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The brotherhood of hate: Hyper-masculinity, same-sex desire and far-right identity in *Brotherhood*

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Abstract

The narrative of Danish director Nicolo Donato's 2009 film, *Brotherhood*, demonstrates how both the coming out and outing of a gay Neo-Nazi creates dramatic moments of transformation within the film's storyline. As a result, the audience has to confront the representation of unstable and asymmetrical acts of sexual, social, and political identification. These moments of identification involve acts of violence and betrayal that lead to the creation of a fluid sexual identity on screen. This article examines the choices of the characters within the film and the homosocial world that those characters purposely construct. In order to carry out that examination, key aspects of contemporary Danish political culture are assessed with a view to better understand the ascendancy of the far right, anti-migration rhetoric, and the centrality of that political culture within the stories that are told in *Brotherhood*. The collisions within the Neo-Nazi group over what defines hyper-masculinity, family, violence against migrants, and same-sex desire are best observed through an interdisciplinary analysis that combines film, queer, and sociological research. In the film, a violent, hyper-masculine Neo-Nazi authors a coming-out moment that is both unique and tragic. This assessment of the collisions between homosociality and homoeroticism in the lives of these men creates space for the important and productive analytical deconstruction of hyper-masculinity in a fictionalized Danish far-right political movement.

Keywords

Queer studies; Film studies; Danish political culture; Far-right; Homosociality; Hyper-masculinity; Coming-out

Introduction

The portrayal of the men involved in the far right is often limited to a simple narrative of angry, hyper-masculine men who display an unquenchable thirst for violence. As the storming of the United States Capitol on 6 January 2021 demonstrated, violence and hyper-aggression are only some of the key identity values that are important in the lives of these men. They are also united by their belief in a unique, white ethnic and racial purity, a strong allegiance to traditional gender roles, and the importance of military discipline to structure ordinary life. American media studies researcher Julia DeCook (2018) described the men of the Proud Boys gang, who would play a central role in the events at the Capitol, as a violent group who exult in Western chauvinism along with their veneration of “traditional gender norms and firmly patriarchal social structures...” (p. 498). Nevertheless, a deeper analysis is required to better understand the reasons that make male dominated, far-right groups attractive for certain men and the choices that those men make to create an environment where hatred and violence are core values. The collision of homosociality and masculine violence is also a central theme within Danish director Nicolo Donato’s film *Brotherhood* (2009). This article examines the choices of the characters within the film and the homosocial world that those characters purposely construct. That world is premised on the creation of spaces where barely concealed homoerotic desires take on a central role in a fictionalized far-right group’s camaraderie and activities.

The hyper-masculine bonding on display in Donato’s film co-exists in an uneasy relationship with both the homosocial and homoerotic. The narrative leads to a moment where a gay coming-out becomes inescapable. The film authors a tragic tale within which a Neo-Nazi is outed and then forced to come out. Jimmy’s story is marked by moments of violent refusal and the ultimate acceptance of his sexual identity. That revelation of identity ends in an orgy of betrayal and violence. At the conclusion of the film, the gang’s reprisal against Jimmy and his lover, Lars, ensures that a form of coming out takes place. Nevertheless, the audience is left to struggle with the question of how a gay identity can be both simultaneously adopted and rejected by a person who clearly identifies as a Neo-Nazi. The film’s storyline affords an opportunity to reflect on the connections between the homosocial and the homoerotic in a novel far-right group. It might be seductive to think that white nationalism and queer identities operate in exclusively separate spheres. Queer theorist Jasbir Puar (2007) points out that the connection is much closer because, “...some homosexual subjects are complicit with heterosexual nationalist formations rather than inherently or automatically excluded from or opposed to them” (p. 4). This notion of interconnection is further developed when Puar articulates the argument that the traditional association of queerness as a freedom from convention has itself become a regulatory function of identity (p. 22). Based on that understanding, she bluntly states, “...queer operates as an alibi for complicity with all sorts of other identity norms, such as nation, race, class, and gender, unwittingly lured onto the ascent toward whiteness.” (p. 24). In effect, her readers are asked to recognize that homosociality, violent pride in a white nationalist identity, and homoeroticism must not be understood as mutually exclusive from one another, but intimately linked together. In the film, that continuum is shown to be present in a violent and hyper-masculine Neo-Nazi gang that chooses to bond over their camaraderie, shared ideology, and homophobia. Within that environment, two of the gang’s members actively support the cause of white nationalism while they engage in a homoerotic love affair throughout the film’s storyline.

The film also reveals the potential for the effects of the entanglements associated with coming out to be both dissident and subversive. Such a notion is central to Judith Butler’s observations in her 1991 work, “Imitation and Gender Insubordination.” There, she evaluates the connections between coming out, the closet, and opacity with a proposition: “... being “out” must produce the closet again and again in order to maintain itself as “out.” In this sense, outness can only produce a new opacity; and the closet produces the promise of a disclosure that can, by definition, never come” (p. 16). Her comments explore the contours

of coming out and help to create a space to recognize the act as an unstable and re-iterative process. She does so when she proposes that full disclosure can never happen and the act of revelation never reveals everything. The mixture of entanglements based on politics, sexuality, and identities in the film demonstrates that whole truths are not always available. This challenge takes place because the audience is shown that queer self-identification and coming out are not the exclusive domain of those who identify with the mainstream of the LGBTQ+ community. In the storyline, two violent, hyper-masculine Neo-Nazis identify as men who have sex men (MSM) and then author a coming-out moment that is both unique and tragic. A productive analytical outcome of this research is that it creates space for an acknowledgment of the central roles of hyper-masculinity, homosociality, and homoeroticism within the Danish far-right political organization that appears on screen.

Through a close reading of several scenes from the film, a spotlight will be cast on the intimate connections that exist between hegemonic masculinity and homoeroticism within a storyline set in contemporary Denmark and focused on the members of a far-right and politically motivated gang. To support that analysis, a brief survey will illustrate how hyper-nationalist and anti-migration rhetoric have become central to the current political discourse in Denmark. The recognition of that cultural background is crucial to better understand the environment within which the film is situated. The paper will also assess the background to the choices that gay Neo-Nazis make through a review of relevant sociological and cultural research on the topic. At the end of the article, a form of unstable coming out will be shown as the inevitable outcome of the tragic drama that is central to this film. Within that narrative, the character Jimmy is forced to both repudiate and accept his sexual identity. This research will help to foster a better understanding of how a culture of violence and hyper-masculinity, that uneasily combines both homosociality and homoeroticism, can be both simultaneously embraced and rejected.

The Tone of the Debate: *Brotherhood* and the Far Right in Danish Political Culture

Brøderskab, released in English with the title *Brotherhood*, is a story of homosocial activity, homoerotic desire, and betrayal.¹ On the surface, the film's narrative is a simple story of a secret love affair between two men, the principal protagonists, Jimmy and Lars. Lars is a former sergeant in the Danish Army who is invited to join his local branch of the Neo-Nazi party. Jimmy is instructed by one of the party leaders, Michael, to indoctrinate Lars. Shortly after they start to live together, Jimmy and his protégé begin an intense sexual relationship. When Jimmy's brother, Patrick, is passed over for party membership in favour of Lars, the former goes into a rage that leads him to reveal to the party elders that his brother and Lars are lovers. As the members meet to discuss tactics, Patrick's rage is slowly brewing.

When the party members sit around a table in conference, the audience is greeted with the boisterous sounds of their discussion. In the confusion, Lars intervenes and offers to write a new propaganda leaflet directed against a refugee centre in the town. In that moment, Lars leads the group and he quickly comes up with a catchy slogan that will demonstrate the renewed and aggressive stance of the Neo-Nazis: "Pakis cost Denmark billions, a bullet only costs a nickel." (00:56:24-00:56:39) The others praise Lars' incisive contribution and assign him the task to get the flyers printed and distributed. In one of the next scenes, Jimmy and Lars are seen in a state of almost ecstatic joy as they work together, play together, and throw the flyers around the town centre late at night (01:02:23-01:02:49). The visual representation of the joy they feel in each other's company masks the hateful rhetoric contained in the flyers.

These scenes within the film underscore the power that far-right and nationalist political discourses have assumed in Denmark since 1990. Political science researchers René Karpantschhof and Flemming Mikkelsen (2017) define the spectrum of the far right in Denmark in the following terms:

¹ For additional analysis about the commercial and cultural reception of *Brotherhood*, see Vivarelli (2009) and Weissberg (2009).

The Danish radical right is a heterogeneous and changing sociopolitical conglomerate that has been designated in various ways such as extreme right, far right, populists, nationalists, racists, and neo-fascists, and recently new terms like national conservatives and Islam-critics have turned up. (p. 712)

Although the two researchers emphasize that the radical right in Denmark is an evolving political agglomeration, they also clearly indicate that it includes both far-right populists in conventional politics and Neo-Nazis. In the context of mainstream politics, the far-right populist party, the Danish People's Party (DPP), has come to dominate the political debate in Denmark over migration, Europe, and social welfare since its creation in the 1970s. Scandinavian political analyst Eirikur Bergmann (2017) argues that in the 1990s, as a response to increased immigration, "Denmark saw a restrictive turn from liberalism to ethno-cultural nationalism in a move towards a reinvention of Danish national identity..." (p. 51). The DPP has been able to foster a change across the mainstream political spectrum. Bergmann goes on to articulate that a, "clear shift to the right had occurred and both blocks in Danish politics—left and right—became much more anti-immigrant than before" (p. 61). The attractiveness of the DPP's approach to politics has been copied by more mainstream parties in order to assert new forms of Danish nationalism.

The party has both dominated, and structured, the political discourse in Denmark over the last 30 years. Scandinavian political researchers Anders Hellström and Peter Hervik (2014) point out: "The concept "tone of the debate" (tonen i debatten) is used in the Danish debate, according to which it refers to the DPP as a forerunner in the Nordic region for introducing the harsh uncompromising tone towards foreigners" (p. 451). The crucial word is tone, because the DPP has fostered an environment where strident views on immigration and migration govern the debate and any alternatives are excluded from the discussion. Hellström and Hervik develop their argument with the statement: "In Denmark, non-Western migrants are framed as some kind of existential threat that endangers the survival of the national community..." (p. 465). The DPP unceasingly articulates the need for the most restrictive immigration policies as an essential part of the revival of Danish national identity.

The particular approach that the DPP has chosen to follow is characterized by political science analysts Birte Siim and Susi Meret (2016) as a unique combination of welfare-nationalism with a strong nativist agenda that is justified through a narrow reading of Danish history (p. 115). The choice to reinterpret history has been a critical component of the political path taken by Danish anti-immigrant far-right nationalists. Norwegian political and cultural researcher Tore Bjørgo (1995) makes the claim that the symbolism of the Danish resistance against Nazi Germany during the Second World War has been captured and transformed by the far right (p. 188). In that analysis, the Danish resistance is reworked as a historical precedent to, "justify violence against immigrants, political opponents and democratic institutions..." (p. 188). This twisting of history has, according to Bjørgo, met with very little ideological opposition from the broader Danish public (p. 188). The use of the powerful historical symbol of Danish survival has broad recognition and value in Danish society. As a result, far-right nationalists in Denmark have found a historical marker that serves as a justification for their rhetoric, policies, and violence in the 21st century.

The DPP represents a polished version of an anti-immigrant, far-right, and ultra-nationalist political culture. *Brotherhood* depicts how an activist political culture to the extreme right, that includes Neo-Nazism, has thrived in the Danish context because of an appeal to both anti-immigrant and hyper-nationalist discourses. Both the Danish Neo-Nazis and the far right DPP share a common set of values. Karpanstschof and Mikkelsen (2017) define the first of those as a belief in the Danish people as ethnically homogenous and a superior Western civilization (p. 712). They go on to include in the list a series of beliefs that cut across the far right. That list includes the belief that Muslims must be expelled from Danish society, the conviction that native-born Danes are the supreme moral authority of the

nation, and a willingness to stigmatize all opponents as traitors (pp. 712-713). These values are continually articulated and reinscribed by both the DPP and the Danish Neo-Nazis. The expression of those values is illustrated by the scene wherein Lars proposes the militant propaganda strategy.

The toxic rhetoric and the consequent political action continues in the present moment. In June 2021, the Danish Parliament passed a law that would require asylum seekers to Denmark to be relocated outside of the European Union before their applications will be processed. On 3 June 2021, Danish government spokesman, Rasmus Stoklund, was quoted in *The Guardian* issuing this unvarnished assessment: "If you apply for asylum in Denmark you know that you will be sent back to a country outside Europe, and therefore we hope that people will stop seeking asylum in Denmark." Danish society now confronts the ever increasing power of a political philosophy from the far right that has been rendered both normative and conventional. This power shift is structured by political rhetoric that is premised on an agenda that combines ultra-nationalism and a virulent opposition to all forms of immigration. Political philosopher Lasse Lindkilde (2014) contends that the result is a "mainstreaming of previously predominantly far-right positions leading to new (at times surprising) political alliances regarding value politics in Denmark (p. 376). The seductive nature of far-right ideology in Denmark has both closed off a critical discussion and an assessment of the choices made within Danish society. The film helps to disrupt the tone of the collective conversation and re-open the debate.

The Brotherhood of Hate: The Background to the Film

The toxic combination of violence, hyper-masculinity, and anti-migrant sentiment that is central to the film's narrative is best illustrated through a brief examination of a key scene. The scene begins in a bar. As they prepare to leave, one of the gang members is heard saying that it is "time to get some pussy." In an instant, the desire for heteronormative sexual conquest by these men is overemphasized for the audience. In the next moment, a group of men who appear Arab and Middle Eastern enter the bar. The first response from one of the gang members is the exclamation: "There's some pussy right there" (01:06:43). Jimmy, the film's anti-hero adds: "Suddenly the place smells of desert rat" (01:06:48). Neo-Nazi party leader Michael, who has accompanied the men for drinks, urges Jimmy to calm down and ushers everyone out of the bar. The audience observes Michael's realization that the group of Middle Eastern men is not the right target for justifiable violence.

Jimmy cannot leave it alone and he chooses to instigate a moment of physical conflict. On his way out, he turns to one of the men who entered and asks, "Excuse me, but did your mom fuck a gorilla, or what?" (01:07:18). The response is swift. The guy in the white shirt rebounds with a straight jab to Jimmy's face and the fight is on. Michael holds his men back while the man in the white shirt and his comrades pummel Jimmy to the ground. Lars intervenes to call for a pause and drags the nearly-unconscious Jimmy out of the bar. In the scene, the white Neo-Nazis engage in fruitless violence that results in serious injury to themselves and Jimmy fails to embody successful Nordic manhood in a fight with the "other."

This scene, and the scene where the gang is in conference to discuss their propaganda strategy, confirms a vital observation from Sara Ahmed (2004): "The ordinary white subject is a fantasy that comes into being through the mobilisation of hate as a passionate attachment closely tied to love" (p. 43). The homosocial fraternity of the Neo-Nazis in the film is constantly engaged in expressions of hatred and love. The hatred of the migrant is closely tied to the love of a white, racialized, and Danish identity. Nevertheless, the love of the white race is also intimately linked to the joy the Neo-Nazis experience in each other's presence. That collective joy is demonstrated through their drinking, brawling, and the violent manifestations of their hyper-masculinity. Based on such behaviour, the gang conforms to another observation from Ahmed. She makes it clear that, "such groups become the ones concerned with the well-being of others; their project becomes redemptive, or about

saving loved others” (p. 123). In the film, the gang’s love and brotherhood is also founded on a collision of the homoerotic, homosocial desire, and their veneration of white nationalism.

Jimmy’s behaviour corresponds to what investigative journalist Michael Kimmel (2018) has noted about one of the key reason why white men are drawn to the far-right and Neo-Nazi movements. He defines the attraction as a form of “aggrieved entitlement—entitlement thwarted and frustrated—that leads some men to search for a way to redeem themselves as men, to restore and retrieve that sense of manhood that has been lost” (p. 10). These men have been discarded by the ever-narrowing parameters of neo-liberal capitalism and now desperately seek meaning in their lives through violence. Kimmel goes on to argue that the men who join far-right or Neo-Nazi groups express, “a worldview that constantly shored up their own sense of masculinity through the emasculation of the ‘others’...” (p. 15). The expression of that worldview is directed through an ideology that combines a love of a white identity, a strong desire for homosociality, and a hope to save both themselves and their comrades from perceived threats. Jimmy’s behaviour in the bar is the result of his expressions of hatred, the on-going concealment of his homoerotic desires, and a sense of aggrieved entitlement. As the bar scene demonstrates, his choice to stand tough ends with the reinforcement of his own status as a victim. He cannot even win a barroom brawl.

In *Brotherhood*, the continuum of the homosocial and homoerotic is shown to be the essential characteristic of a violent and hyper-masculine Neo-Nazi gang that bonds over their camaraderie, shared ideology, and homophobia. It is important to draw attention to the fact that Jimmy and Lars act on their homoerotic desire for each other and Lars repeatedly challenges Jimmy to openly acknowledge their sexual and emotional relationship. Just as often, Jimmy resists and subverts such a script, avoiding any direct acknowledgement of their relationship until the very end of the film. Jimmy’s resistant script not only involves his homoerotic desires and his affiliation to the Neo-Nazi movement, but also his relationship to his brother, Patrick. Jimmy’s brother is shown to be a drug addict and someone who must frequently be rescued. After the bar fight, Lars tenderly cares for Jimmy and tells Patrick to go home (01:08:45). However, Patrick remains deeply suspicious. Later, he spies through the cottage window and his fears are confirmed when he sees his brother and Lars in an intimate embrace (01:09:28-55). Patrick then sets the tragic narrative in motion when he chooses to reveal to the Party elders that his brother and Lars are men who have sex with men (MSM). Patrick’s actions in the narrative are focused on his choice to uncover, rehearse, and then reveal the secrets of his brother’s sexuality and conduct.

Stranger Than Fiction: Neo-Nazis, the Far Right, and Homosocial Identity

Homosociality and homosexuality are on the menu in a scene from the film where the gang members partake of an informal dinner (01:04:29-01:05:25). In a classroom-like setting, the men crowd around a table and the militaristic Kenneth is berated as a faggot for examining himself in a nearby mirror (01:04:32). He then nearly instigates a brawl to counteract the threat to his masculinity.

To answer the conflict involving Kenneth, Lars draws the group’s attention to Ernst Röhm. Lars places a special emphasis on the fact that Röhm was a leader of the Sturmabteilung (SA), a Nazi, and a homosexual. At the table, Lars says, “He was queer. He was. That’s why Hitler had him executed.” (01:05:13-01:05:16). The camera cuts away from Lars and then lingers, briefly, on Jimmy and his agitated posture. At that moment, Lars risks outing himself, Jimmy, and indirectly, the whole movement as a dedicated club of violent hyper-masculine, fascist men who have sex with other men. Michael offers a more nuanced assessment and, by doing so, takes on the role of a knowledgeable teacher: “He wasn’t necessarily a faggot, but he got too powerful, so they shot him” (01:05:16-01:05:19). The response from the other men, while they devour their food, comes in the form of a statement that one of them yells out: “Who cares why? The main thing is they wasted him.” The comment offers a display of violence and bravado at the expense of understanding the

movement's own history. Bulgarian political scientist Anna Krasteva (2016) argues that for the young men involved in far-right movements: "Violence is so important that it is shown off like a badge of honour, a supreme distinction" (p. 159). The gang members luxuriate in all forms of violence, even violence directed against one of the pillars of German National Socialism. At the end of this moment in the visual narrative, it becomes clear to the audience – by all their facial expressions – that the gang now harbour suspicions about Lars' sexuality and his ability to be a loyal team member.

The analytical focus of this article is on the visual representation of a fictionalized gang of Neo-Nazis and the subtle connections between both homosociality and homoeroticism that are depicted in the film's storyline. As such, it is equally important to gain a better understanding of the links between German National Socialism, homosexuality, and fascism. American researcher George Mosse (1997) asserts that: "Fascism thus threatened to bring to the surface that homoeroticism which had been a part of modern nationalism from the beginning" (p. 176). Mosse's commentary illustrates the interconnections between the German traditions of masculinity, nationalism, and their role in the rise of the Nazis. The Nazis were a continuation of the traditional German "Männerstaat," a community of men working to further the interests and power of other men. Mosse emphasizes that such a community, "symbolized an aggressive nationalism based upon the ideal of masculinity. It would crush all those who threatened respectability and the nation" (p. 170). At the heart of the Nazi movement was a homosocial community of men who desired a violent form of nationalism. The central contradiction of Nazism is the ability of the political movement to simultaneously embrace and reject the uneasy alliance of the homosocial and homoerotic. Neo-Nazis, such as those presented in *Brotherhood*, represent a continuation of the political and sexual contradictions that were part of Nazi culture.

Gay Neo-Nazis are an issue that has, for some time, fascinated sociologists and theorists alike. However, it is important to draw some distinctions. Not all skinheads are Neo-Nazis and a constellation of skinheads, Neo-Nazi skinheads, gay skinheads, and gay Neo-Nazis co-exist. Criminal justice researcher Kevin Borgeson and hate-crimes researcher, Robin Valeri (2015) analyze the connections between skinhead culture and gay men. They propose that: "The skinhead movement provided a means for straight men to reassert working-class masculinity and for gay men, who were dissatisfied with effeminate gay men, to assert their own masculinity" (p. 59). Nevertheless, the forms of traditional masculinity adopted by both gay and straight skinheads are intimately tied to acts of violence. Kimmel (2018) posits that for Neo-Nazi skinheads: "The group's dynamics—the intense bonding, the camaraderie, the parties, the fights—forms much of the glue that keeps the groups together. Ideology comes later, if at all" (p. 23). Such an assessment is incomplete because ideology is always at the core of the politically charged and homosocial environment that these men inhabit. Kimmel's analysis must be contradicted because ideology, violent action, and love work in concert with each other. Ahmed makes just such a connection with her reflection that, "love is crucial to how individuals become aligned with collectives through their identification with an ideal, an alignment that relies on the existence of others who have failed that ideal" (p. 124). The interplay of love and hate is always premised on a judgement directed against those who have failed and are now a threat to the collective. The choices made by the characters in the film to prove their masculinity through violence rests on a common ideology that is grounded in a love of a white race, the harsh judgements directed at those who are deemed a threat, and a desire to protect the brotherhood.

The film's narrative deploys a mixture of loyalty, secrecy, hope, and betrayal as central themes in order to focus the action on the lives of those involved in a fictionalized European Neo-Nazi movement. For male Neo-Nazis, the concepts of solidarity and brotherhood give members the license to display a full expression of their pent-up frustration about a world that has discarded them. Kimmel adroitly goes on to argue that for these men, participation in the Neo-Nazi movement "... restores that sense of manhood. It is a powerful narcotic, easily addicting ..." (p. 242). In this film, the desire of the Danish Neo-Nazis to

reaffirm their masculinity through brutal acts of violence may appear to come into conflict with the presence of both homosociality and homoeroticism within the visual narrative. The competition and collision of these realities remain an analytical challenge for contemporary society.

Those involved in the analysis of queer practices, and even film audiences, may feel the need to establish a clear connection, or lack thereof, between Neo-Nazism and gay oppression. Such a sentiment is refuted by Jasbir Puar's (2007) declaration that, "the project of whiteness is assisted and benefited by homosexual populations that participate in the same identitarian and economic hegemonies as those hetero subjects complicit with this ascendancy" (p. 31). Therefore, regimes of white power, homosociality, and homoeroticism can be understood as closely allied. Such an alliance is never far from the surface in the film. The narrative in *Brotherhood* also pays close attention to the problematic moments within a fictionalized Neo-Nazi movement where homoerotic desire and homosociality combine to create an environment within which a coming-out narrative must take place. Jimmy operates in an enclosed world where the pursuit of his sexual desires and his efforts to engage in radical politics force tragic choices that are at once impossible, yet inescapable.

Expulsion: Coming Out, Homosociality, and the Homoerotic in *Brotherhood*

The final encounter in the film between Jimmy, Lars, and the Neo-Nazi gang represents a powerful moment of choice, revelation, and a confirmation that both Jimmy and Lars have become complete outsiders. They are outside of the norms of a conventional gay identity and they are rejected by their former Neo-Nazi comrades from the gang. Nevertheless, the scene at the water tower confirms the connections between a brotherhood which delights in violence for its own sake and different forms of victimization.

After his observations of Jimmy and Lars through the cottage window, Patrick comes back the next day to confront his brother (01:13:50-01:16:15). Once Patrick receives confirmation of what he already knows, he exacts the first part of his revenge. He does so when he chooses to go to Michael's home in order to reveal the secret of his brother's sexual conduct (01:17:55-01:18:12). Patrick's actions set the stage for the punishment that follows. Once Patrick has disclosed all that he knows about his brother and Lars, Michael summons all the members to a meeting at which he delivers a coded speech and then announces that he has a surprise for Jimmy and Lars. The two lovers are driven to a water tower on the outskirts of the town where Lars will be bashed. During the drive, Michael vents his anger on Jimmy by knocking him senseless with a truncheon (01:20:42-01:23:34). The stage is now set for the moment of complete identity revelation within the storyline.

Queer theorist Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (1990) examines the presumptions at work in society that result in the construction of an either/or choice where those who identify as LGBTQ+ are forced to either stay in the closet or affirmatively declare their sexual identity (p. 72). Implicit within this construction is the universalized belief that every queer person will eventually choose to move from being closeted to coming out. Left out of the discussion is the possibility that a queer person may neither be in the closet nor ever come out. Nevertheless, she also acknowledges that both the closet and coming out are placed together as a "...salvational epistemologic certainty against the very equivocal privacy afforded by the closet..." (p. 71). In Jimmy's case, the closet offers a very permeable privacy that ends when his brother denounces him to Michael.

The results of Patrick's confessional act are moments of ultimatum, gay bashing, and an unstable coming out for Jimmy. In this type of coming out, a sexual identity is instantaneously refused, rejected, and accepted through acts of violence. Jimmy is forced – through the violence of Michael's ultimatum – to make an impossible choice. He is told to renounce either his desire for Lars or being a Neo-Nazi. Jimmy must make a choice between two communities and the price involves betrayal, violence, and the threat of death. Until that point in the narrative, Jimmy exerts every effort in a vain attempt to keep his love for Lars a secret while they carry on their active involvement with the Neo-Nazis. In effect, Jimmy

chooses to protect the structure of the closet within which he operates. Sedgwick (1990) outlines the pervasive nature of the closet when she points out that: "Furthermore, the elasticity of heterosexist presumption means that, like Wendy in *Peter Pan*, people find new walls springing up around them even as they drowse . . ." (p. 68). In Jimmy's approach, he attempts to confirm heterosexist presumption through his violence and hatred against homosexuals. However, he undoes that presumption because of his secret love affair with Lars. The walls of his closet are both imposed on him by the Neo-Nazis and created by his assumptions. Those assumptions are premised on his belief he can secretly love another man, maintain his relationship with his brother, and continue his Neo-Nazi political loyalties.

Jimmy dramatically engages with his own coming-out story when he is instructed to physically attack his lover in a ritual that Michael carefully orchestrates. Within this scene, Michael demands that Jimmy make a sacrifice. In this case, the act of sacrifice requires that Jimmy must repudiate any homosexual identity. At this point in the story, Jimmy's relationship and allegiance to Michael, his fellow Neo-Nazis, and his lover are governed by shame and betrayal. Sedgwick highlights the destructive roles of shame and anger with her emphasis on, "the double movement shame makes: toward painful individuation, toward uncontrollable relationality" (2003, p. 37). Michael's ritual forces Jimmy into an unwanted spotlight. Jimmy's painful individuation as one of the two "outed" homosexuals within the gang is accompanied by the 'uncontrollable' destruction of his relationships with all those present in the scene. At this point in the film, the audience is compelled to witness how a ritual, an ultimatum, and a coming out are enacted.

The scene of the bashing and coming out unfolds at the town's water tower. The ground around the tower is transformed into a place of otherness and as a space for those in crisis. In the film's opening scene, the bashing of the young man looking for anonymous sex rendered the ground around the water tower as a place of hatred and sacrifice. At the end of the film, the exposure of Jimmy's sexuality completes a narrative circle that began when he bashed the young man at the same location. As Michel Foucault notes (1986), heterotopias can be spaces of trauma and otherness that are "reserved for individuals who are, in relation to society and to the human environment in which they live, in a state of crisis . . ." (p. 24). All the characters in the scene, including the gang members, experience an active trauma. Jimmy has been betrayed by his brother and is forced to perform acts of violence to counteract the fact that he has been outed. Lars is the pre-selected sacrificial victim for physical violence through which the Neo-Nazis seek to avenge their sense of betrayal. These various emotional states add narrative weight to the physical location where Lars is attacked.

The terrain around the water tower and the seaside cottage where Jimmy and Lars lived together represents geographic manifestations of the Neo-Nazis themselves. They are spaces for those that are isolated from mainstream society. Foucault's fifth principle of heterotopias is that they, "presuppose a system of opening and closing that both isolates them and makes them penetrable. In general, the heterotopic site is not freely accessible like a public place" (p. 26). The gang, like all Neo-Nazi organizations, requires acts of loyalty and violence to confirm a person's status within the brotherhood. The gang's penetrable isolation is reflected in the spaces within the film where action takes place. In this scene, this special system of isolation and accessibility takes on another aspect that Foucault ascribes to such spaces: they are consecrated for acts of purification (p. 26). In this case, purification comes in the form of the necessity to purge homosexuals from the homosocial brotherhood and to avenge a sense of betrayal.

During the bashing scene, with the gang of Neo-Nazis hovering around the semi-conscious Jimmy and holding Lars in place for his punishment, Jimmy is revived and Michael delivers his ultimatum. The audience must confront the fact that Jimmy has now been fully betrayed and his secret revealed. Patrick's revelation has led to a violent reprisal enacted upon both Jimmy and Lars by the entire gang. In his officiating capacity of this ritual sacrifice, Michael gives Jimmy one final choice, which turns out to be no choice at all. He reveals that he knows everything when he says to Jimmy, "You can't have it all, so you have

to choose. It either ends here for the both of you or else you show Lars what we do with fucking faggots like him” (01:24:42-59). Michael’s statement reflects the gang’s belief that Jimmy has violated the acceptable norms of a homosocial brotherhood by crossing over to engage in homoerotic and homosexual behaviour. It is also a reflection of the gang’s profound anger at Lars because of the explicit manner in which he acted on his homoerotic desires and his consequent betrayal of the political cause. The irony in this moment is that the straight gang members chose to ignore the fact that the actions of Jimmy and Lars implicitly reinforce, what Puar would call, white identitarian hegemonies (p. 31). Therefore, to be a Neo-Nazi and to act on one’s homoerotic desires is not a contradiction. The actions of these two Neo-Nazis, who are also lovers, implicitly reinforces white racialized narratives of power.

Nevertheless, the only solution for the gang is to purge and destroy the source of the homosexual conduct: Lars. The opportunity to engage in purely violent acts against both Jimmy and Lars is a source of intense pleasure for the rest of the gang. As Jimmy prepares to attack his lover, the taunting crowd shouts: “Do it. Whack him one, Jimmy. Whack him!” (01:25:29). After Jimmy begins to punch Lars, the gang members do not let up. They add to their jeers, “Punch him again! Come on, you fucking faggot!” (01:26:05). Everyone present knows that Jimmy and Lars are homosexuals, but the gang’s sense of betrayal is assuaged by acts of violence. As Jimmy continues to pummel his lover, there is an ejaculatory-like quality emanating from their heckling tormentors.

Michael’s ultimatum is shown to the audience as a carefully planned cleansing ritual designed to purge the group of homosexuality. The ritual also enables them to banish the men that they have branded as traitors to the cause for their dissident sexual practices. In the process, Jimmy must sacrifice himself and his lover. In effect, the sacrifice that is demanded of him is to perform a type of coming out, where identity and desire are both repudiated and accepted. Jimmy’s inability to complete the task of bashing his lover authors a moment of opaque disclosure within the storyline and that is how another part of the coming-out action is made visible. Jimmy goes on to choose the very homosexual identity that he initially rejected. The gang members push Jimmy aside and deliver additional blows to the already battered Lars. Jimmy crumbles under the emotional weight of the attack and begins to sink to the ground. The gang, including Patrick, exit the scene having been able to “out,” categorize, discipline, and expel both Jimmy and Lars. Jimmy’s emotional breakdown and the public acknowledgement of his love for Lars continues when he cradles his wounded lover and sobs the words, “I’m sorry” (01:28:17). The gang continues to beat up Lars; however, they refrain from killing the lovers. Jimmy has neither directly come out nor asserted a homosexual identity. Nevertheless, the audience observes that he now classifies himself, just as the Neo-Nazis classify him, as a homosexual. By the same token, he can no longer remain a Neo-Nazi. He has betrayed his lover and his political cause.

The coming-out narrative in *Brotherhood* tests the possibility that a protagonist can be both gay and a Neo-Nazi. The conclusion is that no such dualism is ever possible without consequent acts of destruction. Jimmy’s impossible quest to choose, or privilege, being a Neo-Nazi over his sexual relationship with another man and the effort to guard that secret end in violent failure. At the end of the film, as Jimmy and Lars try to escape into the night, the gay man whom Jimmy bashed in the opening scene emerges from the darkness to stab Jimmy in the stomach (01:29:22-01:29:44). Through his choices, Jimmy has betrayed his lover, his political cause, and then becomes the victim of hateful violence. The film demonstrates that all positions are untenable because Jimmy loses everything.

Conclusion: Revealing Relationships

This analysis has been informed by a key objective: to create a space to diagnose the links between hyper-masculinity, homoeroticism, and the far right. The film *Brotherhood* (2009) is a cultural object that assists in just such a diagnosis because it illustrates the uneasy coexistence of homosociality and homoeroticism in a fictionalized Neo-Nazi gang. The

film's storyline reveals to the audience - through the characters' choices to engage in acts of betrayal and violence – how a far-right group on screen cannot tolerate a homoerotic presence within in a movement founded on homosocial ideals. The acts of camaraderie in gangs, where masculinity and extreme violence are welded together, contain both the expressions of pure hatred and the resolve to create a world where the power of men is always paramount. The promotion of that power structure is only possible because of the combination of homosociality and homoeroticism.

This study represents an investment in the effort required to understand the various ways that the lives of those in the Neo-Nazi movement both appear in popular culture and are scripted. *Brotherhood* authors a narrative where the homosocial and homoerotic realities of politically-oriented far-right men are challenged through a coming-out performance that contests moments of prescriptive necessity and normativity. If the violence of the Neo-Nazis is to be fought, then all aspects of this movement and those who are involved in it must be understood. The path that leads from aggrieved entitlement to the acceptance of a brotherhood where honour and meaning are restored through acts of extreme violence cannot be separated from the homosocial and homoerotic world that these men inhabit.

In *Brotherhood*, a gay Neo-Nazi is forced to renounce and embrace a gay identity through an act of chaotic and violent coming out. The presentation of such a character on screen confronts the fact that regimes of white power, homosociality, and homoeroticism easily co-exist. Just as importantly, the conventional understanding of coming out as the critical step to the creation of an acceptable gay identity - where the person who comes out is then both connected to and accepts the goals of the broader LGBTQ+ community - is undone in the film's narrative. Through an understanding of the powerful mixture of masculinity and homoeroticism in such groups, a more comprehensive assessment becomes possible. This analysis of the interconnected regimes that tie together white power, homoeroticism, and far-right ideology within the film is allied to Jasbir Puar's (2007) belief in the assemblage as a necessary tool for understanding regulatory regimes of power. She defines the assemblage as a format that, "is more attuned to interwoven forces that merge and dissipate time, space, and body against linearity, coherency, and permanency." (p. 212). In the collective quest to better understand the on-going influence of the far right in the West, the concept of the assemblage becomes a critical approach to create knowledge, better understand cultural agency, and then find the means to contest the power and legitimacy that are exerted by such groups.

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