently referred to their male Drama teachers as 'good blokes' (some female Drama teachers were also referred to as 'good blokes') and this consistently brought with it a desire by the student to share very private information with Drama staff. It occurred to me that the Drama teacher had a privileged position as a librarian of students' risk-stories that other teachers may have felt obliged to reveal ('dob') to the Headmaster or counsellors. The Drama teachers therefore 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:

FRASER: [...] 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 poofters in Grade Twelve used to look after the Principal's kids! They were all elected prefects by the students.

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

FRASER: Fuckin' oath—it's a complete myth—it's just another part of society. (Interview, 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 they contest the image that the school thinks it is projecting to the community. Although being 'camp' and playing in the margins of the 'Drama faggot' was tantalising for many boys, actually being truly outed as 'queer' was still something considered

dangerous and fearful. The gay students mentioned above hid their queerness from the greater public eye and chose to 'turn it on' and perform the normative masculinity of an outstanding 'muscular Christian', as:

> Boys who don't like other boys immediately say "oh, yeah, I don't like him—he's a faggot" [...] if you don't like someone—just call them 'gay' [...] If someone seriously accuses—it would be the worst thing that could happen in an all-boys school. I mean, who wants to be known as one of 'them'—I guess that's it—they're different. (Mitchell, interviewed 11 August 1998)

The tensions between 'playing it straight' ('muscular Christian') and 'camping it up' ('Drama faggot') is at the centre of body-reflexive practice, and this awareness was part of the invisible curriculum offered by these male Drama teachers. However, what was repeated as a 'safe' performance was the homogenous masculinity of the GPS tradition. The performances that contested and disrupted this 'muscular Christian' masculinity happened in the intimate settings of the Drama classroom and not necessarily on the public arena of the school. As much as Drama and the male Drama teacher offered alternatives to the normativity of the school, the instability and ambiguity of 'boy' gender resulted in a reluctance on the part of students to completely jettison their public image as GPS boys:

> I think Drama's nice, but I don't think Drama itself can sustain my intentions of life, and I think that if you have a degree in law or something like that—and you'd be a successful barrister or solicitor ... I think there's more in that than being qualified just in Drama. (Luke, interviewed 28 August 1998)

Connell states in *The Men and the Boys* that where the hegemony of a school is secure (presumably cradled in traditions repeated over a long period of time such as those in the GPS), "boys may learn to wield disciplinary power themselves" as part of their learning about masculine hierarchy (2000: 159). Words such as 'gay', 'poof' and 'faggot' are appropriated by students beyond their original meanings to describe behaviours that more aptly imply 'non-masculine' or effeminate behaviour rather than homosexuality (Swain 2005: 223):

> ALLEN: Oh yeah. Sometimes they say, "look at all the faggots in your [Drama] class", but that's true—

you've just got to put up with them—you don't have to be a faggot to do it [...]

INTERVIEWER: Do you mean 'faggot' in the true sense?

ALLEN: Oh not homosexuals—just y'know you're soft, geeky-type, hard-core, thinks-he's-Marilyn-Manson type. (Interview, 14 August 1998)

Conclusion

My position underpinning this analysis is that gender is a "complex and powerfully effective domain of social practice" that occurs over a lifetime (Connell 2000: 18). The class privilege inherent in the overarching hegemony of the GPS is a powerful anchor in that young masculinities desire the potential stability of a manhood forged in the 'muscular Christian' tradition. The playing in the margins of the 'Drama faggot' demonstrated by the male Drama teachers might have masked or contested this hegemony but this was a performance only and not genuinely subversive in its actions. The boys remain largely unaware of their complicity in maintaining the dominant hegemony; therefore, the visible public 'boy'-body and the privately playful Drama-body remain hegemonic in that they ultimately reassert the dominance of the school's authority over the body. However, the body-reflexive practice of negotiating masculinities between the expected (and upstanding) 'muscular Christian' performance and that of the (false) 'Drama faggot', mean that the Drama staff and boys' bodies were not always "docile"; they were both agents and objects of a transgression.

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