

# The Closet Remediated: Inside Lindsay Lohan

MELISSA JANE HARDIE

When he announced the winner of the Best DJ category at the *Paper* Nightlife Awards in 2008, Michael Musto 'noted that Samantha Ronson could not attend as "she was busy inside Lindsay Lohan and that I'm happy if she's happy"' (Lewis). *Village Voice* gossip columnist and sub-Proustian chronicler of the intersection of celebrity and GLBT communities, Musto intensifies the fact of Ronson's absence by deploying a figure for the closet. His comment simultaneously outs and closets Ronson, figuring Lindsay Lohan's body as a carceral space of action and distraction: 'busy inside' her celebrity girlfriend, Ronson misses the insider event, confirming Musto's status as blasé commentator, the one who knows: 'I'm happy if she's happy'.

In its metaphorical perversity and perverse literal meaning, Musto's comment alerts us to the remediation of the gossip columnist as award-show announcer, a transformation of the all-knowing insider into celebrity explicator. Its contours offer an allegory for the fate of the closet in the last ten years. Whereas the old school gossip columnist works in the semi-slow medium of print, here the act of announcement takes place in an auditorium venue that imputes 'real time' access, acquaintance and substitution to mediated events: MC stands to columnist as twitter stands to column. Gossip or insider knowledge, as figured by the closet of print media is constitutively past tense: it is knowledge, typically narrational knowledge, of something able to be known. While gossip or insider narration may concern the ongoing experience or reputation of its subject, it imputes in the person of the gossiper a state of knowing prior to the moment of its enunciation. In this paper I consider how this closet epistemology, nostalgically tethered to the past and its modes of culture consumption, is remediated into the present tense by the emergence of new social media.

The closet epistemologies Sedgwick identified in 1990 have not simply evaporated. Indeed, in her Preface (written in 2007) to the 2008 reprint of *Epistemology of the Closet*, Sedgwick not only contextualises her book in terms of the socio-political preoccupations of the 1980s, but also addresses the question of writing an historical moment that is necessarily 'fleeting'. Sedgwick writes that one of the questions *Epistemology of the Closet* (1990) asked is how it is that we 'can wrap our minds properly around the mix of immemorial, seemingly fixed, discourses of sexuality and, at the same time, around discourses that may be much more recent, ephemeral, contingent' ('Preface' xiv). A discursive

sexuality that exists in the *now*, rather than the *then* of a distant history—one that lends itself to the fixity of memorialisation—is found in *Tendencies* (1993), published soon after *Epistemology*. A collection of essays that includes a performance piece (with Michael Moon) about the outrageous 1970s and 80s film and video performances of transvestite celebrity Divine, *Tendencies* revisits the earlier book's defining argument about how homo/heterosexual definition structures modern systems of knowledge. While, in the Foreword to *Tendencies*, Sedgwick re-states *Epistemology*'s argument that 'gender inversion' and 'gender separatism' are the dominant tropes through which knowledge of sexual difference is metaphorised, she also writes that:

I have no use at all for the trope of homosexuality-as-gender inversion, with its heterosexist presumption that *only* a self that is somehow 'really a man' could be attracted to a woman, or vice versa. Yet the T-shirted carnival of cross-reference at last summer's pride parade also evokes a history of moments to which the gender separatist models just won't answer. (*Tendencies* xiii)

Sedgwick's revisiting of *Epistemology*'s argument in *Tendencies* is notable for the way it both observes and participates in the former book's defining argument. Sedgwick's disavowal of any personal identification with the argument that homosexuality constitutes gender inversion is made through a sustained use of first person singular, as she argues that she would 'find it mutilating and disingenuous to disallow a grammatical form that marks the site of such dense, accessible effects of knowledge, history, revulsion, authority, and pleasure' (xiv). Grammatically, and generically, first person, in the form of autobiography and allied genres, sustains the book's elaboration of the arguments of its predecessor in more experiential terms, more easily understood to address a present moment than the historicizing analyses of *Epistemology*. Though the 'T-shirted carnival of cross-reference' can be dated to last summer, it remains presently accessible to evoke 'a history of moments'. While *Epistemology* at several crucial points invokes the first person singular to orient its readings, *Tendencies* privileges such individuating locutions and essays in 'intimate adhesion' (xiv) to its predecessor. It's entirely consonant with this modulation that in *Tendencies*' performance piece, 'Divinity', Sedgwick and Michael Moon discuss the hyperbolic drag performance as a transgression of effete and effeminate stereotypes of male homosexuality; the performative nature of this discussion between the two illuminates an equivocal relation to and adjudication of both minoritizing and universalizing discourses. Similarly Sedgwick's declaration of her own desire, in 'White Glasses', to sport her friend Michael Lynch's frames closes an anecdote that dwells in the past as a place from which to escape a deadening future. Sedgwick recounts her secret forecast that 'white glasses' would become objects of desire among gay men and the 'fashion-conscious' before declaring

‘My instant resolve: I want white glasses first’ (253). This resolution, ostensibly oriented as a desire to be ahead of the pack, installs a desire to insert herself as a kind of circuit-breaker into the repetitions and imitations that effect the transformation of ‘white glasses’ into a trope for the closet epistemology that both conceals and exposes the question of homosexuality as an absent truth. In this case, such a rupture is provided by gender inversion precisely as gender inversion remains what allies his glasses to her. The closet continues to signify, even as it is elaborately exposed. Resolve, however, formed in an ‘instant’, can remedy its defeating logic.

Following Sedgwick, my argument here is neither that the ‘closet’ as a figure has disappeared, nor that either Samantha Ronson or Lindsay Lohan has ‘come out’. Nor am I making a claim about the lived experience of closeting. Rather, this essay engages with the relevance of closet epistemologies during a time in which new social media are shaping knowledge of sexuality and, in this case, through public understandings of the spectacle of the ‘private’ lives of celebrities. Public speech about the closet has come to a critical impasse. Recent scholarly debate about the closet, in the context of new social media, would suggest that a perceptual shift has taken place since the early 90s that, in turn, has had an impact on how both queer identities and queer spaces signify. For instance, when Hank Bromley looks at the prominence of ‘gender bending’ (86) in cyberspace he argues that the online environment facilitates constructivist notions of identity to suggest its limitations as well as its liberatory potential. Randal Woodland argues that the proliferation of cyberspace communities has enabled the movement of queer identities from the boundary to the centre, suggesting they can be understood to build ‘third spaces’ that combine ‘connected sociality of public space with the anonymity of the closet’ (418). Such a queering of the internet as a productively closeted space rehearses those dominant tropes Sedgwick identifies in both *Epistemology* and *Tendencies* as structuring a closet epistemology. Does contemporary screen culture, as Sue-Ellen Case predicted, make accessible a space that creates new forms of identification and desire and in a way that contrasts with earlier (cinematic) models?

In the context of this remediated technological environment, Musto’s two parallel phrases, ‘she was busy inside Lindsay Lohan’ and ‘I’m happy if she’s happy’—with their drift in tense, their floating subject, their impossible conjunction as a piece of direct speech—can be thought of as representing two tenses for the closet. In the first section of this essay, ‘She was busy inside Lindsay Lohan’, Musto’s past-tense formulation operates as a sign of the prevalence of a cinematic model for the ongoing operation of closet epistemologies. In a contemporary context, where new social media platforms rival the power of cinematic images, this first part of my argument considers the continued reliance on such images and how they service a closeting rhetoric in their use of tropes of impersonation

and gender inversion. This reading of cinematic citation as a remediation of closet epistemologies is further developed in the second section of my essay, 'I'm happy if she's happy', in which I look more closely at the figure of Lindsay Lohan as she is constituted through social networking forums. My argument here analyses the role of gossip as a form that remediates knowledge of the closet. In doing so, I want to suggest that, along with a change in the venues that air and repeat closet epistemologies, the conditioning influence of the closet has also shifted. Contemporary closet epistemologies, though they are still resonant, ramify less and their citation exposes purposeful redundancy.

### 'She was busy inside Lindsay Lohan'

The celebrity gossip columnist in code-era Hollywood regulated the 'putting into discourse of sex' that Foucault claimed to be 'subjected to a mechanism of increasing incitement' (16). The contagious effect of celebrity is ideally instanced in the celebrity gossip columnist as celebrity, where the dissolute indistinction between the columnist and his subject forms an affective bond and affiliation between the two (even in the irony of 'I'm happy if she's happy'). Musto's comment parodies the status of 'inside knowledge' that permits the gossip columnist to regulate and proliferate the speculation that surrounds the conundrum of privacy and celebrity. It marks as a second-order affect the satisfaction of the columnist, whose affective state is conjured as conditional; rather than supplying a conduit for the publication of this 'status update', Musto's engagement is relative and mimetic. While it stages relational affect—of the kind that proliferates on networking sites like *Twitter* and *Facebook*—Musto's equivocal comment both ramps up and baffles this logic of attachment.

Writing of Henry James' evasive manoeuvres around homosexuality, Sedgwick suggests 'that the reifying effect of periphrasis and preterition on this particular meaning [that is, the meaning of 'homosexuality'] is, if anything, more damaging than (though not separable from) its oblitative effect' (*Epistemology* 203-4). Preterition is a rhetorical figure 'in which attention is drawn to something by professing to omit it' (*OED*). In her analysis of John March's ostentatious 'secret' in James's 'The Beast in the Jungle', preterition functions to draw attention to the 'emptiness of the secret, "the nothing that is"' (*Epistemology* 201). Periphrasis is a rhetorical term for a 'roundabout' way of saying something; 'a figure of speech in which a meaning is expressed by several words instead of by few or one; a roundabout way of speaking, circumlocution' (*OED*). Sedgwick identifies two consequences of periphrasis and preterition, reification and obliteration, and notes that the reification imputed by such speech acts is the more damaging. She continues that the decoding of such circumlocution places the reader 'in a discourse in which there was a homosexual meaning, in which all homosexual meaning meant a single thing' (*Epistemology* 204). Speaking around something,

in her example, leads not to the proliferation of possibility, but rather to a single meaning, a homosexual meaning, and this single meaning, in turn, promises 'the reassuring exhilarations of knowingness' that come from the specific formula 'We Know What That Means' (204), a formula which 'animates and perpetuates the mechanism of homophobic male self-ignorance' (204). For Sedgwick, then, part of the homophobic effect of not-saying is precisely the way in which it can be construed as a saying: the contingency of a strategy which orients its reference to the *singular* fact of male homosexuality; homosexuality as the (in this sense) natural and final point of preteritive relation.<sup>1</sup> Musto's comment conforms to the logic of the periphrastic: it is as though he is simply saying Samantha Ronson (or Lindsay Lohan) is a lesbian in a roundabout way, and that's what this strange expression means. As a way of speaking to the absence of Ronson, it offers a curiously cognate form of obliteration to the kind Sedgwick sees constitutive of the preteritive, that is, it puts words to the fact of an absence in the form of a closeted truth.

Has this circumlocutionary discourse, one that continually elaborates but never states its definitive intention, been shifted in the twenty years since the publication of *Epistemology*? One way in which a shift has occurred has come with the changing valency of 'outing' as a tactic that uses the medium of celebrity biography to make the celebrity a cinematic spectacle. 'Outing' as a mainstream phenomenon became possible when the capacity to give public articulation to the category of 'homosexual' post-Stonewall collided with the tactic of 'outing' as politicised speech through the late 80s and early 90s. One way to consider the short history of the outing epidemic would be as a bi-coastal articulation of the question of the cinematic apparatus's reach in the lives of celebrities and the public.<sup>2</sup> As Sharon Willis writes:

Even while offering the pleasures and the lure of an illusory highly privatized space, cinematic experience is, in many ways, the most eminently social form of consumption, [and] we must work on the contradictions common to the subject constructed through cinematic forms of address and to the apparatus itself; upon the crucial ideological formation that splits 'public' from 'private'. (265)

Here we might also consider the spectacle's close relations to the cinematic, and the inscription of the vocabulary of cinema within the vocabulary of private

---

1 This paper is concerned with that 'reifying effect', and the way in which its separation from the 'obliterative effect' of the closet might be considered as an effect of the remediation of the 'tense' as well as the 'space' of the closet.

2 Obviously, a more complete account of outing, such as Signorile's, locates a tripartite operation, including Washington, DC. as another crucial axis of power and closeted site. His representation finds its fruit in the anonymous novel (Joe Klein's) *Primary Colors*, for example, where the generic features of the *roman à clef* instantiate the thematic of homosexual secrets and abiding nostalgia for past regimes: libertarian and homophobic.

sphere actions and sexuality. If one of the preoccupations of a popular reception of cinema is, for example, the 'authenticity' of sexual performance in cinema, that is precisely because cinematic specularity itself rides on this productive misrecognition, and such a logic of misrecognition extends to the spectacular private lives of public identities. After all, actors are presumed to act.

So how is this cinematic imaginary put into work in Musto's periphrastic invocation of the 'inside' of Lindsay Lohan? Musto's citational relation to Lindsay Lohan must inevitably be contoured around one particular exercise of impersonation as incorporation. In February 2008, Lohan featured in *New York Magazine* in a recreation of the famous 'last sitting', a photo session of Marilyn Monroe taken in 1962, six weeks before she died.<sup>3</sup>

Bert Stern, the photographer of the Monroe session, took the photos of Lindsay impersonating Monroe, and in the article that accompanies the photo shoot Amanda Fortini writes:

Stern, who shot the photos on film rather than digitally, told me he was interested in Lohan because he suspected 'she had a lot more depth to her' than one might assume from 'those teenage movies'. (Fortini)

Fortini writes of the original pictures of Monroe that 'Stern excavated and preserved the poignant humanity of the real woman—beautiful, but also fragile, needy, flawed—from the monumental sex symbol', and Stern's comments about Lohan employ similar metaphors, where the nude celebrity portrait becomes ironically, or periphrastically, in a 'roundabout way', the opportunity to decipher depth. Reinforcing Stern's interest in Monroe's visible depth—that she might be 'more' than her image—is Fortini's discussion of Lohan's fascination with Monroe. For Fortini, Lohan's interest in Monroe

took root a decade ago with multiple viewings of *Niagara* during the London filming of *The Parent Trap*. She has even purchased an apartment where Marilyn once lived. 'If you saw my house ... I have a lot of Marilyn stuff', she told me, including a huge painting of Monroe.

'It's eerie', Lohan said of the painting, a Christmas gift, 'because it's this picture of her, and it's kind of cartoony, and there's a big bottle of pills next to her, and they've fallen over'.

Lohan's fetishistic collection of Monroe's 'stuff' suggests her desire to see beyond, or at least compensate for, deathly ('cartoony') images of her celebrated subjectivity. Fortini describes Lohan's work on the shoot as a form of 'strict mimesis: scarves, nudity, and all'. Further, Stern's use of film rather than digital

---

<sup>3</sup> The image is available at <<http://nymag.com/fashion/08/spring/44247/>>. Accessed 16 May 2010. Photograph by Bert Stern. Published in *New York Magazine*, 18 February 2008.

technology to make his shots of Lohan is symptomatic of the essential nostalgia of the project, a mediation of the 'eerie' effect of the photographs that have become iconic prolepses of Monroe's death. The re-animation is thus spectral as well as uncanny: her representation of Monroe is not merely a doubling, but a form of technological exhumation. Fortini writes:

All made up, in winged eyeliner and shellacked blonde wig, Lohan, who has returned to her former voluptuousness, at times appeared more Marilyn than the thin, somewhat diminished woman of the original Marilyn photos. 'It was very similar, *déjà vu* you might say, like revisiting an old street', said Stern.

Revisiting not just an old street but the 'royal road to the unconscious', Stern's citation of *déjà vu* is an oddly inappropriate metaphor for an exercise in such deliberate reproduction; *déjà vu* involves, at least, the involuntary conjuring of an experience of prior experience, defined by psychiatrist Vernon Neppe in 1983 as 'any subjectively inappropriate impression of familiarity of the present experience with an undefined past'. The uncanny assertion that Lohan appeared 'more Marilyn than' Monroe situates Lohan as a 'real' temporally posterior to the 'real' of the image she reproduces. More precisely, though, the effect is cinephilic, what Christian Keathley describes as produced '*en plus*, in excess or in addition, almost involuntarily', 'a fetishization of fragments or moments' (35). As fetishised photographic image of the cinematic Monroe, the images elicit an experience of what Keathley terms a 'cinephilic moment' (30), where 'fleeting experience of the real ... is felt most intensely or magically' (37). Keathley traces this cinephilic 'moment' to the ontology of the cinema (Bazin), where 'the indexical quality of the film image is the mark or trace of a prior presence' (37), that is, of something that has been filmed. In this case, that cinephilic moment arises when the something captured on film is the trace of an earlier photographic moment; in another way of speaking, we might regard such an image as a form of periphrasis, a roundabout way of pointing to the real.

On Sedgwick's argument, such a roundabout moment points to one thing in particular; according to the epistemology of the closet, 'the reifying effect of periphrasis and preterition on this particular meaning [that is, the meaning of 'homosexuality'] is, if anything, more damaging than (though not separable from) its oblitative effect' (203-4). For Sedgwick, this 'meaning of homosexuality' is constitutively male; the formula 'We Know What That Means', the stance of 'knowingness', is one that trips association to the 'mechanism of homophobic male self-ignorance' and does so by orienting reference to the *singular* fact of male homosexuality.

Musto's oblique introduction of the term 'inside' as a modification of Lohan's name easily evokes another example of this logic, a film whose plot broadly

resembles Lohan's own career as starlet and 'triple threat', singer, actor, dancer, and which thematises gendered masquerade or disguise as a way of effacing *and* effecting a sexual 'outing'. Robert Mulligan's 1965 film *Inside Daisy Clover* tells the story of a tomboy who finds herself a career in the pictures as an aspiring young starlet. Daisy Clover, played by Natalie Wood, is embroiled in a relationship with the plausible playboy Wade Lewis, played by Robert Redford. The narrative is designed to indict the star system of the 30s, but as IMDB puts it 'the film is basically one big anachronism' as there's little of the 1930s in its *mise-en-scène*; its 'inside secret' is that Wade Lewis, whose original name is Lewis Wade, is gay, and so Daisy's affair and marriage to him are, like all his roguish behaviours, sham. As I have argued elsewhere, the figure of the beard—a woman or man who disguises the (true) sexual interest of her or his partner—metaphorizes disguise and disclosure as corporeal manifestations, and operates as a material signifier in a complex rhetoric of disclosure and orientation. The beard encourages us to take literally the visibility of sheer manifestation.<sup>4</sup> Likewise it is tempting to read Musto's 'inside Lindsay Lohan' through *Inside Daisy Clover's* reframing of this question of visibility. Whereas Daisy is cast as beard, as visible metaphor for the homosexuality of the bearded body, Lohan is cast (in Musto's comment) as the distraction that makes Ronson invisible, not present to the assembled guests. Ronson's failure to show is a failure to be sheerly visible, a lack of visibility Musto ascribes to her subsumption inside Lindsay Lohan.

What finally draws together Musto's comments about the 'inside' of 'Lindsay Lohan', the Monroe photographs, and an historical preoccupation with the visibility of a gay male body is the way in which Musto interposed himself into the '*déjà vu*' of Lohan's impersonation of Monroe. Not long after the Monroe pictures appeared in *New York Magazine*, Musto organized his own photo shoot, in which he impersonated ('re-vamped') Lohan impersonating Monroe.<sup>5</sup>

Musto writes:

As the New York article unavoidably pointed out, it was six weeks after the legendary Stern shoot that Marilyn died of an apparent OD, a tidbit that looms over Lohan's Stern shoot like the griffin in *The Spiderwick Chronicles*. But the doomy parallels between M.M. and L.L. seem far less upsetting if you believe, as I'm sure Oliver Stone does, that Marilyn was actually murdered. Why would the Kennedys kill Lindsay Lohan? (Unless maybe *Herbie Fully Loaded* somehow reminded Ted of Chappaquiddick.) (Musto)

---

4 See my 'Beard.'

5 The image is available at <<http://www.villagevoice.com/photoGallery/index/351188/0>> Accessed 16 May 2010. Photograph by Howard Huang. Published in *Village Voice*, 4 March 2008.

Perhaps to insulate Lohan from the pernicious cycle he fantasises, Musto offers himself as third term, albeit as acquiescent rather than inciting: 'I gleefully agreed to star in an homage to an homage: Musto as Lohan as Marilyn. That's three generations of loveliness, and I prepared for it by not shaving or waxing a thing, just letting it all hang in the wind as both a nod to history and a means of reclaiming control'. Framing his contribution in an escalating hyperbole of 'insider knowledge' that reaches from paranoid stream-of-consciousness to first name faux-familiarity, Musto's camp reprise of the pictures returns periphrastic reference to its symptomatic meaning. That is, it is the 'outing' of male homosexuality through a singular act of cross-dressing which masks a doubling, the 'strict mimesis' between two women. Musto writes ironically that his unattended body is 'both a nod to history and a means of reclaiming control', and it performs both functions, offering himself, the third generation that can be interposed between Lohan and Monroe, as the truth 'inside Lindsay Lohan'.

Musto writes that he lets it all 'hang in the wind', a reminder not only of castration anxiety as a form of gender determination but also as the final term in his account of the contemporary anxiety over female bodies, hair, and exposure. Lohan's homage to Marilyn also provokes Musto's imagining of her 'dumpling' breasts, which he compares to his own 'desperate' desire to show-off his 'mantits'. However, for the rest of his column he plays obsessively with the 'horror of nothing to see' that attends his perception of female genitalia, the spate of pantless pictures and evident genital shaving that preoccupied celebrity gossip around Lohan, Britney Spears and Paris Hilton. In his analysis of cinephilia, though, Keathley notes its implicit challenge to history by speaking of 'the wind in the trees' in film as a cinephilic perception of something on screen that is distinct from the perceptions recorded in histories that catalogue and discipline films. By drawing attention to his body and what hangs 'in the wind' Musto frames his body in a similar way, as an object both vulnerable to and amenable to cinephilic perception, that is, desire, and the final reference point for a periphrastic rhetorical flourish. In these terms, it is *his* body, neither Marilyn Monroe's, nor Lindsay Lohan's, that is ontologically prior to the images he parodies, an inversion of usual temporal order (a preposterous gesture) that serves to demonstrate how complicatedly periphrastic reference can be returned to the 'single fact'.

Musto speaks, then, as an expert in the area of what it is to be 'inside Lindsay Lohan', jostling with her lover for that honour, and it might be that his second comment, 'and if she's happy I'm happy' speaks to the logic of affect contagion in a more complicated way than previously supposed, as his inhabitation of the

object Lindsay Lohan is now effected by his own history. Precisely as Musto interposes himself, as 'insider', between Lohan and Monroe, he finds himself again as the 'inside' third term between two women.

## 'I'm happy if she's happy'

How to unwind the complicated logic of Musto's periphrastic announcement? How to take it to another place, and what spatiality exists for this transformation, if any? Judith Butler parsed the problem back in 1991 this way:

Conventionally, one comes out *of* the closet (and yet, how often is it the case that we are 'outed' when we are young and without resources?); so we are out of the closet, but into what? what new unbounded spatiality? . . . . Curiously, it is the figure of the closet that produces this expectation, and which guarantees its dissatisfaction. For being 'out' always depends to some extent on being 'in'; it gains its meaning only within that polarity. Hence being 'out' must produce the closet again and again in order to maintain itself as 'out'. (16)

There is another context for thinking about the role of the singular, male homosexual as an 'insider' and so capable of providing bounding structures for that 'unbounded spatiality'. The 'open secret' of homosexual identity for actors working in 1940s and 50s Hollywood is one that, like Musto's impersonation of Monroe, relies on gender performance as a way of elaborating homosexuality as an absent truth. The open secret functions in just this way in the 1959 movie *Pillow Talk*, in which a closeted gay actor (Rock Hudson) plays a straight man pretending to be a gay man. Hudson (Brad) and Doris Day (Jan) live in adjoining apartments and share a telephone line. This causes them to argue, but once he sees Jan, Hudson's character impersonates a Texan named Rex and in that guise contrives to meet her. To incite Jan to initiate sexual contact with Rex, that is himself, Brad suggests to Jan that Rex's failure to be sexually aggressive toward her might be accounted for by the fact that he is 'one of those men ... very devoted to their mothers ... you know, the type that likes to collect cooking recipes, to exchange gossip'. The closeted Hudson's impersonation of a straight man playing gay is not only a signal instance of a closet epistemology that played with its audience's familiarity with the 'gossip' exchanged about Rock Hudson. It also established a complicated set of meanings embedded in the phrase 'pillow talk', ostensibly a metaphor of conjugal intimacy but operating as a metaphor for bearding, knowingness, indirection, the periphrastic logic of 'I know what that means'.

The 'new unbounded spatiality' of online media reproduces closet epistemologies via gossip as periphrasis and remediation and in a way that suggests interdependence of old and new media. In March 2009, the artist

Jonathan Horowitz teamed up with Calvin Klein to support the Art Production Fund by displaying in the window of Klein's Madison Avenue store 'rotating pairs of white Calvin Klein pillowcases silk-screened with names of über-famous couples, like "Barack" and "Michelle", "Sam" and "Lindsay", and "Bert" and "Ernie"' ('Pillow Talk'). The 'pillow talk cases' were also on show at PS 1, the MOMA annex in Long Island City. Detailed with the names of fictional and historical pairs, gay and straight couples, the 'pillow talk case' borrowed the euphemism of the Hudson/Day beard relationship but re-oriented its terms. The pillowcase becomes a medium of amplification: whereas 'pillow talk' is understood to involve the privacy of the boudoir and its secret communications, a 'pillow talk case' operates as a case study of what happens when closet epistemologies become subject to public broadcast. The 'pillow talk case' offers one remediation of the closet. Evidently the story caught Lindsay Lohan's eye because on the 17th of March, four days after an image of a pair of pillow cases labeled 'Sam' and 'Lindsay' was published in *Women's Wear Daily*, she was using it for her profile picture on Facebook.<sup>6</sup>

This remediation of the logic of gossip, of 'knowingness', relies on the collision of old and new media, what Henry Jenkins refers to as 'convergence culture'. Lohan and Ronson are both adept and prolific users of social media, and their fandoms are similarly adept. Lohan and Ronson sometimes friend fans on Facebook, and sometimes respond to fans on Twitter. Mostly they don't, but sometimes they do. According to their fans, there's no logic by which their responses can be predicted, and their responses are unmediated by gossip and its history. During a period of time in which rumours circulated about a breakup between Lohan and Ronson, Lohan repeatedly discounted those rumours by asserting that they were still together. Here, the figure of 'pillow talk', redolent of the complexity of closeted reference, is circulated through the logic of digital replication and in the territory not of storied history but of temporal proximity. While it would be hard to acknowledge Lohan's use of that image as anything but out, it falls short of the logic of either the closet or its exterior. Despite Lohan's overt and repeated acknowledgment of the relationship through social media though, the fact of the relationship itself has been continuously rumoured, as if there were a question that it existed, as if, in other words, traditional media were more concerned with the stimulating effect of a closet epistemology than in the matter of ostensible report, which is, of course, precisely that mechanism of ignorance that the oscillations of closet epistemologies engender.

It's clear that there are suggestive parallels between the life of the star, beset by old media, and the closet. Writing on her Myspace blog, Lohan describes one outing:

---

<sup>6</sup> The image was documented by the 'Lindsay-Sam' community on Livejournal.com. <[http://community.livejournal.com/lindsay\\_sam/469992.html?thread=17803752#t17803752](http://community.livejournal.com/lindsay_sam/469992.html?thread=17803752#t17803752)> Accessed 20 Feb. 2009.

all grown up and .. an outsider for some nights..

How does it feel to be an outsider?....behind the scenes type of feeling.

Picture this in your head, if you're willing to focus for a second my friends ;)

Washington, D.C.- you're probably thinking that you are going to a monument of some sort... well, you're highly wrong loves....

Washington, D.C.-you're in a club, you are here for support for someone that you care for very much, VERY MUCH.. But, you're here just to chill and support, not to be seen and heard... Not to be on display in the dj booth...or to feel as if you are in a cage at the Bronx Zoo...

Do you see what i am getting at???

Alright, so i am literally sitting in the dj booth at a club in Washington, D.C. where Samantha is djing and they have a computer at the back of the booth, which i am on right now..

aside from the fact that she is an amazing dj and i am having a nice time, the glass mirror placed to my left to hide me from photos (literally) is making it all a bit uncomfortable!!! (Lohan)

The blog entry allies the experience of the 'outsider' with a 'behind the scenes type of feeling'. According to the logic of the 'insider', the logic of the closet epistemology, the outsider relies on 'inside knowledge' for their knowledge of the closet, and yet in this blog entry Lohan identifies the feeling of 'outside' with a 'behind the scenes type of feeling'. Being inside and outside are two sides of the same coin. As Butler predicts, it is 'the figure of the closet' that guarantees that 'being 'out' always depends to some extent on being 'in'; it gains its meaning only within that polarity' (16). Lohan's blog moves between metaphors of 'in' and 'out', mirroring ('strict mimesis') and blockage as ways to articulate the experience of life within the ambit of media, figuring her blog as a means to escape this deadening logic. Typically, pictures were later published of her sitting at her computer blogging, and the night was reported at *Celebrity Gossip's* website like this:

According to a source on-hand, '(Lindsay) initially appeared completely anti-social, asking for a screen to be put up so only a select few at Lotus could even see her. Instead of grooving to Samantha's tunes, she spent the first part of her girlfriend's set instead staring at a computer looking through MySpace'.

The insider adds, 'But then Samantha went up to Lindsay, shared a laugh and, according to witnesses, gave Lindsay a kiss that completely changed her mood'. (Gossip Girls)

Social media offers an alternative orientation to the 'source on-hand', whose reportage conforms to the logic of inside knowledge. Can it be that one effect of the remediation offered by social media is that the closet itself may be remediated? In his *Queer Optimism*, Michael Snediker writes that his project might be thought 'a furthering of Sedgwick's account of immanent joy, in Proust' where the recognition of truths can itself be a source of joy; he quotes Sedgwick's observation that

In the paranoid Freudian epistemology, it is implausible enough to suppose that truth could be even an accidental occasion of joy; inconceivable to imagine joy as a guarantor of truth. (Sedgwick, *Novel Gazing* 16, qtd in Snediker 17)

Between the 'inside Lindsay Lohan' of Musto's quip and the remediated access afforded by new media a collision is taking place that has startling consequences. One of those, I hope, is that the closet becomes less ramifying than redundant, as social media organise new venues that interrupt the logic of disclosure and reinscription an epistemology of the closet requires. One way this mechanism works would be to take seriously Jack Halberstam's proposition that the 'strange temporalities, imaginative life schedules, and eccentric economic practices' (1) of queer time and space perform one kind of remediation, where the 'knowingness' of periphrastic reference and roundabout disclosure can be transformed from a 'restorative' to 'reflective' nostalgia. That is, such citation can be thought about as loss (or, as is said of recorded media, 'lossy', deteriorated) rather than fearfully installed as the fantasised re-inscription of singular reference and homophobic temporal lag.<sup>7</sup>

In 1959 the plot of *Pillow Talk* relies upon the conceit of the party line as a figure for congested miscommunication, a quasi-private space whose capacity to spill its contents into a more ambivalently open territory generates plot and enforces a closet epistemology. In 2009, the 'pillow talk case' refigures or remediates this trope or 'case study', organizing an elegant and supple metaphorical transition from the congested community of the party line to the happenstance community of online social media. Such transformations permit a kind of happiness, an affect associated with what happens, fortune, the cast of the day rather than the

---

<sup>7</sup> My reference to the two types of nostalgia, 'reflective' and 'restorative' draws from Svetlana Boym's transformative account of the two in her book *The Future of Nostalgia*. Whereas 'restorative' nostalgia 'proposes to rebuild the lost home and patch up the memory gaps' (41), 'reflective' nostalgia 'lingers on ruins, the patina of time and history, in the dreams of another place and another time' (41). Musto's performance of Lohan as Monroe attempts restoration.

logic of inter-generational transmission that Musto's 'strict mimesis', the logic of impersonation, would allow. The evolution of the closet may not, indeed, be sufficient to withstand the new circumstance in which we find ourselves; a closet epistemology, however you cut it, cannot revisit its deadening logic upon the 2009 version of pillow talk, and its incorporation into the space of social media resembles, to me, one of those 'accidental occasions of joy' Snediker writes about; perhaps its discovery was just one such moment of joy for Lohan. And if she's happy, I'm happy.

*Melissa Jane Hardie teaches in the English Department, University of Sydney. She is currently completing a book on the evolution of the closet from 1989-2009 which traces the relationship between celebrity, outing, closets and scandal from Liberace to Lindsay Lohan via the Starr Report, Ellen DeGeneres, The Guiding Light and Law and Order: SVU.*

## Works Cited

- Boym, Svetlana. *The Future of Nostalgia*. New York: Basic Books, 2001.
- Bromley, Hank. 'Border Skirmishes: Gender, New Technologies and the Persistence of Structure.' *Appropriating Technology: Vernacular Science and Social Power*. Ed. Ron Eglash, Jennifer L. Croissant, Giovanna Di Chiro and Rayvon Fouché. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2004. 79-100.
- Butler, Judith. 'Imitation and Gender Insubordination.' *Inside/Out: Lesbian Theories, Gay Theories*. Ed. Diana Fuss. New York: Routledge, 1991. 13-31.
- Case, Sue-Ellen. 'Performing Lesbian in the Space of Technology, Part II.' *Theatre Journal* 47.3 (1995): 329-44.
- Fortini, Amanda. 'Lindsay Lohan as Marilyn Monroe in "The Last Sitting".' *New York Magazine*, 18 February, 2008. <<http://nymag.com/fashion/08/spring/44247/>> Accessed 20 Feb. 2009.
- Foucault, Michel. *The History of Sexuality Vol. 1: An Introduction*. Trans. Michael Hurley. New York: Pantheon Books, 1978.
- Gossip Girls. 'Lindsay Lohan and Sam Ronson: Cuddly at the Club.' *Celebrity Gossip*, 17 October 2008. <<http://www.celebrity-gossip.net/celebrities/hollywood/lindsay-lohan-and-sam-ronson-cuddly-at-the-club-208296/>> Accessed 20 Feb. 2009.

- Hardie, Melissa Jane. 'Beard.' *Rhetorical Bodies*. Ed. Jack Selzer and Sharon Crowley. Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1999. 275-295.
- Internet Movie Database. 'Inside Daisy Clover.' <<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0059314/>> Accessed 20 Feb. 2009.
- Jenkins, Henry. *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*. New York: New York UP, 2006.
- Keathley, Christian. *Cinephilia and History, or The Wind in the Trees*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 2006.
- Lewis, Steve. 'Good Night Mr. Lewis: Looking Good on "Paper" & Popping Frank Owen.' *Black Book*, 17 November, 2008. <<http://www.blackbookmag.com/article/good-night-mr-lewis-looking-good-on-paper/5066>> Accessed 20 Feb. 2009.
- Lohan, Lindsay. 'all grown up and .. an outsider for some nights.' Myspace blog entry, 17 October 2008. <<http://blogs.myspace.com/index.cfm?fuseaction=blog.view&friendId=29730276&blogId=441607242>> Accessed 20 Feb. 2009.
- Mulligan, Robert. *Inside Daisy Clover*. Warner Bros, 1966.
- Musto, Michael. 'Michael Musto as Lindsay Lohan as Marilyn Monroe in 'The Ultimate Re-vamping.' *Village Voice*, 4 March 2008. <<http://www.villagevoice.com/2008-03-04/news/michael-musto-as-lindsay-lohan-as-marilyn-monroe-in-the-ultimate-re-vamping/>> Accessed 20 Feb. 2009.
- Neppe, Vernon. 'Déjà Vu, Research and Theory.' Pacific Neuroscientific Institute. <[http://www.pni.org/books/deja\\_vu\\_info.html](http://www.pni.org/books/deja_vu_info.html)> Accessed 20 Feb. 2009.
- OED (Oxford English Dictionary)*. <<http://www.oed.com>> Accessed 16 May 2010.
- 'Pillow Talk at Calvin Klein Collection Flagship.' *WWD.com*, Friday 13 March 2009. <<http://www.wwd.com/fashion-news/fashion-scoops/pillow-talk-at-calvin-klein-collection-flagship-2070485/>> Accessed 20 Feb. 2009.
- Sedgwick, Eve. *Epistemology of the Closet*. Berkeley, U of California P, 1990.
- . *Novel Gazing: Queer Readings in Fiction*. Durham: Duke UP, 1997.
- . 'Preface'. *Epistemology of the Closet*. Reprint. Berkeley: U of California P, 2008. xiii-xviii.
- . *Tendencies*. Durham: Duke UP, 1993.

Signorile Michelangelo. *Queer in America: Sex, the Media and the Closets of Power*. London: Abacus, 1994.

Snediker, Michael. *Queer Optimism: Lyric Personhood and Other Felicitous Persuasions*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2009.

Willis, Sharon. 'Disputed Territories: Masculinity and Social Space.' *Male Trouble*. Ed. Constance Penley and Sharon Willis. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1993. 263-281.

Woodland, Randal. 'Queer Spaces, Modem Boys and Pagan Statues: Gay/Lesbian Identity and the Construction of Cyberspace.' *The Cybercultures Reader*. Ed. David Bell and Barbara M. Kennedy. New York: Routledge, 2000. 416-431.