Radical Love, Visionary Politics: The Adventure of Harry Hay

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Keynote Address

Radically Gay: The Life and Visionary Legacy of Harry Hay

SEPTEMBER 27-30, 2012

NEW YORK CITY

Rev. 10/14/12

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> Its the summer of 1982 and my partner, Bradley Rose and I, are crammed into the front of Harry and John's Datsun pickup careening down the mountain roads of Southern California, and Harry is regaling us with the story of the Milk Strike of 1934, when he hurled a brick at a mounted policeman and then set off on a wild chase through tenements of Bunker Hill and an encounter with a legendary queen named Clarabell.
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> Driving with Harry was not for the faint of heart. Harry did not view the lines on the road as limits or guides for driving in, they were frontiers to be explored, limits to be tested, vantage points from which to view the others lanes. And so we're swerving back and forth, story goes on, and Brad and I are exchanging nervous glances, waiting for a pause. Finally, Harry took a breath and Brad jumped in, "Harry…aren't you driving on the shoulder of the road right now? Oh, yes, yes, my dear…now where was I at, oh yes …"
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> A year later, we rent a houseboat in the San Joaquin delta. The idea was for the four of us to spend a few leisurely days tied up along the riverbanks, cooking, eating, and talking as we always did. Of course we all took a turn driving the boat…and how do you think Harry piloted our scow? Exactly the way he drove, full throttle, swerving from bank to bank, while John admired the ecosystems along the riverbank, our dog Steve was feeling the wind in his face, and Brad and I are try to resisting the temptation to grab the wheel from Harry's hands and steer toward deeper waters.

That's the way it was with Harry, and for nearly 15 years were an intrepid foursome. Piling into Harry and John's little pickup, heading off in every direction where Harry thought there was something we should see, experience, discuss—from old missions, to living pueblos, museums and hot springs, visits with homophile elders and crazy characters he had a way of befriending, irrigation ditches where the water ran upstream, mountain lakes in the Sierra Nevadas where, Harry was certain, young Native Americans had their vision quests, pueblo ruins where a Tewa elder had once told him, "That is where your people lived." And every Christmas a tree fastidiously decorated with pagan symbols and Harry's turkey stuffing that took all night to make. We stayed in the camper shell unloaded onto the driveway next to their cottage in LA, with avocados from the overhanging tree

plopping onto the roof while we slept, Harry drinking Nescafe and taping music, John tinkering in his workshop making kaleidoscopes.

For me, it began in the summer of 1976, while I was an intern at the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, as it was then called, here in New York. I was 21, a college student from Missoula, Montana. In a closet with the mimeo machine I found a thin black bound book with a bold yellow title: "Homosexuals Today 1956." Published by ONE, Inc., it had an essay by Harry telling the story of the original Mattachine.

In those years, gay politics tended to polarize between a leftist view that considered the very notion of an lgbt movement too single-issue to be a part of the real struggle of the working class and against imperialism, and that of the assimiliationists, who simply wanted gays to send them checks so they could lobby liberals and, please, don't do drag at the parade. In fact, skip the parade. But in Harry's story of early Mattachine I sensed another kind of politics, and I wanted to know more. I finally met him at the first radical faerie gathering in 1979 in Arizona, and then again at the next national gathering, when Bradley Rose joined me.

On an evening in 1982, my adventures with Harry took a new turn, when we were talking about ancient history, and I asked a question. "Well if you want know the answer," he said, "you'll have to get into *that*," and he gestured vaguely toward a dark corner. There, I discovered, was a stack of pressboard boxes filled with notes, typed and handwritten, on half sheets of letterhead purloined from the companies where Harry had worked over the years.

I spent three years reading Harry's notes, copying and indexing them. Gradually, the idea came for a small project. An article, perhaps, on the Native American two-spirit

tradition, but one that focused on a single tribe to do what Clifford Geertz calls "thick description." By the end of the 1980s that had become a book, *The Zuni Man-Woman*, with one before it, *Living the Spirit*, a collection of writings by lesbian and gay Native Americans, and one after it, *Changing Ones: Third and Fourth Genders in Native North America*. By then I had gone back to graduate school and received my Ph.D. in History of Consciousness from UC/Santa Cruz. But Harry's research and his constant dialogue continued to spur me.

Harry had drawn my attention to non-western patterns of homosexuality and to the voices of indigenous and people of color not being included in lgbt studies. That led me to work on two other projects, Stephen Murray's, *Islamic Homosexualities* and *Boy-Wives and Female Husbands: Studies in African Homosexualities*—works that still stand as rather lonely hilltops on a barren plain. And like Harry, I found that my scholarly interests led to, indeed, demanded activism. For nearly ten years I worked with the Gay American Indians organization in San Francisco, learning how to make frybread, attending powwows and memorials for the many members lost to AIDS, and laughing until my sides hurt at stories told late into the night about that crazy trickster, the white man.

In 1995, I published *Queer Spirits*, a collection of myths and folklore with an exploration of gay psychological archetypes. Both Harry and John made many contributions to that project. My last book, *Jesus and the Shamanic Tradition of Same-Sex Love*, is the most deeply influenced by Harry and the most like him—that is to say, over the top, speculative, quixotic. I tried to carry forward not only Harry's thinking about subject-subject consciousness, but what I learned in the course of the HIV epidemic.

It's been several years now since my travels with Harry, John, and Brad came to an end. Brad succumbed to AIDS in 1996; Harry and John are gone. Tonight, I stand here not as a

scholar or writer, but as a witness. A witness to two epic events in lgbt history, which it is my job to remember: the epidemic and Harry Hay. Such is life. As Bradley wrote in his journal days before he died: “What I like, what I’m drawn to, the intense, fascinating glamour of the world, is its totality. Light and dark. Life and death. Pain and pleasure.”

It is my great pleasure and honor to be your witness tonight for the happiest part of my life. My adventures with Harry Hay.

The Importance of Harry Hay

On August 10, 1948, Harry Hay wrote a prospectus that anticipated the goals, forms, and institutions of today’s international lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender movement to an extent that was truly prophetic—and for six decades, he brooded over this new movement as it sputtered to life, nudging it onto its feet in the 1950s, steeling its resolve in the 1960s, challenging it to claim its rightful place among the great causes of our time, until 2002, when still grumbling and grousing, still issuing alarums and calls, his brow furrowed at the horizon, he passed. He was 90.

Up close Harry’s life is trees swaying in a turbulent wind, but from the ridges above it is a forest rich and verdant. Creating a movement to secure the human dignity of sexual minorities was his vision; finding a Whitmanic brotherhood of gay comrades in which to live and learn, which he first imagined as a young man working shoulder-to-shoulder with Wobblies in the fields of Nevada was his dream. And he realized both. Harry died in the arms of his beloved radical faeries with the love of his life, John Burnside, by his side. These two boys, for nearly four decades , were together clinging, never leaving, excursions making, fulfilling their foray—and walking into the pages of history.

On this occasion of the centennial of Harry's birth, let us celebrate not only the triumph of his life, but as well all that our movement has achieved in the span of a single lifetime. From a bold proposal typed in the wee hours of the morning to a movement of international scope and influence. Today our dignity is affirmed by presidents, nations, and world organizations, and our cause—freedom from hate, liberation from shame—captures the imagination of everyone who yearns to be true to themselves. Welcome to Glee nation!

Tonight, I want to talk about the importance of Harry Hay, his activism and ideas, and the adventure that awaits those willing to engage his remarkable body of work. It's a radical enterprise—in the sense of the word that Harry liked to point out, "to the root." For in exploring Harry's life and thought we will be returning to the roots of lgbt liberation, contemplating not only its proximate causes and circumstances, but as well the nature of the inner conflict that finds it resolution in an act of sheer audacity: declaring an identity, signing up for a cause.

When it comes to our movement's origins, Harry Hay is the taproot. I'm not claiming for him the title of founder—as if that were a championship title. And I'm not calling him our Martin Luther King, Jr. or Cesar Chavez or Dolores Huerta or Robin Morgan. He is simply our Harry Hay; a leader of equal stature, but in a style specific to our community. And if you have difficulty putting together the idea of "major historical figure" and "really big queen"—well, you've come to the right place! Because I will argue that this drama queen, in his Holy Fool outfit of jeans and camouflage skirt and fake pearls, ranks among the most inspiring and courageous civil rights leaders in American history.

In the 1950s, Harry was not alone nor the first to challenge society's treatment of homosexuals. Writers like Robert Duncan, Gore Vidal, and James Baldwin all published

works offering a defense of homosexuals and challenging the prejudice against us. Social scientists like Alfred Kinsey, Donald Webster Cory and Evelyn Hooker were taking on the biases of their disciplines. And activists like Paul Goodman, Bayard Rustin, and David McReynolds were beginning to step out of the closet. But Harry did something none of these others did: he called a meeting.

He's best known for his role in starting the original Mattachine Society (the Mattachine Foundation was its incorporated umbrella organization). Between 1950 and 1953, Harry Hay…Chuck Rowland…Dale Jennings…Bob Hull…Konrad Stevens…James Gruber…and Rudi Gernreich built an organization that used consciousness-raising groups to recruit members; held fundraisers, events, and lectures; spun off a publication; successfully defended one of its members against entrapment; distributed flyers and leaflets; and began polling political candidates. By 1953 perhaps 5,000 people in Northern and Southern California had attended Mattachine activities.

Then a local newspaper columnist darkly hinted that a "strange new pressure group" named Mattachine might have members that were pal-ing around with terrorists—they called them Commies then—some members panicked. Harry, of course, was a big Commie, so were others among the organizers. Two conventions were called in the spring of 1953. On vote after vote, the founders and their original vision were affirmed. But red-baiting by conservative dissidents and the fear of investigation led the founders to make a dramatic decision. To give the organization a clean slate, they resigned.

Make no mistake, the founders were not booted out or voted down. The grassroots, activist Mattachine was betrayed by assimilationists who were threatening to take names to the FBI. But even more heartbreaking—its story was supressed. The young activists of

the post-Stonewall years—my generation—had no idea that a grassroots, liberation-based movement existed before. Not until Jonathan Katz's 1976 *Gay American History* did we know, and what a surprise it was, that an activist movement had flourished over a quarter of a century earlier. And it had all been thought up by a man who used theory and skills he had learned as a card-carrying member of the Communist Party of the USA. But the best surprise—he was still alive!

By then, however, Harry appeared to be retiring into obscurity in northern New Mexico. When John D'Emilio summed up Harry's post-Mattachine career in *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities*, he wrote, "He never again occupied a central role."

Who knew Harry would return to Los Angeles in 1979, and resume a life of renewed, indeed relentless, activism, writing, and speaking lasting over twenty years, and along the way launch yet another movement—the unruly, indefinable, incomparable radical faeries? Then, in 1990, we got Stuart Timmons' masterful biography, its pages brimming with the names of the activists, actors, artists, writers, musicians, dancers, political figures, and others Harry had known, a Who's Who of bohemian Los Angeles in the mid-twentieth century. And the causes—from unionism to the Spanish Civil War to civil rights, Harry joined them all. And he continued making high profile interventions into lgbt politics well into his 70s and 80s, whenever he felt voices were being excluded. But even with all this, Harry's intellectual and literary output remained virtually unknown. And so, in 1996, to fill in one more part of the story, I published a collection of Harry's writings called *Radically Gay*.

Not to put too fine a point on it, but the man has cred—he talked it, he walked it, he pranced it [**aside**]. He did not make money off it, seek a title for it, or earn a salary when he

did it. He fundamentally got racism, sexism, patriarchy, heterosexism, and class. And in his later years he got anarchism, leather, and mushrooms. Harry Hay is the real deal. And to my mind, the best kind of hero, because, like Harvey Milk, he had so many flaws. He can't be followed, he keeps changing lanes. And if you should happen to think for a moment that he's the greatest gay guy since Whitman or Plato, you will be disabused. He fails to live up to his own ideals, he stabs your chest with his finger to make a point, he storms out of the room in a fit of pique… your projections never get a chance to take hold.

But above all, Harry got queer liberation. And his greatest contribution was the breakthrough, won after years of self-examination and inquiry, that enabled him to see in queer folks a people.

We're together in this room tonight because we all have some kind of relationship to a group of people known as lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender. It is almost impossible for us to imagine the consciousness of those living in a time when there simply was no such group, not in the minds of who those who engaged in homosexuality or whose gender was different, not in the language of the time. As Harry so often pointed out to any who would listen, when he was a young man there was no word for talking about "us"—no common term that didn't amount to a *maledictum* or provoke nervous giggles. We were "that way," "sensitive," "touched"; we were "aunties," "nancies," or "rough trade." Nothing frustrated Harry more than the anachronistic projection of our modern self-awareness onto the times he lived in as a young man. He would have bristled the title of tonight's play, *The Temperamentals*—a term only used as an adjective in his time. Harry's point is that the leap from adjective to noun had not been made, and until it had, queers did not and could not think about themselves in collective ways. It was literally unthinkable.

In the 1930s, when Harry proposed to his boyfriend, Will Geer, the leftist actor who ended his career playing Grandpa Walton, that they start a society of "us" and have serious discussions, Geer snipped back, "But honey, *what* would we talk about?"

Geer was putting it politely. Henry Gerber's comments, a leftist like Harry, who also tried to "call a meeting" in Chicago in the 1920s but was soon arrested, provides a blunter appraisal of the prospects Harry's faced. "The first difficulty," Gerber recalled, "was in rounding up enough members and contributors so the work could go forward. The average homosexual, I found, was ignorant concerning himself. Others were fearful. Still others were frantic or depraved. Some were blasé. Many homosexuals told me that their search for forbidden fruit was the real spice of life. With this argument they rejected our aims. We wondered how we could accomplish anything with such resistance from our own people." (388)

So how *do* you call a political meeting of a group of people who call each other the "friends of Dorothy"? And please remember: While the baleful influence of the medical model was already bearing down on queer self-esteem in these years, the word "homosexual" was not in common American dictionaries and would not be for a decade or more

Looking back now, Harry's faith in the possibility of loving ourselves and each other, and his intuition that the powerful act of self-redemption we call coming out could unleash immense energies for social change, seems all the more visionary. He knew that having an answer to the medical model was not enough; and, indeed, the Mattachine founders wasted little time thinking up arguments for psychiatrists. Will Geer's question was the gordion knot that had to be cut if there was to be a movement.

The answer came in 1948. The story is apocryphal—but bears repeating. That August Harry attended a party of what turned out to be all gay men. He had a copy of the Kinsey report under his arm, and he had just come from signing a petition to place Harry Wallace's name as a candidate for president on the California ballot. Beer flowed, talked followed, and that night a new idea was born.

Now, Wallace's third-party candidacy was drawing support from many activists like Harry, whose roots lie in the Popular Front politics of the 1930s and 40s. This was the period when American Communists forged alliances with a wide range of groups that opposed fascism and the worst ills of capitalism. In America, opposing fascism meant fighting racism and aiding those targeted by it, especially African-Americans. The Party lent aid to African-American causes and organizations, and wide-ranging discussions among Party intellectuals extended Marxist principles to make the case that cultural, racial and ethnic minorities had common cause with the working class—over and against an older view that considered minorities the byproduct of capitalism's attempt to divide and conquer.

In Southern California, not uniquely but especially, African-Americans were one of several groups experiencing racism, and they all had a common enemy in brutally repressive law enforcement agencies and local governments dominated by business interests. The Commies worked with them all. And so, in mid-twentieth century Los Angeles, as Daniel Hurewitz shows in his marvelous book, we see the chrysalis of what was to come—multiculturalism, an analysis of the relationship between class and racism and sexism, and the ever-shifting coalitional politics that are now so characteristic of the American city.

Meanwhile, at a party in an apartment in LA, the discussion ranged from Kinsey and his startling revelation of the frequency of homosexuality in America, to the Wallace campaign. Harry tossed out the idea that a discrete organization, calling itself perhaps, Bachelors for Wallace, could lobby for a plank in the platform supporting the right to privacy. The idea took off. But at dawn's early light, when the revelers straggled home to sleep it off, Harry was pouring coffee and sitting down at the typewriter.

When he pulled out the last sheet of paper, he had created a prospectus of brazen scope. It projected an organization that would engage in full-out civil rights advocacy, provide social and legal services, have a research and education division, and offer social and cultural activities. If that weren't bold enough, the prospectus had the audacity to cite in its support two of the major international statements on human rights of the World War II era, the Atlantic Charter and that of the United Nations.

And in this text Harry uses the word *Minority* fourteen times—here as "Androgynous Minority"—but that qualifier was soon replaced with "homophile" or "homosexual," then later still "gay" and "faerie" and "third gender" and others. But the denominator was always—minority. And this is new.

The other Mattachine organizers challenged him to flesh out the idea. Chuck Rowland—and Chuck, by the way, besides being one of the sweetest men you could ever know, played a role in Mattachine no less important than Harry's—Chuck recalled, "I kept saying, 'What is our theory?' Having been a Communist, you've got to work with a theory. 'What is our basic principle that we are building on?' And Harry said, 'We are an oppressed cultural minority.' And I said, 'That's exactly it!'"

Harry's ideas were discussed extensively by the founders (interminably, some of them recalled), at discussion groups, and in presentations by Harry. When the group adopted a mission statement in 1951, homosexuals were referred to as an "oppressed minority." The organizers put the theory to practice. The thesis states that we are a group, so discussions were centered around questions the questions this generates: What *do* we have common? What experiences *do* we share? How can we help each other? The results were powerfully cathartic—and by 1953 the discussion groups had gone viral.

The most fully develop version of the thesis is in notes Harry wrote in 1960. He begins by borrowing the definition of cultural minorities from a text he used in his Marxist classes, one often cited in the Party's discussions about African-Americans, which states: "A nation [which here has the sense of "a people," or a minority, within in a larger state] is a historically-evolved, stable community of language, territory, economic life and psychological make-up manifested in a community of culture." No *single* characteristic is determinative in constituting a nation, "only a sum total of characteristics, of which, when nations are compared, one characteristic (national character), or another (language), or a third (territory, economic conditions), stands out in sharper relief." As Harry sums it up, all groups "whose motivating persuasions and/or fundamental inclinations evoke decisive patterns towards a socially specific way of life, are to be seen as Social Minorities."

Harry provides several examples to show the variety of ways in which minority identities can be constituted and then creatively reformulated to survive over time. Two are especially key to his argument. The Nisei were the Japanese-Americans interred during World War II, a racist policy Communists like Harry had protested. Had the Nisei been deported to Japan, as was threatened, Harry observes, their American outlook would have

marked them as a minority there as well, even though they remained racially and linguistically Japanese. Similarly, the former American slaves who established a colony in Liberia were black but no longer African; they became a minority within the nation they created.[1]

In each case, social and historical contingencies trump essential traits. Now Harry turns to the case of modern homosexuals. They do not come from a single race or have a single language; they do not have cross-generational kinship systems. But Harry argues that they have two of the four variables in his paradigm: a shared psychological make-up or outlook and distinctive modes of communication. In light of his previous examples, this is enough. As for the other variables, Harry notes, they can be "historically constituted."

I call this the cultural minority "lite" thesis, or, fumbling for a more precise term, the existential version. It says that common experiences of being queer, facing hostile families and communities, learning strategies for surviving, hooking up with others like us, and the values that accrue from these experiences, provide common bonds for a movement and the seeds of a culture. This lite version of Harry's thesis does not depend on transcendental claims regarding a continuous past or essential traits. It cannot be accused of essentialism in the way that straw figure is usually held up. But as Harry's thinking developed, he elaborated this into what I call the full-on or transcendental version of the cultural minority thesis. While more controversial and easily stereotyped, I think it is a richer, more

[1] Now, it is lamentable fact that this text written by a certain Joseph Stalin, who was presumably describing the basis for the Soviet Union's policy of multiculturalism, which of course was a big lie. But Harry just as easily could have cited one of the multivariate models for describing minorities and ethnic communities that American sociologists of the Chicago School were introducing in the same period. Donald Webster Cory (Edward Sagarin) also described homosexuals as a minority in his book *The Homosexual in America*, published in 1951.

provocative hypothesis than that afforded by the existential version, and it is equally grounded in Marxist thinking.

Already by 1960, Harry's research had convinced him that we had a place in history that transcended modernity. And here is where the two exemplars Harry cited so often were key—the so-called two spirit or berdache roles of Native North America—which have many parallels worldwide—and the Fool, a folkloric figure in Renaissance Europe that Harry believed was a survival of an ancient, pre-Christian, agrarian village role. Harry concluded that these roles, beyond all their elements that strike us as exotic, involved craft and religious specialization. Crafts being tied to production, religion being connected to the redistribution of surpluses—this means that roles such as these are not epiphenomena of the superstructure but integral to the subject of Marxism—the social relations of production. And as I note in *Changing Ones*, what we see in these roles is one way that preclass societies with a gendered division of labor accommodate increased specialization—by multiplying genders.

Now all this is good historical materialism—but once placed into the kind of grand scheme of Marx and Engels—from tribes to feudalism to capitalism to utopia—it becomes a transcendental claim—with all its baggage. But I would argue that Harry's amendments to Marxian historiography are so provocative they're worth revisiting.

Sadly, if the cultural minority thesis is known at all, it is by the stereotypes of its critics. And, indeed, it is not an exaggeration to say that careers have been built on decrying this very notion that we are a minority or have a culture—our diversity, random distribution, and divisiveness clearly refute it. And this notion of identity—why, it's a category error, a

phantasm, an Althusserian interpellation, false consciousness, in Jeffrey Weeks' words, "a historical fiction, a controlling myth, a limiting burden."

You know, when I read this kind of thing I can't help but hear echoes of Plato's account of the soul yearning to escape the prison of the body and soar free in the heavenly aether of fluid identities, fluid sexualities, and fluid genders. Like a cruise in warm tropical waters with lots of gay sex but everyone has to take a vow of silence.

But a real debate between Harry Hay and anti-identitarian queery theory has never been held as far as I'm concerned . So let's do this thing now, let's have a smackdown right here in Proshansky Auditorium.

[get two empty chairs]

So…In this corner I give you Harry Hay, a contender for title of founder, survivor of 12 rounds before the House Committee on Un-American Activities, darling of the radical faeries…Harry, love the shawl and the camouflage skirt…and it looks like you turned in those fake pearls when you passed through the pearly gates. What's that…I didn't think so.

And in this corner, I give you the man whose single statement has done more to define lgbt studies than any single statement has ever defined a discipline before, professor of History of Systems of Thought, idol of graduate students wherever the humanities are still taught….I speak of none other than the author of page 43 of *The History of Sexuality*, Michel Foucault.

Michel….nice haircut by the way. And is that a new leather harness? I didn't think so. Okay, Michel…you've been dead longer…you go first.

> "As defined by the ancient civil and canonical codes, sodomy was a category of forbidden acts; their perpetrator was nothing more than the juridical

> subject of them. The nineteenth-century homosexual became a persona, a past, a case, a history, and a childhood, in addition to being a type of life, a life form and a morphology….We must not forget that the psychological, psychiatric, medical category of homosexuality was constituted from the moment it was characterized—Westphal's famous article of 1870…can stand as its date of birth—less by a type of sexual relations than by a certain quality of sexual sensibility, a certain way of inverting the masculine and the feminine in oneself….The sodomite had been a temporary aberration; the homosexual was now species."

Well put, Michel. Very compelling…the repetitive language; circling around and around then driving the point home; reaching deep into the archive to pull out a single text and wave it before us as the definitive marker of a discursive rupture. And the use of italics—you can't see them but I can—honestly, girl, if you capitalized some of these words and threw in a few exclamation marks I might think this was one of of Harry's texts.

Dare I say, we're clearly in the presence of two drama queens of the highest order?

And so Harry, what do you say?

Michel, you dumb bitch —okay, Harry wouldn't say that but I would. Harry would say, Michel honey, "homosexual" was not a kind of person, let alone a species, or way of life, and we didn't become a people in 1870. We simply became sick heteros—failed, depraved, deficient, deviated versions of the only kind of human there was—heterosexual. Taxonomy is not ontology. And perverts are not people, anymore than corporations are people, my friend.

And as for inverting masculine and feminine—did you ever ask the girls back in the schoolyard at the Lycée if they thought you threw a ball like them? They'd have told you that you didn't throw a ball like a girl, but like something *other*. Michel, honey, some of us may be a combination of hetero-female and hetero-male, but mostly we are a combination of *neither*.

Okay, very good, Harry.

But if you don't mind, I'd like to tap my heels now and transport myself back to my seminar days in the redwood groves of Santa Cruz, in order to carry your argument a bit further.

Foucault's text, cited so dutifully, for all purposes the imprimatur of legitimate lgbt studies, contains a phallocentric phlaw—I'm being pomo homo now, so I spelled it p-h-l-a-w. It postulates a binary of two discrete, symmetrical terms: homosexual and heterosexual. Harry is saying it's no binary at all, because one term, heterosexual, is always-already dominant. Homosexual is neither symmetrical to nor independent from heterosexual. It is merely its inferior, its subaltern, a parodic knock-off of the heterosexual. Its production serves only to perfect the idealized presence of the dominant term.

Harry, in rejecting the ontological claims Foucault makes for medical discourse, initiates a deconstruction of this binary that follows exactly the methodology of Jacques Derrida. First, he pinpoints the rupture that reveals its hierarchy: the characterization of the homosexual as inverting masculine and feminine, terms that depend on and presuppose heterosexuality. The homosexual is merely the internalization of heterosexuality's division of labor, a bad dream of a an imaginary that longs for the unity of its opposites. Harry postulates instead, not an opposition or a synthesis, but a supplement

that is neither or both parts of the opposition. This is what he is doing when he insists that we are neither hetero-male nor hetero-female, that we are not-men and not-women, or that we are characterized by neitherness. Note the play and undecidabilty. Rather than perfect the presence of the privileged term, they reveal the absences within it. And by continually reformulating the supplement, before it can be amplified to a stability, Harry creates a discourse of identity that refuses assimilation and reintegration, resists binaries, disrupts hierarchies.

Yes, "homosexual" constructed perverts so that they could be controlled. True that, as far it goes. But "homosexual" did not make us persons, it made us subhumans, just as racism made subhumans of people of color. Harry's cultural perspective upsets the Foucaultian apple cart. It asserts an ontological status not derived from, parallel to, or a reversal of heterosexuality, but just other. What *other*? As Harry wrote in 1970, "Let us enter this brave new world of subject-SUBJECT consciousness, this new planet of Fairy-vision, and find out."

And please note—what really separates Foucault and Hay is not constructionism versus essentialism. These are two versions of social constructionism. What distinguishes them are different views of Power. In Foucault, it's all top-down. Medical authorities write it, states enforce it, and bodies, in the moment of becoming subjects, are subjugated. But it's tautological. Since discourse theory does not require embodied actors, it does not find it necessary to provide evidence regarding who read these texts and if it mattered. For Harry, identity construction is creative, political, transactional…and it is active, identities are the result of identifying.

What Harry is saying, long-story-short, is this: juridico-medical discourse did not construct our identifies. Excuse me. *We* built that.

This debate might have actually happened when both men were alive if Mattachine had not been eviscerated in 1953 and Harry relegated to obscurity. But when Stonewall occurred Harry's thinking was not available, not a school of thought, not a book to cite. This does not diminish its significance, however. Instead, it gives us an opportunity to test it in another way—that is, how well does this thesis, developed in the early 1950s, predict and describe what eventually followed in the 1970s?

By the time of Stonewall, I would argue that the idea that we are a group had become self-evident, and this watershed occurred as a result of the growing migration of lgbt people to urban centers and the relentless persecution they faced when they got there. By 1969, it had become clear that society was out to get us and we were in it together. Will Geer's question was moot.

The 1970s saw a period of intense institution-building in which everything envisioned in Harry's prospectus was realized in one form or another. And all the organizations and agencies, the businesses and marketing schemes, political clubs and churches, parades and pop culture—and of course I should mention social media—all these premise a group of people, who have not one but various needs and interests, which they meet in whole or part by identifying with the group. A social minority by any other name.

As for politics….Mattachine called for queers to organize themselves and seek power within the terms of the existing bourgeois democracy, what I call progressive identity politics. Here's how Harry put it speaking to an audience of leftists in the 1990s: "We

Queers, having won our autonomy with no help from anybody, shall continue to maintain that autonomy. We shall be happy to walk with *any* group so long as we *and they* remain in a loving-sharing consensus. But the moment the consensus breaks, exercising our ancient prerogatives to totally-self-reliant independence—we Faeries *vanish*!"

If Harry Hay is the theory, Harvey Milk was the practice. I met Harvey in early 1978 in his tiny office in City Hall. He gleefully described what he was able to do with his new powers as a supervisor. He could have a letter written to the Chief of Police. And the Chief was legally required to reply. From being free to ignore us, to being required to reply to us is what power means. One of Harvey's apocryphal stories was about the day following his election, when he strode into Mayor Moscone's office, thumped on his desk, and announced, "I'm the queen now; if you want to get re-elected with gay support you need to deal with me." The message is the same as Harry's: We will walk with you, but no more divide and conquer, no more cooptation, no more voting us down because we're only 10% of your membership. Treat us individually as individuals, but when it comes to politics, we're a community.

Since Stonewall, the existential model of lgbt identity has been enough to unite us. It has given us an effective civil rights moment, a lively culture of resistance, and bonds of amazing strength that sustained us through the AIDS epidemic. But Harry believed lgbt people had a deep yearning to see themselves having a more meaningful place in the human story. The title of his never-finished book was to have been, "The Homosexual in Search of Historical Contiguity."

In the 1970s, he sensed that the existential gay community—the community organized around consumption, disposable income, and shopping and dining districts—was not

addressing the alienation many gay men still experienced…or was deepening it. A doubt remains at the core—if I'm not sick or deviant, if I'm normal, why don't I have a history? And if I'm different, what's the purpose of it? The response to the call put out by Harry, John, Don Kilhefner, and Mitch Walker in 1979 for gay men to explore these themes revealed the depth of this yearning…and the radical faerie development began. (BTW…hat's what Harry called it…a development.)

But I want to emphasize one point. Harry's thinking encompasses either and both of these—the minority lite version, grounded in the existential experience of being queer in America; and the full-on transcendental version, grounding us in the broadest narratives of human history. Both affirm identity, both affirm progressive identity politics.

The Future of Harry Hay

Harry Hay has been saved from obscurity. We won't forget him again. But of his full import the verdict is still out. Our greatest adventures with Harry Hay lie ahead.

Harry's book, *Radically Gay* is merely a plate of amuse-bouche, meant to awaken your palate. In archives in San Francisco, Los Angeles, and elsewhere, and in private collections who knows where, lies a vast trove—thousands of pages of notes and manuscripts, research materials, letters, documents, and photographs, and more. And as is fitting for a man who was one of the great raconteurs of all time, there are hundreds of hours of oral history, interviews, videotapes, and film. Here is where the legacy of Harry waits to be found.

There are a literary works—poetry, fiction, screenplays, lyrics, and stories—from the 1930s, and rough manuscripts from the period when Harry was a Marxist teacher. There is

Harry's research into music history during his involvement with People's Songs—Stewart Timmons counted over 500 citations and musical examples in Harry's notes—which culminated in a popular course called "Music…the Barometer of Class Struggle." This was nothing less than a complete recapitulation of European history with an analysis of the relationship between music, social organization, and resistance..

Harry was a major opera queen and he collected every recording he could get by gay composers or composers he suspected were gay, finding in the formal aspects of their music evidence of what he called the gay window. Much of this collection now resides at the Southern California Library for Social Studies and Research.

In the 1950s building on his insight into the economic and religious specialization of two spirit roles, Harry asked if could similar roles be found in the prehistoric societies of the Old World. This led to even more extensive research, in fields ranging from history to archaeology, anthropology, Biblical studies, and folklore. His writings in these years are peppered with names like Robert Graves, Joseph Campbell, James Frazer, Jane Harrison, E. P. Thomson, Gordon Childe, Ruth Benedict, Alfred Kroeber, Lionel Trilling, Edward Carpenter, Robert Pfeiffer—and more. In the 1960s, he dipped as well into ethology and sociobiology, admired the work of Konrad Lorenz, and made nuanced speculations on the substrates of homosexual behavior and orientation.

Harry's work is a powerful resource for queering some of the leading intellectual debates of the twentieth century. When you read his notes and commentaries, it's as if you're suddenly hearing a very smart, very gay voice interjected into a conversation that, when it first occurred, excluded us—along with a bunch of other folks, too.

Harry's papers are a resource as well for anyone researching the many causes and groups he was involved in. Two histories of People's Songs, for example, make no mention of Harry's significant contributions in Southern California. There needs to be a do-over on that. We deserve so much more research on Mattachine and the homophile period and its pioneers, and Harry's papers are a resource for this as well.

Now, it needs to be said, that Harry does not come with a user-friendly interface. He writes like he drove, willfully refusing to observe discursive regimes, genres, registers, and typographical conventions. At least the handwriting is always neat. But, it's worth the effort. Whenever he found that an authority, whether a scholar or a community leader, had ignored, misinterpreted, or dismissed evidence concerning homosexuality, he would say, "If they got that wrong what *else* did they get wrong?" Well, I think we should turn that upside down and back around onto Harry, and ask, considering his achievements, "If he got *that* right, what else did get right?"

Many of us here knew Harry. But none of us knew him before he was an old man. We can't help but think of him in the image he chose to cultivate in those years—our dear old eccentric brave quirky faerie elder. Harry, I'm calling you out. Some frog-skins are pretty, especially the ones with pink tutus, but it's time to shed your coy guise and let us see the shining prince beneath. For, truly, this prince is one of the towering intellectuals of lgbt liberation.

Ending: Reaffirming the Mattachine Pledge

Before we started tonight, we played you a very bad recording, filled with scratches and screeches. It's from a cassette tape Harry gave to Brad and me years ago, and it's a

version of an old folk song used by Dutch patriots in their wars with the Spaniards and by the Dutch resistance in World War II. This was the song that the Mattachine founders played during their membership initiation, and the recording you heard is from the very record they used, one of Harry's 78s.

If you can recall the tune again, and close your eyes, perhaps you can imagine what it sounded like loud and clear. And what it was like to be standing in a small circle in a small house in Los Angeles—the blinds closed; a pillow over the telephone because it might be bugged. You're holding hands with six other people, who love the same sex.

You know that what you're doing could cost you everything. Police bursting through the door this very moment is not out of the range of possibilities. And this is not Franco's Spain or Stalin's USSR. This is America in 1950. "Father Knows Best" is on the television and McCarthy is in the news. Homosexuals do not have the right to assemble, they do not have freedom of speech or a press; and they are not equal under any law anywhere.

But you've decided to hope for the best.

This is as deep as commitment gets.

I ask you to take this pledge in your hearts tonight. To make the same deep commitment to never again let a story like Mattachine be forgotten or let a younger generation doubt for minute that lgbt people aren't present in the world. We've made a promise—it gets better. Well, as Harry would put it, it better. We need to explode our movement tenfold in the next ten years, and make sure that every young person who watches Glee and lip synchs Lady Gaga and hears our call, and comes out...in high school…or middle school…or in the crib…has a support network. We need to form a circle

that links queer generations and swear to never let it be broken…in the words that our founders pledged six decades ago:

> "Our interlocking, sustaining and protecting hands guarantee a reborn social force of immense and simple purpose. We are sworn that that no boy or girl, approaching the maelstrom of being different, need make that crossing alone, afraid and in the dark, ever again."

Welcome to Planet Faerie! Please have a wonderful time. Argue and laugh and give each other lots of hugs because…you're all fabulous…thank you!