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Queer Theory and Discourses of Desire

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Louise O. Vasvári,
"Queer Theory and Discourses of Desire"
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Abstract: In her paper "Queer Theory and Discourses of Desire," Louise O. Vasvári proposes that the multiplicity of ways that language constructs -- or silences -- the socially constructed expression of erotic desire is a necessary complement to the study of gendered and of sexual identity. Vasvári contributes to queer theory and its subfield, queer linguistics, with the term "queer" understood as more inclusive and less male-oriented than "gay" where queer theory seeks to read between and outside the lines of the dominant heteronormative discourses that studies how mainstream reproductive heterosexuality comes to be (re)produced through cultural narratives as self-evident, obligatory, and desirable. Queer theory also aims to examine hitherto unheard of voices, suppressed narratives, as well as the development of counter-hegemonic queer discourses that talk about same-sex and other "perverse" desires and subjectivities. Based on her discussion of queer theory, Vasvári presents and analyses representative samples of queer discourses from a range of cultural texts that serve to encode desire, with the aim of working towards a comparative analysis of heteronormative versus "queer" scripts. While most texts Vasvári discusses are by necessity from English, her paper includes analyses of emerging queer discourses through the example of contemporary Hungarian poetry.

Louise O. VASVÁRI

Queer Theory and Discourses of Desire

In this study, I propose that the analysis of the multiplicity of ways that language constructs -- or silences -- sexuality (that is, the socially constructed expression of erotic desire) is a necessary complement to the study of gendered and of sexual identity. In my study, I aim to contribute to queer theory and its subfield, queer linguistics, with the term "queer" understood as more inclusive and less-male oriented than the term "gay" (on this, see Browning 7-8; on defining and contesting meanings of queer linguistics, see the cluster of seven articles in Campbell-Kibler, Podesva, Roberts, Wong 23-160). Queer theory, with feminist and poststructuralist cynicism towards grand narratives, seeks to read between and outside the lines of the dominant heteronormative discourses about cultural formation and authority; it also means to be a theoretical discourse that studies how mainstream reproductive heterosexuality comes to be [re]produced through popular cultural narratives as natural, self-evident, desirable, privileged, and obligatory, at the same time that it discursively disqualifies sexual and other minorities as strangers within the normative national space (see Bucholtz and Hall 469). Queer theory sees sexual power as embedded in different levels of social life and interrogates areas of the social world not usually seen as sexual; that is, it calls for sexuality not only to be looked at as a discrete area of sexual practices and identities, but also as a constitutive element of social life (see Pascoe 331-32). Queer theory also aims to examine hitherto unheard voices, suppressed narratives, as well as the development of counter-hegemonic queer discourses that talk about same-sex or other "perverse" desires, practices, and subjectivities, such as, for example, coming-out stories, rape stories, or recovery tales, all of which play a significant role in the construction of sexual and political identity formation (on this, see also Plummer).

In a broader definition, I include not only the study of non-heterosexuals but also all those whose story, often silent or silenced, is incongruous with the existing corpus of narratives and those who tell new stories that challenge existing assumptions of familial structures and desires (see also Steedman 19). These include "heterosexual queers," those who go against hetero-normative scripts by daring to publicly challenge heterosexual conventions of marriage and/or procreation, those who have sex with others much different in age than themselves, or those who dare to express forbidden, transgressive desires, or no desire at all. It could be posited that queerness in this broader sense (and expanding on Rusty Barrett's definition of "homogenius " speech community), centered in desire rather than in identity, can be constitutive of an actual subculture, comparable to other ethnic and racial cultures, except that few have inherited it from parents or families (see Browning 1, 8-9). An outstanding discursive example of heterosexual queerness is the work of the 2004 Nobel Prize in Literature, Elfriede Jelinek (see, e.g., Bandhauer <http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol7/iss1/1/>; Flotow). Although she is herself married, in *Lust*, which she proclaimed as the first feminine pornographic novel, she depicts sado-masochist sex not as a text about women's sexual fantasies but rather to argue that sexuality in marriage is, with its unequal relations of ownership, by definition an act of violence (thus following a Faucauldian line of thought). In Jelinek's earlier and equally pessimistic *Liebhaberinnen* she had already, literally, created a new parodic novelistic discourse in order to denounce the lies of bourgeois respectability of contemporary Austrian life. In that work she subverts the linguistic formulas of female romance novels and the German-language *Heimatroman* according to whose scripts of courtship followed by women's proper location (*Kinder und Küche*) her three young heroines self-destruct their lives (compare also the complex bisexual queerness of the Holocaust survivor Grete Weil, whose work is conventionally relegated to "women's" literature and its homoerotic themes ignored [see Bos]).

In the second section of this paper I discuss a few representative samples of queer discourses from a range of cultural texts that serve to encode desire, with the aim of working towards a

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comparative analysis of heteronormative versus "queer" scripts, mainstream as well as those marginalized as pornographic. The aim to be comparative also functions on the level of language and culture, so that while most previous work that I discuss is by necessity from English, I also attempt to study emerging queer discourses through the example of Hungarian. To date, studies on queer linguistics (with the exception of some anthropologically oriented studies on "exotic" milieus) have been primarily on English and a few other major languages, most notably French and German, and thus they could not pay adequate attention to the specifics of cultural and political contexts. Groundbreaking in considering a broader range of language varieties in queer discourses is the collected volume edited by William L. Leap and Tom Boellstorff (2004), which is devoted to the interface between globalization processes and sexual subjectivities. The overall aim of the collection is to study the global circulation of gay men's U.S. English and to investigate how it is transformed and interacts with local ways of talking about same-sex desire, on translocal sexual politics. Regrettably, as the editors themselves point out, there is no mention of Central and East Europe, although in fact many of the aspects of the *qwir* English or *lavender* German would also be relevant for Hungary or Romania. To cite only one example, in Germany the level of borrowing is related to discourse topics, with *qwir* English borrowing and code-mixed terms such as coming out, *sich outen*, *out-sein*, or *das Outing* preferred when talking about public image and rights, presumably because they are not perceived as transparent or as direct as native words (see Minning 48-50). It would be instructive to study to what degree in Hungarian, for example, coming out[*olni*] versus the native coinage *elöbujni*, literally to "sneak out," is speaker- or context-specific as suggested in Márta Kis's "Előbújás a gyerekeim elött" ("Coming-Out to My Children").

With regard to an emerging scholarship about Hungarian-language queer linguistics is perhaps best illustrated with a text by András Gerevich, in my estimation one of the most daringly innovative queer poetic voices today: "Desire. Desire is a tight, stale apartment, / Blaring with main street's traffic, / Colognes line up in front of the mirror, But the fridge is empty, the doorknob sticks. // This desire is home to the most handsome man, / Whom you will never find /there at home, / Because he sleeps in other men's apartments, / Still, from a hundred photos on the wall, he tempts. // Stick your photos up among them. / Get his underwear, slip into his bed, / Take his name -- if you move in, / You can only be a piece of furniture" (trans. Rachel Miller) ("Desire. A vágy egy szűk, pallott lakás, / Mely hangos a főút forgalmától, / Parfümok sorakoznak a tükör elött, / De üres a jégszekrény, ragad a kilincs. // Ez a vágy a legszebb férfi otthona, / Akit soha nem találsz odahaza, / Mert más férfiak lakásán alszik, / Mégis a falon száz fotóról csábit. // Ragaszd közéjük a képeidet. / Hozd az alsóját, bujj az ágyába, / Vedd fel a nevét -- ha beköltözöl / Csak a bútorzat része lehetsz" [*Férfiak* 68]). I expect critics and scholars knowledgeable of contemporary Hungarian literature would argue that the work of Ádám Nádasdy or, in narrative, the novels of Péter Nádas cannot be left out in this context. Personally, I would add László Ladányi's *Én és a férfiak* (Other Men and I) (2002), and the edited collection *Éjszakai Állatkert. Antológia a női szexualitásról* (Night Zoo: An Anthology of Women's Sexuality) (see Bódis, Forgács, and Gordon; 2005), whose thirty-three authors of various sexual proclivities set as their aim to describe female desires.

Other texts of interest would be the collections *Szembeszél. Leszbikusok a szépirodalomban* (Countertalk: Lesbians in Literature; Ed. Béres-Deák, Borgos, Hatfaludi, Takács, Rózsa, Sándor), *Már nem tabu. Kézikönyv tanároknak a leszbikusokról, melegekről, biszexuálisokról, és transznemüekről* (No More Taboo: Manual for Teachers on Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals, and Transexuals; Ed. Béres-Deák, Sándor, Fenyvesi, Hatfaludi, Kis, Móricz, Nussbaum, Rózsa), and *Előhivott önarcképek. Leszbikus nők önéletrajzi írásai* (Self-Portraits Developed: Autobiographical Texts of Lesbians; Ed. Borgos, Rózsa, Sándor, Söregi), or the innovative lesbian-theme poetry of Anna Lovas Nagy who fuses Greek pastoral poetry with the image of an angelic policewoman carrying her nightstick as a displaced prosthetic penis: "Chloe and the Police Officer" Chloe, it's not from the blows you know the armed officer in whose presence you swoon, not fully in possession of your senses, and without any strength in your

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fist / Because the officer is your lover -- [and] on the hip of that angel-faced policewoman her nightstick seductively swings" ("Chloé és az egyenruhás" Chloé te nem ütéséről ismered a fegyverest / Ájultan öntudatlan nézed és öklödben nem / Moccan erő / Mert szeretőd ő -- az angyalarcú rendörnő / Oldalán kacéran lóg a bot" [Lovas Nagy 97]). However, owing to constraints of space I focus here on gay male poetry. My focus is both socio-linguistic and literary and in that context Gerevich's work, in particular the concluding section of his text, "Mellbimbók" ("Nipples") in his 2005 poetry collection, *Férfiak* (Men), surpasses Nádasdy's texts in its linguistic daringness and in the author's willingness to foreground his sexual identity. The very choice of the title word, *mellbimbók* in Gerevich's collection is significant, as it seems to have always been a metonymic substitution for sexual desire and a leitmotif of erotic texts. I published elsewhere about the medieval French refrain *les mamelettes me poignant*, which can be translated as "the hardening of my nipples excites me," where they describe the rarely voiced sexual arousal of a young woman speaking as a sexual subject (see Vasvári, "Retrieving" <http://magyar-irodalom.elte.hu/palimpszeszt/ 19_szam.06htm>). The term has been studied in a homosexual context as well, for example by Ghislain Lapointe, or, compare the erotic evocation of male breasts and nipples in Alan Hollinghurst's novel *Swimming Pool Library*, a homoerotic fantasy, full of audacious verbalization, masquerading as narrative memoir. Nipples are also featured erotically in one of the newest emerging discourses, the gay romance novel (see, e.g., *Romentics: A Novel Approach to Gay Romance* <http://www.romentics.com/>).

Impressively innovative is Péter Nádas's linguistic-sexual daring in his just-published monumental three-volume *Párhuzamos történetek* (Parallel Stories), where he coins terms such as *zsidó libidó* ("Jewish libido"), a term, which among other things, is an "in your face" challenge to and against right-wing Hungarian anti-gay discourse (a discourse that is often combined with anti-Semitism). Of relevance to my discussion is what Nádas describes in an interview about the semiotic and discursive lacunae in the language of sexuality in Hungarian (on the history of erotic literature in Hungarian, see Tötösy de Zepetnek, "Erotic Literature"; see also his "Literature and Cultural Participation" on sexuality in the texts of Péter Esterházy and László Kemenes-Géfin):

> How is it that a novel breaks such new ground in talking about bodies? Precisely about feelings, erotica, sexuality lovemaking between men and women, between men and men, between women and women, for which we speak no language? We don't speak it because it is not capable of being spoken, because it has no agreed upon vocabulary, and we don't speak it because it is prohibited, it is taboo. Can we free ourselves of the restrictions? Of the prohibitions? It is a question of more than that; it is not only about freedom ... at the present time we can speak only in medical language, criminal language, and in pornography about the body, or else we simply remain unable to speak with each other. I didn't want to accept any of these solutions. They are very dangerous. I tried to speak in a language in which we normally don't speak or in which we speak only to ourselves, in the most personal internal language … for the body to speak I had to see things from the standpoint of one then another protagonist. (unless indicated otherwise, all translations are mine)

> Mi az oka annak, hogy a regény ilyen szokatlanul nagy teret nyít a testeknek? Éppen annak: érzékiség, erotika, szexualitás, szeretkezés férfiak és nők, férfiak és férfiak, nők és nők között, aminek a nyelvét a legkevésbé sem beszéljük? Nem beszéljük mert nem beszédes, mert nincsen egyezményes szókészlete, s nem beszéljük mert le van tiltva, tabu alatt áll. Szabadulni a korlátozottságtól? A tiltásoktól? Többről van szó, nem csak a szabadságról … Jelen pillanatban a testről szólva az orvostudomány, a kriminalisztika vagy a pornográfia nyelvén beszélünk, vagy egymás között éppen beszédképtelennek mutatkozunk. Én egyik megoldást sem akartam elfogadni. Nagyon veszélyesek. Megpróbáltam azon a nyelven megszólalni, amelyen különben nem beszélünk vagy csak magunkban beszélünk, a legszemélyesebb belső beszéd nyelvén … hogy megszólaljon a test hogy az egyik, hogy a másik szereplő szempontjából kellet látnom" (Nádas qtd. in Varga <http://www.nol.hu/cikk/383125/>).

Before I proceed with my discussion of queer language in Hungarian, I wish to provide some background on the (incipient) state of queer linguistics in general: it was not until the publication of William Leap's 1996 *Word's Out: Gay Men's English*" or perhaps, less directly, of Kira Hall and Mary Buchholtz's 1995 edited volume *Gender Articulated: Language and the Socially Constructed Self*, that queer linguistics research, beyond the study of slang, began in earnest (on this, see also Kulick; Wong). In spite of a number of important contributions since then, the study of sexuality is still marginal within sociolinguistics (of interest are Livia and Hall; Campbell-Kibler, Podesva, Roberts,

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Wong; Harrison and Hood-Williams; Cameron and Kulick; Leap and Boellstroff; Kulick; Wong). An overview article on gay and lesbian language by anthropological sociolinguist Don Kulick is particularly relevant for this study (see also the correctives to Kulick in Eckert; Leap and Boelstorff). Kulick critiques the notion of performativity, whereby, according to him, Anna Livia and Kira Hall and other queer theorists have defined [homo]sexual identity so as to make it indistinct from gender identity. Kulick objects that precisely what remains left out in performativity theory is what makes sexuality what it is: namely fantasy, desire, repression, pleasure, fear, the unconscious, and transgression. Particularly important here is fantasy, which Rosi Braidotti defined as that which allows us to imagine ourselves and others otherwise, and that which establishes the possible in excess of the real (21). Judith Butler described the foreclosure of fantasy, through censorship or other means, as one strategy for providing for the social death of persons. In different terms, it can be said what is left out is also the freedom to "explore the endless possibilities of free-floating desire," which, incidentally, according to Diana Negra the television program *Sex in the City* is at least sometimes able to achieve for [postfeminist] heterosexual women (Negra <http://www.genders.org/g39/g39_negra.html>). A good decade before Kulick's critique from a sociolinguistic perspective, Biddy Martin -- first in her "From Bridges Called My Back" and later in her "Extraordinary Homosexuals and the Fear of Being Ordinary" -- proposed that lesbianism should be relocated as desire rather than as an identity, thus liberating it from the oppression of dominant heterosexuality. She speaks of the need to introduce desire and conflict, and the need to acknowledge the vulnerability, identifications, and unmanageable bodies at the heart of queer sexualities (on this, see also Teresa de Lauretis's psychoanalytical framing of "perverse" lesbian desire; on de Lauretis see Gross).

In contrast to both Martin and Kulick, Michel Foucault attempted to conflate gender and sexual identity without losing sight of sexual desire by proposing precisely that modern selves result in part from acknowledging themselves as subjects of desire, thus leading them to discover in desire their identity. Foucault's theoretical stance, however, still leaves female erotic subjectivity unacknowledged and this has been characterized by systematic linguistic/literary erasure throughout history in multiple ways (on this, see Vasvári, "Examples of the Motif of the Shrew" <http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol4/iss1/3/>, with reference to Hungarian "A Comparative Approach to European Folk Poetry" <http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol1/iss4/1/>). Although Kulick proposes the need to problematize the semiotic codes and discourses of sexuality, he makes only brief mention of concrete examples, all dealing with heterosexual desire, most notoriously the somewhat kinky and infamous "Tampax" telephone conversation between the Prince of Wales and Camilla Parker-Bowles, where Prince Charles expresses his desire to be in Camilla's "knickers" so badly that he fantasizes he will probably end up being reincarnated as a tampon (see Channell). Kulick and Deborah Cameron, in their book *Language and Sexuality* (2003), expand on Kulick's original thesis and discuss additional examples, some from Kenneth Harvey and Celia Shalom's 1997 *Language and Desire: Encoding Sex, Romance and Intimacy*. Several of their observations need to be taken into account in the context of this paper as well: namely, that the expression of sexual desire seems always to exceed the capacity of language to represent it and that sexuality does not have meaning outside of the discourses which construct and (re)circulate it, that is, that sexuality/sexual desire/sexual identities are produced through and exists in and through language (Harvey and Shalom 13, 18). We can add here also Butler's definition of gender identity (xi), extending it also to sexual identity as well as to sexual desire in order to reiterate that they do not emerge out of the depth of the self but are all discursive constructions of historical variability and enunciated at multiple sites. Cameron and Kulick also point out that while the study of language and identity places the emphasis on the self, the language of desire is always transitive and hence scholarship ought to investigate both the subject and object and the relationship between the two in language (107). Note that in the quote above Nádas says essentially the same thing when he says that he had to write about sexuality from

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the vantage point of one and the other protagonist, something that patriarchal discourse has tried to avoid by reducing female desire to an object position.

There is substantial scholarship available about the semiotics and the cultural discourses -- or cultural silences -- of desire, including on the absence of terminology for some female sex organs (Braun and Kitzinger), on gender-linked terminology for male sexual organs (Cameron; James), on the sexual semiotics of the derogation of women (Sutton; Hines); on the shifting meaning of rape and the actual absence until recently of a multitude of terms denoting sexual danger and defilement such as "wife battering," incest, date/marital rape, indecent exposure, and sexual harassment (Clarke; Plummer; Vasvári, "Buon cavallo e mal cavallo" <http://magyar-irodalom.elte.hu/palimpszeszt/21_szam/01.htlm>; "'Buon cavallo e mal cavallo'"), on the self-censoring of desire in women's life writing in diaries (Conlan), on silencing or rewriting of sexuality relating to the Holocaust (Elman; De Costa; Davis; on heterosexist erasure of lesbian desire see Hantzis and Lehr; on silencing lesbian desire in translation see Diaz-Diocaretz; Klaw; Wildemann; Parker); on the discourse of romance in times of war (Darian-Smith); on the linguistic encoding of sex, romance, and intimacy, such as, for example, in baby talk and pet names among hetero- and homosexual couples (Harvey and Shalom); on contrasting female and male sexual talk (Crawford); on the discourses of flirting, wolf-whistling, and sexual harassment (Kissling; Quinn); on the language of straight and queer personal ads (Coupland; Livia, "Camionneuses"), on desire and men's magazines (Benwell; see also Fan <http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol8/iss1/3>), on the expression of a variety of desires in women's versus men's straight and gay soft- and hardcore pornography (Friday; Bright; Patthey-Chavez and Youmans; Rowe; Russo and Torres; Patthey-Chavez, Clare, and Youmans; Heywood; Christian-Smith; Ensler; Joshi; Pavda); on closeted queer desires in heterosexual texts (Hardin); on coming-out stories as discourse of desire (Saks and Curtis; Penelope and Wolf; Béres-Deák; Borgos; Herman), on feminism and female desire (Hollway; Negra <http://www.genders.org/g39/g39_negra.html>), on lesbian print culture and desire (Levy; Brandt; Juhasz; Adam; Foote), on transgendered desires (Epstein), on women talking back to hegemonic discourses of desire (Bland and Barrett; Fricke; Coates; Watts; Bailey; Califia; Califia and Sweeney), on ethnicity, race, and desire (Hamonds; Quiroga; Johnson), on cyber/virtual sex talk in chat rooms and in commercial telephone sex (Hall; Waldinger); on love addiction (Norwood), on desire and the performance of masculinity (Redman), on erotic taboos and fantasies in women's lives (Vance; Webster), on desire and pedagogy (Davis; Bartlett; Pellegrini; Tretheway), and, perhaps most interestingly, on the (semi)silent discourses of deviant behavior and as-yet not expressible forms of desire, such as, for example, zoophilia, incest, female anonymous sex, women who pay for sex, anti-monogamy feminism, female sexual exhibitionism fetishes, masturbation stories, pedophilia (Plummer; Caldas-Coulthard; Roof; Gates; Millet; Jackson; Bentley; Benwell), on translating gay male camp discourse (Harvey; Keenaghan). Finally, one might mention emerging new discourses, such as gay romantic novel already cited above, "slash fiction," fan rewriting on straight texts into campy gay versions and other forms of re-scripting hegmonic romance (Stacey and Pearce; Pearce and Wisker; Hamming <http://www.genders.org/g34/g34_hamming.html>), or the linguistic construction of the websites of binational heterosexual couples (Rao <http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol7/iss4/8/>).

Next, I discuss briefly selected aspects of poetic expression of gay male desire including some examples in Hungarian. This would be best done in contrast to varieties of lesbian poetics, such as Liz Yorke's "Constructing a Lesbian Poetic for Survival" or J. Bristow's *Sexual Sameness: Textual Difference in Lesbian and Gay Writing*, which I can only mention here. Charles Lambert, in his paper "Speaking Its Name: The Poetic Expression of Gay Male Desire," asks what is gay poetry and concludes that it does not count as such if the readers have to rely on biographical conjectures about an author, who speaks in a double discourse, understood only by the initiated, by leaving ambiguous the sex of the beloved, and exploiting the English genderless second person "you," rather than using the third-person pronoun "he" (on the question of readers' ability to gauge the gender of the author of

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an erotic/pornographic text, see Tötösy, "Literature and Cultural Participation" 68-78). It is not only gay poetry that uses this device but is also common that when someone records a song originally by someone of the opposite sex the pronouns and bits of the lyrics are changed to preserve the heterosexual narrative of the original (see Kulick and Cameron 50). On the other hand, English gay or lesbian speakers also have recourse to using the indefinite "they" in place of "she/he" when they want to avoid disclosing the sex of someone spoken about, as in "I have a friend coming in for the weekend and they are arriving late tonight." While hiding behind the unmarked second person pronoun is one major linguistic feature of closeted gay poetry in English, it gets more complicated if we compare other languages. For example, when during the writing of her dissertation *Translating Poetic Discourse: Questions in Feminist Strategies in Adrienne Rich* Miriam Diaz-Diocaretz realized that when she translated the "universalized" poetry of Adrienne Rich into Spanish, there was no way that the identity of the second person could be kept closeted or when Gerevich could claim that the Hungarian genderless third person "ö" allowed him to write with playful ambiguity (on languages with genderless third person see Hellinger and Mannheim; for Hungarian, Laakso): Gerevich suggests that in Hungarian one can avoid making a distinction and (the gender of a person) is found out only if a verse names the person addressed, as in the poet Attila József names Flóra or as Gyula Juhász names Anna, or if the poet writes a kind of erotic verse in which the sexual organs have a role. Compare in this context the playful poem by Lovas Nagy I quote above. In the Hungarian Chloe's object of affection is mentioned four times -- twice by the nouns "uniformed [one]" ("egyenruhás"), "armed [one]" (fegyveres"), once with the epicene third person pronoun "ő" and once with that same pronoun deleted but understood after "look at [him/her]" ("nézed" [you]) before the punch line "angel-faced policewoman" ("angyalarcú rendőrnő") the final revelation that the police officer is female. Although Hungarian, as Gerevich says, allows for the poet to play with this ambiguity, it is likely that any but a most closeted lesbian-only readership who is also familiar with biographical information on the author of the poem would nevertheless initially read a poem that starts with a female name, Chloe, assuming in those first four instances that the beloved is male; this is, in fact, precisely what makes the punch line funny.

The difference between the Hungarian and English gender system is that in my translation I had a very hard time to avoid revealing the beloved's gender prematurely, as it were. In the case of the two nouns I was able to find gender-neutral substitutes with officer, but only because these terms, like flight attendant or chairperson, have come to be adopted by conscious language reform in English (note that I might have also tried to use "cop," which technically could refer to either gender but readers would still have assumed a male person). However, I could solve the third-person she/he only by avoidance of the object pronoun through rewriting. On the other hand, to illustrate that translation (does not only) involve(s) loss, my translation of the policewoman's "bot" / "stick" as nightstick, which just happens to be the precise colloquial term in US-American English for "baton," actually adds a humours double-entendre unavailable in the original. Further, Lambert, similar to Gerevich, points out that even if a poet uses the second person, he/she can chose to disambiguate the text by lexical devices, such as naming the lover, or itemizing eroticized body parts, and, in contrast to female-authored poetry, some gay authors do so with an obsessive taxonomy and consciously disruptive use of sexual slang, using terms such as "cock" (sucking), "prick," "blowing," etc., and with other taboo features, such as mention of body odors of armpits, savory with sweat, broad breasts with nipples, and so on. Here is another example, showing all these devices, and again featuring the already familiar eroticization of the nipple: "Rick Asleep. Your naked chest / breathing / nipples / corks bobbing / on a hot sweet sea" (Ian Young, "Rick Asleep" qtd. Lambert 212). Such linguistic juxtapositions may be complemented by discursive ones, where, for example, features of traditional love poetry are conflated with unadorned descriptions of oral sex, as in: "Sometimes when I'm at the beach I see your muse. / He's tall, good looking, has dark blond hair / And a bulge in the crotch of his blue bikini" (R. Daniel Evans, "I Praise" qtd. in Lambert 215). Such a collage of lexical and discourse

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strategies seems, on the one hand, to aim to excite readers by a kind of camp performativity (on camp see, e.g., Meyer; Michaisiw; Komins <http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol3/iss1/3/>) of disruptive taboo features, and, on the other, to distinguish gay texts as consciously liberating discourse and resist a kind of universalizing, ahistorical hegemonic romantic reading.

In the above quoted section of Gerevich's text we see that he follows all the techniques I am discussing by contrasting his version of desire -- a term borrowed from English as a form of gayspeak -- with all the hackneyed conventions of romance. His version of desire is an empty, unkempt, uninviting apartment and the beloved -- named explicitly as a male -- one who can be enjoyed only in fantasy, or, at best, as an anonymous encounter. In a much longer poem, "A gimnazista" ("The High School Student"), Gerevich describes a one-night stand with a paradoxically innocent but yet sexually expert pimpled adolescent who still cherishes a vain belief in lasting romantic love, reminding the poet briefly of his own youth but ultimately just boring him: "Sometimes I think of him, his blonde head, / Because I also started this way … / I felt sorry for, bored by him and myself in him. / Already on the street I had warned him … / I'm just like all the others" ("Néha gondolok rá, szőke fejére, / Mert én is így kezdtem … / Sajnáltam és untam, magamat is benne. / Már az utcán figyelmeztettem, / Olyan vagyok mint a többiek … / Most már a nevét sem tudom" [*Férfiak* 73]). While superficially the poem might be read as merely a pessimistic appraisal of gay life, in fact, with its subversion of all conventions of the romantic script it reflects equally back on the lies of the dominant discourses of compulsory heterosexuality. Following a more general discussion of a variety of examples of queer discourses of desire, I have focused on the particular example of the camp Hungarian queerspeak that András Gerevich has successfully created in his poetry by, as Rusty Barrett has described in an English-language gay context, adopting a "linguistics of contact" focusing on encounters across linguistic boundaries and mixing and switching linguistic as well as discourse codes. What Gerevich achieves is not only to focus on the discursive construction of the body and desire in "queer" erotic behavior but at the same time his literary representation of camp talk with its citational fluidity is a sign of gay resistance to prevailing monologic, straight, and homophobic erotic discourse. Specifically, he highlights the incongruity inherent in the juxtaposition of a detailed interest in the mechanics of sex with traditional adherence to rules of patriarchal romance. In his highlighting of the discursive interrelation of language, sexuality, and gender he achieves the beginning of a radical queer approach to Hungarian culture, society, and identity, where besides the few authors I have mentioned there is very little contemporary gay literature which dares to openly textualize issues of desire.

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