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A Profile of an 'A' List Homo –Habitus, Attitude, Boredom and The End of Enjoyment*

Un perfil de una lista Homo "A"- Habitus, Actitud, Aburrimiento y el fin del placer

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Abstract

Embodying signifiers of silent suffering, frequently envenomed by envy disguised as patronising pity, enraged as a result of admiration never returned, duped by their naïve belief in gay (capitalist) Eden, stress-ridden, moving through a psychosocial reality that almost never fails to disappoint, split between a deadly wish to speak in monotone with their larynxes, bodies and dicks, and a little flicker that tells them to resist this urge, too many homo men express, in the guise of the composite character I describe below, the emotional battleground created by the new bourgeoisie's deployment of the breathtakingly beautiful masculine homo male body as a sign/image vehicle in asserting its own social domination in a late capitalist society. The character I develop here can be read as a simulation and fabulation of the homonormative new bourgeois self as a syndrome with a range of affective crippling coming from the technologically assisted channelling of homosexual desire via the mass circulation of the imaginary of the homo new bourgeoisie.

Key words: Capitalist; Homonormative Bourgeoisie; Homosexuality.

Resumen

Encarnando significantes de un sufrimiento silencioso, con frecuencia aquejado por la envidia disfrazada de compasión condescendiente, enfurecido como resultado de la admiración nunca devuelta, engañado por su creencia ingenua Eden (capitalista) gay, invadido por el estrés, moviéndose a través de una realidad psicosocial que casi nunca falla en decepcionarlo, dividido entre el deseo mortal de hablar en voz monótona con la laringe, órganos y genitales, y una pequeña vacilación que les dice que resistan a ese impulso, demasiados hombres homo expresan, bajo la apariencia del personaje compuesto que describo a continuación, el emocional campo de batalla creado por el despliegue de la nueva burguesía del cuerpo homo masculino, impresionante y hermoso como un vehículo signo/imagen en la afirmación de su propia dominación social en una sociedad del capitalismo tardío. El personaje que desarrollo aquí puede ser leído como una simulación y fabulación de la nueva naturaleza burguesa homo-normativizada, como un síndrome con una gama de paralizadores afectivos procedentes de la canalización tecnológicamente asistida del deseo homosexual a través de la circulación masiva de lo imaginario del homo en la nueva burguesía.

Palabras clave: Capitalismo; Buguesía Homo-Normativizada; Homosexualidad.

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A Profile of an 'A' List Homo –Habitus, Attitude, Boredom and The End of Enjoyment

Reading instructions: on simulation and fabulation

I urge the reader to read the character described below not as a *true* representative of his class, ethnicity, sexuality, or gender, but as a *simulation* and *fabulation* of these corporate identities (Massumi 1993: 33-35). On one hand, he is a simulation, a copy without model, a species of one, a unique *monster* (Haraway 1991: 21-22), a singular molecular stitching of the molar social forces of the large aggregates to which he is statistically assigned (his class ethnicity, sexuality, and gender) (Deleuze and Guattari 1983). Singularization is a 'shared departure [a deviation]: members of a constituted collectivity taking leave of it and one another' (Massumi 1993: 34). On the other hand, since he *resembles* (*simulates*) many other men socially assigned to the same collectivities, he can be read as their *example*, a *fabulation*, but only in his *singularity*. *Fabulation* is the 'attraction of deviant singularities [that resemble or simulate each other] into a [social] constellation, the crystallization of a ...collectivity' (Massumi 1993: 34). *Simulation* and *fabulation* are words that express 'movements that run in different directions, but always together, like fibers in a weave' (Massumi 1993: 34). With this in mind, let me offer the story about:

PART I

TWENTY FOUR HOURS IN THE LIFE OF ANDREW

Sometime in the year 2015

Friday, 7-8.30 am

Andrew's tall and incredibly sculpted bronzed body was moving in furious fits and starts. His muscular left arm was holding very tightly onto the edge of a thick, luxurious mattress. The thousand threads per count Egyptian cotton sheets were soaked in his

sweat. He had a peculiar nightmare that clapsed him on a regular basis. In this particular dream he saw himself as a slimy, amorphous liquid punctured by white soundwaves pulling the water of his body in different directions. The piercing white rays carried voices, human and alien alike, whispering, screaming, pleading, sighing and commanding something in thousands of different languages. There was a rotating red flash rhythmically jumping out of the misty ocean of whiteness. Each reoccurring flash amplified both the volume and the luminosity of the voices. With each amplification, his liquefied flesh would grow further apart in various directions, creating increasingly bigger islands of vacuum. He found the threat to the contiguity of his watery body intolerable. At the first sign that a lake or a sea was about to secede from his body, Andrew would wake up shaking and feeling unbearably exhausted.

This time he was woken by the sound of his digital alarm clock sending emergency wake-up shockwaves through his body. It was 7:15 am. He was trying to find some imaginary pincers to lift his heavy eyelids. He sat on the edge of his ivory smooth leather Giorgetti bed, his body still reverberating with fresh memories of his nightmare. He finally managed to open his eyes and threw a reassuring glance over his ultramodern apartment. There was a pile of macroeconomic data on the state of the global economy, a crumpled Ermenegildo Zegna striped suit and an elegant Armani leather briefcase lying on a beautifully textured crimson leather ottoman. An empty bottle of Bombay Sapphire gin, some glasses and an ice container laid on a thin frosted glass top somehow perched on two exquisitely intertwined steel legs resembling the 's' letter.

Andrew got up and switched on his plasma television set mounted on the wall, and his wireless 23-inch screen iMac. His television was programmed to

flick to the Bloomberg channel. His Safari browser, fuelled by a high-speed Internet connection, took him straight to the Bloomberg website. Graphs showing all the major world stock market indices and annoying, relentlessly mobile and repetitive, newsbars with economic news were filling up both screens. As he walked to the kitchen to put his Alessi kettle on, a crew of Bloomberg TV women and men dressed in power suits were dissecting every aspect of the financial markets in Asia with an amazing speed. Shanghai, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Korea's KOSPI, the Nikkei, and Singapore all down. One bright spot Sydney's All Ords, up almost 1%. He also logged on his own *CommSec* page to check the value of his own investment portfolio. He glanced at the different graphs and saw that he was poorer for \$79,000 than yesterday.

A grimace signalling a major annoyance with his own inability to predict the schizo movements of the markets distorted the impeccably taut skin on his classically handsome face. For Andrew, who was earning big money from peddling investment advice to major investors, this was certainly not a good start to the day. Andrew walked to his Starck kitchen to get his bircher muesli he prepared last night from his red, slightly retro looking, Smeg fridge. He dropped a teaspoon of organic earl grey tea leaves in his glass and stainless steel Alessi plunger and poured some boiled water. He put his muesli bowl, the plunger, a mug, and his stylish iPhone 6 on a tray and took them to his beautiful mat white architect desk designed by Manfred Makedonski that served as his computer desk. As he was waiting for the tea leaves to infuse the hot water in plunger, he checked his message bank on his mobile.

There was a message from his secretary reminding him about a very important presentation he was supposed to give to a group of very powerful and rich clients that afternoon. Pangs of high-voltage anxiety shook his body. Although he had been working very long hours preparing this presentation in the last three months, he already felt very anxious that the excesses of last night, when he consumed copious amounts of alcohol, cocaine, crystal and Prozac in a blurred sex session with a male ghost, could, stupidly, jeopardise a multimillion secured account for his investment bank. His head felt heavy with limpid thoughts and shape shifting emotions succeeding each other with unbearable speed. Fear, anxiety, lust, greed, ambition, guilt, impatience, despondency, and overconfidence fleshed through his body. He got very cranky with the next eight messages from an assorted number of work colleagues,

and one-night stands he could barely remember. The ones he could recall left him entirely indifferent. He promptly deleted all of these messages without even listening to them to the end.

He dipped his spoon in the muesli, and with the other hand pressed on the email button on his computer keyboard. Again, there were a number of humdrum messages from colleagues, friends and his mother. He quickly glanced at the messages and yawned. In a separate window of his browser he logged on Manhunt, his preferred online sex market. In his inbox were eleven messages from eleven different people. He did not bother to read any messages on Manhunt unless he was satisfied with the physical attributes of the person who messaged him. 'A' grade lean muscularity, big cock macho confidence and white handsomeness were his basic criteria for communicating with anyone. He expertly clicked on the photo-hyperlinks in each message leading to the profiles of the people who messaged him. He browsed through the profiles' photos showing various degrees of uncovered male flesh to see whether the sender satisfied his basic criteria. Seven of them were promptly put on his *block* list. Not lean enough, chop; not handsome enough, chop; Asian, chop, too old, chop; too queeny, chop; too young, chop; no face pic, chop.

There was something ineffably exhilarating about zapping between different hyperlinks, channels, websites, and screens. Living in a state of permanent distractedness, Andrew's attention span, even at the best of times, which certainly was not this morning, consisted of short intervals between clicks on his computer keyboard. Logging on Manhunt, where he never browsed other guys' profiles and always waited for other people to contact him first, was for Andrew a brutal, yet 'harmless' breakfast ritual in exercising his social distinctions. Whoever did not make the cut, was chopped into digital pieces and sent into virtual oblivion.

The other three senders' profiles were good enough for one-time-only consumption. In his reply to these three, Andrew coldly indicated that he would be happy to play with them and that he would contact them when he found some free time. This was a convenient strategy on his part, assuring that he had a big enough pool of toy men to play with at any time. With his rugged handsomeness, incredibly lean muscular body and irresistibly sexy bourgeois arrogance, he did not have any problems keeping this pool big. He was constantly besieged by hot suitors online and almost everywhere else he moved in this town.

The last profile he browsed made his heart race with pounding excitement. As he zapped from one photo to another in this profile of a user named 'hotmotherfucker', a Colt type of a leather master unfolded in front of Andrew's eyes. He was greedily absorbing the images of this enormously muscular, and yet very lean, man with a classically handsome Anglo face pierced by cold deep blue eyes. There was something irrepressibly macho in the meanness that was emanating from the images. 'Hotmotherfucker' wore different various leather fetishes in each photo: chaps and military boots in one; leather speedos and boots in another; chaps, harness and boots in a third one; and leather chap shorts, boots and a stainless steel harness in a fourth one. The photos were edited in such a way that this man's body was pressed against a completely dark background, with a subtle golden light emerging from every muscle in his body. To Andrew, this man seemed to emerge as a fiery angel from the deepest recesses of the darkest parts of his own soul. Andrew's imagination was set ablaze and his anxiety about his afternoon presentation was harnessed by his excitement about the possible hook-up with this guy. For him this was once in a year find. He quickly responded to 'hotmotherfucker's' message, telling him that he was very keen to meet up with him very soon, and giving him all his phone number, which was connected to his WhatsApp account. It was so unusual for Andrew to show so much sexual enthusiasm and interest for anyone.

Andrew finished his muesli. With his body recharged and feeling sufficiently plugged into the global *cybercity*, he was ready to join his fellow citizens out there in the *real* world. He walked to a series of tall glass panels hugging two walls of his big open plan apartment. Behind the translucent white roller blinds he could see his harbour city as if on a canvas. He lifted the blinds and a strikingly beautiful vista entered his vision: a gloriously shining metropolis pierced with steel and glass skyscrapers, and colonial sandstone buildings enveloped by the azure mirror-surface of the Pacific. The merciless sun, hardly challenged by the punctured ozone layer, plunged the city in bubbly fractals of evaporated ocean water. Andrew quickly dressed up, shoved his MacBook and presentation documents in his Armani briefcase, and left for work.

8.31 am – 9.15 am

From the leather comfort of his Porsche Carrera

GT cabriolet, Andrew distractedly observed thousands of his glamorous fellow citizens enacting the spectacle of a global city life, busily affirming their social distinctions. Expensive sexy garments accentuating beautifully gym toned bodies, leather briefcases, fast and shiny cars, confident or anxious gaits, grudging nods of approval or admiration, studied indifference, and pushy purposefulness marked these people. Whenever he looked he saw opulent displays of stylishness and luxury. Immersed in their own image and the relentless pursuit of a flattering reflection of that image in whoever caught their gaze, the people of this city walked with great resolution down the path of fame, fortune, and fun. So many gorgeous people, as sexy and glamorous as anything you see on TV, lived here in their own live advertisements, soap operas and romantic comedies.

He learned quickly to switch off that TV channel that showed him the filth of reality. The waste of society, embodied in the drunken beggars, the drug hazed and the mentally deranged zombies inconveniently populating his route through the city, screamed for his attention and yet he pretended he saw nothing. Even if sometimes it was difficult for Andrew to ignore this societal garbage, since they were blocking his path, pulling his shirt or jumping on his car, he simply did not waste a second of his time on these people. He just did not want to be 'brought down'.

This sunny day, Andrew's gaze restlessly touched the handsome men in their flawlessly tailored suits, and unbuttoned their freshly pressed shirts in order to uncover the marbled muscularity of their flesh. Like a butterfly that could not decide which one among the many beautiful flowers of the same species it wanted to pollinate, his eyes devoured the rugged faces and muscular male bodies he already imagined in speedos, football shorts, gym gear, leather, military uniforms. A heady mix of excitement and sadness reverberated through him as he thought about how much male beauty there was and how little time there was to consume it all. He caught himself in the reflection that these beautiful male bodies offered him. His image got refracted through millions of flattering mirrors, dissolving it into an intoxicating nothingness.

A honk of an impatient driver behind him woke him up from his reverie and reminded him that he had an important briefing about the afternoon's big presentation to attend in twenty minutes. As he pressed on his accelerator, the burden of reality filled him with fury and anxiety.

9.16 am – 6 pm

The whole day at work was a big blur until the big presentation at 4 pm. Just minutes before the presentation, Andrew's head was still buzzing with an unbelievable headache despite the four Panadeine capsules he had since nine o'clock that morning. It took him absolutely heroic efforts to go ahead with the presentation, but he felt he had no other choice.

He, as usual, performed more than competently his task in front of the full executive board of his company and the big investors. As he was presenting an investment plan for the big investors, he noticed approving smiles and nods from everyone. As soon as he finished and sat down, there was a round of applause from everyone. The big investors were impressed with his plan and decided to invest with his bank. Apart from a slight relief that he was going to keep his job, get a promotion and a huge salary raise, he felt nothing. His work paid for aestheticizing his life. He wanted a life filled with all sorts of beauty, particularly male beauty: his and those of other men in whose presence he shone. As he let the people present at his presentation to ritualistically tap him on the shoulder with their 'good work, Andrew' lines, his body shivered with anticipation about enacting a full-blown submission scene with the Marlboro man look-alike master that he hooked-up with on Manhunt just few hours ago.

6.01 pm – 6.30 pm

There was a little cocktail party to celebrate the new deal. Andrew quickly gulped two glasses of Dom Perignon and excused himself. He felt an urgent need to escape this crowd. His boss gave him a very subtle disapproving look mixed with paternalistic admiration. Andrew took the lift down to the basement of his soul. It was very dark there. He intentionally left this basement area in darkness, so he did not have to see what was in it. Mess, order or nothing, he simply did not want to know. Even when he did try to put some light on, he seemed unable to find the light switch. All he could see down there was a few dimly lit neon signs that enjoined him to enlist all the chemical help he could muster in order to jolt his body out of the perennial pain it was in. He craved an injection of MDMA, the 'penicillin of the soul' (Pearce 2003: 5). He needed just a brief moment of loved up, empathogenic, sanity.

As he was navigating through the flooded with traffic streets of the city, Andrew confusedly reminisced about his own Jurassic days on the gay scene. His past inexperienced, lanky and definitely non-gym gay body felt so alive with fiery pleasure which he shared with so many boys and men who seemed so uncool to him now. The memory of his own body back then infused him with a sense of detached disbelief. 'What a ridiculous dork I was' - he thought. Having internalised a most rigidly demanding hypersmaculine set of images and roles, Andrew was now a big macho gay *porn star*, worshipped on every altar in every gay temple in the city. He gave his body only to other macho gay porn stars now. Andrew only got involved in elaborate sexual scenes and craved for intensity and a master who could devise new ways on inflicting pain on him. He took copious amounts of coke, speed, MDMA, MDA, and GHB pleading with his body to take more pain dished out by hard to find masters. He felt that he had reached a corporeal plateau of painful pleasure, and attributed this to his masters running out of imagination. He was getting really impatient with them. Maybe, there were only so many ways to be humiliated and dominated. Perhaps, it was time to switch roles, if he could only learn how to enjoy being a master. If only he could find THAT perfect master to push all the right buttons and more, so he can claim his body for sexual pleasure again.

6.31 pm – 11.45 pm

Andrew quickly shooed these thoughts, and the emotions attached to them, away. He was finally in his apartment, throwing his shirt, suit, ties, briefcase, socks and undies on the floor on his way to the bathroom. He had a quick shower and ordered a light pesto chicken burger to be delivered to him. As soon his meal arrived he sat on his computer desk and checked his Manhunt messages again. A guy he had sex with sometime ago reminded him that he was organising a private dance party for the Sydney 'A' gay list at *The Ivy* and that he would really like Andrew to come as his very special guest. Andrew was tempted to accept the invitation for a moment. However, he found the pretentiousness of the party organiser and his groupies, who imagined that Andrew was one of them, laughable. Andrew was always on the lookout for the *real thing*, for some *authentic* masculine beauty filling a setting that was not carefully stage managed by some *queens*, masquerading as men.

There was a message from 'hotmotherfucker' saying that he was going to *The Shift* for a while and asking Andrew whether he wanted to meet him there for a dance, and a long chem(ically assisted) session afterwards. Andrew unhesitatingly responded that he was going to meet 'hotmotherfucker' there and that he would love to have a long sex session with him. Volcanic anticipation tickled Andrew's body while he was putting on his faded Replay jeans, tight Emporio Armani white singlet that accentuated the sculpted beauty of his torso, and worn out French army boots. He rummaged through his little cabinet full of licit and illicit drugs. He had GPs, pharmacists and drug dealers besotted with his beauty and willing to provide him with the best both orthodox medical and underground pharmacology had to offer. He grabbed four ecstasies, two MDA capsules, and two Viagra capsules to assure that both he and 'hotmotherfucker' fucked for hours in heaven.

11.46 pm – 12.25 pm

He popped an ecstasy and an MDA capsule before he left his apartment. He decided to walk to *The Shift*. Half way there he was already all loved up and connected with the universe. He chatted to a few homeless people, gave them all some money, and even bought a burger for one from *Hungry Jack's*. He did not feel pity for these people, he *loved* them. For to feel pity is to express, no matter how one disguises this, one's superiority and good fortune over the one who is pitied, Andrew thought.

12.26 am – 3.30 am

He finally entered *The Shift* in a beautifully warm, almost magical, state of empathic and luminous sexiness. He radiated with effulgent beauty dispensing smiles to everyone, kissing surprised tricks on the cheek, allowing complete strangers to hug him, chatting away with people he would not look at all in his normal, not-euphoric, euthymic state (Pierce 2003: intro, 2), and generously tipping the bar staff. After forty minutes of social frolicking in the club, he found 'hotmotherfucker' in the middle of the dance floor. 'Hotmotherfucker' looked even more impressive in real life. Andrew was in complete awe at the sight of this man, and a certain insecurity and envy that he did not have the upper hand in the beauty

contest here quickly flickered through his body. However, he managed to very quickly bracket these emotions. Andrew gave 'hotmotherfucker' a big hug and a sloppy French kiss. 'Hotmotherfucker' was dismayed with this very public show of affection on Andrew's part, because he was not in the same headspace as Andrew, and was also very conscious of his public image as a dominant master. 'Hotmotherfucker' moved in a well rehearsed manner, careful not to betray too much interest in Andrew, his slave. Andrew cheerfully registered this, knowing well that none of these *motherfuckers* would bother with him unless he was of superb quality. 'Hotmotherfucker' wore a harness that looked really hot on his bulging and sculpted torso.

3.30-4 pm

Probably due to enzyme induction, Andrew had a very high tolerance to methamphetamines, which meant his loved up peaks lasted, at the best of times, measly 90 to 120 minutes. Multiple doses of methamphetamines taken in quick succession usually prolonged the peaks for another hour maximum. His three hours of magic were up. The veil of magic was lifted and Andrew suddenly felt claustrophobic and irritable. His body was invaded by some invisible insects of anxiety spearing his flesh with millions of pangs per second. He needed to leave the club immediately. As he was walking across the dance floor in order to get 'hotmotherfucker' he angrily pushed and shoved some of the same people he was smiling at, kissing and hugging only some moments ago. He found 'hotmotherfucker' and asked him if he was ready to come to his place. 'Hotmotherfucker' nodded yes and went to check a huge leather bag out.

4 am-7 am

As soon as they arrived at Andrew's place, 'hotmotherfucker' pulled a range of torture implements out of his bag, signalling the range of fantasies they were going to enact in Andrew's dungeon. This dungeon was set up in the second bedroom of Andrew's apartment. It was a very Spartan room, furnished just with a sling, sexy blue neon floor lamps, and walls adorned with big drawings of Tom of Finland in various poses. The two of them exchanged a few highly ritualised pleasantries while offering each other a

taste from the medley of chemical sex helpers they both brought here. Andrew popped his Viagra tablet, had quite a few puffs from his pipe filled with crystal meth and had 2.5 ml of strong GHB diluted in a glass of Fanta.

He felt the relaxing warmth of the GHB penetrating his whole body. He was now ready to submit himself, surrendering the imperative burden of his class, ordering him to be in charge of everything, at the feet of his master. Without a further ado, 'hotmotherfucker' plonked him on the sling and tied him up around his ankles and wrists. He skilfully gagged Andrew, flogged him, pulled his nipples with steel pincers, fist fucked him, controlled his breathing, slapped him, pissed on him, kicked him with his boots, burned him with wax, spitted on him, dragged him with a dog chain attached to Andrew's dog collar wrapped around his neck, mummified him. As 'hotmotherfucker' was pushing a police truncheon up his arse, a thundering yawn escaped Andrew's mouth. His whole body was colluding against his will to say it was bored. His master recoiled in horror and anger.

'Hotmotherfucker' quickly packed his stuff while Andrew was trying to disentangle himself from a myriad of contraptions. The enraged, now ex-master, slammed the door of Andrew's apartment as he left. The spell was broken yet again. Andrew lay muted in the puddle of his ex-master's piss, feeling nothing and dissolving in his imagination into a watery nebula. He was too tired to fight the thought. He fell asleep on the floor of his dungeon, again being visited by his regular nightmare. It did not wake him up this time. Beauty could not haunt him here. For the first time the nightmarish dissolution of his body felt as a relief.

PART II

WHO/WHAT IS ANDREW?

The Attitude personified by Andrew

Andrew is a composite character sewn together from researched and lived, narrative and performative, 'scraps, rags and patches' (Bhabha, 1993: 297) of postindustrial daily homonormative male life in Sydney (Santana & Richters, 1998; Slavin *et al.*, 1998; Lambevski *et al.*, 2000). Lisa Duggan has theorised homonormativity as a new neoliberal sexual politics that relies on 'the possibility of a demobilized gay constituency and a privatized, depoliticized gay culture anchored in domesticity and consumption' (Duggan, 2002: 179). Homonormativity as a discourse and

praxis is complicit with reinforcing various forms of privilege based on sex, class, ethnicity/race, religion, and (dis)ability (Puar, 2007). Andrew is the arbitrary name I give to a peculiar set of gay homonormative cultural representations and performances of an attitude that dominates many aspects of postindustrial gay sociality revolving around the aestheticization of life and commodified sexual pleasure as it is lived in Sydney. The story is a snapshot of some of the affective/ed dispositions associated in Sydney gay narratives with the very lean muscular and masculine homonormative male body (Santana & Richters, 1998; Slavin *et al.*, 1998; Lambevski *et al.*, 2000).

Andrew is the *fabulated* and *simulated* personification of this attitude, a 'fluctuating ensemble of positive and negative affects' that tends to carry 'certain very general ideas about the way [both] the [gay and wider] world[s] work' (Gibbs, 2001: 5). I hope the story provides sufficient resolution to some of the very general ideas that percolate in this attitude. These ideas then translate into actions and practices that in turn reinforce both the affects and the ideas that they carry with them. Together, these ideas, affects and practices form a set of dispositions, through which men who embody this attitude, like *Andrew*, perceive themselves and others, and act on themselves and others (Connell, 1995: 123). A very few gay men proudly declare or display this attitude, while most, rhetorically at least, announce, solemnly again, they do not have it (Santana & Richters, 1998; Slavin *et al.*, 1998; Lambevski *et al.*, 2000). I will argue that the arrogant deployment or insistent disavowal of this attitude hints to a game of social distinctions, and an emotional class struggle, played out at the intersection of economic, historical, political and technological forces defining late capitalist society.

Considering the enormous body of literature on what the contemporary Western hypermasculine muscular male body represents (see bibliography), here I want to focus on some of the less observed molecular expressions/symptoms of, and connections between, the molar socioeconomic forces marking late capitalist society as they relate to the homonormative, commodified, hypermasculine muscular male body.

I will initially examine this body as a form of capital that is used to various effects in a homonormative game of social distinctions. Then I will turn my attention to exploring the attitude emanating from, or associated with, this body as an objective product of the objective social destiny of the class it best represents – the *new bourgeoisie*. I will argue that the

historical rise of this class and its ethos coincide with the transition of economic production of durables to economy of intangibles in the developed capitalist world in the last twenty to thirty years. In the end I will examine some bodily/affective afflictions, as already indicated in the last part of the story, as ironic molecular symptoms of the social (molar) success of Andrew's class.

The sexual capital of the homo new bourgeoisie

The hypermasculine homonormative male body, like the clothes and the ultramodern apartment furnished with beautifully designed and manufactured furniture, appliances and objects, are signs possessed by Andrew that site him in the hierarchy of social classes (Boltanski, 1971; Guttman, 1996: 122). His body's hard muscled texture, its imposing size and tallness, its swift confident gait, are 'all signs of his [higher] status, perhaps the most intimate and, therefore, the most important of all' (Boltanski, 1971: 232). As a fabulated lived gay male body, embedded in culture and history, *Andrew* moves in a structured social space of power relations among economic, political, social, and cultural agents involved in defining the rules according to which various forms of capital marking his (class) status can be accumulated, appropriated and distributed (Bourdieu, 1984).

Within this structured space *Andrew* has accumulated a lot of (educational, cultural and economic) capital. As a winner in the genetic lottery, he has been able to add enormous homo(normative) sexual capital to his portfolio. Although firmly dependent on genetic luck, homo(normative) sexual capital is also a type of embodied knowledge that is accumulated through informal mechanisms of social learning which confers a special status, sexual desirability, to its owner. The butch sexual capital that Andrew owns is a combination of genetic luck like his rugged handsomeness and mesomorphic body, hard work involved in turning this body into an organic sculpture of male muscularity, and a studied manipulation of signs of masculinity like 'assorted body deportments, clothing customs, hair styles, and complex behaviours such as being' (Pronger, 1990: 53) a leather master or butch submissive.

Homo(normative) capital, like any other form of capital, is a particular system of distinctions, or hierarchy, of sexual desirabilities which correspond to other systems of social hierarchy. It could be used in

homo sex and gay sociality in general to reinforce, reverse or modulate the power effects of class as a social 'structure of relations between all the pertinent properties [like education, income, professional occupation, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, age] which gives its specific value to each of them and to the effects they exert on [social] practices' (Bourdieu, 1984: 106). Andrew's butchness is representative of the enduring, and problematic, appropriation of working class masculinity by homo *new bourgeois* men in big Western cities (Pronger, 1990; Levine, 1998; Connell, 1995: 156). When combined with lean muscularity, this butch rhetoric (Levine, 1998) is used to distinguish this group of men, as the only 'really hot men', from the unsexy *queens* populating their own and, especially, the other classes.

Specific communities produce specific kinds of body-grouping, which in turn produce quite specific 'ways of being' (Gatens, 1996: 102). The globalised Western homonormative male community, both in its real and imagined aspects (Anderson, 1991), groups most intensely around 'images, symbols, metaphors and representations' (Gatens, 1996: VIII) of the lean muscular masculine male body which, deep down, inform the desires and the (day)dream lives of most Western homos (Bordo, 1997, Gutmann, 1996, Connell, 1995: 157, Santana and Richters, 1998; Lambevski *et al.*, 2000; Lambevski, 2001: 37-38). This imaginary homonormative body, that now fuels the actions, powers, pleasures and possibilities of so many actual homo bodies, is a historical sedimentation of the ability of the homo new bourgeoisie to use its economic, cultural, technological and political resources in order to impose on homos from other classes its own, most flattering, image of the white (Anglo-Euro), upper middle-class, butched up lean muscular and masculine body as the most desirable homo body (Levine, 1998).

The imaginary spectre of this homo body permeates almost all aspects of *Andrew's* habitus, which in turn allows him to inhabit, read, appropriate and keep active all the gay social institutions and practices in which he is involved. This habitus provides a generative scheme within which *Andrew* engages with other homo men, whether for sex or other practices (Bourdieu, 1993). His incredibly lean muscular body is the 'most indisputable materialization' of the tastes of his class (Bourdieu, 1984: 190, Boltanski, 1971). This taste is an 'incorporated principle of classification which governs all forms of incorporation, choosing and modifying everything that the body ingests and

digests and assimilates, physiologically and psychologically' (Bourdieu, 1984: 190). The sculpted lean muscularity of his body, the strength, agility and flexibility that are associated with it, the efficient metabolic rates that it manifests, are all signs of the 'superiority' of his class and the ethos it espouses (Bourdieu, 1984: 153-157; Schulze, 1997; Bordo, 1997; Parsi, 1997; Heywood, 1997, Bolin, 1997).

Thus, he only desires other male members of his class or male members of the most natural ally of his own class – the *new petite bourgeoisie*. From self-employed fitness trainers and yoga instructors to vendors of nutraceuticals, this class consists of all those who 'now make a profession of supplying the means of bridging the gap between "is" and "ought" in the realm of the body' (Bourdieu, 1984: 153). His sexual desire is borne out of the strategic alliance between this class and his own new bourgeoisie of the gym which together collude in producing an endless market for products that require 'new [improved] uses of the body' (Bourdieu, 1984: 153). *Andrew's* attitude as exemplified by his appropriation of *Manhunt* as online service facilitating new forms of gay sociality (Lumby, 1997) is just a molecular expression of the molar forces involved in the larger social project/destiny of his class and its ally.

Who is the new bourgeois?

As I indicated earlier, *Andrew* is a member of the new bourgeoisie (Bourdieu, 1984: 31, 153), the social class consisting of various professionals in charge of the ruthless reorganisation of late capitalism in the centre of the global capitalist economy (Massumi, 1993: 15; Baudrillard, 1988; Kellner, 1994; Negri, 1988). Senior and junior finance, media, advertising, market research, marketing, and public relations executives, business and finance analysts, top software and hardware developers, telecommunications executives, entrepreneurial scientists, a veritable motley crew of celebrities and media personalities (from music, film and TV stars to top professional, mostly male, athletes) (Guttmann, 1996), business administrators, trend setters and image makers of all sorts and descriptions are some of the major professions populating the dominant fraction of this class (Bourdieu, 1984). Deeply immersed in contemporary knowledges, mentalities and practices of American big business (Bourdieu, 1984: 153; McColl-Kennedy and Kiel, 2000; Stevenson 2002; Mintzberg and Quinn,

1996; Meredith and Mantel, 2000; Grant, 2002; Peters, 1988; Besanko *et al.*, 2000), this is the class that has spearheaded, and benefited the most from, the shift in the centre of the global capitalist system from production of durables to an economy of intangibles: information, communication, services, and images (Massumi, 1993: 15; Baudrillard, 1988; Kellner, 1994; Negri, 1988). The habitus of this class, 'the generative principle of objectively classifiable judgements and the system of classification of [social] practices' (Bourdieu, 1984: 170), refers to all the internalised cultural attributes, turned into personal dispositions and particular corporeal morphologies, needed to unapologetically carry out the late capitalist project of displacement of the work force, fluidification of both the work force and capital, and intensification of labour in the centre of the capitalist economy (Massumi, 1993: 15, Kellner, 1994; Negri, 1988 and 1992).

The social destiny of the new bourgeoisie

Energetic agility, flexibility, ruthlessness, speed, swiftness, confidence sometimes bordering on pathological arrogance (let us not forget *American Psycho's* Patrick Bateman here) (Ellis, 1991), that frequently melts into unbearable intense daily narcissistic scrutiny of oneself, incredible ambitiousness and greed for success, intensified productivity and efficiency, intelligence focused on problem solving and product development, including the production of new consumer subjectivities, and supercompetitiveness are some of the main sociocultural properties/values of the habitus of this class which it imposes, through defining the rules of access to the wage relation, as economic 'necessities' onto other classes. The lean muscular and masculine male body is the most indisputable sign of these properties, which are turned into a set of personal attributes by which the new bourgeois judges oneself and others. The internalisation of these sociocultural properties is fundamental for one's survival in a job market characterised by perennial precariousness (Massumi, 1993: 16; Negri, 1988 and 1992). Although the new bourgeoisie as a *class* is incomparably better prepared than any other class to thrive in a labour market defined by its own values, this does not mean that its members are spared, despite the appearance of exultant confidence that this class exudes, from the fear effects (Massumi, 1993, ed.) that this ever precarious access to the wage relations produces.

The professional job market in the centre of the capitalist world is characterized by highly casualised, deregulated, non-unionised, unprotected by seniority systems, collective bargaining and affirmative action, jobs (Massumi, 1993: 16; Negri, 1988 and 1992). One's ability to successfully compete for access to the wage relation requires that one embarks on a never ending program of image building and self-improvement. The dominated fractions of the new bourgeoisie (mostly business academics and educators) and the new petite bourgeoisie step in here to provide the services needed for one's self-improvement and image building: from various forms of fitness practices and yoga, to executive coaching, MBAs, and endless courses offered to improve one's business and administrative skills. One literally buys new selves, since one has to pay hefty amounts of money for these self-improvement courses, in order to stay supercompetitive. Leisure or reproductive time becomes productive time (Massumi, 1993: 17). The wage and commodity relation completely converge here. Every moment one spends on making oneself 'the best one can be' means investing in one's future ability to stay employed (Massumi, 1993: 17). The new bourgeoisie induces fear in itself and other classes, so by selling an ever increasing range of products to alleviate this fear it extracts more profit for itself (Massumi, ed., 1993). This is a class that thrives on insecurity, which it elevates to a main principle of capital expansion.

Since leisure time and production time completely converge here, the new bourgeois attributes required to compete in the new economy of intangibles are automatically and unconsciously transposed in multitude of ways in every aspect of new bourgeois life. Andrew's impatience with, indifference to, and contempt for *losers*, whether they are underclass, unemployed and unemployable people with psychosocial dysfunctions that cross his path, or the less than super-hot, read supercompetitive, homo 'porn stars' trying to establish communication with him for sex or other things, is a subjective, molecular, expression of the objective, molar, economic destiny that his class has set for itself. This objective class destiny is to remind others that they are not good enough, that they need to work much harder, spend much more on improving themselves if they want access to a really *hot* jobs, *hot* male bodies and *hot* hypermasculine homo times.

Andrew has a certain choice in modulating this attitude based on psychological traits and personality

scripts (Tomkins, 1995) independent of the generative schemes of his class habitus, turning it down or up as the occasion requires, or temporarily switching it off under the influence of body/mind altering substances, yet his personal attitudinal trajectory is very much within the gravitational sphere of his class.

Lifestyle, transitive power, boredom and the end of homosexual enjoyment

Andrew's lifestyle, a systematic product of his habitus in which every object and practice is assigned a value in a sign system of social distinctions that qualifies him as a super-hot 'winner' (Bourdieu, 1984: 172), constantly vacillates between extreme industriousness and hedonism. His motto is the clichéd 'work hard, play hard'. He is immersed in endless consumption and abandonment of highly valued objects, including other super-hot male bodies. Content with the sign/image values attached to these objects and male bodies, and the narcissistic kick he gets out of the act of consumption of these objects (Baudrillard, 1988; Kellner, 1994; Massumi, 1993: 15) this is an aloof man that dispenses with any need to represent his experience (Kristeva, 1995: 7). Encouraged by the national (Australian) inflections of the myth of masculinity, he shuns introspection as boring and frivolous (Webb, 1993; Nicoll, 1997). Yet, he pays a very heavy price for this.

His body is littered with somatic symptoms. He has regular headaches, is almost always cranky, and has that nervous gait of someone who is desperately trying to lower the voltage of anxiety flowing through his body. Engulfed by a commoditised homonormative Eros (D'Emilio, 1993), he experiences his sexual encounters with other men as *disaffected/disembodied sex* (Santana and Richters, 1998; Lambevski *et al.*, 2000). In this context, *Andrew* can be read as a fabulation of the homo new bourgeois *self as a syndrome* (Massumi, 1993) with a range of affective crippling coming from the technologically assisted channelling of his desire *via* the mass circulation of the homo imaginary of his class.

There is something in the assembly of his desiring/pleasure-machine (Deleuze and Guattari 1983) that fails to charge his body with primary positive affects (like interest or excitement) (Tomkins, 1995), when he moves to consuming an embodied erotic/ized image, despite the fact that his sex partners possess the hottest signs of homo (normative)

desirability. As Tomkins argues, excitement, as a primary affect, 'lends its magic' to all drive systems, including the sex drive (1995: 76). This affect is crucial as a support to all pleasurable (and wakeful) sensory input, memory, thought, image and action (Tomkins, 1995: 76).

It is the craving for experiencing this affect on an ongoing basis that pushes many humans to constantly seek new people, objects, textures, smells, sounds, landscapes, substances, foods, practices and experiences. When someone like Andrew fails to sustain the excitement from siting 'hotmotherfucker', for the first time, as an image on the internet to excitement at corporeally siting/touching/feeling him, again for the first time, one is on the threshold of making many corporeally social (and pleasurable) aspects of homosexuality superfluous.

Andrew's body as an organic machine is being plugged into a 'technologically assisted channelling' (Massumi, 2002: 85-6) of the homonormative Imaginary of his class. Communicational technologies virtualise the imaginary hot homonormative body of his class and pass it on as a 'conveyor of forces of emergence', as 'vehicles of existential potentialization [and containment] and transfer' (Massumi, 2002: 37). The network of these technologies connects, interlinks, relates bodies to images/coding/codification (Massumi, 2002: 37). The significance of the words and images in this homonormative Imaginary, as they are transmitted by these computer-assisted technologies of transitive interconnection, are only important as catalysts or triggers of ineffable desiring/yearning.

There is something within these images that has a tendency to escape both corporeal embodiment and full signification by a subject swimming in them (Lyotard, 1971, Metz, 1982, Barthes, 1977 and 1993). It is this thing that escapes from the image that, paradoxically, causes this unquenchable desire to embody, possess or consume something in the image that *is not really in it* (Lacan, 1992; Grigg, 1991; Lambevski, 2001). The inundatory flow of images through the technologies of transitive interconnection, and the experiences and desire effects they create through *zapping*, *flicking through*, and *surfing*, only further powerfully facilitate this escape, and thus further amplify the yearning produced by it (Massumi, 2002: 85-90). Having understood the nature of images, and the technologies for their speedy and efficient mass circulation (Barthes, 1993; Virilio, 1999), as vehicles for its own profit expansion, the new bourgeoisie has turned this *transitive* mode of power,

which induces people to buy *themselves* and *others* in order to satisfy this unsatisfiable yearning (Massumi, ed., 1993), into a dominant mode of power in the postindustrial (postmodern) world (Massumi, 2002: 86).

Immersed in this technologically assisted channelling of the homonormative Imaginary of his class (Levine, 1998), Andrew desires the male body only as a metaphor for the hottest attributes of his class (Lambevski, 2001; Gatens, 1996: 102), an imaginary spectre which haunts him with its perfect fleshlessness. Having given an almost unchecked reign to a scopic drive in which he can experience sexual desire only visually, he is nothing but a blurred gaze suspended in a state of subjective groundlessness (Kristeva, 1995: 7; Massumi, 1993), as already alluded to in the nightmarish world of his dreams.

Andrew's relentless pursuit for a *real hot leather master* and his frequent recreational drug taking are symptoms of an ultimately futile attempt to recover some ground for orgasmic joy within a society dominated by the ethos and technology of power of his class. This is a society that is increasingly abandoning the public space of living, experienced in the real city and with real people, for the public image of life, experienced in the tele/cybercity and with tele/cyber/virtual people (Virilio, 1999). With the incessant and accelerated cultural homonormative circulation and reinforcement of a very basic and fixed set of images of gay male beauty, homos (and others too) are finally beginning to acutely feel the effects of the uncoupling of affect and sexuality (Kristeva, 1995: 4-8). Gay male beauty and sex appeal, whether butch or otherwise, have been rendered almost meaningless, since the mass mediated homonormative notions of gay male beauty and sex appeal do not really have a psychic/bodily support in actual bodily experiences. Andrew's words, body practices and life have a meaning only by virtue of their connection to affect. The hypermasculine homo imaginary of his class has flattened his psycho-erotic space, making him live his erotic life *somewhere else*: on the TV, film, computer screen, on the pages of glossy gay magazines.

Andrew's boredom in the face of his corporeal sexual exchanges with 'hotmotherfucker' also signals a new phenomenon accompanying the rise of the new bourgeoisie: the disappearance of (sexual) enjoyment as an end (Deleuze and Guattari, 1983: 254). The sole end of the new bourgeoisie is the accumulation of abstract wealth, including all forms of cultural and sexual capital, and 'its realization in forms other

than consumption' (Deleuze and Guattari 1983: 254). With the effective demolishing of the barrier between the antiproduction/leisure and production spheres, the new bourgeoisie as the newest *master* class 'institutes an unrivalled slavery, an unprecedented subjugation' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1983: 254) to the social machine assembled by it and charged by its *transitive* power.

Andrew as a fabulated homo new bourgeois 'sets the example, he absorbs surplus value [from being in transit (ive communication) with hottest homo male members of his class and its ally] for ends, taken as a whole, have nothing to do with his own [sexual] enjoyment' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1983: 254). Instead of a lively body captured by gay Eros that uses the texts/myths of power – gender, class,

and race – to produce an intense pleasure, there is Andrew's body suspended in a state of melancholic schizokinesis, split between the imaginary compendium of his S/M erotic objects and the refusal of his body to validate them with affect. He is the 'first servant of the ravenous machine' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1983: 254) charged by *transitive* power, the monster of capital expansion in late capitalist societies. 'Only as personified [cultural, financial and sexual] capital is the [homo new bourgeois] capitalist respectable' (Deleuze and Guattari 1983: 254) and desirable. Andrew's sexuality is nothing but an effect of the social mechanism instituted by his class, of 'which he is but one of the wheels' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1983: 254). *Image is Everything*.

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