

“A Sort of Buzzing”: Queer Sound in David Malouf’s

Blood Relations

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Introduction

David Malouf’s only stage play, *Blood Relations*, is an Australian re-telling of Shakespeare’s comedy, *The Tempest*. Following its premiere at the Sydney Theatre Company in 1987, the play received a mixed critical reception and has generated relatively little scholarly interest since. While much of the critical discourse concerned with Malouf’s work centres on his novels and poetry, *Blood Relations* is important for providing a dramatic lens on issues that are recognisable in much of his work, such as his exploration of postcolonial Australia. In fact, *Blood Relations* operates as a postcolonial palimpsest that problematises the relationship between the European settlers (represented through the Greek-born¹ character Willy) and Australia’s Indigenous population (represented through the Aboriginal character Kit).

A number of scholars have recognised the postcolonial discourse embedded in the play and Malouf’s *oeuvre* in general.² Alongside Malouf’s postcolonial tropes, critics have identified other postmodern elements in his work, including his conflation of topography and the human body;³ his complication of space and its meaning;⁴ his exploration of language;⁵ and the sexual complexity of his various characters.⁶ While Malouf’s novels and

poems provide us with a valuable insight into his postcolonial and postmodern concerns, *Blood Relations* is unique in its ability to theatricalise these foci. This paper, then, furthers the postmodern discussion of Malouf's work through a queer deconstruction of his use of stage sound in *Blood Relations*.

Malouf challenges heteronormativity and established hegemonic structures through the employment of queer theatrical sound. Two characters in the play, Edward and Willy, share the awareness of an identical, yet internalised, psychic sound. This sound, described by Edward as “[a] sort of buzzing,”⁷ is the conduit for his discovery of the murder/suicide of his family, and as such, literalises Lee Edelman's polemical “death drive,” where heteronormative family structures and their reproductability are identified as fantastical.⁸ This queer sound then, is employed by Malouf as a tool to expose dysfunctional heteronormative family relationships and occurs in the play during those moments when characters find themselves located on the “queer edge,” defined by Martin Leer as a fantastical space constructed around dreamscapes, isolation and altered consciousness.⁹

Queer Theory—Queer Theatrical Sound

At the outset, it is necessary to spend some time defining queer theory in order to position the queer nature of Malouf's play and the theatrical sound that he employs. Current scholarship has extended queer theory beyond its traditional taxonomies of sexuality and gender to include other discourses, such as “race, ethnicity, [and] postcolonial nationality”¹⁰ in its deconstruction of hegemonic structures. Rather than restricting its focus entirely to sexuality, the term queer has been employed recently to include “a general awareness of difference, an understanding of inclusion and human rights in the broadest sense”¹¹ and is often linked more closely with earlier understandings of the word. Investigation into the history of the word queer establishes its etymological diversity: previously, “queer” has meant “query” or “strange/odd” or even “unwell,” before it came to represent sexual deviancy.¹² In fact, Judith Ann Peraino argues that it was not until “the early 1990s [that] the word *queer* emerged as a term of resistance to the 1970s identity labels *gay* and *lesbian*.”¹³

The plasticity of this term is reflected in Teresa de Lauretis' definition of queer literature, where she argues that a queer text can extend beyond a work's lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans/transgender and intersex (LGBTI) authorship or the narrative inclusion of queer characters. De Lauretis asserts that queer literature can include any text, “be it literary or

audiovisual—that not only works against narrativity, the generic pressure of all narrative toward closure and the fulfilment of meaning, but also pointedly disrupts the referentiality of language and the referentiality of images.”¹⁴ The sort of queer disruption expressed by de Lauretis expands the boundaries of queer theory to enable a critique of hegemonic structures in terms which are not limited to a sexual discourse. Interrogation into the queer function of a text, then, is complicated by queer scholarship which identifies the disruption of normalcy, rather than sexual deviancy alone, as a central concern of the paradigm.

Of importance to this paper is the recent queer research that examines the way in which authors and playwrights disrupt normalcy through distortions of narrative time and space. Judith Halberstam argues that “[q]ueer uses of time and space develop, at least in part, in opposition to the institutions of family, heterosexuality and reproduction . . . [and] according to other logics of location, movement, and identification.”¹⁵ As we have seen in de Lauretis’ definition above, queer analysis can extend beyond issues of sexuality to focus on the deconstruction of other hegemonic structures. In addressing the work of Halberstam, Hoday King argues that, apart from issues of sexuality, a queer text might subvert narrative expectations of temporality by displaying a lack of teleological consistency, challenge normative patterns of birth and marriage, and resist accepted socio-cultural notions of work and leisure.¹⁶ This narrative subversion provokes a queer rupture within heteronormative expectations of society and its structures,¹⁷ and engages a form of postmodern paranoia.¹⁸ In other words, authors may assist in dismantling greater hegemonic structures through a queer distortion of the expected textual relationship with time and space, providing no complete answers, but instead offering an even greater ability for the deconstruction and critique of these social norms.

In terms of queer time, Karl Schoonover has demonstrated how a film might interrogate socio-economic structures, especially capitalism, through “wasted time and uneconomical temporalities and, in doing so, ‘asks us to consider what it might mean to be productively queer.’”¹⁹ In this way, Schoonover demonstrates that film is able to manipulate the way in which time is employed in a narrative by slowing down or speeding up action, for example. This distortion may be read as having political implications:

In considering the functionality of narratively inconsequential time in relationship to the specificity of art films, we are asking about the political potential of that slowness. Barthes found those films that encourage distended spectatorial temporality to be replete with political potential. He writes the following in his tribute to Antonioni:

“To look longer than expected . . . disturbs established orders of every kind, to the extent that normally the time of the look is controlled by society; hence the scandalous nature of certain photographs and certain films, not the most indecent or the most combative, but just the most ‘posed.’”²⁰

Similarly, space can be queered through the medium of performance in order to induce a polemical result. Todd Barry has identified queer theatrical space as that which presents a dialectical representation of those who embody the hegemony versus the outcast or “other,” where “there is always some kind of queer wanderer who catalyses a new understanding of the play’s places and the literal dramatic space of the theatre, because he [sic] ‘crosses, engages, and transgresses’ a multiplicity of spaces.”²¹ Detailing a production of the socio-political Irish play, *Observe the Sons*, by Frank McGuinness, Barry clarifies how the dramatic space can be queered:

Displacement and projection of space and time in *Observe the Sons* is a theatrical strategy used by McGuinness, and a survival strategy used by his characters, in order to make historical myths justify otherwise horrific and meaningless realities. It is queer in nature because the strategy is deconstructive of historical and cultural mythologies.²²

The employment of queer time and space in performance then, is political in essence: playwrights purposefully disrupt socio-political norms and the expected or traditional use of time and space.

On the basis of the above discussion on queer space and time, it is possible to assert that sound or noise may also be regarded as theatrically queer when it disrupts hegemonic imperatives. While much is written on queer space and time, there is very little scholarship on queer sound. Peraino has identified the capacity that music has to be queer, in that it is “notoriously resistant to legibility,”²³ although she does not extend this to noise *per se*. Drawing on the work of Foucault, Peraino posits: “how an individual conducts her or his life under normalizing pressures exerted by social institutions and symbolic systems, holds promise for an account of how music participates in both forming and questioning subjectivity” (436). Extending this argument to sound or noise allows us to explore the way in which specifically composed theatrical sound can rupture hegemonic narratives and expectations of performance.

This is especially true in the case of Malouf’s *Blood Relations*, which uses conventional theatre sounds, such as music (37) and sounds of thunder (72), but also employs a psychic and prophetic sound—that is, a buzzing—to destabilise heterosexual relationships and families. The

buzzing that is identified in Malouf's play is not an expected stage sound in that it does not conform to the more traditional applications of theatrical sound.²⁴ Malouf's queer buzzing represents the internal impulse of the character Edward and is employed to heighten his queer nature—that is, his unstable sexuality and his disruption of heteronormativity. Further, the electronic buzzing can also be heard rising from a number of packing crates on the stage and is used to draw the audience's attention to their significance in the narrative as well as to underline their queerness. As we will see, Malouf heightens moments of heteronormative rupture and dislocates social and sexual norms through his theatrical employment of queer sound.

David Malouf's *Blood Relations* and Postcolonialism

A postcolonial examination of Malouf's re-telling of *The Tempest* helps to inform a queer reading of *Blood Relations*, where social and cultural disruption is explored. The postcolonial discourse in the play, like the queer sound, is linked with issues of fractured heteronormative family structures, making this discussion integral to the following queer analysis. Helen Gilbert has appositely demonstrated how *Blood Relations* is a complex Australian interrogation of postcolonial issues, arguing that it cannot be read "as a narrowly parodic work but as one that attempts to problematize the power relationships set up on Shakespeare's mythical New World island and to question their legitimizing discourses."²⁵ The protagonist of the play, Willy, is a Greek citizen who has landed, Prospero-like,²⁶ on a new island with little respect for the original inhabitants. On arrival in his new home, Willy, "a representation of both patriarchal and colonial power,"²⁷ rapes an Indigenous woman. His son Dinny, the result of this rape, takes the symbolic role of Caliban in the play,²⁸ allowing Malouf to explore postcolonial dilemmas from an Australian perspective. Like Caliban, Dinny resents the influence of the non-Indigenous culture: "People give me the shits. [*He indicates the others.*] Listen to them. It's bloody ninety-six in the shade out there. [*He turns and shouts.*] And they're singing about a white Christmas" (43). Dinny characterises the white Australian characters as naive tourists who lack an authentic connection with the land and its Indigenous inhabitants: "OK folks. Time for the Big Bush Tour. Native animals. Local corroboree. Comfort stop with optional extras" (51).

The resonance that colonial Australia has had on the contemporary individual is a trope employed by Malouf in much of his work and occurs in the play to underline social, cultural and interpersonal disruption. This is especially true of the fractured relationship between Willy and his son

Dinny. We learn that Dinny had been sent to boarding school as a child, although Willy now doubts the “civilising” effect that education has had on his son: “Willy: You wouldn’t think that boy had been to a first class private school, would you?” (46) Dinny expresses a postcolonial resentment of the experience: “You sent me three thousand miles away, to fucking Brisbane. To be with white kids I never seen before. I missed you! You sent me away, to learn to think like a white boy” (66). It is during his time at boarding school that Dinny is cast in the role of Caliban for a performance of *The Tempest*. His reflection on this role provides him with the opportunity to recite sections of Shakespeare’s play with postcolonial purpose: “This island’s mine, by Sycorax my mother” (64). *Blood Relations* then, establishes Australian postcolonial anxiety through the fractured relationship of Willy and his son, demonstrating a queer disruption to the expectations of harmonious family relationships. This disruption is furthered by Malouf through his employment of both a metaphoric and literal tempest.

Blood Relations, like its Renaissance predecessor, begins with a discussion about an impending tempest, however in this version we are uncertain whether the storm is real or simply a looming fear that will amount to nothing. Willy’s concern that “[t]here’s a cyclone coming” (17) is shared by his current partner, Hilda, who believes that she’s “heard thunder” (17), but this is rejected by his daughter, Cathy, who argues that Willy’s “up half the night chasing imaginary storms” (22) and his Indigenous son Dinny who can’t see: “a cloud in the sky” (17). The threat of a tempest becomes the central metaphor for the cultural clash between coloniser and postcolonial indigene, where “Willy is unable to read this landscape, or rather, to read himself in its terms, because he carries with him an imperial view of the world.”²⁹ The symbol of the tempest also helps to establish the significance of landscape, where the intersection between topography and the body can be read with postcolonial import. The presence of an actual tempest in the play represents postcolonial hostility and provides Malouf with a queer space in which to underline these fractured relationships.

Leer has identified the way in which Malouf conflates geography with the self by mapping postcolonial issues onto the body.³⁰ He argues that Malouf’s first novel, *Johnno*, includes a narrator who disrupts reality through imaginative descriptions of Australia’s geography: “[t]his is a map of the imagination, a topography of the mind, of the self—or that aspect of the self which involves nationality”³¹ and this trope recurs in much of Malouf’s *oeuvre*. The juncture of imagination and topography can also be seen as representing a queer space and is defined by Leer as that place which exists “at the limits of a consciousness,”³² and where messages are received “from something *other* [my emphasis]: another consciousness or

its own subconscious or the world of nature.”³³ This has direct resonance with *Blood Relations* which employs a dreamscape (discussed in full later) in order for the characters Edward and Willy to reveal their psychic connection and their ability to hear Edward’s internal buzzing sound.

Queer Sound and Heteronormative Destabilisation

We first encounter queer sound at the opening of the play, emanating from some open crates that “*give off an electronic note*” (17), which none of the characters appear to be able to hear. While Willy’s daughter confesses that, as a child, she thought the crates contained “[o]ther kids” (42), in the last scene we learn that they hold the stones from a wall Willy had brought with him all the way from Greece. For Willy, the wall stands as a symbol of isolation: “Once upon a time there was this little kid. . . . They sent him out to look after the goats. He was all alone in the world, in a field, behind a stone wall he couldn’t see over” (80). This crepitating wall looms as a symbol of Willy’s own memory of being queer (as an outsider) and is, perhaps, a major factor in his decision to move to a new country.

The wall becomes an apt metaphor for postcolonial imposition and separation, where the coloniser, resentful of the presence of the “wall” in his own homeland, literally transfers the same border to his new home. The wall, at once symbolic of postcolonial barriers that separate “us” from “them,” or in other words colonisers from indigenes, has, in the end, ironically become “a sacred site” (86), at least as far as Dinny is concerned, pointing to the bond that has developed between them. However, while Willy’s death may have solved part of the antagonism between the two men and silenced the cantankerous Willy—“Hilda: I can’t believe they’ve shut you up at last, that you’re not out there somewhere shouting your head off. Only we can’t hear you. Will I get used to it? The world will seem so . . . still” (84)—it has re-established postcolonial barriers between Dinny and other colonising figures. Dinny is no longer willing to show the white guests over the island habitat and sends them away: “Come on: off! The tour’s over” (86).

At the end of the play, Dinny begins to play Willy’s flute over the crates of stones. The traditional music of his flute is combined with the queer “music” of each crate, which we are told in the stage directions, gives “*out its note*” (86). This action suggests, perhaps, some form of reconciliation or unification may have occurred following the death of Willy, the oppressive white coloniser. However, while Dinny plays, the presence of Willy’s wall begins to assert its dominance: “[*the sounds [from the crates] get louder, then cut out*” (86). This is the last stage direction of the play and may be

read as a comment about the continued presence of postcolonialism in Australia. The sound represents the fractured relationship between Willy and his Indigenous son Dinny and at that same time reminds us of the postcolonial rupture present in Australian society.

While the wall is useful for linking the themes of postcolonialism and queerness, it is the other theatrical sound, identified by both Willy and Edward, which is of greatest interest. In a moment of intimate confession to Kit, Edward's business partner and lover,³⁴ Edward explains how his father had become "strange [and] had this idea he was about to be accused of something—some kind of fraud—that all the evidence was being piled up against him" (51). It is this anxiety that led Edward's father to murder his beloved step-mother, brother and sisters, before committing suicide himself. Edward details the afternoon that he "came in from football practice" (51) and sensed that "there was something odd" (52). Going upstairs to look for his family, he recognised the presence of an internal sound that he describes as a "sort of buzzing" (52). Although Edward confesses that this sound had "always been there," he'd only "just become aware of it" as he had previously been "carrying it inside" (52) him unwittingly. As audience, we are privileged to hear this sound "*played by the cello*" (52) linking us with Edward's psychic buzzing. Nick Mansfield has suggested that "[e]ach of Malouf's protagonists is hurled against the limits of his container, language,"³⁵ and this is certainly true in the case of *Blood Relations*, where an internal sound becomes the conduit for Edward's actions. Edward cannot explain what this sound is or why he allows it to take control of himself; he simply obeys his own internal impulse. Once aware of the sound Edward allows it to take control of his actions and imbues it with consciousness: "I let it lead me" (52). It is the sound that directs him to the grisly discovery of his dead family.

This internal sound literalises Lee Edelman's "death drive" where the "fantasy" that is created around the stability and reproductability of the heterosexual family is shattered. For Edelman, queerness is a paradigm that consciously seeks to disrupt heterosexual procreation and is openly hostile to what he argues is society's reproductive agenda. Edelman argues that the presence of the queer is disruptive to the "fantasy" that presents stable heterosexual family-based structures as exclusively desirable. For Edelman, the reproductability of a heteronormative family structure cannot be guaranteed for a number of reasons, but in particular as a result of the presence of gay (queer) children who may ultimately fail to grow up, get married (in a heterosexual union) and have heterosexual children of their own. Edelman argues:

The ups and downs of political fortune may measure the social

order's pulse, but *queerness*, by contrast, figures, outside and beyond its political symptoms, the place of the social order's death drive: a place, to be sure, of abjection expressed in the stigma, sometimes fatal, that follows from reading that figure literally, and hence a place from which liberal politics strives—and strives quite reasonably, given its unlimited faith in reason—to disassociate the queer.³⁶

Blood Relations, then, displays characters who continually fail to develop successful and functional heteronormative families. Edward, for example, confesses that before his father married his step-mother, he had been “an only child” and was “so lonely” (51). However, his queer isolation was dissolved by his new mother who “not only gave me herself, she gave me them [brother and sisters] as well. I wasn't one anymore” (51). Edward identifies his love of shared family meals and singing rounds, where the individual is of value only when s/he is a part of a chorus because, as Edward confirms, “one voice can't sing it” (51). Edward advocates for the superiority of the heteronormative family structure and as such is complicit with Edelman's death drive.

Edward is sentimental about his own family, and although we later discover that he desires participation within a family, he is destined to be isolated and queer. Confusingly for Edward, his father does not include him in the murder of his family, highlighting, potentially, his heteronormative unsuitability and therefore his queerness and the reason why he was not deemed to be part of his family: “I couldn't believe it! He'd taken them with him—all four of them—and left me out of it. Why? Was it my luck: because I was late home from school? Or did he choose that afternoon because he meant to leave me out: because I'd never been one of them? Maybe he'd simply forgotten I existed” (52). Edward's buzzing sound is the vehicle that leads him to discover the death of his family and establishes his queer unsuitability; it is the agent of heteronormative destabilisation. Significantly, in the latter section of the play, after his confession to Kit, Edward states: “I'm just beginning to wake up” (53) and in the very next scene, having left Kit, he starts “looking for Cathy” (55), indicating a change in sexual preference from homo- to heterosexual. Despite the fact that none of the characters in the play is a part of a successful and happy heterosexual family, Edward still openly desires to be a part of a heteronormative relationship and he continually attempts to reject his own queerness.

Later in the play, Willy confronts Edward during a scene in which an actual tempest with “*lightening, then thunder*” (72) occurs. As explained above, this night-time tempest and the “[p]ercussive music [that] continues throughout the scene” (72) establish a dream-like atmosphere where Willy

and Edward can locate themselves on the “queer edge” as argued by Leer. It is in this queer space

where things happen; where sudden discoveries illuminate hidden memories; where revelations and metamorphoses occur. . . . The edge is also the edge of the self where inside and outside meet and sometimes interpenetrate by a process of osmosis; it is where opposites meet, where we begin to make comparisons, indeed where all the intellectual and creative functions of our consciousness are performed.³⁷

This space enables a full exploration of the queer sound that has disrupted both men and their relationships. Willy takes on aspects of the magical Prospero and tells Edward, “I’ve been expecting you half my life” (72), although we know that until recently the two men had never met. Willy reveals that he has telepathic insight when he confesses to Edward that he can also hear the buzzing: “If you don’t know at least shut up and listen. Oh, not to me! To that—sound of yours—that buzzing” (72). Further, he confirms that he has insight into Edward’s dreams, stating: “Do you think dreams are nicely sealed off in separate rooms, in separate lives with no doors between” (73). Willy concedes that he is responsible for the actions of Edward’s father and acknowledges that: “There’s a plot. Going back so far I can’t see the beginnings of it” (73). While the details of the “plot” remain elusive, Willy certainly feels culpable of “[i]ndirectly” (74) advancing Edward’s father’s anxiety which, in turn, led to the murder and suicide of Edward’s family.

Dale and Gilbert have eloquently detailed the carnivalesque elements of the play,³⁸ identifying their queer power to “unsettle Willy’s family fictions *and* the fiction of ‘the family’ as a microcosm of Australian society.”³⁹ Willy, as Prospero, confesses a degree of responsibility for the death of Edward’s family, but surprisingly, it is Edward who achieves reconciliation: “I feel as if a weight had been taken off me” (74). The stage directions then inform us of “*a lighting change: a transition from dream to night time*” (74) concluding the magical nature of the tempestuous scene. As with his earlier duologue with Kit, on completion of the confessional scene, Edward’s heterosexuality is once again confirmed and his queer past is now something that belongs only to the edge: “Edward: I must have been sleepwalking. There was a storm. Didn’t you hear? / Cathy: [*approaching him*] It’s over. Come back to bed. These storms up here don’t last. They’re too violent. They blow themselves out” (74). Edward’s buzzing is a queer alert, warning him of the death drive by leading him to the discovery of his heteronormative family’s death and potentially his own queer condition. Like the queer sound, the

storm brings Edward back to the queer “edge,” but once Edward removes himself from that queer space he is driven by heteronormative desire. The buzzing, or the dream-like tempest, both of which exist on the edge, can be seen to justify Edelman’s death drive, where the heteronormative fantasy is shattered by the queer “reality.” Ironically it is “the edge” that is fantastical in the play and yet it emphasises the queer “truth” as Edelman might represent it.

Blood Relations demonstrates the anxiety associated with being queer. However, at the same time that *Blood Relations* evokes the character Edward’s dissatisfaction with his queer life, the play also destabilises heteronormativity. We see the unravelling of Edward’s family as well as the dysfunctional interpersonal relationships that exist in Willy’s family. The queer buzzing sounds underline moments of heteronormative disruption as well as challenging traditional (and expected) performance techniques, inviting a new reading of the play. Edelman’s death drive, which highlights heteronormative dysfunction and queer fear, provides an opportunity to revisit Malouf’s play and consider the role that queer sound has in the theatrical performance of *Blood Relations*.

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NOTES

- ¹ It is interesting to note that Malouf has chosen to represent the European character as a Greek expatriate rather than one who has stemmed from British heritage. In this way Malouf can explore a *postcolonial* phase in Australian history where members of other European nations were diffusing the number of British immigrants and their descendants, thereby complicating understandings of what a postcolonial Australia might look like.
- ² Helen Gilbert, “The Boomerang Effect: Canonical Counter-Discourse and David Malouf’s *Blood Relations* as an Oppositional Reworking of *The Tempest*,” *World Literature Written in English* 31, no. 2 (1991): 50–64; Maryanne Dever, “Place, Possession, Power: The Politics of Space in David Malouf’s *Harland’s Half Acre*,” in *Provisional Maps: Critical Essays on David Malouf*, ed. Amanda Nettelbeck (Nedlands, WA: Centre for Studies in Australian Literature, 1994), 117–31; Samar Attar, “‘Yearning of Grandsons for a Language the Dead Still Speak’: Exile and the Loss of Language in David Malouf’s Work,” in *Provisional Maps*, 51–69; and Don Randall, *Remembering Babylon. David Malouf* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2007), especially chapter six: 125–46.
- ³ Leigh Dale and Helen Gilbert, “Edges of the Self: Topographies of the Body in the Writing of David Malouf,” in *Provisional Maps*, 85–100; Martin Leer, “At the Edge:

- Geography and the Imagination in the Work of David Malouf," *Australian Literary Studies* 12, no. 1 (1985): 3–21; Ivor Indyk, *David Malouf* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1993); and Ihab Hassan, "Identity, Play, Imagination: David Malouf, Hossein Valamanesh, and I," in *Imagining Australia*, ed. Judith Ryan and Chris Wallace-Crabbe (Cambridge: Harvard University Committee on Australian Studies, 2004), 83–105.
- ⁴ Dennis Haskell, "'Smoke Drifting up at Dawn': Individual Identity in the Poetry of David Malouf," in *Provisional Maps*, 13–27; and Maryanne Dever, "Place, Possession, Power: The Politics of Space in David Malouf's *Harland's Half Acre*," in *Provisional Maps*, 117–31.
- ⁵ Paul Kavanagh, "Elegies of Presence: Malouf, Heidegger and Language," in *Provisional Maps*, 149–62; and Nick Mansfield, "Body Talk: The Prose of David Malouf," *Southerly* 49, no. 2 (1989): 230–38.
- ⁶ Stephen Kirby, "Homosocial Desire and Homosexual Panic in the Fiction of David Malouf and Frank Moorhouse," *Meanjin* 46 (1987): 385–93.
- ⁷ David Malouf, *Blood Relations* (Sydney: Currency Press, 1988), 52. All further references to this text will be given in-text.
- ⁸ Lee Edelman, *No Future. Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2004), 3.
- ⁹ Martin Leer, "At the Edge: Geography and the Imagination in the Work of David Malouf," *Australian Literary Studies* 12, no. 1 (1985): 13.
- ¹⁰ Eve K. Sedgwick, *Tendencies* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1994), 9.
- ¹¹ Max H. Kirsch, *Queer Theory and Social Change* (London: Routledge, 2000), 6.
- ¹² Entry for "queer, adj," *OED Online* (Oxford University Press), accessed January 30, 2013, <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/156236?rskey=s2atPF&result=2>.
- ¹³ Judith A. Peraino, "Listening to the Sirens: Music As Queer Ethical Practice," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 9, no. 4 (2003): 433.
- ¹⁴ Teresa de Lauretis, "Queer Texts, Bad Habits, and the Issue of a Future," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 17, no. 2–3 (2011): 244.
- ¹⁵ Judith Halberstam, "Queer Temporality and Postmodern Geographies," in *a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (New York; London: New York University Press, 2005), 1.
- ¹⁶ Homa King, "Girl Interrupted: The Queer Time of Warhol's Cinema," *Discourse* 28, no. 1 (2006): 100.
- ¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 104.
- ¹⁸ Matthew Helmers conflates time and paranoia to demonstrate the epistemological relationship between knowledge, desire, sexuality, and time:

paranoia enjoins us to look at time and see a system that applies to knowledge as well, to look at knowledge and see a system that applies to desire, and to look at desire and see the same system that applies to sexuality and, through syllogism, to reduce all of these elements into a well-understood structural unity: the tessellated pattern of Western culture in which time, understood as a past and present that contain a set of



interrelated events that certain people can accurately remember or predict, tessellates into a system of knowledge where people can dig up previously buried pieces of knowledge in order to arrive at a more thorough understanding of past and future and an intimate comprehension of the interiority of other subjects.

Matthew Helmers, "Possibly Queer Time: Paranoia, Subjectivity, and *The Beast in the Jungle*," *The Henry James Review* 32, no. 2 (2011): 114.

¹⁹ Karl Schoonover, "Wastrels of Time: Slow Cinema's Laboring Body, the Political Spectator, and the Queer," *Framework* 53, no. 1 (2012): 65.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 73.

²¹ Todd Barry, "Queer Wanderers, Queer Spaces: Dramatic Devices for Re-imagining Ireland," in *Deviant Acts: Essays on Queer Performance*, ed. David Cregan (Dublin: Carysfort Press, 2009), 152.

²² *Ibid.*, 156.

²³ Peraino, "Listening to the Sirens," 434.

²⁴ Traditional sound effects (sfx) are usually employed to support the action on stage, for example a knock on the door as a character waits to enter a space, or as music that has been specifically chosen to highlight a particular thematic moment or character's emotional state. Sfx are an established theatrical convention derived from Aristotle's *Poetics*: "In about 335 BCE, Aristotle's *Poetics* set down the formal elements of drama, and the influence of Aristotle's description has been massive: Today we still speak of dramatic form in terms of its *plot*, *characters*, *language*, *theme*, and its performative elements, what Aristotle called *music* and *spectacle*." W. B. Worthen, *The Harcourt Brace Anthology of Drama* (Boston, MA: Thomson Heinle, 2000), 9.

²⁵ Helen Gilbert, "The Boomerang Effect," 50.

²⁶ Indyk has identified those characters from *Blood Relations* who have a double in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. These include: Willy = Prospero; Kit = Ariel; Cathy = Miranda; Dinny = Caliban; Edward = Ferdinand. Indyk, *David Malouf*, 68.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 68.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 68.

²⁹ Dale and Gilbert, "Edges of the Self," 89.

³⁰ Leer, "At the Edge," 4.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 3.

³² *Ibid.*, 13.

³³ *Ibid.*, 13.

³⁴ Although the text is not explicit about their relationship, the implication is that the two men have shared a sexual partnership.

³⁵ Mansfield, "Body Talk," 231.

³⁶ Edelman, *No Future*, 3.

³⁷ Leer, "At the Edge," 11.

³⁸ Dale and Gilbert, "Edges of the Self," 85–100. Apart from those moments detailed above *Blood Relations* includes a number of other magical elements. As we have seen, in the first instance the text is an adaptation of Shakespeare's "magic play." Willy, the magician Prospero, is currently partnered with Hilda, who used to be a circus performer (which is where Willy found her) and can read the tarot: "I could read the cards for you, if you like. I can, you know" (35). In Act II scene i, Willy talks with the ghost of his dead wife Tessa: "But I *am* dead, Willy. *Now* I am. Though it wasn't drowning. That's just a story you made up, because you couldn't face the truth. That I'd . . . walked out on you" (56). Edward, apart from his magical buzzing, also talks about spirits and familiars: "All of us—each of us—has a familiar spirit. For some people it's a lion or a dog—or a cat even. Mine is a little black pig, that loves mud, flesh, shit" (75).

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 93.