

Dr. Robert Oscar Lopez : “Where has Foucault Gone?”

So as we head into the afternoon today it's my pleasure to introduce to you Dr. Lopez and he's going to be speaking to us this afternoon on the topic “Where has Foucault gone; an archeology of the family in the 1950s and 2010s.” He received his BA in Political Science from Yale and MA as well as PhD in English/Classics from SUNY Buffalo. He has taught at Rutgers University-Camden and Canisius College and he's now an associate professor in two departments in CAL State Northridge in the English Department and in the Department of Modern and Classical Languages and Literature; and he has been at CAL State University Northridge since 2008. His scholarly work includes areas such as Transdisciplinary Education, Double Exceptionalism in African American Literature, and also the Influence of Homer on Henry David Thoreau. In 2011 his monograph came out called the “Colorful Conservative”. One of the areas this book addresses is the relationship of black writers to ancient predecessors such as Horace and Cato; and also homoerotic literary relationship between Henry David Thoreau and Homer and between Walt Whitman and Virgil. His current project is called “Gilded Lilies” and he is studying Hollywood Musical depictions of the nineteenth century during the mid-twentieth century. It's my pleasure to introduce Dr. Lopez. Thank you.

Thanks. Thanks. Okay. Um, I'd like to thank Jennifer for the introduction and of course the Anscombe Society, Judy Romea, and Elisa Figueroa it was a true honor to-to be able to speak at Stanford.

If you take a look at your program it's probably a pretty easy game to play spot the English Professor because I have the convoluted title that's kind of part of our, you know, um, that's kind of part of the discipline; so. Um, but, uh, I'm going to be changing gears a little bit now. Um, I am coming from uh, a literary background and also a queer theory background. I myself identify as queer and I came into these debates as a queer theorist. So um, let me just uh; get into the meat of the topic here.

I made a confession before several hundred thousand people in France which got me into a lot of trouble; believe it or not. The confession was I said my favorite philosopher is Michel Foucault, who is as most of you probably know the grandfather of queer theory and he happens to be my favorite philosopher and my spiritual grandfather. So, um, when I said this it didn't go over well with Claudine Frank who is a writer for *Le Nouvel Observateur*. She wrote “beneath clownish veneers revealing how behind the times he is, Lopez dares to say that his favorite philosopher is Michel Foucault.” And this disturbed me quite deeply; and I wanted to ask why is Foucault dismissed in the debates on the family? Foucault is crucial in analyzing popular media in order to trace how we arrived at our current understandings of the family.

In the landmark texts “The Archeology of Knowledge”, Michel Foucault argued against history per se preferring that scholars engage in excavation of fragments as opposed to construction of complete comprehensive narratives. I'm just going to read you two passages um, from my book where I kind of give a summary of Michel Foucault that is pertinent to what I'm going to talk about today. It's a little bit dense; don't worry, we're going to get to the musicals and the “Brady Bunch” in a second okay, so hang on all right? Um in “Archeology of Knowledge” Foucault calls for the study of “discontinuity, rupture, threshold, limit, series, and transformation”. Implicit in Foucault's analysis is the belief that the values that are opposite to discontinuity and rupture—values like continuity, like integrity, like unity or consistency—are deluded concepts, either because of what they falsely integrate into a fictional hole or because of what they erase. So, for Foucault, he wants to always look at each time period for what was forgotten, what was erased, what was overlooked. In the “Archeology of Knowledge” Foucault dispels any hopes of a continuum to know anything about the past. Whether it's a recent or an ancient past the

ideal exercise is not history but rather archeology. He explicitly states that his literary archeology offers a new freedom to scholars. He says that it can make one free or as he says in French *affranchir*. From what does his theory free us though? He says from a whole mass of notions that present their own variations on the theme of continuity.

Additionally one more thing before I move into looking at specific cultural texts; I want to talk about what Michel Foucault said about bio power because this is very important. He said—this is a quote from the “History of Sexuality-Part I” where he presented his theory of power—“various scientific and cultural texts function as mechanisms with a double impetus; pleasure and power. The pleasure that comes of exercising; a power that questions monitors, watches, spies, searches out, palpates, brings to light and on the other hand the pleasure that kindles it having to evade this power, flee from it, fool it or travesty it. The power that lets itself be invaded by the pleasure it is pursuing and opposite; power asserting itself in the pleasure of showing off. These attractions, these evasions, these circular incitements have traced around bodies and sexes not boundaries to be crossed or perpetual spirals of power and pleasure.”

So Michel Foucault felt that pleasure and power were always intertwined and there’s no such thing as just an innate drive to be satisfied; that that always is tied to every person’s ultimate goal for control over the process of life and death; what he calls bio power. Within Foucault’s philosophical framework, the family is the paramount site of bio power and to understand how multiple discourses; and here I’m going to talk about the scientific, the cultural and the juridical; three that are very important. How these have constructed the family, Foucault suggests that we do several things. Number one we have to step away from images of wholeness, completeness, or ideological certainty. That’s number one. Number two; we have to search for what popular conceptions or dominant notions erase or misunderstand. That’s number two. Number three; we have to ask what effect power relations may have and how the ultimate desire for bio power may shape the producers of cultural narrative, even if players within the discourse do not realize it, and most importantly, we have to do all these three things tirelessly; because what often happens at least in Foucault’s world view; and I agree with it, is that whenever we breakdown the dominant prevailing belief system, we always end up replacing it with a new prevailing dominate belief system and we end up erasing things that we ourselves overlook. Okay.

So the thesis for today’s talk is to twofold. All right, on the one hand I’m going to argue that in the 1950s we can identify prevailing myths about the American family. And many of these notions were expressed in the genre of the Hollywood Musical. Many 1950s musicals look backward to the early twentieth and late nineteenth century. They admitted the problems and ruptures in family structure but they solved all these ruptures by completing the film narrative with the grand finale which is if any of you are musical fans, you know is always a wedding or some kind of heterosexual union at the end. These narratives typically erased queerness and they downplayed stark realities like rape, domestic violence and abandonment. That’s number one. The second argument I’m going to make is by the 2010s the myths of the 1950s have already been thoroughly debunked; especially the earlier idea that marriage could solve all conflicts. Yet the deconstruction of the 1950s marriage culture has given rise to new myths about the harmony of alternative families and the new “consensus” about alternative families erases the loss and grief inflicted on women and children by their alienation from traditional kinship bonds. Alright, that’s a big mouthful so let’s get to the fun part.

Why musicals? All right; um, well, first of all the Hollywood Musical is an extremely American genre; it’s also a very queer genre. Uh the combination of dance, song and script made the genre particularly powerful as an ideological engine because it really drew people in to a full film experience and its Saturday and you just ate, so what’s more fun than show tunes? All right, now, I do have ask you if you

feel like bursting out and humming the show tunes of the musicals I'm going to talk about, please wait to do that until the question and answer period and then I will definitely uh, invite you to do it. Huge super-duper spoiler alert; if you haven't seen the entire Turner Classic Movies Collection of 1950s musicals I'm about to ruin all of them so I'm really sorry about that. All right; but let's go, let's-let's talk about some specific texts. I've gotten very abstract; let's do the archeology of it okay.

Let's start with "Annie Get Your Gun" in 1950. All right, in this film, based on Irving Berlin's Broadway Musical, the legendary Annie Oakley rises from the grit of backwoods Ohio to international fame as a female sharp shooter. In the end she willingly loses a shooting match, so the object of her love, Frank Butler, will not feel threatened by her. At the end, Annie and Frank unite and jointly rinse out the tensions involving women's roles, racial tensions with the Indians and the consumerism with the turn of the century. Now here's what the film erases. What about the Indians who adopted Annie Oakley? What about the future of the other poor families like the Oakleys who do not luck out with having a super star in their family? What about the negative effects of obsessively seeking fame as embodied in the famous movie; the song from this movie "There's No Business like Show Business". What about women who do not wish to lose men—to lose to men in order to gain their love? Alright? So those are all things that are kind of suppressed or overlooked in the film.

One year later we have "Show Boat". Based on a novel by Edna Ferber and a Jerome Kern musical; this film was the second adaptation in the cinema of this narrative and it included the famous song "After the Ball." A double plot unites the story of an interracial singer and her friend who is the white daughter of the show boat owners and her name is Magnolia. Magnolia marries a man whose name actually is Gay; I mean not that his name sounds gay, his actual name is Gay. Um, but is abandoned by him when he decides to return to a life of dissipation. Gay returns to Magnolia after a few years to discover his daughter who doesn't recognize him. They reunite and kiss in the sunset as William Warfield sings "Old Man River". Now, Show Boat hints at queerness with the character whose name is Gay because by 1951 that turn did have somewhat of a code turning towards the-uh, a code for homosexual. But the film is more open about racial issues than about questions about suppressed sexuality and it presents the reaffirmation of male/female marriage as a cure-all to all sexual alienation by the end.

One year later we have "Calamity Jane". Now Calamity Jane paired Doris Day with Howard Keel in a film that some critics felt resembled Annie Get Your Gun just a little bit too much. In this fictionalized version of Calamity Jane's life, Day plays a western woman who dresses like a man even though she is in love with a male army lieutenant or at least she thinks she is. Things change when Katie Brown, a maid pretending to be a theater star, moves to Deadwood and becomes Jane's roommate. Katie teaches Jane to dress like a woman but then she kisses Jane's love interest, the lieutenant, which causes Jane to become enraged and go back to dressing like a man. Are you guys all getting lost yet? Right, at any point, raise your hand if you're lost, because I know these musicals like; are you lost or? Oh, yeah, have you seen it? Okay. All right. You should. Required reading. All right. In the end, Bill Hickock decides to love Jane even though she is borderline transgender. Now Calamity Jane admits the problem of gender identity conflict by presenting two cross dressing characters, one male and one female. In the end, however, the possibility of lesbian attraction between Jane and Katie is safely suppressed and the solution to Jane's gender dilemma is marrying a man who can accept her as a masculine female. Okay, everyone got that?

"Gentleman Prefer Blondes". This is one I'm sure all of you are familiar with right? This Howard Hawks musical based on the Anita Loos novel is not like the other musicals built on nostalgia for pre World I history. In this one, Dorothy Shaw and Lorelei Lee are two singers in the 1950s who travel to Europe on the account of Mr. Desmond; Lee's wealthy fiance. Lee is a notorious gold digger while

Shaw is a wise cracking side kick who ends up falling in love with a man who has been hired to spy on Lorelei. Remember; raise your hand if you get lost. Um, Lorelei, unaware that she's being monitored, succumbs to her need for diamonds and swindles a wealthy man for his wife's expensive tiara. In the end Dorothy and Ernie Malone, the man who spied on her, join forces to save Lorelei and the film ends again in a double wedding; where both Lorelei and Dorothy get what they want. Now when the film ends, the camera zooms in on Jane Russell and Marilyn Monroe, in their matching wedding dresses excluding their new grooms from the picture. So it's almost as if they them, are getting married to each other; while the song "Diamonds are a Girl's Best Friend" plays in the background. The knowing glance that the women exchange allows a hint of lesbianism but in the end Hawks assures the audience that the diamond-like trust between these two best friends will co-exist within their marriages.

Then we get to "Seven Brides for Seven Brothers" 1954; which one of my students said was "an ode to the Stockholm Syndrome for women". This popular musical with choreography by Michael Kidd adapts the Roman legend of the rape of the Sabine women from Livy and Plutarch. The setting is 1850s in the American Northwest and centers around seven Pontipee brothers. The oldest Adam is married to Milly but the six younger brothers are unmarried and in love with six women in town who are betrothed to other people. At the start of winter, the Pontipees kidnap the six women they love and violently transport them to their isolated cabin where they remain stranded through a long winter lasting more than five months. Milly protects the six captive girls and Adam abandons the family. Milly gives birth to a baby girl in the spring and then after the snow has melted; when the six captive's fathers come to hang the Pontipee brothers for rape, all six of the girls claim that the baby is theirs so that the Pontipees will not be killed. Because nobody can figure out which of the girls gave birth to the baby and so they have to keep all of the women and the men alive and then everything ends in a six couple shotgun wedding right after Adam has returned to find his baby girl. Everyone got that? We're gonna, we're going recap after all of this. I just want to get the artifacts out there for you.

"Oklahoma" in 1955, starring my favorite actress of all time Shirley Jones. This Rogers and Hammerstein film adaptation of the popular Broadway musical launched the career of Shirley Jones who would go on to be famous as Mrs. Partridge. Jones plays Laurey, a coquettish orphan living in the Oklahoma territory just before it became a state. In order to make her boyfriend jealous, Laurey decides to go to a community dance with Judd the despised laborer who works for her aunt. Judd is an outsider, mistrusted by men in the town and a conflict ensues when Laurey argues with Judd. Laurey ends of marrying Curly in a ceremony that is consciously linked to the parallel of Oklahoma marrying the United States. In the end, Judd ends up trying to kill Laurey and Curly on their wedding night but Judd falls on his own knife and dies. Oklahoma marks a transition in Hollywood to a darker esthetic with the famous dream ballet sequence which touches on Laurey's intoxication with drugs and a hallucinogenic vision of prostitutes, violence and murder emerging from behind a neat facade of marriage innocence. "I'm Just a Girl a Who Can't Say No" is a song that alludes to female promiscuity. And I see some people kind of yeah; "I'm just a girl..." Well we won't see the songs yet.

Um, "Carousel"...I'm going to try to move quickly because I know that we started late and I have limited time. So; uh "Carousel", uh, came out a year later and that one also was a little bit darker because in this one it's about a widow and the ghost of her dead husband returns to find her and her daughter...um, we'll skip this one and try to move ahead a little bit quick, more quickly. But the combination of this long chain of musicals all ending in marriage or some kind of male/female unification is "The Music Man". This film adaptation of Meredith Wilson's smashing Broadway hit of five years earlier is considered by many, especially me, the quintessential Hollywood Musical. Shirley Jones herself called it the "perfect musical" for its unity of song, dance, script and message. Robert Preston plays Professor Harold Hill, a conman who comes to River City Iowa after a long history of

sexual licentiousness and fraud. He woes the librarian Marion Paroo who lives with her widowed mother and her fatherless brother who has a speech impediment. Marion is considered an old maid because she is 27, I know gasp, um, and coldhearted but also too sophisticated for the small town. She catches on to Hill's fraud but decides not to expose him when she realizes that the conman Harold Hill has become a proxy father figure to her brother who lost his father. Everyone follow that? So the "Music Man" within queer theory the "Music Man" really has a very special place. In fact that was one um, uh, queer theorist who wrote a book called "Deconstructing Harold Hill" all about using the "Music Man" as the ultimate perfect queer text, uh, from the time period. Shirley Jones' character is pushed, accused of pushing pornography in the film and Robert Preston who was himself a homosexual in real life, plays the character of Harold Hill with-with high camp. All right? And so the "Music Man" in many ways was the culmination of the genre.

So what we find if we do this archeology of that genre and that time period is that um, from what I just said you all have to acknowledge, there are a lot of problems that are illustrated in the film right? When you actually look at the 1950s as a, as a complete assemblage of stories it's not true that it's all sunshine and roses; there's a lot of darkness described in it. But the reason why we tend to think of the 50s as so pie-faced and optimistic is because the key was that every single set of problems was always solved through marriage; all right? Unfortunately the "Music Man" came in 1962 and the sexual revolution intervened and there were three different trends we see in popular media after the "Music Man"; all of these three trends reflected people's desires to break away from the Marriage myth. The first is that we see a lot of narratives that present non-traditional families as Idyllic and Utopian. Everyone got that? That's number one. So that challenges the earlier notion that non-traditional structures were somehow problems needing a solution. The second trend that we see is that other narratives begin to present traditional married homes as plagued with problems such as repression or hypocrisy. And finally the third and final stage, which is where I think we are now, popular narratives flip the 1950s dominant narrative on its head and do the-the perfect reverse of it which is that narratives begin to present traditional families as a problem to be solved by magical alternative solutions like adoption, blended families, and same sex parenting.

So that's, I'm going to now trace very quickly, just give you some of the-the key cultural texts to illustrate what I'm saying so it's not so abstract. Probably I argue and I know that, in the question answer session, Partridge family devotees can stand up and argue with me but I think the Brady Bunch was key in this because the Brady Bunch was ground breaking in that it centered a wholesome family entertainment around a blended family. In the original concept of the show, Mr. Brady was a widower and Mrs. Brady was a divorcee. But at the time in 1969 that was a little bit too scandalous, so they kind of changed it and implied without saying that Mrs. Brady had also become a widow. So they presented this sort of idyllic utopian home where there's three blond girls and three brunette boys and there's no hint of sexual congress between them even though they're not biologically related and they could get it on without breaking any laws. Um, unlike the films from the 1950s, the "Brady Bunch" did not present the loss of the Brady boy's mother or the Brady girl's mother as a long lasting affliction. Their unusual situation is seen as a good in itself and few serious tensions are depicted.

This was taken to the next level with "One Day at a Time" which launched in 1975 and was also ground breaking because in this TV show, Bonnie Franklin plays a divorced women and she's raising two girls on her own. Um, and while "One Day at a Time" was certainly less Utopian than the "Brady Bunch", it did convey a sense of stability, even in a family that would have been considered broken in the 1950s. In this instance, Bonnie Franklin's character does not need to be married to reconstitute a family, and her daughters, while struggling, tend to overcome obstacles without serious damage to them.

This was taken to the next level with “Diff’rent Strokes”; which then brought in the element of race into the concept of blended families. This was a popular series that tackled interracial adoption, single fatherhood and blended families. In this show a widowed father with a biological daughter adopts two black orphans and raises them with the help of his maid. “Diff’rent Strokes” did touch upon sensitive racial and sexual issues for the time period but the overall message tended to be that the black children were the recipients of great benevolence and there was no long lasting sense of loss or grief in the family that had been composed of so many prior ruptures and traumas; alright?

So those are the examples of the first of the three post-1962 tendencies I showed you. Now let’s take a look at some of the narratives that begin to do the second trend which is they present the-the typical family of mother, father, child as a problem, as uh, as the sight of crisis or the sight of-of serious problems. And probably one of the most historic ones was “Kramer vs. Kramer”. How many of you have seen this film from 1979? Okay. By the late 1970s as TV shows were challenging the 1950s marriage myths by presenting Utopian counter narratives of alternative problems without major fam-or alternative families without major problems; films were starting to dismantle the 1950s through a different route. They presented nuclear families with a living mother and father, with children as the ones with terrible problems. “Kramer vs Kramer” starring Meryl Streep and Dustin Hoffman presented a dark story about a divorce in which both parents fight for custody of a boy. In the end, the film makes a counter intuitive gesture and presents the mother as giving up custody up to her ex-husband. Dustin Hoffman had a great deal of cultural resonance when this movie came out because of his memorable role in “The Graduate” in the late 1960s, another film that sought to expose the hypocrisy, adultery and emptiness of nuclear families.

“Ordinary People” came out a year later. And as the theme of this landmark film implies, it reports to show the dark underbelly of the ideal “normal family” since normal and ordinary could be taken as fungible adjectives. Mary Tyler Moore carried a great deal of cultural freight in the film because of her past roles as the wife in the “Dick Van Dyke Show” and as a career woman in the “Mary Tyler Moore Show”. And here she plays a frigid suburban mother whose son and husband are abandoned by her despite all of the advantages of growing up in a seemingly stable family. Now what those two films did with very dark sort of tragic depressing undertones, people also did with lots of great comedy and probably two of the ones that I really look at as landmark works that lampoon the traditional American family were “Married with Children” which only lasted 10 years and “The Simpsons” which I believe is the longest lasting TV show in history if I’m not mistaken. Has anyone, it’s one of the longest; okay. So, um, “Married with Children” and “The Simpsons” did this with satire and humor. Both of these late 1980 sitcoms inspired in part by the success of Chevy Chase’s character Clark Griswold in the Vacation series show normal families with a mother and father as strange, crude, cooky and embarrassingly ignorant. The children who live under the care of their mother and father range from rude like Bart to slutty like Kelly Bundy; to smart and embarrassed by their parents ignorance like Bud and Lisa. Both series however, evolved in my analysis and they began by the late 1990s to romanticize the families that they had originally lampooned. But that’s something we could probably have a debate about.

So, this pretty much set the stage, it set the framework for the launch of “Heather has Two Mommies” which was not a TV show but was a book of incredible historical importance. On the heels of “Married with Children” and “The Simpsons” the book “Heather has Two Mommies” became an instant classic presenting same sex parenting as normal and indisputably positive. The political motivations behind the publication of this book were never kept secret. Unlike the earlier shifts that I have discussed in the discourse; “Heather has Two Mommies” was unapologetically and blatantly deployed as a weapon during the culture wars under President H. W. Bush. Schools were pressured into assigning the reading of the young children extensively with the goal of making kids raised by same sex couples feel less

alienated in school. Now my critique of it is that the stated rationale for widespread assignment of this book to children was supposed to be concern for children raised by same sex couples, yet this and a whole series of later children's books on same sex parenting, tended to erase or ignore the likely grief that the child will feel and the sense of loss over the missing parent of the opposite sex.

Very soon after that book came "Ms. Doubtfire" and "Birdcage". Two, uh, comedies both starring Robin Williams in the 1990s who then took this to the next level. By the 1990s there was a specific movement the burgeoning Gay Lobby that actively sought to employ discourse in order to influence legislative battles over gay rights. The family became a key focus of such efforts because marriage and parenting were at the top of the new gay agenda perhaps as a welcome digression from the more daunting issue of AIDS. With "Ms. Doubtfire" and later films there is blatant orchestration and sometimes sermonizing about the need to celebrate different kinds of families mark...making this period of the 90's very different from earlier times when the cultural shifts were subtle in the films. Scripts began to include monologues like the one that ended "Ms. Doubtfire" emphasizing that all families count whether they have a mom and dad in them or are structured in some other way. The idea of having a father who dresses up as a woman is presented as harmless and actually quite positive in the film since Robin Williams' character uses his disguise as Ms. Doubtfire to sneak past his ex-wife and gain greater access to his kids. Very soon after this, came "Birdcage" which was actually adapted from a film that came out in France "La Cage aux Folles" in 1978. The 1970s film "La Cage aux Folles" was while funny, rather dark compared to the American remake of it two decades of it later. In the French original there are blatant beatings, explicit racism towards a cross-dressing black servant and pederastic undertones. The plot in the 1996 American version is adapted for the West and it ends up being a progressive rebuttal of the defensive marriage act which had been signed by Bill Clinton in the same year. In this film, Robin Williams plays a gay man in a relationship with a drag queen lover. Williams' character has a son from a one night stand with a woman who conveniently delivers the child and hands him over to two gay men with no requests to see the boy ever again. The film does not allow for any indication that the gay man's adopted son feels hurt by the loss of a mother who effectively abandoned him. The son's normalcy and heterosexuality are repeatedly emphasized in the film almost to the point of preachiness.

And so there's two more films that I'm going to look at and then I want to try to regroup. Very soon after that series of 90's sort of comedy treatments of this, we have two very serious ones that I think deserve some attention which are "The Hours" and "Brokeback Mountain". So I want to talk a little bit about those. These become a little bit more complicated. The 2002 film "The Hours" adapts Michael Cunningham's 1998 novel. It's based on three parallel stories of lesbians including Virginia Woolf in the 1920s and it also depicts the 1950s nuclear family as suffocating and repressive for a lesbian mother played by Julianne Moore. Moore's character almost kills herself over her lesbianism and then chooses to abandon her husband and son. Her son grows up to be a homosexual; he gets infected by AIDS and jumps out of a window. But by the time he is middle-aged, he is friends with a lesbian played by Meryl Streep of "Kramer vs Kramer". Streep's lesbian character is in a healthy lesbian relationship and has an adopted daughter played by Claire Danes who the film assures viewers is well adjusted and shows no signs of anything going wrong. "The Hours" like "Ms. Doubtfire" and like "Birdcage" is unapologetically blatant in its politics. The 1950's heterosexual family is bad because it causes silent wounds to a lesbian mom, while the 1990's lesbian family is good and we have no indication that Claire Danes' character even wants a father let alone her particular father; she is almost like a two-dimensional advertisement for "Heather has Two Mommies". Then came "Brokeback Mountain" which to me seems like a great lost opportunity in the field of queer theory. Ang Lee's film adaptation of Annie Proulx's novella was consciously contoured to emphasize several characters that did not play a big role in Proulx's original literary narrative. It focused a great deal of time on the two queer men's wives and

children. In a break from the propaganda of “Birdcage” and “The Hours”; Lee directs the film such that the viewer is forced to feel the importance of Jack’s son and Ennis’ two daughters. Moreover we are made aware that the two men have children with important ties to their mothers that cannot be washed away. There is a slight indication in the film in one part where Jack wants Ennis to leave his wife and leave the town where he is living close to his daughter’s and move into a ranch. There’s somewhat of an implication; although you have to extrapolate it that Ennis is hesitant to do that because he-he has a relationship to both his ex-wife and the two daughters living in the same town. What’s interesting is that the critical reaction to “Brokeback Mountain” revealed how powerful the discursive work of the previous waves of cultural revision had been. Despite the film’s enormous sensitivity to the children’s situation in the film, the children were almost completely overlooked in the critical reaction to this film. Dan Savage watched the film and he concluded that the film pointed to the need to create a world “where all we need is for Jack and Ennis to be together”; erasing the poignancy of the children and wives’ characters. By 2005 even a film of enormous depth could not prompt viewers and critics to consider the forgotten impact of alternative families on women and children.

So I ask the question now, looking at this. Now let’s all take a deep breath. Now you can start singing the songs; you know. There’s a lot of cultural texts. But my question is you know, my-my, I guess my answer may be a little bit bitter to this French socialist who called me behind the times because I still liked Foucault. Where has Foucault gone? Queer theory was born based on critical thinking. It was based, the whole idea of a consensus of anything, I don’t care if it comes out of sociology or medicine or the law, that’s anathema to what queer theory was supposed to be. Michel Foucault is arguably the grandfather of queer theory and his overall vision of discourse should have prompted queer theorists to unpack and criticize the utopian mythology of alternative families. While the 1950’s films suppressed many realities they showed sensitivity to the feelings of loss, grief and melancholy that came about when the basic triangle of mother, father and child was broken. “Annie Get Your Gun” was not only about a female sharp shooter, it was also about an older sister who had to juggle caring for her orphaned siblings and her own pursuit of a husband. “Show Boat” could very well have been about a gay man who left his wife Magnolia to sow his wild oats and then realized that he had to return to his wife in order to love his daughter fully. “Calamity Jane” despite its heteronormativity did present an example of a man accepting his future wife as transgendered and their marriage to each other without surgical reassignment would have guaranteed their ability to conceive children and raise them together. The marriages at the end of “Oklahoma”, “Seven Brides for Seven Brothers” and “Gentleman Prefer Blondes” leave a lot to criticize but the plots do acknowledge that females desire partnership and a chance at building families with men who can also become fathers to future children. In other words the 1950s presented human relationships and emotional realities about the family that have been erased. As queer activists, rather than doing the work that Foucault asked us to do, sought to impose a narrative of wholeness and completion on children who were forced to live in situations where they could not be with their mothers and fathers. The new wave of utopian visions of the alternative family makes it so that children aren’t even allowed to feel longing or mourning for the fact that a mother or father was taken from them largely due to the decisions of the adults who are raising them. And that’s something that’s a blind spot that we didn’t see in the 1950s.

So let’s take a look now at the new genre in the 2010s; what seems to dominate the news; which is the genre of the same-sex parenting testimonial. And I, you know, I want to start out by saying that the number one way that kids lose access to their mother and father is when heterosexuals divorce; all right? So this is not a gay issue. I believe that if you’re going to, you know, tangle with people who are pushing motherless or fatherless families under the same sex parenting rubric, you’ve got to have a plan on divorce, you’ve got to look at reform of the foster care and adoption system; it has to be comprehensive; alright? So, so you know, it can’t just, you can’t just get outraged when gay people are

doing this stuff. But, and this is a big but, okay, while heterosexual misdeeds create the de facto conditions for children to lose their mother and father, the gay lobby, which is not the same thing as gay people; I want to make that clear. The gay lobby has sought to make changes in the laws to enshrine as a judicial principle that children do not have a right to their mother and father. And that's why we find ourselves constantly in this death match with the gay lobby. It's not because gay people are particularly bad about these things but because the gay lobby wants to enshrine this in law and that's something that we didn't see before. And the juridical discourse of the law, if we keep things within Foucault's framework, it grew out of the cultural discourse. It grew out of all of these texts that kept on deconstructing um, the 1950s marriage ideal and the 1950s model of a family where those relationships mattered between a man and a woman and the children that they conceive. So in the 2010s suddenly we have the genre of the same sex parenting testimonial. By the 2010s it became standard in court cases and legislative hearings to hear testimonials from children raised by same sex couples about their happiness with their situation. At the same time an increasing number of professional associations; the APA, ASA, AMA, adoption associations and a million other people have rushed forward to declare that children have no reason to feel disadvantaged if they are deprived of a mother or father. And I want to make that clear as someone who was raised by a same sex couple. When sociologists say we have documented no disadvantages to a child raised by a same sex couple, what I hear is they're telling me I never had a right to a mom or a dad. You have to think of how serious that is; that your research was used to prove that I don't have a right to feel a loss. I don't have a right to grieve over the fact that my father was taken from me by the decision of three adults to create that arrangement. That's serious. But despite the existence of plentiful narratives of children and same sex parenting households expressing pain about their situation, a consensus is declared. And then we can look at the judicial actions of the last uh, you know, uh, decade or so. 2005 the American Psychological Association declares that there was no difference between the same sex parenting household and households that have a mother and a father. In 2013, the Obama Administration files an amicus brief with the Supreme Court asserting that there is no reasonable reason to use marriage laws to protect children's relationships to their mother and father. And it's interesting the Obama Administration made no aggressive or strong stance in the case of Baby Veronica which went up to the Supreme Court at the same time and was decided on the same day. And that was the case where a biological father was forced to surrender his daughter to an adoptive couple in another state. In 2013 also the Supreme Court heard the cases of Hollingsworth vs Perry and Windsor vs the USA and the Supreme Court decides to strike down parts of the Defense of Marriage Act and also the Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978 on the same day using the same logic; and let me explain that. To strike down parts of the Defense of Marriage Act they accepted the reasoning that there was no particular reason to protect the child's bond to their mother and father. The Indian Child Welfare Act had been passed to protect Native American Reservations from cultural genocide and if you've thrown out any notion that you have to protect a child's bond to its mother and father, there was no more of a rationale to preserve the Indian Child Welfare Act; so the Native American father lost his daughter to a white couple in another state even though he didn't want to surrender her. These things have real consequences that go far beyond sometimes what we're able to see. In 2013 "Philomena" and "Delivery Man" came out and they brought a lot of attention to the human toll of anonymous sperm banking as well as adoption procedures and it really points to the loss, the sense of grief between the adopted child and the birth mother and it's interesting that there was a great deal of attention in the Huffington Post and Salon to those two films but they didn't ever want to criticize sperm banking or adoption practices when it dealt with gay couples. It was almost as though the gay community had carved out a special judgement free zone on practices that warranted a great deal of criticism when heterosexuals did it.

All right, so where were here now here. Here's where I think we are at. I think it's time to bring Foucault back. Foucault was first and foremost a believer in critical thinking. To do archeology rather than history means to excavate, to doubt, to question. If the 1950s myth of marriage was a prevailing

grand narrative that had to be deconstructed, the resulting myth, the myth that the 1950s model for marriage was wrong in every way is a prevailing grand narrative as well and quite frankly after looking at it for many years, I believe it's worse. Because it rationalizes the decisions by adults to acquire and shuttle around an abandoned children like objects. It denies the hidden reality that children often feel pain when their mothers and fathers are taken from them and it flatters a selfish adult view of the world where desires can be fulfilled and children can be cowed by scientists, politicians, and film makers into making no peep of protest. It is time for queer activists and queer people to excavate again, to question again and to become queer again. Thank you.