

Queer Juxtapositions in the Art of Francis Bacon and *Lilliput* Magazine.

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Abstract

Francis Bacon made extensive use of photographs and other images from the visual culture of his time in the production of works that were implicitly queer. Homosexual men were widely represented in prose and through cartoons as campily effeminate ‘pansies’. In the magazine *Lilliput*, by contrast, photographic spreads produced juxtapositions that evoked a range of responses to same-sex attraction from erotic engagement to nervous rejection. Studying the ways in which this and other magazines engaged with queer culture enables us to reassess the painter’s use of juxtaposed visual forms as acts of sexualised self-expression.

Keywords

Cartoons, Collage, Homosexuality, Magazines, Photography

Bacon resubmission, p. 2

Fig. 1. Francis Bacon, *Three Studies for Figures at the Base of a Crucifixion*, 1944, oil paint on three boards, 94 × 73.7 cm each support, Tate Gallery, London, N06071, © Estate of Francis Bacon, reproduced courtesy of DACS.

Fig. 2. Detail, anon., 'Polish Clothing: Fashion Variations: Colour', *Style for Men* 24, no. 2, August 1934, 95, reproduced courtesy of The British Library, London, LOU.LON 555 [1934] and Harris and Sheldon Group, Ltd.

Fig. 3. Ian Fenwick, *Untitled*, in John Bingham Morton, 'Conscription for Young Pacifists', *Everyman: The World News Weekly* no. 247 (no. 4 New Series), 20 October 1933, 11, reproduced courtesy of The British Library, London, LOU.LON 16 [1933].

Fig. 4. Douglas England, *Untitled*, *Punch* 198, 13 March 1940, unpaginated, reproduced by permission of Punch Cartoon Library/TopFoto

Fig. 5. Topical, 'Boxers, Larry Gains and Lee Harvey'; MGM, 'Film Stars, Clark Gable and Jeanette Macdonald', *Lilliput* 4, no. 5, May 1939, 450-51.

Fig. 6. Fox, 'Dead Mutton'; Gehr, 'Live Beef', *Lilliput* 8, no. 1, 1 January 1941, 32-33.

Fig. 7. Leonard Raven-Hill, 'Ganymede and the German Eagle', *Punch* 149, 6 October 1915, 283.

Fig. 8. Fox, 'Everything for the Führer!'; London, 'What do They Mean?', *Lilliput* 5, no. 6, December 1939, 520-21.

Fig. 9. Francis Bacon, *Painting*, 1946, oil and pastel on linen, 197.8 x 132.1 cm, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 229.1948, © Estate of Francis Bacon, reproduced courtesy of DACS.

Francis Bacon is increasingly seen as an artist whose sexuality directly informed the development of his key early works including the six *Heads* that he painted for his first solo exhibition held at the Hannover Gallery in London in 1949. Richard Hornsey, in his survey of the cultural life of post-war London *The Spiv and the Architect* (2010), wrote of Bacon's 'preoccupation' in these works with 'the public presentation of his own queer self'.¹ Bacon is also well-known for his creative referencing of sources from books and magazines.

Consideration of the ways in which queer expression operated in such contemporary sources may suggest that he also borrowed some of those elements. Bacon was working on his first major surviving paintings toward the end of World War Two. Examining British men's magazines from the 1930s and early 1940s reveals two significant ways in which male homosexuality was expressed in the popular culture of the time. The first, and most widely employed method, relied on visually stereotyping the queer man as effeminate. The second, which was frequently used in the magazine *Lilliput*, involved the production of queer meaning through the juxtaposition of images from a variety of sources. Understanding juxtaposition as a technique related to collage enables us to look innovatively—and queerly—at Bacon's work.

Lilliput was founded in 1937 by the photo-journalist Stefan Lorant who is famous for having co-founded *Picture Post* the following year.² *Lilliput* aimed at a mass-market but provided a moderately sophisticated diet of arts and culture that was directed primarily at men but which did not seek to exclude women readers. By the start of World War Two it was selling c.300,000 copies (about three times as many as *Punch*).³ Its popularity peaked in 1947 by which time it had achieved a circulation around 500,000 copies.⁴ Martin Hammer has stated that he thought that Bacon was 'almost certainly familiar' with *Lilliput* because of its popularity and inclusion of work by leading British photographers.⁵ Specific images from the

magazine may have informed particular paintings by Bacon, but it was the way in which contrasting images were often paired in the magazine which is particularly significant. At a time when same-sex desire was not mentioned in polite society visual juxtaposition created coded ways in which to engage with ambiguities of sex and gender.

A common point of origin for the visual culture of Bacon and *Lilliput* was the Dadaist concept of the cut-up which inspired the Surrealists. Susan Sontag argued in 'Happenings: An Art of Radical Juxtaposition' (1962) that 'the Surrealist tradition in all these arts is united by the idea of destroying conventional meanings, and creating new meanings or counter-meanings through radical juxtaposition (the "collage principle")'.⁶ This was from an essay on early forms of performance art which was published in her first collection *Against Interpretation* (1966). She placed it immediately before 'Notes on "Camp"', which was notable for drawing attention to the connections between camp and homosexuality.⁷ Since society did not provide a ready-made template for queer culture other than those deriving from concepts of sin and crime, homosexual men and women constructed their own culture through strategic acts of juxtaposition and calculated exaggeration. The queer theorist Alan Sinfield argued that stereotypes of gay man then emerged from a 'queer bricolage' of images and concepts associated with aestheticism, effeminacy and social class.⁸

The queer juxtapositions in the early art of Francis Bacon were intended as shocking destabilisations of such popular stereotypes. They should be seen in the context of the story told by Gregory Woods in his book *Homintern: How Gay Culture Liberated the Modern World* (2016) of the striking change of tone from frivolity to seriousness as the 1920s gave way to the 1930s.⁹ The aesthete Harold Acton, writing flippantly in 1948, described this shift as follows: 'The astute younger generation had decided quite rightly that they had a better chance of a public hearing by grafting political messages onto T. S. Eliot's technique. Their cantos, interlarded with music-hall ditties, the puns of Joyce, pedantic jokes, and passages of

bisexual sentiment, were riveted with pink slogans and hoisted on Red flags'.¹⁰ The bizarrely juxtaposed objects that appear in works such as Bacon's *Painting* (MoMA, New York, 1946)—umbrella, hoisted meat and all—form into a queerly logical pattern if the composition is viewed as a visual collage (fig. 9).

The Collage Principle

The visual shock delivered by collage involves the juxtaposition of images that either are dissimilar or are related in direct or indirect ways. Art historians have hitherto thought mainly in terms of the referencing of previous images by Bacon and have, hence, been on the look out for similarity. Martin Hammer, for instance, in his studies of Nazi propaganda, has discovered what appear to be a wide range of close visual parallels with imagery in paintings by Francis Bacon.¹¹ An example of his method is provided by *Sphinx* (Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C., 1954), which bears a striking resemblance to a fascist sculpture in Düsseldorf of a sphinx composed of a pair of storm troopers. A photograph of this work appeared in a book that Bacon had bought the same year.¹²

Popular magazines from the 1930s and 1940s can also be fruitfully explored for a wide variety of possible parallels. One example relates to the creatures in Francis Bacon's *Three Studies for Figures at the Base of a Crucifixion* (Tate Gallery, London, 1944) (fig. 1). One of their disturbing peculiarities is a juxtaposition of bulbous fleshiness with stick-thin limbs that resemble modern furniture. An earlier expression of the same idea can be seen in Bacon's *Crucifixion* (private collection, 1933). Having worked as an interior designer, he would have been familiar with the world of the retail trades in interwar London. The premier

trade magazine for the menswear retail trade was *Style for Men*. This provides an excellent source of information for the appearance of window displays and the way in which men's clothing was displayed. An article from 1934 illustrated a bust with 'tubular arms and flexible joints, supported on metal telescopic upright' (fig. 2).¹³ If bent up these arms would form the effect shown in the painting of 1933 and if bent down and around the body would give the effect of the left-hand figure in the 1944 work.

It is well-known that Francis Bacon made extensive use of photographs taken from films, newspapers and popular magazines as source material for his paintings. This was first brought to popular attention by Lawrence Alloway in his article 'Pop since 1949' which was published in *The Listener* in 1962: 'Pop art begins in London about 1949 with work by Francis Bacon. He used, in screaming heads that he painted at this time, a still from an old movie, *The Battleship Potemkin*. This image, of the nurse wounded in the eye in the Odessa-steps sequence, though mixed with other elements, of course, was central to the meaning of the work.'¹⁴ The painter's reluctance to talk about his reliance on such materials for inspiration may relate to what has been termed Britain's 'grudging and delayed acceptance of photography' as a form of art.¹⁵ The painter may have rejected what Alloway termed his 'use of quotations from the mass media', but more recent scholarship has revealed 'just how integrated into the visual currency Bacon's practice was in terms of his absorption of the same photographic sources and collagist strategies as the Independent Group artists'.¹⁶ It is to this circle, who met regularly at the Institute of Contemporary Arts in London from 1952 to 1955 that the British origins of pop art have usually been ascribed. It has been argued that the practices of Richard Hamilton, who was a leading member of the Independent Group, can be understood as queer and as having been prefigured by the interwar collages of Cecil Beaton.¹⁷

The celebrity photographer was an ardent creator of collages and scrapbooks. This is not only evidenced by the surviving collection of his scrapbooks owned by Sotheby's but also

by frequent references in his published writings such as in this article which appeared in *Vogue* in 1937:

The juxtaposition of various pictures on the same page adds vitality; punctuation can be given to a page of dancers by a vignette of the Queen crossing a street, and endless pleasure can be had from the distortion or recomposition of pictures. Cigar-box pictures and pictures from 'Health and Strength' magazine are useful for montages, and a figure from 'The Nudist' carefully cut round and placed, unobtrusively, among the ladies of Their Majesties' Court, creates a surprise.¹⁸

Where Bacon had his distorted popes and businessmen, Beaton had his recomposed courtiers and bodybuilders. Such juxtapositions that were queer in the sense of strange or startling might also be read as blurring conventional boundaries of class, gender and even sexuality. Beaton did not invent this practice, even if he was the first to popularise it. This can be seen by looking at the series of scrapbooks kept by the pioneering homosexual-rights campaigner George Ives. They are striking for the way in which they regularly juxtapose scenes from high and low society, and from western and other cultures. A representative example is a page that features a photograph of 'Umbark: the sultan's favourite [male] slave' on a swing, surrounded by a montage of English cricketers.¹⁹

Beaton was inspired by the visual culture of the United States during the 1930s and these practices of queer bricolage were also being employed across the Atlantic. The interwar scrapbooks of the American gay photographer George Platt Lynes show a similar pattern. A fairly typical set of (undated) spreads featured Mae West in 1890s costume eyeing up a boxer, Edith Sitwell, Edwardian ladies paddling, the young Gabriel D'Annunzio, images by Cecil Beaton, scenes from Richard Strauss' *Der Rosenkavalier* (1910) and African

tribesmen.²⁰ A particularly notable theme was the juxtaposition of a male pin-up of the day with a masculine entourage, as in a spread that positioned Cary Grant with a group of bathing boys.²¹ Lynes, Beaton and Ives thus employed the subversive possibilities of camp contrasts such that, as David Weinberg has put it in another context, the dominant culture's visual language was 'made to speak sexual transgression.'²²

Camp Stereotypes

Queer individuals made use of the collage principle to side-step the negative images of same-sex desiring individuals that were produced by mainstream culture. These focussed on gender transgression as the supposed sign of sexual nonconformity. In 1933 the national press reacted with disgust to the passing by the Oxford Union debating society of the motion 'that this house will in no circumstances fight for king and country'. The newspapers alleged that this was the result of the triumph of 'woolly-minded communists, practical jokers and sexual indeterminates'.²³ These stereotypes dated back to World War One when conscientious objectors had been pilloried for being unpatriotic, effeminate, selfish, perverse and tainted with admiration for foreign cultures.²⁴ This image relied in turn on prejudiced responses to Oscar Wilde and other flamboyant queer men since the eighteenth century.²⁵

Ian Fenwick, who was to serve as an army major during World War Two, presented the fashionable young pacifist as an effeminate man in a 1933 edition of *Everyman, News Weekly* (fig. 3). There is a suggestion of make-up on the man's face and he is provided with a boutonnière which had had queer associations since Oscar Wilde's employment of the green carnation in the 1890s.²⁶ The cartoon accompanied an article by the popular writer J. B. Morton on 'Conscription for Young Pacifists' that was a response to a pacifist essay by

Beverly Nichols in the previous issue.²⁷ Morton accused Nichols of having ‘hysterics in public’ and of displaying attitudes typical of ‘emotional young people to-day. He writes, or used to write, exactly as they talk, in a high, shrill voice’. The result is that ‘the normal man who loathes war but believes in honour is held up to ridicule’.²⁸ This was, therefore, an attack on Nichol’s homosexuality using the linked stereotypes of effeminacy and cowardice.

Male same-sex desire had, by this time, become far more familiar than it had been at the beginning of the century. Cartoons featuring ‘poofs’, ‘pansies’, ‘fairies’ or ‘sissies’ who were implicitly homosexual frequently appeared in *Men Only*, which was a pocket-sized periodical launched in 1935. It had a substantial print run of between 50,000 and 200,000 copies. It was aimed at the ‘normal’ man as indicated by a ‘poem’ published in *The Bystander* and reprinted in *Men Only*:

For its prose and pictures are
(using the vernacular)
Far from ‘sissy’ or ‘just too-too,’ but full
Of honest and full-blooded meat,
The suits the manly man a treat.²⁹

‘Too-too’ hinted at affectations associated with Wildean decadence.

Justin Bengry has argued that the frequent appearance of cartoons of effeminate ‘pansies’ in 1930s editions of *Men Only* is evidence that the magazine was courting a queer customer base. It is true that that many of the cartoons are jocular such as one that showed a camp soldier on parade observing “‘how nice your sword looks, Trevor.’”³⁰ There were occasional pictures of sailors and service personnel that might ‘suggest erotic possibilities to some readers’.³¹ However, the cartoons did veer toward a more overtly homophobic mode

when showing brightly painted pansies attempting to solicit other men. An example of this was Edward Hynes' 'Oh, Sir, Spare a Copper' (1936) in which a queer man wearing make-up asks an outraged police sergeant either for money (a copper coin) or a police constable (a 'copper').³²

Bengry suggests that during the war *Men Only* 'almost entirely abandoned any treatment of homosexuality', but whilst the pansies disappeared—perhaps due to pressure from the censors—queer innuendo in Hynes's work of this time did not.³³ In one cartoon a little girl misinterprets a drunk man who is being helped back to his ship by two officers and says, 'Oh, mummy, look at that sailor loving those policemen.'³⁴ The sexual implications of the scene were underlined by the appearance in the background of another sailor intent on pursuing a woman wearing high-heels (presumably a prostitute). Then there was another cartoon depicting a captain and a junior officer as if they were man and wife: 'I say, MUST you come aboard ten hours late, reeking of gin and 'noir de Paris'?'³⁵ Cartoons employing stereotypes of butch lesbians were also printed although there were fewer of these. A representative example showed a uniformed woman talking to a pair of her compatriots, both of whom are ugly and one of whom is reading a copy *Men Only*: 'Frankly speaking, I think a lot of women join up with a view to matrimony—present company excepted of course.'³⁶

The publication, therefore, parodied the effeminate 'sissy' and the 'too-too' mode associated with Oscar Wilde's circle of the previous century, yet the repeated inclusion of pansy cartoons indicates a lively awareness of queer possibilities within the homosocial realm from which the 'manly man' had constantly to assert his distance. Such phobic images did not come out of nowhere. Make-up and flamboyant dress had long been used by a minority of homosexual men. The function of this style was not only to improve appearance but to send the signal that one was open to same-sex advances, or even that one was a male prostitute.³⁷ At a time of rising public and police concern over the 'problem' of homosexuality, such

behaviours became of intense interest to the authorities.³⁸ Matt Houlbrook has revealed how a man's possession of a power puff became equated by the police with a propensity to sodomy.³⁹ Such individuals became 'an integral and startling part of metropolitan modernity, embodying the nagging fear that the city offered queer men an affirmative space, where their desires were no longer abhorrent and depraved.'⁴⁰

It has been widely noted that Francis Bacon did not only paint pictures but that he also painted his own face with cosmetics. He told the art historian Michael Peppiatt that the connection was forcibly brought home to him one day when he walked into a bar and heard a camp man say loudly, 'As for *her*, when we knew *her*, she was more famous for the paint she put on her face than for the paint she put on canvas.'⁴¹ The incident took place when Bacon was starting to become well known; so probably in the immediate post-war years. The painter can be understood as having been a socially privileged 'west end [of London] poof' of the sort described by the lawyer Travers Humphreys in 1927.⁴² *Men Only*, therefore, did sustain a certain level of queer visibility but it was one which projected the homosexual male as a ridiculous figure who was not a sexual threat to 'normal' men. It can be suggested that such jesting fitted with a long-established pattern of toleration within working-class communities of flamboyant homosexual 'queens' and that such men did not necessarily face bullying and discrimination in their military units during the War. Cross-dressed theatrical reviews offered queer men a chance to 'have fun and display their camp sensibilities while genuinely contributing to the morale of their outfits with the official approval of the highest-ranking military officials.'⁴³

One reason for varied and ambivalent responses to male femininity is suggested by Sonya Rose's reading of British men during World War Two as 'temperate heroes'. Disgust at effeminacy was balanced by distrust of the forms of hyper-masculinity advocated by the Nazis.⁴⁴ This meant that the normative male was expected to be both manly and, at least to

some degree, sensitive. The pansy, therefore, appeared to be on a spectrum of gender performance as opposed to a bizarre other who had to be excluded at all costs. Various cartoons of the time gently parodied the aesthetically inclined squaddie, such as Frank Reynolds' "Fall in, that Poet!" in which a soldier stoops to pick a blossom to the bemusement of his platoon and the outrage of his commanding officer.⁴⁵ Another example is an untitled work by Douglas England, published in *Punch*, in which a fey young man, training with his squad, spots a flower (fig. 4). In this version, however, the poetic youth is implicitly transformed into a homosexual when he proffers the flower to his macho and enraged sergeant. In the midst of the terrors of war pansies bloomed into figures who could be treated more with wry amusement than horror. However, the effect of camp humour in these cartoons was to desexualise the queer body. The resulting imagery scarcely offered an ideal reference point from which to develop a shockingly radical and sex-affirmative visual language.

Juxtapositions in *Lilliput*

Lilliput offered a different form of queer visibility than *Men Only*. A characteristic feature of the magazine was a photographic spread that juxtaposed two images to comic effect. The edition of 2 August 1942 carried a double-page spread featuring on one side a photograph of a young man holding a fork (captioned, 'Keep out of my garden') and on the other a photograph of the Swedish milliner Aage Thaarup (captioned, 'I only wanted a few pansies').⁴⁶ There was a fashion for women's hats to include artificial flowers which might have seemed morally dubious at a time of national emergency.⁴⁷ The implication of the magazine spread was, of course, that Thaarup was a homosexual and, following Oscar

Wilde's unfortunate precedent, he duly sued for libel. However, in the ensuing case in the High Court of Thaarup v. Hulton Press (1943) Mr. Justice Cassells found that 'he had to consider what the captions would convey to a reasonable and fair-minded man, and not to one of a morbid and suspicious mind. He thought that no reasonable, fair-minded man would give to the photographs and words any such meaning as was alleged.'⁴⁸ Therefore, it was the establishment's unwillingness to recognize queer juxtaposition that allowed it to continue to be published.

The phobic humour shown in this spread relies on the same stereotype as the pansy cartoons in *Men Only*. However, before Stefan Lorant left *Lilliput* in 1941 the magazine had printed photographs that were redolent of homoeroticism. Thus George Platt Lynes' 'Slumbering Sailors' were shown sleeping head to crotch in a double-page spread across from an image of 'Restless Cattle'.⁴⁹ And in 1939 *Lilliput* published a decidedly queer sequence of eight images by Cecil Beaton the 'fanciful camera-artist'.⁵⁰ This included the bisexual and gender-bending actress Marlene Dietrich kissing the face of a woman in sculpture made up to look like her. This was a sexed-up version of a photograph of 1932 by another queer man, George Hoyningen-Huene, in which Dietrich was posed looking away from a bust.⁵¹ There were also two sexualised images of topless men: a 'young negro' and a tattooed 'able seaman' half-covered by a transparent shower curtain.⁵² Martin Hammer has discussed the presence of figures half-obscured by curtains in various of Bacon's paintings with specific reference to women seen through semi-transparent materials in 1930s glamour photography—but here is a more precise parallel for the painter's interests in the male figure.⁵³ Creating a sequence of images with more or less overt expressions of same-sex desire encouraged the viewer to search for further evidence of queerness.

Cecil Beaton was a camp individual who feared being stereotyped as a pansy. In 1930 he wrote that he longed to escape from effeminate homosexuality: "I have always hated

fairies collectively... I am sure I shall turn mean about fairies because they frighten and nauseate me and I see so vividly myself shadowed in so many of them and it only needs a little grip and dash to get oneself out of that sad and ridiculous predicament.”⁵⁴ Moreover, his career received a severe setback in 1938. He was dismissed from *Vogue*, where he was a leading contributor, because he had included the word ‘kike’ in the background of one his drawings on the subject of modern life in New York. The mood in the Jewish community was, quite understandably, febrile and Beaton’s protestations that he had simply included the term as an example of contemporary slang that he had heard employed by Jewish friends were not enough to save him from being seen as an anti-Semite.⁵⁵ His rehabilitation from this disgrace, and from his reputation as a camp dilettante, was achieved through war-service.⁵⁶ His work for the British Ministry of Information duly appeared in *Vogue* and he was called upon to provide shots of the fashionable woman as patriot. The evidence of *Lilliput* suggests that he was, nevertheless, still advancing the boundaries of queer visibility on the eve of World War Two.

Various of *Lilliput*’s photographic spreads featured suggestive juxtapositions that played on both similarity and difference. The sexual implication of juxtaposing images of the clinched boxers Larry Gains and Lee Harvey opposite the clasped Clark Gable and Jeanette Macdonald are unlikely to have been lost on the queer reader (fig. 5).⁵⁷ The pansy stereotype implied that the homosexual male could only seek sexual fulfilment by assuming a passive sexual role with a duped or paid ‘normal’ man. Reading same-sex desire into the wrestlers required one to appreciate that two masculine men might love one another, even if this radical idea could only be made presentable through parody. The same recognition is required in order to read *Two Figures* (private collection, 1953) as a representation of sex rather than of wrestling.⁵⁸ Gregory Salter has argued that this work was, in effect, half hidden when first exhibited, which implies that its sexual intent was indeed legible at the time.⁵⁹ The blurred

nature of the figures incited the viewer not only to infer movement but also to make queer comparisons between mental images of pairs wrestling, embracing or having sex.

One of the best-known visual juxtapositions that occurs in Bacon's art of this time is that between animal carcasses and strong men as shown in *Painting 1946* (Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1946) (fig. 9). The same comparison appeared in a photographic juxtaposition in *Lilliput* magazine in 1941. In this spread a series of carcasses captioned 'Dead Mutton' are displayed opposite a line of heavily muscled gymnasts labelled 'Live Beef' (fig. 6). It is important to point out that the images used in the magazine were sourced from elsewhere and, therefore, also prefigured Bacon's method by being derivative. Thus the concept of man shown as meat was far from new: a certain George Nicholls, who presumably worked in the meat trade, had been photographed on receiving a prize for having dressed up as a side of bacon in a Covent Garden Fancy Dress Ball held in April 1894.⁶⁰

Another area in which the *Lilliput* photographic spreads inform our understanding of the queer visual culture of the war years is in relation to fascism. The appearance of swastikas and other elements related to fascist imagery in paintings by Bacon has been related to a desire to shock and to his sexuality, bearing in mind that he eroticized power relationships between men. Jack Halberstam has argued against simplistic associations between Nazism and sadomasochism whilst cautioning against the erasure from critical notice of a tradition of right-wing masculinist homosexuality.⁶¹ Homoerotic bonds were important in certain strands of early Nazism.⁶² Germany had also been associated with homosexuality in Britain since the widely reported Harden-Eulenburg affair that lasted from 1907 to 1909. This centred on a series of courts-martial and other trials concerning the accusations of the journalist Maximilien Harden that there had been a same-sex affair between Philip, Prince of Eulenburg-Hertefeld and General Kuno, Graf von Moltke. Reportage of this case saw the first widespread appearance of the term 'homosexual' in the British Press.⁶³

Innuendo concerning the perverse tastes of the ‘Hun’ was widespread during World War One. An example of this, in the usually decorous pages of *Punch*, was Leonard Raven-Hill’s cartoon ‘Ganymede and the German Eagle’ (1915) (fig. 7). Classically educated readers of the publication would have been well aware of the pederastic Greek legend in which the god Zeus in the form of an eagle sexually abducted the boy Ganymede. ‘Of course I know it’s a great honour being “taken up” like this; still, I’m beginning almost to wish the bird had left me alone’, says the decidedly unattractive Sultan who is shown being carried off in the talons of the German eagle. The military alliance of Prussia with Turkey was, thereby, presented as a relationship of sodomitical domination.⁶⁴

In the same year Austin Harrison, who was best known as the editor of *The English Review*, published an article entitled ‘A Nation Ruled by the Stick’. He identified the enemy as suffering from a pathological condition which, we are told, is referred to by the Germans themselves as ‘Oscar Wildeism.’ Harrison advanced the view that sodomy was a shameful practice whose eroticism lay essentially in delight in the giving and taking of pain. He duly attributed ‘the growth of Sadism or joy by the infliction of pain, to the terrible license and growth of unnatural practices ... [involving] the savage flogging of schoolboys, the outrageous brutality of the working classes, the deliberate popularizing of depravity and homosexuality...’⁶⁵ The openness with which such matters were addressed in Germany was in stark contrast to the state of affairs in Britain. To take one key example, Havelock Ellis’ book on ‘sexual inversion’ was suppressed in the latter country even though it had been released a year earlier in a German-language version without any legal problems.⁶⁶ This contributed to homosexuality being viewed in Britain as something of a German specialty.⁶⁷

The reputation of Weimar Germany as a hot-bed of sexual experimentation helped to intensify such associations and they were duly available as an explanatory framework to explain the personal drives of the Nazi leaders during the 1930s.⁶⁸ In 1939 *Lilliput* printed a

photographic juxtaposition of images of young conscripts doing press-ups and of Hitler looking through a pair of binoculars as if he had them trained on the men's backsides. The caption, 'Everything for the Führer!' implies that the rank and file of German troops were sexually available to their leader, even though it had been he who had ordered the execution of the notoriously homosexual Ernst Röhm in 1934 (fig. 8).⁶⁹ Much the same joke, featuring a military parade with men presenting their backsides, had appeared in a cartoon in the German press during the Harden-Eulenberg scandal.⁷⁰ The juxtaposition in paintings by Bacon of male bodies and visual references to fascism can, therefore, be understood as another means by which coded queer meanings could be expressed.

Putting it all Together

Francis Bacon bore certain of the hallmarks of the pansy such as his use of make-up. He was not a conscientious objector but was declared unfit for wartime service and worked as an Air Raid Precautions officer. Although he did not create collages much is explained about the queer content of his work if we think about his practice as having involved practices of visual juxtaposition. One important difference between the source material employed by Bacon on the one hand and Beaton and Platt Lynes on the other was that the painter was not interested in camp nuances of social distinction. The overall effect is closer to that of the 1950s scrapbooks of the bisexual American writer and photographer Carl Van Vechten. These alternated erotic images of men with scenes from crime reports and other locales where queer desire was 'not supposed to be—the tennis court, or the wrestling mat.'⁷¹

Bacon abandoned the camp bricolage of the pre-war pansy for what Richard Hornsey has termed the 'citational assemblage of the antisocial criminal'.⁷² This involved

interrogating apparently normative behaviour like a detective for signs of queer deviance: a suit that was slightly too well-fitting, a certain facial expression, lingering at a street corner or at a urinal.⁷³ In works such as *Figure Study I* (Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, 1945-46) the male body is present through material signs such as a coat and hat. Such items appear as aspects of masculine drag that can be shed to reveal the desiring body beneath and thereby foreground 'the constructedness of masculinity as a theatrical masquerade'.⁷⁴

In 1940 Neville Chamberlain, who had failed to deliver the 'peace in our time' with Germany that he had promised two year before, was replaced by Winston Churchill as Prime Minister. The same year Stefan Lorant published a volume of juxtaposed photographs from *Lilliput* entitled *Chamberlain and the Beautiful Llama* (1940).⁷⁵ MoMA, New York, which owns *Painting* (1946) (fig. 9) says on its website that the work shows:

an oblique but damning image of an anonymous public figure. The umbrella that partially obscures him might refer to Neville Chamberlain, the prewar British prime minister who was known for carrying one. His dark suit—the unofficial uniform of British politicians of the day—is punctuated by an incongruous bright yellow boutonnière, yet his deathly complexion and toothy grimace suggest a deep brutality beneath his proper exterior. In the background, three window shades evoke those found in an often-circulated photograph of Hitler's bunker.⁷⁶

Painting (1946) starts to look less mysteriously oblique if its incongruities are embraced as essential elements of the collagist logic of queer juxtaposition. Umbrella, bunker and meat compose a masculine bricolage implying the concealed desires of apparently heterosexual leaders. Boutonnière and the characteristic smearing of make-up-like paint to indicate the face represent forms suggestive of effeminate bricolage; as also does the umbrella which was

associated with emasculate weakness when employed against the sun.⁷⁷ Putting all these elements together through juxtaposition enabled Bacon to construct paintings that spoke in code of a queerness that transcended the camp stereotypes of his own time and rendered it part of the condition of the human animal.

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¹ Hornsey, *The Spiv*, 151.

² Bryant, 'A Little Magazine'.

³ Woodhouse, *Angus McBean*, 168.

⁴ Hallett, *Stefan Lorant*, 67.

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⁶ Sontag, *Against Interpretation*, 269.

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⁸ Sinfield, *The Wilde Century*, 146.

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¹⁰ Acton, *Memoirs*, 163-64.

¹¹ For example, Stephens, 'Seeing the Story'.

¹² Hammer, *Francis Bacon*, 188-89.

¹³ Anon., 'Polish Clothing', 95.

¹⁴ Alloway, 'Pop Art', 1085.

¹⁵ Harrison, 'Potential Images', 58.

¹⁶ Walsh, 'Real Imagination', 85; for an overview see Robbins, *The Independent Group* and Massey, *The Independent Group*.

¹⁷ Janes, 'Cecil Beaton'.

¹⁸ Beaton, 'People and Ideas', 140.

¹⁹ Ives, Clippings Album 3, p. 1, Beinecke Library, Yale University, general mss 426. These scrapbooks are not precisely dated but this material is from around c.1900-1905

²⁰ George Platt Lynes Papers, Beineke Library, Yale University, YCAL mss 139, box 3, folder 23.

²¹ Ibid., box 2, folder 20.

²² Weinberg, "'Boy Crazy'", 32.

²³ O'Connor, *Straight Acting*, 131.

²⁴ Hussey, 'Clive Bell', 244 and 255, n. 11.

²⁵ Janes, *Oscar Wilde Prefigured*.

²⁶ Janes, *Oscar Wilde Prefigured*, 199-205

²⁷ Nichols, 'The Devil'; thanks are due to Dr Andrew Rudd for bringing this cartoon to my attention.

²⁸ Morton, 'Conscription', 11.

²⁹ Anon., 'B. W.', 'Men Only', 13.

³⁰ Bengry, 'Courting', 134-35.

³¹ Bengry, 'Courting', 122, fig. 1.

³² Hynes, "'Oh, Sir'", 95; see also Bengry, 'Courting', 133, fig. 3.

³³ Bengry, 'Courting', 142.

³⁴ Hynes, "'Oh Mummy'", 69.

³⁵ Hynes, "'I Say'", 91, emphasis in original.

³⁶ Anon., 'Palmer', 'Frankly Speaking', 42.

³⁷ Peppiatt, *Francis Bacon*, 60; see also Weeks, 'Inverts', and Bartley, *Prostitution*, 25, 30 and 157.

³⁸ Moran and McGhee, 'Perverting London', 104-6.

³⁹ Houlbrook, "'The Man'", 170.

⁴⁰ Houlbrook, 'Lady Austin's', 39.

⁴¹ Quoted in Peppiatt, *Francis Bacon*, 69, emphasis in original.

⁴² Humphreys quoted in Houlbrook, *Queer London*, 139.

⁴³ Bérubé, *Coming Out*, 97.

⁴⁴ Rose, *Which People's War*, 154.

⁴⁵ Reynolds, "'Fall in that Poet'", 386.

⁴⁶ Black Star, 'Keep out', 154-55.

⁴⁷ Dyhouse, *Glamour*, 105.

⁴⁸ Anon., 'High Court'; an appeal was allowed but was not pursued, on which see anon., 'Court of Appeal', 2.

⁴⁹ Lynes, 'Slumbering Sailors'.

⁵⁰ Beaton, 'A Fanciful', 81.

⁵¹ Ewing, *The Photographic Art*, p. 186, plate 132.

⁵² Beaton, 'Able Seaman', 85; see also Stephenson, "'Our Jolly'".

⁵³ Hammer, *Francis Bacon*, 174.

⁵⁴ Quoted in Vickers, *Cecil Beaton*, 134.

⁵⁵ Princeton University Library, Cecil Beaton Papers, box 1, folder 12, for correspondence on this incident.

⁵⁶ Francis, 'Cecil Beaton's', 92-93.

⁵⁷ Topical, 'Boxers', 450-51.

⁵⁸ Ofield, 'Wrestling', and Arya, 'Constructions of Homosexuality', 52-53.

⁵⁹ Salter, 'Francis Bacon', 85.

⁶⁰ Marshik, *At the Mercy*, 104, fig. 3.1.

⁶¹ Halberstam, *The Queer Art*, 170.

⁶² Halberstam, *The Queer Art*, 158.

⁶³ McDonnell, 'Essentially Masculine', and Tobin, *Peripheral Desires*, 188.

⁶⁴ Hill, 'Ganymede', 283.

⁶⁵ Harrison, 'A Nation', 7; compare anon., 'Gospel', 7.

⁶⁶ Tobin, *Peripheral Desires*, 4.

⁶⁷ Beachy, 'The German', 828.

⁶⁸ Hewitt, *Political Inversions*.

⁶⁹ Fox, 'Everything', 520-21.

⁷⁰ *Der wahre Jacob* (November 26, 1907), p. 5621, reproduced in Steakley, 'Iconography', 336.

⁷¹ Weinberg, "'Boy Crazy'", 31.

⁷² Hornsey, *The Spiv*, 161.

⁷³ Hornsey, *The Spiv*, 137, and Janes, 'The Scene'.

⁷⁴ Hammer, *Francis Bacon*, 156; Salter, 'Francis Bacon', 91, and Van Alphen, *Francis Bacon*, 175.

⁷⁵ Lorant, *Chamberlain*.

⁷⁶ Moma, *Francis Bacon*.

⁷⁷ Janes, *Picturing the Closet*, 151.