



The only good man is a dead man: Queering ideological feminism in *Splice*

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*In the movie Splice, two young rebellious scientists at Newstead Pharmaceuticals, Elsa Kant and Clive Nicoli, have an overt agenda to develop medical treatments for diseases such as Parkinson's and Alzheimer's. Showing hubris, and ignoring legal and ethical boundaries, one of the scientists, Elsa, introduces human DNA into their experiment. The resulting creature, whom she and her complicit research partner and lover, Clive, name Dren ("Nerd" backwards), is a female hybrid of animal, insect, fish, and human genes, and an unexpected sequential hermaphrodite who changes from female to male. I explore misandry, ideological feminism, and more progressive attitudes towards males largely from *The will to change: Men, masculinity, and love* (2004), by controversial American social activist bell hooks, according to three dominant leitmotifs in *Splice*: (i) nerdism and the ineffectual, emotionally dead male scientist; (ii) the deviant man and the benign woman and, finally; (iii) the murdering, rapist hermaphrodite/man. In this way, I unveil *Splice* as a deceptively transgressive, cinematographic art form that actually reinstates misandric norms regarding gender, sexualities, and socio-economic trends and roles for men in particular.*

Key Words: men's studies, ideological feminism, androgenophobia, queer theory, misandry

Introduction

In Greek tragedies, such as those of Shakespeare, “hubris” (Wikipedia 2012) refers to actions that shame and humiliate the victim for the pleasure or gratification of the abuser; such outrageous treatment usually involves sexual connotations and acts. Indeed, Clive, Elsa, and Dren enter into a complex triangle in which parent-child relationships merge with sexual yearnings, jealousy, and rage. Acts of sex, from sexually motivated sadistic bodily mutilation to incest and rape, and also more mundane but unnerving physical and psychological abuse and murder, create a modern, scientifically inspired tableau of Greek tragedy proportions.

In *Splice* (Natali, Bryant, and Taylor 2010), two rebellious, hip scientists at Newstead Pharmaceuticals, Elsa and Clive, have an overt agenda to develop medical treatments for diseases such as Parkinson’s and Alzheimer’s. Their covert agenda is to become superstars by splicing different animal DNA to create fantastical new creatures and patents. Initially, they create the slug-like hybrids that they name Ginger and Fred, thereby generating considerable praise and expectations amongst their bosses and board members. In the meantime, Ginger, whom they did not realize was a sequential hermaphrodite, has unknowingly changed from female to male. Clive and Elsa show off the pair to stockholders, but the slug-like creatures proceed to brutally killing each other, rather than showing a lovey-dovey demonstration. Senior management promptly calls off their experiment. Ignoring legal and ethical boundaries, and without Clive’s knowledge, Elsa introduce her own DNA into their experiment to create a new creature.

Once the company has shut down their experiment, Elsa admits to Clive what she has done. Reluctant but complicit, he assists with the birth of the creature. The result is a female hybrid of animal, insect, fish, and human genes who grows at an accelerated rate. Initially, Elsa alternates between treating Dren as a child or pet. They keep the child Dren at their barricaded work laboratory, until too much suspicion is aroused. Then they bring Dren to Elsa’s secret, abandoned family farm. Once Dren reaches young adulthood, Clive and Elsa learn that she is a sequential hermaphrodite, a creature able to change sex. Academic critiques of *Splice* to date rightly argue that the film adds to the sizable body of horror films in which aspects of procreative sexuality—from conception, pregnancy, and childbirth to early parenthood—are used figuratively, as visual or topical metaphors of monstrosity (see, for instance: Hantke 2011; Renner 2011). However, my interpretation goes beyond the obvious, to an analysis of *Splice* as a transgressive cinematographic art form, one that violates boundaries and norms regarding shifting gender, sexualities, and socio-economic roles and trends for men and women, with which society is experiencing angst.

Background

I critique tenets of ideological feminism in *Splice*. Ideological feminism is an extremist form of feminism. Borrowing from the Marxist notions of the subjugated proletariat rising up against the exploitative, entitled bourgeoisie, ideological feminists have replaced proletariat with “women”, and the bourgeoisie with “men”. Ideological feminists have for decades created a field of women’s studies, research, and dogma that permeates every aspect of society, from education and popular culture to our legal and scientific institutions, resulting in pervasive misandry—contempt for men, the counterpart of misogyny (Nathanson and Young 2006). As an omnipresent yet often subconscious part of our individual and collective psyche in North America, ideological feminist tenets often go unnoticed—they have become accepted as normal and commonplace, but yet are jarringly false, damaging, and reductionist to both men and women.

Farrell (1993, p. 67) refers to the concept of patriarchy as a universal political structure which privileges men at the expense of women, a problematic notion which he actively contests. A cornerstone of ideological feminism is the notion of patriarchy, which entails societal perpetuation of the traditional male qualities of stoicism, autonomy, and hunger for power and dominance. In ideological feminist belief, men are simultaneously malignant and exploitive, and yet incongruously the protectors, providers, and defenders of women and children, the latter role being downplayed, or construed as evil-intended “control”. Ideological feminists hold the conviction that men yield ultimate power over women, and certain men, such as gays, who deviate from hegemonic masculine ideals—

an aggressive form of heterosexuality mired in obsession with pornography, and sexual exploitation and rape of girls and women. Prevalent in popular culture, bell hooks (2004) says:

Since contemporary feminist movement, the genre of the mystery novel has been exploited such feminist issues as domestic violence, rape, and incest to create male villains who are misogynists.

In the vein of Camille Paglia and Katie Roiphe, bell hooks decries radical feminists as “pathological narcissists” who see even a harsh word as assault or rape; hooks rebukes ideological feminists for reinforcing the idea that men “...were and only are sexual oppressors”, while women, especially young women, are “...always and only victimized by sexuality” (hooks 2003, , p. 142-143).

To illustrate the problematic notion of the sexually and physically violent male in contemporary propaganda, the Canadian Women’s Foundation recently introduced a 30-second television spot airing on Citytv stations across the country called “It’s a girl!” A group of women are gathered at a baby shower (Powell 2012). The celebratory mood darkens when the new mother pulls out a whistle, and is informed by the gift-giver that it is a rape whistle. The young mother looks alarmed, but a young girl of approximately 8 years (perhaps her elder daughter) takes the whistle, a knowing half-smile on her face. A caption then appears on the screen, “1 out of 2 girls growing up in Canada will be physically or sexually abused.” Upon investigation, I found the following on the Canadian Women’s Foundation (2012) website: “Half of all women in Canada have experienced at least one incident of physical or sexual violence since the age of 16.” This data is actually from a study of from the early nineties (Statistics Canada 1993). Moreover, the Canadian Women’s Federation (2012) refers to a broad definition of “violence against women” provided by the United Nations, also from 1993:

Any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.

Psychological or emotional abuse is commonly held to include insults, humiliation, put-downs and yelling, and extreme (often unfounded) jealousy (Johnson 2006, p. 9). If this were included in the allegation, it is probable that 100% of women and men in Canada might experience “abuse” over their lifetime.

Furthermore, the Canadian Women's Foundation website (2012) notes that, “On average, every six days a woman in Canada is killed by her intimate partner. In 2009, 67 women were murdered by a current or former spouse or boyfriend.” However, females account for the lowest proportion of homicide victims in Canada, and the lowest rate of females killed since 1961, as reported in 2008, not 2009 (Beattie 2009). Females account for 24% of the total 611 homicide victims, and males for 76%, or 3 times the overall rate of females during this period. Also, evidence suggests that women are as physically aggressive, or more aggressive, than men in their relationships with their spouses or male partners (Fiebert 2012). Ultimately, as Kimmel (2001, p. 23) indicates:

Men who are punched, slapped, kicked, bitten, or otherwise assaulted by their wives or partners are no less deserving of compassion, understanding, and intervention than are women who are so assaulted. And male victims deserve access to services and funding, just as female victims do. Nor do they need to be half of all victims in order to deserve either sympathy or services.

While women are not killed as often in film, cinema is rife with tales of their sexual victimhood by male predators from molesters to rapists and sex traffickers. Noble men, whether husbands, fathers, or boyfriends, are then called upon to seek vengeance or save them, in keeping with the longstanding damsel in distress motif and the tradition of courtly love—a man must prove himself worthy of a female by engaging in daring even deadly feats (see Wollock 2011). The popular television CSI series over-represents the number of female murder victims at 34% and male murder victims at about 66% (Deutsch and Cavender 2008), when in reality it is closer to 25% with 75% of murder victims in North America being male.

Ideological feminism maintains social, political and research focus on women and children victims of violence, domestic and otherwise, so that fewer services are available to males. Simulta-

neously, the Boy Code (Pollack 1998, 23-25), which encourages stoicism in males and a disinclination to admit weakness or vulnerability, discourages many targeted males from reporting violence, or accessing services, for to do so would be “unmanly”. The longstanding ideology of the benign woman and mother, and the innate nobility of females, versus the vice of men and fathers, also works to inhibit acknowledgement of female violence.

Gosse and Arnocky (2012) provide compelling statistics on injury and premature death for males. Being male is unequivocally the most significant demographic risk-factor for premature death in developed countries (Kruger and Nesse 2004). In Canada, suicide, coronary heart disease, drug or alcohol abuse, violence, and accidents pose a significantly greater risk to male versus female youth (Kalben 2000; Möller-Leimkühler 2003). Canadian male youth are also at greater risk than female youth to incur physical injury. For instance, an average of 24.4% of male versus 20% of female students in grades 6 through 10, reported missing one or more days of school, or usual activities, due to an injury (Pickett 2008). Mounting evidence indicates that the numbers of female perpetrators of sexual violence against boys and girls may be greater than previously believed, and overall sexual violence against boys may be under-reported in Canada (see, for instance: Female sex offenders 1998-2012). There may also be more male victims in the 4-7 year old range on child pornographic databases, which men and women appear to be running in equal numbers (Gillespie and Leaver 2002). Therefore, the onus on male violence against females needs to be questioned, as does the notion of patriarchal privilege and power.

The modern film *Splice* upholds this longstanding cinematic disregard for men’s lives, for the significant male characters are killed at the end. Moreover, applying the extremist ideological feminist belief, as portrayed in *Splice*, that “the only good man is a dead man”, I resolve to illustrate that truisms of ideological feminism are actually falling apart.

Theory

Modern enlargement of gender diversity (from the shifting numbers of men and women in non-traditional careers to the notion of the metrosexual), sexualities (including growing social and legal acceptance of gay rights and marriage, and the move towards protection of transgender human rights in Canadian provincial and national legislation, to the proliferation of LGBTTIQ characters on North American television and in cinema), and shifting social-economic power structures (women in North America are increasingly chief breadwinners in families, for instance, and tend to be university educated more often), are at work to induce these emergent ruptures. Simultaneously, and paradoxically, traditional norms are thus being continuously and frantically reinstated in popular culture, in wildly popular and grossing movies, such as the *Twilight* saga (2008-2012) or *The Amazing Spiderman* (2012), to the hegemonic masculine enactments of the *Harry Potter* series (2001-2011), all of which epitomize the Boy Code, and place male protagonists in heroic and knightly roles, stereotypically protecting womenfolk along the “damsel in distress” leitmotif, or all of society.

A poststructuralist approach examines intersections of identity, and overlap, between race, class, gender, sexual orientation, geographical location, and language and culture. However, predicated on a dualism of male-female, ideological feminism not only vilifies males, as if we were a homogeneous group, but also propagates misandry. Queer theory is a form of post-structuralism that can challenge capitalist notion of masculinities and power (Jagose 1996). A queered position involves an ontological shift resistant to heteronormativity (Honeychurch 1996). Queer puts into question inconsistencies between categories of sex, gender, discourse, and desire (St-Hilaire 1999). One may dwell in paradoxes, as in bell hooks books, *The will to change: Men, masculinity, and love* (2004).

In *Splice*, I seek to queer knowledge that reflects ideological feminism, misandry, and heteronormativity, in keeping with morphing ways of reconsidering gender, sexuality, and power in the 21st century. Several prevalent misandric premises arise in hooks’ book, as well as some that are more progressive and wrought with contradictions to the former.. Sample pages are indicated for reference to these premises:

<i>The will to change: Men, masculinity, and love</i>	
Misandric premises	Progressive premises that challenge misandry
North American boys are socialized to be potential rapists, predators, and killers. (pages 43-44, 55, 75, 77-78, 85-89, 92, 115, 120, 130-131, 169, 180)	Knowing men only for the violence they inflict on women and children is an impartial, inadequate knowing. Males suffer in patriarchy, too. (pages xi-xii, xv, 31-32, 35, 41, 49-50, 52-55, 64, 91, 96, 99-100, 139, 157, 179, 184-185)
	Mothers exert tremendous power over their sons, and single-mothers can be particularly sadistic towards them. (pages 12, 18-19, 21, 45, 57, 61, 63-64, 80-81, 131, 136, 145)
We live in a patriarchal society in which males wield power over females, the tools of which are macho rage and violence. (pages xvii, 2, 13, 18, 24, 27-29, 47-48, 51, 59, 68-71-72, 77-78, 107-108, 119, 127, 129, 138, 162)	Both women and men are complicit in maintaining patriarchy, including the Boy Code, which force males to repress any emotions or behaviours thought of as feminine or weak, via physical and emotional abuse, such as shaming. (pages 4-5, 7-8, 10-11, 15, 23, 41, 46, 58, 61, 94, 102, 143, 149, 154-155, 160-161, 164, 177)

Even though hooks at times reverts to common ideological feminist ideas as revealed in the left column of the chart, many of her views on men are shockingly contradictory, progressive, and defiant of misandry. This may reflect her confluence of aspects of feminism, and sometimes ideological feminism, with more postmodern or poststructuralist exposure, for just as feminists and qualitative researchers tend to embrace subjectivity, those who are poststructuralists and/or queer theorists highlight the many paradoxes of what we (re)consider and reconfigure to be knowledge.

In any case, *The will to change: Men, masculinity, and love*, may be viewed as a queer text, one that aggressively troubles common understandings of men, power, and sexualities. As a provocative tool, it compliments writings that are more comprehensively and cohesively pro-male, such as *Splicing Misandry, The Teaching of Contempt for Men in Popular Culture* (Nathanson and Young 2001), *Legalizing Misandry: From Public Shame to Systemic Discrimination Against Men* (Nathanson and Young 2006), and even my own writings (see, for instance: Gosse 2005a, 2008), among many others. I attempt to bring notions from bell hooks' book to the forefront, to enrich the canon of literature in male studies that has a pro-male and anti-misandry stance. Therefore, I apply bell hooks' more progressive premises, as summarized but not pedantically restricted to the chart above, to three dominant leitmotifs in *Splice*, which I queer: (i) nerdism and the ineffectual, emotionally dead male scientist; (ii) the deviant man and the benign woman and; (iii) the murdering, rapist hermaphrodite/man.

Nerdism and the ineffectual, emotionally dead male scientist

A dominant theme in *The will to change: Men, masculinity, and love* is that both women and men are complicit in maintaining patriarchy, including the Boy Code, which forces males to repress any emotions or behaviours thought of as feminine or weak, via physical and emotional abuse, such as shaming. This rings true in *Splice*. Clive may be initially viewed as more cold hearted than Elsa. However, this notion ruptures over time, as we gain a more comprehensive assessment of capitalism at work, and the so-called masculine traits that Elsa embodies from ruthless ambition to psychological

and physical violence towards both Clive and the sex-shifting Dren.

Director Natali openly declares that *Splice* is a Frankenstein spin-off (cited in Monk 2012), "There was so much room to reinterpret the Frankenstein story in our era of technology. I was surprised that no one had really done it yet" A standard theme since Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818), and implicit in *Splice* is that "intelligent people carry emotional baggage that prevents them from achieving great things" (Marsen 2010). This is the idea that genius is akin to lunacy, and a stalwart of our popular culture since the 1990s. Coleman, in his famous book, *Emotional Intelligence, Why it can matter more than I.Q.* (1995), states that even the most academically brilliant among us are vulnerable to being undone by unruly emotions. Hook (2004, p. 121) similarly says that, "Patriarchal masculinity insists that real men must prove their manhood by idealizing aloneness and disconnection." Along with a Boy Code that forces boys to repress emotions, and become autonomous at all costs (Pollack 1998, pp. 23-25), the modern scientist remains likely damned to a life of long daily hours, and potential loneliness and capitalist exploitation, where progress and patents may take years, if not decades, at personal costs to social, familial, and parental satisfaction. This holds true for both male and female scientists, and other professionals, who may find having a child, or attending to a child in the way they would like, a luxury, and even an impossibility (see, for instance: Slaughter 2012; Power 2012).

Women increasingly outnumber men at both the undergraduate and master's level in universities, with a negligible prevalence of men at the doctoral level (Frenette and Zeman 2007). There are insignificant differences between male and female secondary school achievement in the sciences in some Canadian provinces, and none internationally on a whole (Knighton, Nrochu, and Gluszynski 2010), contrary to ideological feminist assertions otherwise. Darwin said that a scientific man ought to have no wishes, no affections—a mere heart of stone (*The Complete Quorks of Charles Darwin* 2008). As a hard scientist, Elsa is no different in this regard in her pursuit of power, her competitive spirit, cold ambition, and ignoring of ethics—all traditionally hegemonic male characteristics: (attempting to talk Clive out of killing Dren) You really going to kill it? You think you can do that? Look, it's aging fast, days going by in minutes. The point is this thing is going to die soon anyway. We're going to get to observe its entire life cycle in compressed time. We'll never get an opportunity like this again. She's dying all by herself. –Elsa

On the one hand, this episode reinstates the ideological feminist stance that men are innate killers, usually within a dualism of woman's moral superiority. However, Elsa is not morally superior for her adamancy for Clive to transgress ethical standards may be interpreted as a coercive, shaming tactic, and at the same time, an exploitive move to further her scientific career. In an interview (Monk 2010), Sarah Polley aptly describes the character of Elsa as, "One so full of naked ambition and monstrously manipulative". Similarly, Twenge and Campbell (2009) contend that "Arrogant, angry, and inconsiderate" are classic narcissist traits but ironically, these traits appear to be increasingly present in North American workplaces by bosses, and ambitious employees, to the point that many states and provinces have begun to create anti-workplace bullying legislature (consult: McKay, Arnold, and Fratzl 2008; Martin and LaVan January 2010).

Like many high-achieving women today who are not wealthy enough to engage nannies, working long hours may supersede having a family, or being able to spend adequate time with children (Slaughter 2012). This a sacrifice that men have been making, and continue to make, for generations as majority chief breadwinners, and in occupations such as fisherman, logger, truck driver, and oil worker, all of which may require weeks, or even months, away from home and family at a time. While women are unlikely to significantly increase in numbers in those dirty, dangerous, and unhealthy job (Farrell 2005), the phenomenon of having to spend more and more hours at the office may generate increased levels of maternal frustration and violence towards familial partners and children. Indeed, hook (2004, p. 55) asserts that as women have gained the right to be patriarchal men in drag, and that women are engaging in acts of violence similar to those of their male counterparts. This certainly holds true in *Splice*, as Elsa in particular becomes increasingly emotionally and physically violent towards Dren, her half pet/half child. Essentially, Elsa epitomizes the controlling, subjugating, and physically violent patriarchal male of ideological feminist lore.

Added to this, Marsen (2010) notes "...the film underlines the practicality and competitiveness of much medical research." Correspondingly, at the beginning of the film Clive says, "What the point

if you can't publish?" In North America, academic life has become less collegial and more dominated by self-interest, power plays, and various forms of domination (Twale and Luca 2008). Schmeink (2012), acknowledging the Clive's and Elsa's growing angst over professional survival says "...in order to function in today's society, in the attention economy of the internet in a highly competitive market, scientists have to embrace transgression in order to be one step ahead."

Reflecting on the potential loss of both personal and professional recognition, Elsa says, "If we don't use human DNA now, someone will." Attempting to talk Clive out of killing Dren, she adds:

You really going to kill it? You think you can do that? Look, it's aging fast, days going by in minutes. The point is this thing is going to die soon anyway. We're going to get to observe its entire life cycle in compressed time. We'll never get an opportunity like this again. She's dying all by herself.
-Elsa

It is Clive who is the more cautious, ethical one, but he is drawn into Elsa's determination.

With fewer and fewer tenure-track positions in academe, and competition for jobs and grants in scientific fields, the adage, "Publish or perish", may have deeper meaning than ever before, creating a pressure, as reflected in *Splice*, to not only publish but achieve fame or infamy at any costs. In modern society, fame and notoriety are increasingly seen as interchangeable, as long as one garners public and media attention (Twenge and Campbell 2009).

Indeed, Clive and Elsa receive career bolstering attention with their laboratory creation of the phallic, slug-like Ginger and Fred, described by one film critic (Howell 2010) as "something out of a porno filmmaker's wet dream". They assume they will soon reach the big time due to the patents arising from the phallic duo, whom Elsa says, engage in love at first sight. However, when Ginger unexpectedly transforms into a male and fights with Fred to the bloody death, even this foreshadowing does not dissuade the ambitious and opportunistic Elsa. According to ideological feminist theory, males are violent, and the only good man is a dead man, so Fred and Ginger die.

This is the first dramatic foreshadowing in *Splice*, of the theme that males are innately physically and sexually dangerous and predatory. Indeed, Dr. Greg Canning at James Cook University, Australia, recently quit his job as adjunct senior lecturer in the School of Medicine over a dispute with a feminist colleague, whom he is reported to have claimed "painted all men as violent or sexual predators", and whom he allegedly accused of publicly practicing sexual vilification (Bateman 2012). Androgenophobia, the prevalent societal conviction that maleness, the male body, and male sexualities are somehow unclean, perverse, and menacing, and erastophobia, a pervasive expectation and fear of looming pedophilia by males in general, are common leitmotifs in education, social and youth services, the volunteer sector, and popular culture (consult: Gosse 2011a; Gosse and Facchinetti 2011).

Furthermore, institutional bureaucracy and researcher isolation create a site where camouflaged aggression may thrive, and Clive and Elsa waver between their secret lab, their insular apartment, and the secret farm of Elsa's inheritance, of which even her partner, Clive, is initially unaware. There is little social connectedness at work, and none apparently outside of work. The closest the couple has to social ties is Clive's brother, Gavin, who plays a minimal role. Brandon McGibbon, as nerdy brother and co-worker of Clive, Gavin Nicoli, jokingly asks if they are making him a mate in their secret laboratory, thereby alluding to Frankenstein (Shelley 1818) and his bride, and his own social isolation as a fellow scientist. Clive and Elsa are social outcasts in the extreme, yet not atypical in today's academic environment that encourages self-interest, self-promotion, competitiveness, and distrust of colleagues, bosses, and the hostile external world, whose inhabitants cannot, or would not, understand the industry of scientists plotting to change [aspects of] the status quo, and advance society.

Clive and Elsa only garner tacit support at work. Actress Simona Maicanescu, as icy boss Joan Chorot, begs the question, "Is she really enforcing ethics, because "dem's the rules", or giving Elsa mad Clive an official sanction, an implicit wink to proceed with human DNA?" At the end, she is businesslike in paying Elsa for the unborn monstrous baby, even if her words evoke sympathy when she tells Elsa that she could always end it, i.e., abort the baby. Her words and manner come across as disingenuous, as if the character is merely saying what is socially expected, a formality, signs of an anti-social personality. Actor David Hewlett, as boss William Barlow, equally uses the sociopathic

boss model (Sutton 2007), employing rude interruptions and subtle putdowns—status slaps intended to humiliate the victims—Clive and Elsa. This may heighten the couple's impulsion to transgress scientific and ethical boundaries, to “prove” themselves, for they are working in a Molotov cocktail work environment, on the rise in North America.

The deviant man and the benign woman

There is a deeply ingrained societal belief in the virtue of women and the inherent vice of men. However, in *The will to change: Men, masculinity, and love* the leitmotif that mothers exert tremendous power over their sons, and single-mothers can be particularly sadistic towards them, rings abundantly clear, as demonstrated in *Splice*. The leitmotif of the cheating, raping husband/father/pedophile is ubiquitous in popular culture from television to movies and literature, as is the notion of the benign mother/wife, often in need of protection or defending. Hook (2004, pp. 63-64) claims that to some extent, reformist feminist thinkers have focused on women as the more ethical, kinder, gentler sex, thereby impeding an in-depth study of maternal sadism, especially with boys. Witnessing her mounting psychological and physical abuse, Clive asks Elsa, “Why the fuck did you make her in the first place? Huh? For the betterment of mankind? You never wanted a normal child because you were afraid of losing control.” Hook (2004, p. 137) states:

Many mothers in patriarchal culture silence the wild spirit in their sons, the spirit of wonder and playful tenderness, for fear their sons will be weak, will not be prepared to be macho men, real men, men other men will envy and look up to.

Transgressively, hooks is declaring that women, like men, also invest in enforcement of the Boy Code, and *Splice* further shows that Elsa is anything but benign or maternal, and on the contrary, capable of great violence and manipulation—like patriarchal men are purported to be.

It is crucial to understand choices that some women have, more so than many men. It is still acceptable for women to stay at home and be wives and mothers, but more precarious for house-husbands, who may be viewed as parasitic and unmanly (Gosse 2005b), although this is changing. Some women may not chose to work the long hours, and indeed, years or decades in laboratories, that are often required to make even modest contributions in scientific fields (consult: Larson 2011). Women still tend to take more time away from work to raise children. While the number of house-husbands is increasing (Appleyard 2007; Segal 2005), men still work longer hours outside of the home. An overwhelming majority of men continue to occupy the dirtiest and most dangerous jobs, from truck and taxi driver to miner and logger (CONSAD Research Corporation 2009; Honeychurch 1996). Almost thirty years ago, Penford (1985, p. 276) said:

Beset already by financial pressures, the involuntary househusband is in double jeopardy emotionally. He suffers not only from the psychological effects of unemployment, but also from traditional sex-role expectations. These expectations add to his anxiety and self blame and fuel the bitter resentments of the reluctant breadwinner.

As more women become chief breadwinners, it is conceivable to deduce that the rise of mother to child abuse may become reported more often, as will the reporting of female-inflicted husband abuse, whether psychological, physical, or sexual. Familial and public perceptions of power will likely enter grey areas that usurp ideological feminists' assertions of male tyranny, subjugation, domination, and abuse.

Hooks (2004, p. 61) states that contrary to popular myths, single mothers are often the most brutal when it comes to coercing their sons to conform to patriarchal standards. As a single-parent, given that only her DNA, and not that of Clive, is in Dren, Elsa feels a single-mother's rage towards her hermaphrodite offspring, neither male nor female, and thus treacherously non-gender conformist and threatening. She may be further echoing her own tumultuous upbringing, when we intuit that her mother abused her—and there is no allusion to a father. That there is no reference to Elsa' father, and that there is no discernable genetic father for Dren, and that father figure Clive is killed, is in keeping with modern notions of the ‘baby daddy’ –essentially a sperm donor who may or may not provide financial support, and is a superfluous father. Young (2007) says, “There is a new belief that

women can and should do everything that men do, including fathering.” In feminist dogma, a woman can be both father and mother to a child, and both can thrive without the baggage of a man, as embodied in the controversial movie *Juno* (2007), which showcases the supposed modern irrelevancy of [young] fathers, and in the brouhaha over the television character Murphy Brown’s illegitimate baby, and Vice-President Quayle’s public chastisement of her in 1992.

Hooks (2004, p. 63) further says that women are as violent as men toward the groups that they have power over and can dominate freely; usually that group is children or weaker females. Female violence toward children often takes the form of emotional abuse, especially verbal abuse and shaming, hence it is difficult to document. Elsa displays mounting anger, and emotional abuse of Dren, which turns to physical mutilation. Dren becomes so frustrated that she kills her cat—her “pussy”, symbolically killing the feminine to become like her mother Elsa, “a patriarchal man in drag.” Much like the female child Claudia in *The Vampire Chronicles: Interview with the Vampire* of Anne Rice (cited in Renner 2011, p. 82), she has become not a girl but a monster, a mixture of sugar and spice and the unthinkable—a murderous girl or young woman. She eventually becomes physically male with an imposing physique and a penis she uses to rape. When Dren acts on sexual feelings for Clive, and Elsa catches them in coatis, Elsa reacts with rage. She pins Dren to a table and mutilates her by cutting off her phallic and poisonous stinger at the end of her tail. Thereby, Elsa not only dampens the ardour of this rival Lolita (see Nabokov 1955), but symbolically tries to castrate the quasi-male Dren.

The sex scene between Dren and Clive may be interpreted as incest or rape (for we do not know whether Dren can consent, or her age), further cements feminists’ ideology of the deviant, sexually perverse male, as embodied in the S.C.U.M. manifesto by Valerie Solanas (1967):

Eaten up with guilt, shame, fears and insecurities and obtaining, if he’s lucky, a barely perceptible physical feeling, the male is, nonetheless, obsessed with screwing; he’ll swim through a river of snot, wade nostril-deep through a mile of vomit, if he thinks there’ll be a friendly pussy awaiting him. He’ll screw a woman he despises, any snaggle-toothed hag, and furthermore, pay for the opportunity. Why? Relieving physical tension isn’t the answer, as masturbation suffices for that. It’s not ego satisfaction; that doesn’t explain screwing corpses and babies.

Hooks (2004, p. 62) relates the story of a sociologist interviewing boys about their passion for television series, *The Incredible Hulk*. The sociologist asked the boys what they would do if they had the power of the Hulk. They replied that they would “smash their mommies.” This is indeed what transpires, as a newly resurrected and male-appearing Dren, proceeds to kill Barlow and Gavin, and then to rape Elsa, and murder Clive, who attempts to protect Elsa.

However, this violence arises after an intense regime of physical and psychological torture committed mostly by Elsa. As hooks (2004, p. 43) states, “All over the world terrorist regimes use isolation to break people’s spirit. This weapon of psychological terrorism is daily employed in our nation against teenage boys.” Once Dren’s soul and heart can bear no more abuse, she physically completes her transformation from female to male, and thus enacts her stereotypical male rage, leading to spontaneous murder, rape, and death, perhaps triggered by what hooks (2004, p. 61) perceives as a lack of motherly protection, and “...ruthlessly severed emotional bonds in the name of patriarchy.”

The murdering, rapist hermaphrodite/man

In *The will to change: Men, masculinity, and love*, we see the pervasive misandric premise that North American boys are socialized to be potential rapists, predators, and killers, and that we live in a patriarchal society in which males wield power over females, the tools of which are macho rage and violence. In *Splice*, the murdering, rapist hermaphrodite/man reflects this ideological feminist trope, and is symbolic of unease with contemporary unraveling of the so-called gender divide. When Dren reaches young adulthood, Clive and Elsa learn that Dren is a sequential hermaphrodite. Sequential hermaphrodites are organisms born with the capability of changing sexes later in life (WisegEEK 2003-2012). Sometimes, sequential hermaphrodites change sex at a predestined time, as part of their development. In other cases, the sex change is an elective process, undertaken in response to envi-

ronmental or biological triggers. There are two types of sequential hermaphrodites. Animals that are born male with the ability to become female exhibit the trait of protandry. Protogyny, like Dren possesses, is a trait in which animals are born as females, with the ability to become males later in life. Depending on the species, simultaneous hermaphrodites may change sex only once, or they may be able to flip back and forth between sexes several times.

Dren, a Pan-like figure, with animalistic features, has the hind legs of a goat. Pan was the Greek god of shepherds and flocks, of mountain wilds, hunting and rustic music (Atsma 2000-2011), and also lust and orgies. Like Dren, he was skilled at hunting skills. When Dren, Clive, and Elsa arrive at the farm, Dren takes off. When Clive and Elsa find Dren shortly thereafter, her mouth is drenched in blood, and she is holding the carcass of a hare. Pan wandered the hills and mountains of Arkadia playing his pan-pipes and chasing Nymphs. His unseen presence aroused feelings of inspiration, sexuality, or panic in men and women, identically to the effects of Dren on Clive, and particularly Elsa. Not only did Pan just lust after maidens and nymphs, he also fell in love with the male shepherd Daphnis (Mitchell 2004), who was the inventor of pastoral poetry, and taught him to play the pan pipes. Pansexual denotes someone who doesn't care what gender people are, or how they define themselves; They will sleep with, or fall in love with someone regardless of their gendered identity (Urban Dictionary 1999-2012). Pansexual may designate a person who dates guys, girls, and people in between. Dren has a crush on Clive and actively seduces him, while later raping Elsa in her male form.

In the last minutes of the *Splice*, Barlow, aware of Dren's existence, arrives with Gavin at the farm, just as Elsa and Clive have buried her, thinking that her life cycle had expired. Like a phoenix rising from the grave, and also reminiscent of Daedalus, the now male Dren spreads his wings and flies into the sky. Dren proceeds to kill Barlow, and then Gavin. Dren then attacks Clive and wounds him. Dren hunts down Elsa and rapes her. Dren is interrupted by Clive, who stabs Dren through the chest. Dren attacks Clive again, but Elsa hits Dren on the head with a large rock, knocking him to the ground. Elsa raises the rock again to deliver the fatal blow, but Dren meets her eyes, and she hesitates. During this moment of hesitation, Dren stabs Clive through the heart with his tail stinger which has regrown. Therefore, Dren has killed his surrogate father and lover. Elsa slams the rock down on Dren's head, thereby killing him.

Earlier in the story, when Elsa is still acting as a quasi-parent, she reveals that she and Dren share DNA, and says to Dren, "You know I love you, don't you? You're a part of me and I'm a part of you. I'm inside you." When Dren transforms to a male, and in the last moments of the film, rapes Elsa, he utters his first phrase, mirroring Elsa's revelation:

Elsa Kast: [crying] What do you want? What do you want?
 Dren: Inside... you...

Then Dren is quickly dispatched, as Elsa bashes in his head with a rock, and the film soon ends (Marsen 2010), for the only good man is a dead man. It is only when Dren morphs into a man, that full terror is aroused. Dren's transformation from repulsive slug-like creature at birth, to innocent girl-like nymph, to muscular and murderous man, his stinger/phallus restored, inspires horror in the audience.

Thus, Dren has attained the ideological feminist stereotype, and popular cultural icon, of the murderous, raping male. Dren lives up to the Pygmalion Effect of social expectations for, "If women and girls in patriarchal culture are taught to see every male, including the males with whom we are intimate, as potential rapists and murderers, then we cannot offer them our trust, and without trust there is no love" (hooks 2004, p. 120). Dren transforms into a male and immediately murders and then rapes. That a female can inflict pain and abuse, much less a mother, is a reality that society cannot yet bear to know, but a truth that seethes beneath the surface. The notion of androgenophobia, or pervasive societal fears of male's dangerous, threatening, and imminent sexual predatory nature, might more aptly be termed the Pan Effect. The Pan Effect, as I conceptualize it, while incorporating androgenophobia, further encompasses society's unease with changing gender roles for men and women, related to pan-sexualities and pan-amorous trends, the increased contribution of women to what has historically, and in bell hook's terms, been branded patriarchal power and violence, but which I see as more capitalistic, and part of all human nature.

Thus, the male Dren may not only serve to reaffirm the ideological feminist conviction that all men are [potential] rapists and murders, as articulated by multiple feminists from Valerie Solanas and Andrea Dworkin to Shulamith Firestone, and in multiple excerpts from bell hooks' book. Furthermore, as hooks indicates, mothers can be capable of brutal violence towards children, particularly male children, a reality that feminists, and broader society, each has difficulty acknowledging. The transgressive scenes, of Clive and Dren having intercourse, Elsa's mutilation of Dren's tail, the murder and mother-son rape at the end, reputedly put off a number of investors for the film (Griffin 2010). When the male lead, Clive, has sex with the mutant, hybrid 'monster'—Dren, it is filmed as an erotic seduction, but when the female lead has sex with the 'monster', it is a violent rape (thugz4real 2010). Passive seduction (by Dren towards Clive), equally as effective as physical rape (by Dren towards Elsa) in leading to sexual intercourse, is overlooked by audiences—the female Dren is a “victim” in the former but a male oppressor in the latter. Referring to the reactions of audience members, Natalia says (Szklański 2010):

If you were at any of the screenings, we got some pretty vocal responses. I mean, people just would go bananas and literally shout at the screen...They would yell things at Adrien Brody's character... they would call him sick and perverted, so it really hit a chord.

Abject horror and blame are the reactions to Clive responding to Dren's seduction, for phallogocentric and violent theories of feminist patriarchy are the lens through which many people still perceive male-female sex.

That society is patriarchal is also suspect,. It is certainly a capitalist world in this movie. The human male characters (Clive and the male boss), like the human female characters (Elsa and the female boss), succumb to greed and ambition over love, selflessness, and integrity. Perhaps as bell hooks (2004, p. 177) contends, “Women have not proven that they care enough about the hearts of men, about their emotional well-being, to challenge patriarchy on behalf of those men with whom they want to know love.”

Conclusions

In *The Will to Change*: Men, masculinity, and love, a final dominant theme is that knowing men only for the violence they inflict on women and children is an impartial, inadequate knowing—males suffer in patriarchy, too. An uneasy truth tacitly revealed in *Splice* is the violence and vice of women as similar to that of men, in contradiction to the widespread yet problematic ideological feminist doctrine of the benign mother, healer, and caregiver. In queer theory, this is knowledge that for many would be considered “hard to bear”, for it places in crisis what is “known” or “knowable” (Butler 1993)—the faulty belief that men are inherently violent, and paradoxically, that women are more noble. Likewise, Hooks (2004, , p. 63) states:

Feminist idealization of motherhood made it extremely difficult to call attention to maternal sadism...And yet we know that...women are shockingly violent towards children. This fact should lead everyone to question any theory of gender differences that suggests that women are less violent than men.

Males are not loved in patriarchal culture (hooks 2004, p. 35); Rather, males are work droids, and their place is to serve, protect and defend (and impress in order to gain favour) the womenfolk in a tradition of chivalry that can be traced back to the middle ages and which persists—not just in popular media but in molding our present-day concepts of human rights, professional ethics, military conduct, and gender relations (Wollock 2011). True females garner love, and also allot love. Love is the female domain and power that males solicit, thereby leaving them at their mercy

Due to a pervasive Boy Code, male children are treated harsher than their sisters, and adults and other children attempt to expunge any qualities from them that may be construed as feminine, sissy, or gay. Dren, then, with her bald head (a characteristic of manhood) is denied curly blonde locks and identification with her Barbie dolls when she looks aghast in the mirror, and even a tender relationship with her kitten (whom she kills), for as an ersatz male, with her threatening, poisonous

tipped stinger on her phallic tail—Dren is more like a boy. Locked away in a drafty, rural barn, psychologically abused, denied emotional warmth, sexually assaulted, and physically mutilated, she transforms into a boy—and not just any boy but the archetype of ideological feminist propaganda—a flying, godlike, murdering rapist with an imposing physique.

This begs the question, in a world where it is normal that girls and women are loved, but boys and men must constantly earn love from them, who is empowered in ways that count, ways that nourish the human spirit and heart? We learn Dren is not a “real” girl but part animal. Furthermore, she is also a covert boy. Following the Boy Code, nourishing parental love is withheld from Dren, and emotions such as compassion, kindness, and empathy are scourged from her being, as she is increasingly abused. If girls were raised as boys, society would call it abuse. Dren reacts with rage first by killing her cat, symbolically her feminine side; She kills her “pussy”, vernacular for the vagina, and proceeds to become physically male, with an imposing physique to murder, and a penis to rape. This outlandish ideological feminist notion that all men are potential murderers and rapists must be constantly re-affirmed in popular culture, in order to sustain the widespread and enduring conviction of female victimhood and male villainy. However, if society adopted a more androgynous model for boyhood, one in which males were encouraged to combine traits mistakenly seen as masculine or feminine, boys might develop greater emotional awareness and acceptance, and become less violent (Garbarino 1999, p. 37; hooks 2004).

The physical and criminal violence of women may be underreported due to enduring beliefs in their benign, nurturing nature, and a misandric legal system that gives them preferential treatments in comparison to men (Nathanson and Young 2006). Hooks (2004, pp. 43-44) also asserts that:

Even though masses of American boys will not commit violent crimes resulting in murder, the truth that no one wants to name is that all boys are raised to be killers, even if they learn to hide the killer within and act as benevolent young patriarchs. (More and more girls who embrace patriarchal thinking also embrace the notion that they must be violent to have power).

Hooks is over-emphasizing physical violence. Symbolic violence, particularly the silencing, manipulating, isolating, ignoring, and dehumanizing of males, is rife in North American and Western culture.

Horror films explore the margins of the contemporary world order by placing audiences' fears about death, the afterlife, and evil on screen, and then relieving them through the defeat of the horror, and the re-establishment of the world order (Teusner 2005, , p. 176). However, this is an uneasy pact in *Splice*. Corporate control and greed reign at the end, but the end is only the beginning with the birth of another 'monstrous' probable intersexual. The queer unsettling and transgression of gender norms will continue, even if Elsa is able to forge ahead with her financially secure future. Elsa becomes a vehicle of capitalist greed—signing over her monstrous baby for what one presumes is a hefty check, to an elegant but morally sterile French-speaking matriarch of the corporate world, dressed in business grey/black, like the nefarious, controlling, inhuman, patriarchal agents in the *Matrix* (Gosse 201b). In this crisp transaction, the characters are emotionless—Elsa, too, wholly succumbs to corporate control and regulations, and is stripped of and semblance of humanity or benign motherhood.

Nathanson and Young (2001) say that males, and male values and qualities, are regularly disparaged, ridiculed or shamed in direct proportion to the way that females, and female values and qualities, are validated, endorsed, and held up for approval. Elsa is no longer: (i) a Frankenstein 'mommy dearest'; (ii) the spurned woman; (iii) the implicit conspirator to daughter incest and bestiality nor; (iv) a helpless victim of incestuous rape. Rather, she has become what is a familiar, if somewhat distasteful icon to North American audiences—an entrepreneur with a product for sale. Elsa, with the foreign name, is an embodiment of the American Dream, for she has achieved financial wealth and autonomy via ambition, greed, and transgression of moral codes—and without any more men in her life. Pregnant with Dren's child and agreeing to have the baby, Joan Chorot tells Elsa that she could always end it (abort). Elsa aloofly replies, "What's the worse that could happen?"

Elsa Kant personifies the ultimate narcissist's and capitalist's justification—achieve at all

costs, come out on top, even if in this case, Elsa is literally selling a part of herself, for the monstrous baby carries her own DNA. Furthermore, like the remains of Dren, the baby's genetic material will create patents [and profits] for years for the corporation, Newstead Pharmaceuticals. Thus, Elsa's identity, and that of the monstrous baby she is carrying, is authorized in a capitalistic context, void of humanism, and bent on profit, values commonly considered to be hegemonically male and patriarchal, thereby rupturing what is usually considered to be gender specific.

Hooks (2004, p. xv) says that, "Women and children all over the world want men to die so that they may live." With a ghost of a father, no indication of any feeling other than indifference towards male co-workers, and with her boss—Barlow, her co-worker and Clive's brother—Gavin, as well as her son-daughter—Dren, and Clive, now all dead, Elsa is about to sell her own baby, and in a sense, grandchild, too. She has repudiated any association with benign motherhood, but may invoke pity as a survivor of rape, the quintessential ideological feminist symbol of patriarchal oppression, with the right to choose. Elsa is the modern woman, empowered and ready to begin her life with financial freedom and autonomy, free of any cumbersome and potentially violent boy child or man—for "the only good man is a dead man". Elsa's own sins are washed away in this misandric tale, for financial success is the ultimate badge of capitalist and ideological feminist success and empowerment, and armour against hubris and ignominy. The end justifies the means. I'll have my "fuck you" money, thank you very much, and I deserve it. As Nietzsche (2001-2012) said, "He who fights with monsters might take care lest he thereby become a monster." We are left to contemplate: who and what is monstrous?

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