

The next section of this exegesis will consider two significant themes within this anti-language and their impact on typographical treatments in the short film *boy*. These themes become evident when the lexicon of bog speak is considered as a whole.

The first theme is detachment. The second is the seemingly unusual profile of parodied ecclesiasticism. These themes are discussed in some depth, both in terms of their origins and profile. They are also considered in relation to experiments developed in the design of the film.

## design considerations

*detachment and ecclesiasticism*

### introduction

*Boy deals with a subject film makers tend to avoid. While young men's emerging sexuality is commonly explored in film and television, their gay equivalent is generally avoided or portrayed as neutral (asexual but camp) or as a victim of paedophilia. Sam is neither. He is a phenomenon in nearly every New Zealand small town with a public toilet. Unable to get in to city pubs or clubs, sequestering his lifestyle from the community, he finds contact through advertisements written on walls and through 'glory holes' burned or drilled through the partitions.*

*I grew up like this, as did many of my mates. We were tough, quickly matured and caught in a value conflict between what was preached and what was practised. We learned early that intimate relationships were something detached, silent, impersonal and anonymous. We learned the biting humour and the rituals that kept us safe from the police and the queer-bashers. We learned that invisibility and a double life meant survival.*

*Nobody talked about us and nobody told our stories, as a result our world remains a vacuum in the literary construct of this country.*

(Ings, Feb. 2001, precursor to director's notes for *boy*.)

A fundamental design problem in this film was the effective translation of Sam's underground language into complementing typographical treatments. These treatments needed to operate effectively in both the over-ground and the underground worlds of the narrative. They needed to draw on the ethos of bogspeak but use this to make two distinctively different typefaces, one lyrical and one abject.

### **detachment and the underground face**

Peter Burton (1985) in his essay *Tearoom Trade: public convenience or private grief*, discusses some of the implications of transgressing the protective rituals that surround bog cruising. He says,

*one of the major tragedies of cottaging is the number of ostensibly straight men who find themselves arrested or confronting the horror and embarrassment of explaining their actions to wives (primarily) and employers; an equal part of the tragedy must be the same or similar situations which face gay men in the same position. (p. 16)*

An example of the consequences of such exposure, cited in Jenkin is taken from a news story *Witch-Hunt Causes Stirling Suicides* that featured in *Scotsgay* late in 1996.

*Eleven men have been arrested, two of whom have since committed suicide, following a cottaging blitz in Stirling. A third man has attempted suicide.... First to die was Michael Cummings, 60, a divorced rigger, who threw himself 200 feet to his death from the Forth Road Bridge after being arrested in the Beechwood toilet. A month later, Cameron Daisley, 48, a youth and community worker based at Balfon High School hanged himself in the woods on Sheriffmuir after police took it upon themselves to inform his employers, Stirling District Council, of his arrest. Despite his not having been convicted of any offence, his Equal Opportunities employer, a Labour controlled council, intended to suspend him. Mr Daisley was a member of the Dunblane Cathedral Choir and the Scottish National Orchestra Chorus as well as being an Elder of the Cathedral where his funeral service was held on 22nd November. He had lived with his partner, John Rooney, for 21 years. (1997, p.12)*

This is a story from Scotland, though it has little publicised parallels in New Zealand every year. It is indicative of a miasmic fear that hangs over men who have sex with other men in bogs.

One set of ritualistic behaviours adopted to deal with this situation involves detachment. In general, sex between men in these sites is silent and rituals of contact, though complex, are enacted using a series of highly engineered cues and responses. The use of written notes, glances and displays through glory holes, the sounds of toilet-paper being rapidly pulled from dispensers, coughing, the shuffling of feet, all operate as cues for contact and all replace the intimacy of speech. Foucault discussing this detachment in the attraction of anonymous sex between men says, "*you stop being imprisoned inside your own face, your own past, your own identity. It's not the assertion of identity that is important; it's the assertion of non-identity,*" (Foucault, 1978, cited in Macey, 1993, p. xv).

This non-identity in bog cruising is embedded in rituals of detachment designed partly for protection. It is also evident in specific linguistic (and paralinguistic) profiles. It is these profiles that are of interest to this research.

Salen (2001) discussing the translation of invisibility into typographical form, talks about the importance of considering "*the phenomena of the typographic 'voice over' which constitutes a 'national symbolic environment'*" (p. 132). She suggests that, "*the typographic voices we are accustomed to are utopian, belonging, nowhere, regionless, without accent*" (ibid.). Designing a typographical treatment for a double life that exists inside, yet separate from a dominant repressive culture, posed a complex and difficult problem.

### **the dictionary experiments**

The first creative experiments I trialled worked outwards from a culturally empowered lexicon, the *Concise Oxford Dictionary*. This is a text that might arguably be considered to represent an established profile and conventional recording and styling of English. It is an accepted voice of a national symbolic environment, where all elements are standardised, and accompanying patterns of typographical treatment are absolute.

The design of *boy* captured the dislocation, discord and anonymity inside an already privileged, established graphic form. It fractured meaning and violated accepted hierarchies. Thus it proved to be a potential metaphor for an anti-language. However, because the design still referenced a linear, cohesive, connection of thoughts, it failed to capture the sense of detachment and isolation indicative of Sam's world.

One of the significant profiles of bogspeak is its use of the third person singular pronoun to describe other men who exist within the community. Calling other men "it" or "that thing" or referring to a partner as a "trick" or a "number", is part of a profile of oppression where the marginalised other self-represses through the detachment and dehumanisation of his peers. Mount in his introduction to Rogers' (1972) *The Queens' Vernacular: A Gay Lexicon*, referring to this American collection of gay words from the first two-thirds of last century says

[gay slang] demonstrates self pity and downright masochism with which gay people have forged the common language into a means of communicating their experience... This is a book about oppression, in which the oppressed deal with that condition and with the pleasure and tension that results from living a secret life. Much of it is more vulgar, barbaric, cruel, racist and sexist than any speech you will ever encounter. (p. ii)

Considering the ideas of detachment, anger and the potential for re-using the dictionary as a metaphor for established order, I began to experiment with disrupted treatments of letterforms, and pronunciation symbols used in the text. This was partially influenced by the range of pronunciations I had encountered when attempting to compile a lexicon of bogspeak.

Fig. 3:9 Typographical translation of anti-language using the Concise Oxford Dictionary. What I was concerned with in this early experiment was the disruption and detachment of the formal elements of this lexicon: its 9pt Times Roman typeface, its absolute and consistently applied spatial treatments and its prioritising of values by weight, form and order. The outcome was stained, cut, dislocated, and creased. It was then rescanned as a background treatment for images in the film. (See fig: 3:12).

**innocuous** [per  
Gael. aingeal] s against othe  
**inglorious** (in-g-), a. Ignomi-  
ous; obscure. [L] **informa'tio**  
**in'going** (in-g-), told, knowledg  
**in' (noceo hurt)** news; charg  
ing of (-ugg-), with court &  
oblong, of cast rition, instructiv  
flour or steel [ ]  
**innocent** **harmless person, esp. ch**  
n-grān'), a. Dyed in grain; (ng  
nveterate. ~ed (bef. noun in'-grānā  
else -ānd') a (fir) [var. of engrain  
**innocent.**  
**ingrate** (in-g- or in'-). 1. ad  
rare). Ungrateful. 2. n. Ungrate  
ful ~-ness [in-gratuel]  
**innocent** (~ of crime  
oneself, get into favour (with).  
phr. in gratiam into favour]  
**ingrāt'itude** (in-g-), n. Want  
gratitude. **Sinless, ATE)**  
**ingrēd'ient** (in-g-), n. Compor  
ent part in mixture. [L ingredio  
enter into] **innocuous**  
**in'gress** (in-g-), n. (Right of  
entrance [T\* (cf. EGRESS)]  
**innocence** n. (i-), a. (C  
dan) growing into the flesh. [D  
**ing'uinal** (inggw-), a. **in-**  
groin. **innocuous** n)]  
**ingulf'gitate** (-n-g-), v.t. Gul  
one fully; engulf. ~ā'tion (-n-e-) i  
TARGET get purgit- whirl-  
**inn'ing person, esp. child**  
&c.) batshe **harmless. 2.**  
part of gam. **innocent.** 1. ad  
is batting; 2. adj. Sinless; not  
political party ~; windows ~ of  
**innocent.** 1. 'd); guileless;  
guilty (~ of cri public, mind;  
**guileless**; unglaz. ughter of  
harmless. 2. n. ~ perso); simple  
(I-s' Day, festival of sla. **in-**  
children by Herod, Dec. 28. **innocuous**  
person; idiot. **innocence**  
**innocuous** a. harmless (inno.  
**innocent.** 1. adj.  
**guilty** (~ of crime: ;





inn'ocence n.

Fig. 3:10 Unaligned type with the inclusion of symbols. The disruption of the privileged grid was inspired by the particular disorderliness of written words as they appear on toilet walls. These, I noted, often flow in more organic, curved lines than in the mechanically leaded strips of formal writing.

Fig. 3:11-12 Large images above and right. Early photographic indicatives for *boy* (2001) showing applications of disrupted type. The word *innocence* in the first image was the original title of the film and appears dominantly in typographical trials during the early stages of the its design. The word alluded to the fact that innocence might be entirely relative, Sam's innocence, social isolation and prostitution being pitted against the embedded and corrupt traditions of a dominant over-ground society.

The second image shows the use of the disrupted Oxford dictionary background. It was trialed as a metaphorical reference to the boy's dislocation, however the idea was too abstruse to be effective.

Letters were cut out of the dictionary, pasted together, enlarged and reduced on poor photocopiers to distress the edges (fig. 3:10). They were then scanned into the computer and laid up over thumbnail images, to assess their potential to operate as detached elements in the same pictorial environment (figs. 3:11-12).

The detached aesthetic of these typographical experiments in both their organic form and dislocation of identity is evidenced in the personal (but anonymous) bog wall writings and scrawled notes that pass back and forwards between participants during rituals of contact.



With these experiments I was wanting to capture something of the fleeting, disconnected contact indicative of Sam's world in the bogs. This is why the type is transparent and ill defined. It acts as dislocated whispers and gestures, rather than as clearly spoken language. Although these experiments with reconstituted type from dictionaries proved problematic<sup>29</sup>, the image of small blocks of apparent and obscured writing was a powerful influence on the typographical voice

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<sup>29</sup> The type was difficult to animate and failed to adequately capture the anger and bristling cruelty of bogspeak. The composite letterforms were also too passive when placed over the images.

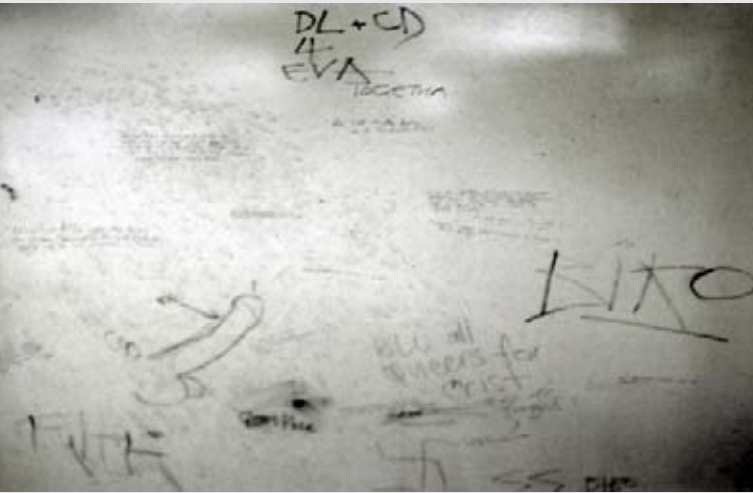


Fig. 3:13 Bog writing, Te Awamutu.

The potential for translating the layout of bog wall writing with its apparently arbitrary positioning of text, its unusual and dramatic emphases and its obscured and sometimes over-written words, provided significant stylistic influences to the design of the underground typographical treatments.

adopted in the film. While this kind of writing is a ubiquitous feature of bog walls, (fig. 3:13) it has parallels in both the underground and over-ground of the film because Sam carries its language with him.

Type is used generally to express dislocated thought that is sometimes Sam's and sometimes so disconnected even from him, that it appears to be words coming from the environment itself, (fig. 3:14). In both of these cases, the type sits outside of the constraints of the grid. It flickers inside the image as a kind of angered dislocation, attached to the idea yet not integrated with it.

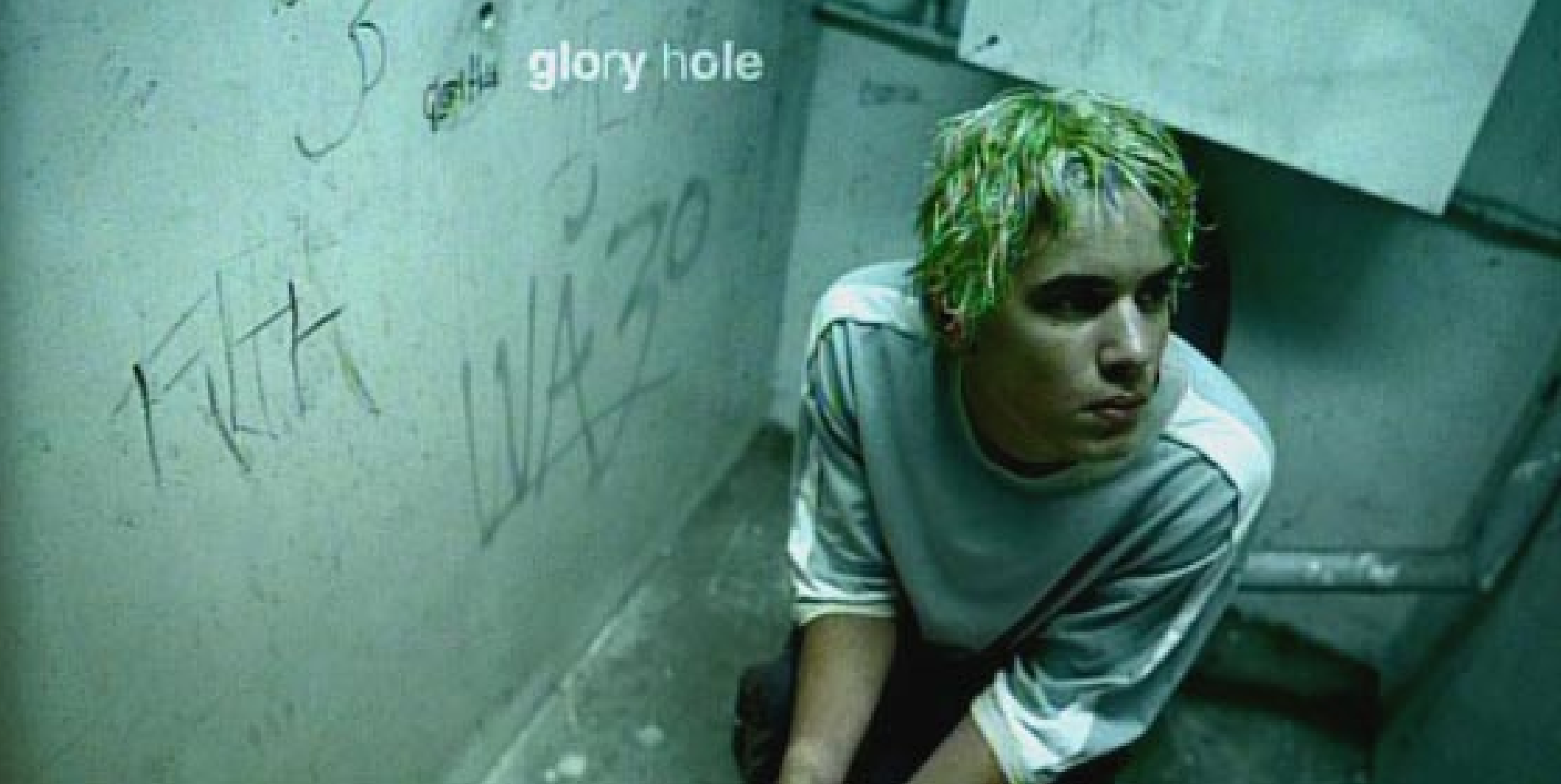
### the anger experiments

The nexus between dislocation and anger that is evidenced in the language of the bogs was a challenge to interpret in type. This is especially because this feature of the language is often turned both outwards and inwards on the user himself. The anti-language of bog speak demonstrates a clear hostility to regulatory and punitive agencies but the language is also scornful of intimate relationships of other men who also use the bogs for sex. Cage (2003) talks about this as a form of linguistic, dehumanised, detachment where,

*people are not viewed as individuals when referred to... but are relegated to the level of sexually consumable commodities, without hopes, feelings and needs. They merely become featureless units in a noxious swarm of past, present and potential sex partners. (pp. 31-32)*

Cage suggests that this can be attributed to the fact that living in an environment characterised by persecution, rejection and frustration, marginalised men do not hold their peers within the co-culture in high esteem. He suggests that historically "a combination of psychological maladjustment and homophobia laid the ground for them to attack and manipulate each other" (ibid) 31.





This sense of attack may also be exacerbated by the state of powerlessness that men in this world find themselves. They are generally unable to retaliate against the queer bashers, or the police, or the media, and as a result suffer not only retribution but also negative reconstructions of their identity in the public sphere. Smith (1993) states that,

*those beat users who find themselves before the courts will tend to follow the course of least resistance... In the absence of an effective counter discourse, beats fall victim to the paranoia of heterosexuals. Beat users become compliant but unwilling participants in (as in the case of a court action), or an imaginary subject of (as in exaggerated fears of child safety), the fantastic stories that are woven in and around the beat. (p. 21)*



Fig. 3:14 Six stills of Sam in the bog with type surrounding him. This is the language of the bogs. It talks about how he is seen and also references some of the features in the environment. The voice here is not Sam's. It is a separate disconnected commentary that only operates in this environment.





Fig. 3:15 Stills of experiments using handwritten words on glass held in front of the camera during filming. While the effects were dramatic, they over emphasised the individualism of the typographic voice. They also created too broad a style palette to integrate cohesively with the more ornate and ecclesiastical typographical treatments in the film.

### *handwritten voices*

The capturing of this suppressed anger was trialed initially through a range of scrawled and scratched typographical experiments. The first approach was to capture the nature of Sam's muffled rage by applying rapidly written words onto the surface of the film, either as text scrawled on transparent sheets, or as words scratched directly onto the negative (fig. 3:15).

Mealing (2003) suggests that

*handwritten text speaks of its author ... and variables such as proportion, evenness, slope, slant angle, size, spacing, width and weight are all considered and used to extract information beyond the remit of the text. (p. 45)*

However, while handwritten typographical treatments had a strong, author's voice they did not animate flexibly across images. They also gave too strong a personal voice to the speaker.

The difficulty I encountered was essentially one of balance. The typographical voices in the film were not only Sam's. The written language needed to be flexible enough to operate across a range of scenes.

Furthermore, handwritten text speaks so clearly of the writer that the approach demanded different signature hands for each speaker in the film. This proved too congested and confusing.

### *animating behind letterforms*

I needed to create a typographical treatment that was angry but still oppressed and dislocated from the viewer. It had to avoid the intimacy of a personal signature, yet still contain feeling. The difficulty, therefore, lay in orchestrating the emotional intensity of the written form. Too much expression of rage, over-impassioned the voice, but purely typographic letterforms seemed to formalise and over-subdue the emotions I wanted to underscore.

The seeds of a solution surfaced eventually in the experimental treatment of an image that was finally dropped from the film.







Fig. 3:16 Still from the animated flash shot, *Red car*. The image was designed to suggest an emerging khamp, kind of fury; something florid but as yet unrefined (immature) in its assault. The sequence was dropped from the final cut of the film because it did not add anything significant to either the narrative flow or Sam's already established anger.

For a moment after keying (scratching) the red car with his flick-knife, Sam was to turn back and look at it.

The car was to appear as a flash shot that scratched and then melted like a burnt negative (fig. 3:16).

The rapidly animated, distressed surface built on the anger that had motivated Sam's attack on the car. A white scratch, separate from the image, was animated over it and continued to crackle as the picture of the car burst into flame and turned into a melting negative. This device, which sat between the worlds of the type and image, I realised could operate as an independent emphasis. It was flexible in



that the technique could be transported across images. The crackling, frustrated texture could become a background rather than a letter form. This technique had the ability to punctuate. It could also contrast letterforms against their backgrounds, and create a variety of animated textures that could be independently orchestrated in terms of discord. Thus, the dislocated, background of the letterform became a significant device in determining the intensity of a word.

This may be likened to the way that Baker (2002b) suggests the background (environment) of an anti-society becomes a determining agent in the intensity of an anti-language.

The creation of an intermediary surface that was neither letterform nor an actual pictorial element, meant that the level of frustration and scratchy brutality could be animated quickly behind words. This resulted in the kinetic nature of the typography containing the aggression rather than the actual typeface (fig. 3:17).

### outcomes

The anger that runs through the distressing of individual words and animated sequences in the film, is a translation of the tone of specific words in bogspeak. The emotion in the typographical design picks up on the hostility and aggression felt towards the key regulating social forces that collectively and individually position bog-cruisers as the demonised other.

The placement of this type in the film, specifically in the bog sequences, references the way that the written word and graphics interplay on toilet walls. Both are separate but mutually involved in describing the social and historical atmosphere of the location. Words from bogspeak flicker in and out of the time that Sam spends waiting for a trick. They form around him or around features in his environment as a silent commentary, in the same way that stories, warnings and advertisements are presented on a bog wall.

The readability and clarity of the letterforms have been preserved because despite the unfamiliarity of some of the words, bogspeak



Fig. 3:17 Film stills.

This flash frame from Sam's notional attack on the girls at his school plays an over-ground insult (*bitches*), off against the underground bogspeak term (*fish*). Both words vibrate because of the scrawled graphic behind them. However, the letter forms remain stable.



is an anti-language not a foreign language. It integrates the known grammar of the dominant society with the obscured lexicon of the underground. The letterforms are recognisable, as are the words. It is simply the meaning and context that is unfamiliar. Bogspeak like any anti-language is identifiable because words from it can be used in over-ground speech (discerningly) to ascertain the nature of another listener<sup>30</sup>.

Sam's story has a number of voices and it was necessary to design a composite typographical treatment that would demarcate yet integrate these into the cohesive aesthetic of the film.

The dislocated and angry type that operates in the bogs also becomes part of the anger that flows out from them. Thus, the driver's threats, his wife's confrontation with him regarding the bloodied shirt, the boys who threaten Sam in the changing rooms, and the pictorial insults Sam flings at those who hurt him, all carry versions of this typographical profile.

However, there is also an alternative voice; poetic, reflective and gentle, that opens and closes the narrative. It also appears in the story's sequences that deal with loss: (when Sam talks about his mother's death from cancer, when he mentions the angels in the summer grass, and during the funeral of the hitch hiker).

The design for this alternative type drew on a seemingly contradictory feature of bogspeak, its unusual metaphorical emphasis on ecclesiasticism.

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<sup>30</sup> While Cage's comments related directly to gay men living in the repressive South Africa of last century, some parallels can be drawn with the currently marginalised and ostracised men in contemporary bogculture. Bog cruisers continue to exist in a fundamentally criminalised environment with little empowerment in terms of opposition or redress. This parallel may explain why many (especially rural and suburban bog communities) are seen as operating as almost anachronistic "snap shots" of gay society before the liberations and decriminalisations of the 1970s and 1980s. Martyn Goddard's essay *The Forgotten World* (1990) offers an interesting analysis of this phenomenon.

## ecclesiasticism

### introduction

The second typeface developed for the lyrical voice in this film, also had its origins in the anti-society of the bogs. However, it drew on a seemingly antithetical feature of the language form. Its source lay in bogspeak's parodying use of the ecclesiastical.

Ecclesiastical metaphors are a significant feature of bogspeak that can be evidenced in specific terms like *glory hole* (a hole in the wall between two toilet cubicles), *having church* (to kneel in order to perform oral sex), *Christ and two apostles* (a dated expression for the genitals of prudish or shy men) and the names of specific toilets like the *Chapel* (Pitt Street Auckland), the *Catacombs* (Auckland Museum), and the *Wailing Wall* (Sydney Hospital in Kingscross). This religiosity also profiles in the names of well-known bog queens like, *Fatima Foetid Fuck*, *Mother Superior Posterior* and *Gloria Hole*.

### cultural profiles

Perhaps the most exposed, contemporary socio/political appearance of this parodied ecclesiasticism is the chapters of the *Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence*. The New Zealand chapter of this order first made an appearance in the Wellington Gay Pride Week in 1984. While it had links to other international chapters, this group of radical gay men was called the *Sisters of Sodomy*. Members of this chapter included *Sister Angel Thighs* and *Sister Trevor-Marie*. In an interview with the Wellington Gay Newspaper *New Zealand Pink Triangle* (1984), Sister Trevor-Marie articulated the significance of the chapter that paralleled the rationales adopted by other, international groups. She said,

*It's a parody of the Catholic Church, which is a major institution of oppression of lesbians as well as gay men. We are consciously being blasphemous and sacrilegious. That takes away some of the power of the church by mocking its holy symbols. Nuns are supposed to be celibate.... From a political point of view as well it breaks down the barriers you couldn't otherwise get through, in much the same way as the clowns on the 1981 Springbok tour protests did. (Issue 46, p. 4)*



Fig. 3:18

Early indicative for Sam's heterodiegetic site of narration.

Initially Sam was designed to appear in the opening frames as the writer of the story. The pictorial style drew on the eclectic and ecclesiastical nature of the poetic verse that framed the narrative. A combination of animated, swirling lines and fusions of *Apple Chancery*, *Brush Script* and *Caflish Script Pro*. typefaces, flickered across the surface of the image. This typographic treatment proved too frail to animate successfully and also led to a competition for primacy between the voice of the type and the voice of the image. The background texture seen in the window behind Sam was developed from the initial typographic treatments taken from the dictionary.

The design however, had too much detail. Because I was wanting the written voice and the images to work harmoniously in the opening of the film, I decided to pare back the use of clutter and detail in both areas.



Fig. 3:19  
The Wellington Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence.  
The photograph by Gavin Young features, Sisters Trevor Marie [Douglas Jenkins], Angel Thighs [Robert Lake] and an unnamed sister, (Robert Beard), LAGANZ-Ms-Papers-0607-396.

In 1993, a second New Zealand chapter profiled in Auckland comprising Sister Sheep-Fucker, Sister Inviolator of the Immaculate Conception and Sister Due to Media Attention. While the New Zealand chapters had relatively short-lived profiles, their Sydney and San Francisco equivalents were highly prominent in the early 1980s. The Australian chapter that included Sisters Sit-On-My-Face, Third Secret of Fatima, Joy of Man's Desiring, Fuck-Me-Silly, Fellatio Obliviata, Mary Azaria-in-a-pram and Mother Inferior, [later known as Mother Abyss aka Fabian Loschiavo] were noted for such political events as performing a formal exorcism at the Gates of Parliament on March 29th 1982. Mother Abyss also walked the highly documented tour of "Gay Sydney", dressed in a pink habit, singing *Volare*, accompanying herself on a squeeze box and being preceded by "a holy relic of gay matrimony, the urinal from a destroyed popular cruising toilet, where so many unions were consecrated." (Cohen, 1999, p. 4).

An extensive profiling of this group of Australian activists is available in the LAGANZ Archives MS-0230.

Baker (2002a), discussing the significance of the London chapter of this organisation, points out that apart from being politically active they are also linguistically revivalist. He notes significantly that they "use 'High Polari' in their blessings, sermons and canonizations- adding a bit of religious mystique whilst acknowledging gay history within their ceremonies" (p. 6).

Reconstituted Christian ritual has historical precedents in the English working class Molly Houses of the eighteenth century<sup>31</sup>. These were taverns and clubs where men met to have sex with other men, and were profiled by the subversion of traditional heterosexual and religious customs and rituals. Norton (1992), refers to Molly marriages that occurred when two men paired off and had sex in another room known as the Chapel. He also offers a description of a "lying in" where a wooden baby was christened after being mock birthed between a man's legs.

Baker (2002a) suggests that this mocking parody of religious convention

*was a response to mainstream society's attitude to the Mollies. Sodomy was illegal and punishable by imprisonment... The Mollies were effectively criminalized, partly because of the growth of the Societies for the Reformation of manners, and many of them were driven underground, mixing with criminals or being forced into their company in prison.* (p. 22)

Ambivalent attitudes to Christian ritual are a complex feature of men marginalised or ostracised by the church. Among the men who "do the bogs", Humphreys (1970) suggests, are a significant proportion of church affiliates who because of their positions, cannot afford to be seen involving themselves in sexual relationships.

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<sup>31</sup> Among some men in the interviews this language is called "code" and many suggested that it is an old, secret way of finding things out while you remain safe. Wedding (2004) states "it formed initially... to cover up what people were doing so they could carry on a conversation in a coffee bar where there might be elderly ladies having a cup of tea or a cup of coffee" (p. 8).

One of the reasons that Humphrey's data was so controversial when it was first published, was that it profiled Roman Catholicism so disproportionately among men who used public toilets for casual sex. He says

*data indicates that Roman Catholic religious affiliation is a causal factor in tearoom participation, because that church's prohibition of the use of artificial contraceptives limits the sexual outlet in marriage. Of the married men in my sample of tearoom participants, 50 percent are Roman Catholic or married to a Roman Catholic, as compared to 26 percent of men in the control sample. (p. 62)*

Morton (2003), in his discussion of the phenomenon of cruising codes, says

*ritual is an important aspect of the way a society identifies and affirms itself. Many oppressed groups react against their oppressor by donning elements of the same ritual 'dress' that excludes them. Thus some gay men will often fetishise the attire and behavior of the police and rough trade inside their own cruising rituals. While on the surface this may be seen as a form of parody of an oppressive, regulatory body, on a deeper level it also operates inside the cyclic dynamic evidenced in many abusive relationships; the abused adopting elements of the abuser's behavior and profile as a form of identification. Politically however appropriation of elements of oppressor's identity also serves to constantly reinforce the status of the marginalised other. (p. 104)*

Thus, elements of the church ritual are reconstituted and repositioned into the metaphors of bogspeak in much the same way that identities of other oppressors (heterosexual men, the police, women, the family and bashers) are<sup>32</sup>.

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<sup>32</sup> Trumbach (1991) says that in the 1660s and 1670s, sodomy was committed by "rakes" who were libertine in religion and republican in politics. Sexually they were interested in sex with younger men, were not effeminate and were also sexually interested in women. Fops, who were effeminate, did not have sex with men. By 1710 a new identity, the Molly had emerged, one who was effeminate and also engaged in sex with other males.





Fig. 3:20

Early design for Sam's shrine. The artwork was not used in the final version of the film.

This shrine sequence was developed to profile key characters in the narrative, inside a religious environment that expanded upon the ecclesiastical references of the opening titles. Words were designed to flank each character and the typeface developed for them needed to masquerade in the over-ground while carrying references to the typographical treatments of the bogs.

The problem posed then was how does one create a complementing typographical treatment for a voice coming from a similar synthesis of oppressed elements, but profiling in the film as an interior, lyrical voice?

### **the lyrical voice**

For the design of this typographical treatment, I initially worked outwards from Baker's (2002a) contention that, "*It is the tension between the two alternative constructions of reality (society and anti-society) that creates the linguistic distance between language and anti-language,*" (p. 14). He suggests "*both sets of concepts should be considered as notional extreme ends of a continuum based on a social system, with considerable overlap occupying the middle-ground,*" (ibid.).

Early in the development of the shrines that were designed to create a pause in the narrative, I considered integrating typographical elements into the pictorial structure (fig. 3:20).

The intention was to develop a typeface that carried references to ritual and ecclesiastical ornateness and at the same time remained introspective. Thus, Baker's society (over-ground) and anti-society (underground) needed to be established as poles on a continuum on which Sam's narrative could move backwards and forwards. Linguistic equivalents can be found in terms like "*having church*" or "*visiting the sisters*" that have flexible meanings to a bog cruiser depending where on the gradient of social intercourse the term is used. In a restaurant, away from the cruising community, these words would mean something very different to what they would represent if they were used in discussion between fellow cruisers in the front seat of a car, parked outside the bogs.

The typographical treatment used in the poetry of the titles needed (in a similar way to the treatment designed for the bogs) to seep out from the world of its original appearance, and into elements of the narrative where the implications of events happening in one world caused actions and reactions in the other.





Fig. 3:21  
Angel Chancery.  
Designed by Welby Ings, June 2003.  
The face is profiled by a stiffened lyricism, destabilised by distorted ascenders and descenders, pinched terminals and an absence of uppercase letters.

Fig. 3:22  
Opening title, (opposite)  
A decision to remove images of Sam from the opening of the narrative meant that I could focus the viewer on a dislocated voice. The Angel Chancery type was used to offset the gritty, distressed treatment of the strange, damaged toys.

### *the times experiments*

The initial typographical experiments operated inside a font family (Times). This typeface was used as an over-ground reference and its appearance was disrupted by its own alternative weightings, italics and symbols (cf. anti-language). Words developed from this reconstructed typeface were then stretched and warped so they gained an unstable but decorative rhythm. While this worked as single words, the face had a diminished level of readability when it was animated. It was also too similar to the type I was designing at that time for the disconnected and angry bogface. An application of this experiment can be seen in figure 3:20.

Legibility and readability became important concerns as I began to condense the duration of words appearing within the narrative. What will often work in print does not operate the same way as moveable type. While issues regarding the influence of time and motion on the typefaces in this film will be discussed later in this exegesis, the establishment of a new typeface that would animate effectively was a parallel concern of these early trials.

### *the chancery experiments*

Following the discounting of the reworked Times face, a second set of experiments was trialed involving the subtle corruption of chancery typefaces.

Modern typefaces based on these handwriting scripts developed during the Italian Renaissance, are often used in vernacular religious print media (newsletters, funeral service programmes, the printing of religious tracts). The face I developed which drew references from Holmes' *Apple Chancery* (1994), Slimbach's *Poetica Chancery III* (1992) and Penner's *Rendezvous* (2003), was designed to contain a subtle level of instability within its letter-forms (fig. 3:21) and was employed in experiments where I animated it over filmed footage of broken doll/angels (fig. 3:22).

The new *Angel Chancery* typeface with its additional disrupted tracking and kerning, provided an isolated, introspective, almost delicate voice that pulled itself apart as the animated sequence progressed.



However despite its distortion it proved to be too delicate and while beautiful to watch, had a frailty that belied both the strength of Sam's character and the acerbic nature of bog speak's ecclesiasticism.

The gritty treatment of the angel-dolls had been filmed at this point, and set a confirmed "volume" for a pictorial voice against which the typographical design could be orchestrated. The development of the film's introductory sequence came from a reconsideration of three profiles of Sam's personality: dislocation, eclecticism and ecclesiasticism. These themes had driven much of the development of the typographical experiments to this point. Now they were revisited and combined with different emphases into one composition that carried both graphically and typographically, a sense of the ornamental and the abject.







Fig. 3:23

A comparison between a Nickelodeon slide c.1900 and a narrative commentary subtitle for *Frontier* (1925) demonstrate how the ornamental devices designed in the early part of the century had been developed into linear scroll works, more indicative of typographical flourishes than pictorial borders. It is significant to note the few gay-themed title cards of the period were often profiled by a comparatively over-ornamented design, when compared to those designed for contemporary heterosexual-themed narratives.



Fig. 3:24

Preliminary title sketch for boy.

The use of caps throughout the design was too dominant and removed some of the innocence and vulnerability from the design. The regularity of the letterforms was also too stable.



Fig. 3:25

Refined design for title.

The lower case b was developed to reinforce the youthful and vulnerable nature of the word. The title has integrated ecclesiastical flourishes and eclectic lower case letterforms.

### *main title experiments*

After discussions with Marcus Ringrose<sup>33</sup> a design for the word “boy” was developed that integrated a range of typefaces and kept the decorative elements on separate layers. This allowed the individual elements to be animated separately.

These devices were influenced by ornamental designs on the borders of early, silent movie commentaries and their graphic relatives, the theatrical Nickelodeon warning slides of the 1900s (fig. 3:23).

During some tangential investigation I had discovered that in many of these commentary frames, it was not necessarily the typeface that had been exoticised (probably for reasons of readability) but the ornamental flourishes surrounding the written text<sup>34</sup>. In a similar fashion to the way that graphic symbols had been used to intersect the typographical voice in the Oxford dictionary experiments, these subtitle decorations were now disconnected from their original context and purpose and relocated inside the letterforms of the title. Experiments using this approach are illustrated as figures 3:24 and 3:25.

The main title of *boy* was refined from these experiments. The final design contained adaptations that allowed it to reverse out, contain a graded fill, or operate as a positive. In the film’s original promotional graphic (opposite), a diagonal flow of calligraphic flourishes is used to suggest continuity between the three distinct letterforms .

The title heralds the movement that will become the constantly drifting, lyrical voice of the film’s opening.

<sup>33</sup> Marcus Ringrose is the founding member of *Heat Interactive*, a New Zealand design company that specialises in animated type. He formed one of the members of the thesis’ reference group during the post-production work on the film.

<sup>34</sup> Griffith and Mayer (1970) suggest that these “voice of God” editorial comments and “spoken titles” were designed for the producers rather than the director. The authors also offer interesting insights into how the design and wording of these were used to significantly change the tone or meaning of the original sequences.

boy



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1997

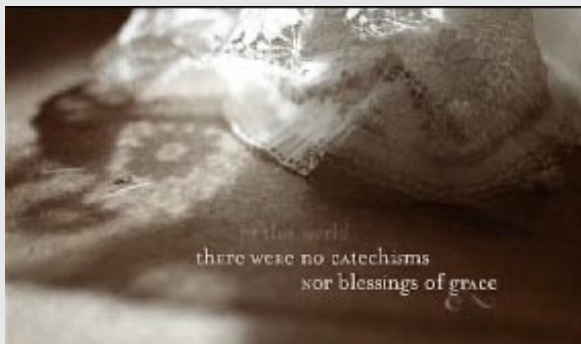


Fig 3:26  
Opening poem letterforms. Words are constructed as ornamental forms, using a variety of replaceable upper and lower case letters.  
An analysis of the still demonstrates how both upper and lowercase versions of the letters n [N], e [E] & r [R] are integrated in different ways in each word. The letter A remains consistently as an uppercase form.

### final ecclesiastical typeface

The film's final, ecclesiastical typeface was eventually made up of serif letterforms taken from across Zuzano Liko's font family *Mrs Eaves* (1996). This eclectic mixture enabled a more delicate construction of words that remained cohesive because all forms came from the same family. The final palette of letterforms included Roman, italics, petite caps and fractions. These were orchestrated into a typeface that provided more than one letterform for many of the alphabet letters (fig. 3: 26). The distorted kerning in each word, affected by the integration of letterforms with varying postures, enabled the words to breathe internally and remain open and lighter.

The result afforded a delicate solution that unlike the Angel Chanery experiments, could breathe inside the time and motion applications. The typeface was quickly legible but still gave a sense of dislocation and eclecticism.

### conclusion and applications

The experiments discussed in this section of the exegesis were essentially concerned with translating profiles of Sam's world into typographical voices. I selected two significant themes, drawn from the language and culture of the bogs. They were detachment and ecclesiasticism.

From a consideration of detachment in both behaviour and language, the abject typographical voice was developed. This voice was used to communicate the rage, dislocation and dehumanisation in the story. Conversely from a consideration of the origins and profile of ecclesiasticism in bog culture, a lyrical voice that generally appeared as recollection was developed. In most cases, this voice operated in the heterodiegetic spaces of the film.

Experiments involving disruptions of Salen's (2001) "cultural standardisation" of type, included the dislocation of words and letters from the Oxford Dictionary and the creative consideration of non-grid-based layout, sourced from writing on toilet walls. These experiments contributed to the placing of words around a picture rather than embedding them on grids or in linear sequences.



A consideration of the angry undercurrent that runs through bog-speak, lead to treatments used behind words. This meant that their background environment bristled with hostility while the letterforms themselves, remained undisturbed.

Experiments involving distortions of the *Times* font family, and the development of an *Angel Chancery* face, capable of animation, were both influential in refining the lyrical voice of the film. However, it was the creative application of decorative elements inspired by early movie subtitles and warning slides, that contributed most significantly to the nature of the lyrical face. When this type appears at the opening of the film, its rhythm is graced with small dissolving flourishes. These ornaments also form the distinctive serifs on the film's title.

### adaptations in application

Disconnected ornamental features (as angry textures in the bog face and dissolving flourishes in the ecclesiastical face), and eclectic word forms operated as complementary stylistic devices common to both faces. These features gave room for alterations to be made to the two type designs as they moved out from their respective positions (the bogs and the poem).

In terms of their use in the film, both the ecclesiastical and the abject typographical treatments vary in how they are applied. While they maintain their individual emphasis, they alter subtly in terms of placement and the animation of their background textures, (fig 3:27-30).

### *adaptations to the ecclesiastical face*

In the funeral scene (fig. 3:27), the ecclesiastical face that was employed in the opening poem resurfaces. While the treatment of the type maintains the mixture of upper and lower case letterforms, individual words are now placed on slightly different levels. This is a treatment taken from the dislocated underground face.

The animated flourishes adorning the opening sentences have also been removed. I made these adaptations because, although the scene was part of the film's storyline, the typographical voice was Sam's



Fig. 3:27  
Flexibility in over-ground and underground faces.



Fig. 3:28 & 29  
Changes in application of the ecclesiastical typeface.



Fig. 3:30  
Abject typeface as used by the boy in the changing sheds.

heterodiegetic commentary. With the smooth drift of sound and imagery towards an ecclesiastical ending in the film, it was also necessary that I introduced the adaptation as a transition. *Boy* was now moving from the harsh reality of the over ground into an emerging ecclesiastical environment. This environment held the narrative's resolve. Stylistically this environment also needed to bracket the text<sup>35</sup>.

In the Last Supper sequence there are two subtle adaptations to the ecclesiastical face. The poem that opened the film has had its words slightly changed. Because the narrative has now been through the brutalising effects of the story's telling, I removed the gentle animation of smoky tones from behind the lettering (fig. 3:28). By doing this, the words became more stable and direct.

The other change can be seen in the final frame of the story. Here, in the closing word, the once separate flourishes that decorated the ecclesiastical written voice, connect (fig. 3:29). The scroll becomes the letter S in the word Silence. What was embellishment now becomes substance. This action brings a form of closure to the typographical journey. The voice has been brought into unison with itself.

#### *adaptations to the dislocated face*

The dislocated face designed for Sam's angry underground world, undergoes changes when it is used by other people. A significant example can be seen when Sam's peers threaten him in the school changing rooms (fig. 3:30). Here the underground face has a more open texture operating behind the words. Where individual letters in the earlier bog face were disconnected from a stable base line, now whole words take the same treatment. This brings aggression to snatches of sentences. Its violence is more overt and confrontational. Earlier letter continuity is disrupted to reflect a level of brutality approaching that experienced prior to a queer bashing.

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<sup>35</sup> *Boy* begins and ends in ecclesiastical environments. In the opening scene broken dolls are presented as angels. In the closing scene we encounter a "Last Supper". The written words are almost identical in both places. The use of monochromatic colour palettes, pace of type, and the employment of low-relief backgrounds also connect these scenes.

The exegesis has now discussed the design of two, distinctive, typographical treatments in the film. These treatments draw on themes inherent in bogspeak, and are able to operate with degrees of flexibility across the text.

Therefore, it is useful at this point, to consider the unique relationship that type has with narration in the film. This next section of the exegesis considers three distinctive features of type as they appear in *boy*.

Drawing on developments in music video and television advertising design, it discusses how type  
*contributes alternative voices*  
*transfigures current information,*  
and is *embedded inside the pictorial elements* of the text.

## type as narrative voice

### introduction

The decision to renegotiate the traditional role of type in a short film was deliberate. It surfaced from the rise of more sophisticated applications of the written word in music video and television commercials at the close of last century.

While theorists like Kellner (1995) observe that there has been a “*steady decline in the use of text or copy in ads and an increase in display and illustrations*” (p. 2), and this would seem to confirm claims by Baudrillard (1975 and 1983), and Boorstin (1962), concerning the increased importance of images in contemporary culture, there has also been a renegotiation of not only the purpose of written text, but also its appearance as an integrated, illustrative voice.

Traditionally type has had slightly different roles in film and television and definitely different roles within the arenas of television advertising and music video.