The Fierce Tribe

Weems, Mickey

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Public attitudes toward Gay men in the United States and Canada have improved immensely in the last few years. Some books in recent popular literature highlight the positive impact Gay men have made on society. How the Homosexuals Saved Civilization by Cathy Crimmins (New York: Jeremy P. Tarcher, 2004) and The Soul Beneath the Skin by David Nimmons (published in 2002) single out Gay male culture as making ethically and aesthetically important contributions to humanity. Nimmons goes so far as to praise the huge dance events for Gay men and their allies called the Circuit (156–68), as does Barbara Ehrenreich in her popular book on festive culture, Dancing in the Streets (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2006).

These books are often dismissed as clever readings in pop culture rather than scholarly works. Nevertheless, Crimmons, Nimmons, and Ehrenreich have reached hundreds of thousands of readers, many more than the typical academician could ever engage, and they do it by writing in an entertaining and accessible fashion. I hope to reach a fraction of that larger audience who might never buy a scholarly text such as The Fierce Tribe for fear it would bore them.

The Fierce Tribe is an ethnography based on information gathered from members of the Circuit community and my own lived experience as a U.S. Marine, a participant-observer studying African Brazilian religion, a scholar versed in multiple academic disciplines, a Circuiteer, a Straight man for the first thirty-eight years of my life, and a Gay man for the last twelve years. This text is also teleological: it advocates for the Circuit, an outlaw community, by portraying it as a positive model for performance of nonviolent masculinity.

A Circuit event is a carnivalesque exercise in excess. Its members gather for weekends at a time, dance much more than they sleep, get
Couple at Pensacola Abracadabra 2007
intoxicated as they dance, and renegotiate barriers that separate them as they engage each other sensually, comically, and emotionally. The Circuit community may appear undisciplined to outsiders, and in many ways it is. It does not, however, lack discipline in preparation and performance. There are many forms of personal and social discipline (grooming, weightlifting, diet, self-control, presenting a public face, verbal virtuosity, strong taboos against physical violence, knowledge of intoxicants and individual tolerances) that are part of the Circuit’s askesis. But they may be practiced in ways that contradict the norms and laws of the larger Gay community and the general public.

The history of the Circuit community is intimately entwined with the history of the LGBTQ\(^1\) community, which is marked by a tendency for festive resistance and an amazing capacity to laugh at oppressors. Experiences of Circuiteers as they congregate on the dance floor are grounded in performances of music and dance that have histories of their own in American popular culture. Participants draw from post-Stonewall expressions of festive Gay camp, and they express the ultra-masculine sexuality and muscular body-image of the iconic, macho-Gay clone. Music and movement developed for the Circuit are deeply rooted in both African American and military cultures. The spirituality that is generated at Circuit parties resembles ecstatic expressions of the Black church and traditional African religion, as well as the profound solidarity that men in uniform share as they march. It differs, however, from the solidarity formed in other predominantly male groups that engage in the production of violence. This difference could possibly be the Circuit community’s greatest gift to humanity: the expression of masculine arrogance and aggression without the need to inflict physical harm.

Folklorists should have the courtesy to address the folk whose folkways they bring to the fore. My audience includes scholars, the Circuit community (especially the disc jockeys/DJs), military personnel, and the larger LGBTQ community with its Straight allies who are fascinated and repelled by the fabulous excesses of Circuit performance. Theory is used lightly in areas where it might interfere with the flow of the narrative. For the most part, I conscientiously avoid academic jargon whenever possible.

In trying to do so much and serve so many, this book has multiple cultural roots, histories, and voices that give the reader a clear idea of the Circuit, its length and breadth, its scandalous past, and its future promise. Several voices speak throughout the text: DJs, promoters, professionals from different walks of life, people who operate behind the scenes, and those who are strictly participants. There is a

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1. Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender/Transsexual/Intersex, Queer
brief commentary from a member or ally of the Circuit community\(^2\) at the end of each chapter. Through these spokespeople, the community will hopefully have its multivocal say. *The Fierce Tribe* is meant to be entertaining, provocative, and accessible to as many readers as possible without dumbing down the text.

My approach utilizes elements from queer studies, men’s studies, the anthropology of religion, somatics studies, and folklore.\(^3\) This is by no means extraordinary; an interdisciplinary approach can be found in many ethnographies. As James Clifford says, “Ethnography is hybrid textual activity; it traverses genres and disciplines” (*Writing Culture* 26). The following is a brief description of how the disciplines influencing this ethnography influence my scholarship.

**Queer Studies and Men’s Studies**

To view the Circuit through the lens of queer studies, I draw especially on Michel Foucault, who analyzes history by means of what he calls an archeology of ideas. Archives are the sites for his “digs,” but rather than uncover “relations that are secret, hidden, more silent or deeper than the consciousness,” he tries “on the contrary to define the relations on the very surface of discourse” and attempts “to make visible what is invisible only because it’s too much on the surface of things” (*Foucault Live* 57–58). It is the use of discourse that is spoken, written, sung, and danced that informs my own archeology of ideas and critical analyses of the history of the Gay community, the Circuit, popular dance, African/African American music, and the military.

I subscribe to Foucault’s ideas concerning the Gay community as a treasure-house of rich possibilities. Near the end of his life, Foucault postulated that the Gay community creates new kinds of pleasure and new kinds of friendships. “To be ‘gay,’ I think,” Foucault says, “is not to identify with the psychological traits and invisible masks of the homosexual, but to define and develop a way of life” (*Foucault Live* 310). Gay men should “use sexuality to arrive at a multiplicity of relationships. And no doubt that is the reason why homosexuality is not a form of desire but something desirable” (308). The Circuit is an example of how the Gay community has successfully created new pleasures and new relationships.

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\(^2\) The strategy of having lived-experience commentary (or oral history) at the end of each chapter is taken from Nan Alamilla Boyd’s *Wide-Open Town*, a historical ethnography of Queer San Francisco.

\(^3\) My educational background includes a BA in philosophy (Berea College), an MA in cultural anthropology (University of Hawaii–Manoa), an MA in comparative studies (emphasis on religious studies and folklore, Ohio State University), and a PhD in education (cultural studies/somatic studies with an emphasis on folklore, Ohio State).
My analysis touches on feminist theory about masculinity as expressed by Judith Butler. Gender is *supposed* to be natural, not artificial or stylized. Nevertheless, gender *must* be staged and stylized:

Gender ought not to be construed as a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts follow; rather, gender is an identity tenuously constituted in time, instituted in an exterior space through a *stylized repetition of acts* [italics in the original]. The effect of gender is produced through the stylization of the body and, hence, must be understood as the mundane way in which bodily gestures, movements, and styles of various kinds constitute the illusion of an abiding gendered self. (*Gender Trouble* 179)

This is masculinity’s dirty little secret: it does not spring unbidden from real men; they must practice it to the point where it flows seamlessly from them without any apparent effort or forethought. Butler’s concept of *performativity* (performance that must not appear to be performance) states that the two very different commands issued to Straight masculine men to “act like a man” and “be a man” (which then get eroticized and/or replicated by Gay men) become perversely identical.

Even more influential on this work is the Queer scholarship of Michael Warner, author of *The Trouble with Normal* and editor of *Fear of a Queer Planet*. Warner coined the term *heteronormative*, the understanding that “humanity and heterosexuality are synonymous” (*Fear of a Queer Planet* xxiii). Worldwide perceptions of heteronormative masculinity tend to link masculinity and violent aggression, a presupposition that I call into question with an analysis of alternative masculine forms of nonviolent expression and aggression found in the Circuit.

Warner criticizes notions of sexual shame that the Gay male community absorbs from heteronormative hegemony, including shame derived from participation in Circuit parties. I make use of his statements about sexual shame and the stigmatized identity of Circuit boys within the Gay community to question (as Warner does) the assumption that such behavior is necessarily immoral (*The Trouble with Normal* 1–40).

Scholars in men’s studies such as Michael Kimmel and Michael Kaufman have also subverted the notion that masculinity is monolithic while nevertheless observing that the general features of many heteronormative masculinities have much in common, particularly with regards to misogyny, homophobia, and violence. *The Fierce Tribe* is a continuation of their work.

*Anthropology of Religion*

Ethnographic influences taken from the anthropology of religion include Victor Turner and his work on *communitas*, especially his
The idea of a religious ceremony of any importance naturally elicits the idea of a festival. Inversely, every festival has certain characteristics of a religious ceremony ... its effect is to bring individuals together, to put the masses into motion, and thus induce a state of effervescence—sometimes even delirium—which is not without kinship to the religious state. (Durkheim 386–87)

Durkheim’s insight is useful in defining the ecstatic experience of the Circuit and perceiving its connections to religious ritual. However, some of my collaborators within the Circuit community link their experiences to a primitive, primal, pan-human source. I do not; my approach is intersubjective and cross-cultural, not universal.

Along with Mikhail Bakhtin’s notion of the carnivalesque, theories proposed by George Bataille concerning transgression and excess are important in understanding the Circuit as a phenomenon with positive economic and political ramifications. Bataille frames the history of humanity in terms of both excess and transgression. In his general outline of surplus dedicated to war (e.g. the Muslim caliphate in the first few centuries after Muhammed, The Accursed Share Vol. I 81–91), or surplus dedicated to festival (traditional Tibetan society before the Chinese Communist invasion, 93–110), one can envision warfare and festival as alternatives for the production and consumption of surplus. It is within this framework that the performance of large-scale religious violence described by Mark Juergensmeyer in Terror in the Mind of God can be situated, in contrast with the carnivalesque hilarity, sensuality, and inebriation found in the Circuit. I privilege festival over war as the better, more humane, means for the performance of transgression and excess.

My ethnographic methodology is based upon the discipline imposed upon me when I did fieldwork on African Brazilian Candomblé. My mentor, Dr. Júlio Santana Braga, insisted on a protocol of respect for the privacy of the community. This protocol became the blueprint for my own research practice and my professional ethos.

Braga is a man who lives comfortably in two worlds. Recognized in Brazil as an authority in the field of anthropology on African and African Brazilian religion, Braga has been regularly published in Brazil and overseas for his groundbreaking work on Candomblé spirituality, its importance in African Brazilian civil rights, and the magico-religious world that the Candomblé community occupies. He is also a respected
babalorixa (“father of the gods” or chief priest) and is currently the spiritual leader of the House of Axé l’Oya in Bahia, Brazil.

It was Júlio Braga who brought me into the religion as an ethnographer-participant. I became part of a tradition of scholar and practitioner collaboration that has existed in Bahia for over a hundred years. Because of my initiation as an ogã or male protector-mentor of Axé l’Oya, I pledge my loyalties to both the world of scholarship and the Candomblé community.

Although Candomblé is not as repressed as it was in the past, it is nevertheless still considered outside of respectable Brazilian values. My training in respectful ethnography as a means of legitimizing a stigmatized and formerly outlaw community such as Candomblé is reflected in my ethnographic work on the stigmatized and outlaw Circuit.

Somatic Studies and Performance Theory

The discipline of somatic studies focuses on the interrelationships between the experiences of the physiological and the psychological. According to Thomas Hanna, “The somatic viewpoint encompasses how we individually view ourselves from the inside looking out and how, from that viewpoint, the distinction between mind and body disappears” (Somatics 45). An understanding of how one perceives the body-mind-in-motion in the performance of pleasure are prerequisites for understanding Circuit spirituality and masculinity. Circuit DJs describe how they use music to move the body-minds of participants, unite a crowd into one communal body-mind, and generate a form of transcendent solidarity that is unique to the Circuit community. To understand how transcendence from self to group is achieved, I examine the effects of certain intoxicants in terms of the utilitarian purposes of those who take them, and the role of sensuality and hilarity as facets of public performance.

I take my cues concerning performance primarily from four scholars: Catherine Bell (ritual as performance), Richard Bauman (the performance frame), Erving Goffman (understanding performer, audience, and team), and Mark Juergensmeyer (terrorism as manly theatrical performance). I discuss the production of transcendent solidarity within a ritual frame by performers who are simultaneously audience. Transcendent solidarity is then framed as a core experience of

4. This collaboration began in the late nineteenth century with Dr. Raimundo Nina Rodrigues, Mãe (Mother) Pulchéria (Chief Priestess of the House of the Gantois), and Martiniano do Bonfim (professor of Yoruba and a high-ranking member of the Candomblé-de-Ketu elite). Mother Pulchéria accepted Rodrigues into her House, as a scholar who could help the persecuted community by conferring upon it legitimization as a valid cultural form, not a primitive criminal cult. As a spiritual child of Pulchéria, Rodrigues would also be honor-bound to respect his Mother, her House, and the religion she practiced.
masculine bonding that the Circuit shares with soldiers (legitimate) and religious terrorists (illegal, illegitimate). The nonviolent, more ethical expression of outlaw masculine excess and transgression found in the Circuit is then contrasted with a violent, less ethical expression found in terrorism and the ethically neutral/positive masculinity of the military. My goal is to present Circuit masculinity as an alternative for men seeking to become real men over the currently muddy ethics of warfare, sports, and public violence in general.

Folklore

Carol Burke says, “The job of any folklorist is to collect the lore of the folk group and to understand that lore in context” (8). The Circuit is situated in the larger context of the Gay community, which became fully self-actualized within the last forty years; the Circuit has been around for most of those four decades. Nevertheless, my research is difficult to situate within the restrictions of traditional folklore. The Circuit does not fit easily within Richard Dorson’s division of folk, popular, and elite culture because it has elements of all three categories. Having survived major challenges to its continued existence over the last thirty-five years, the Circuit does conform, however, to Henry Glassie’s statement: “the establishment of the folk nature of an idea is the demonstration of its persistence through time” (258).

But it does not fit Glassie’s assertion that “the folk object, unlike the popular and elite object, is not a part of rapidly changing fashions” (258). The Circuit contributes and responds to rapidly changing fashions, thus troubling the trichotomy in ways that require a broader folkloric understanding of cultural fluidity and what constitute legitimate objects of study in the discipline.

Rather than seeing folklore/folklife as concerned with folk rather than popular or elite, it is better to understand folk culture as being interwoven with popular and elite culture, especially when dealing with Gay cultural expressions such as the Circuit. I hope that this book illustrates a point many folklorists make: folklore is poised extremely well to take advantage of many disciplines simultaneously because it is inherently multidisciplinary. We as folklorists do better work when we un-discipline ourselves, when we open up our conceptual and methodological borders to capture, as much as we can, the full flavor of human expression that is not formally determined or mediated. Folklore functions better as a net than a niche.

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5. I use un-discipline in the sense of becoming interdisciplinary and that such a position presents, in the words of Pauline Greenhill and Diane Tye, “undisciplinarity/interdisciplinarity as intellectual alternatives to the disciplines and as bases for theoretical and methodological innovation” (Greenhill and Tye 9).
Here as elsewhere, this opening of borders includes subversion of the boundaries between the ethnographer and the folk. The participant-observer must, as Danny Jorgensen tells us, become the phenomenon that is being studied (62). I recognize that my positionality as an ethnographer with insider status in the Circuit prevents the establishment of clean lines between my identities as scholar and practitioner.

I subscribe to David Hufford’s category of core experience to relate the bonding experience of the Circuit to other forms of communal bonding. I call this core experience “transcendent solidarity,” the unification of individuals into one corpus through shared ecstasy. I use, as Hufford would say, “experience based theory” (‘Beings’ 11) on the premise that the lived experience of Circuiteers is valid and worthy of study, and that their witnessing is the best source of information concerning the core experience of transcendent solidarity. I do not subscribe, however, to Hufford’s assertion that “A core experience will occur in all populations regardless of cultural references” (‘Beings’ 32). I am cautious about asserting any cultural universals.

In her research on altered states, Erika Bourguignon proposes that the presence of altered states in religious ritual is a worldwide phenomenon (Bourguignon 137). Such altered states are, borrowing Hufford’s terminology, a set of core experiences, each one shared by many different spiritual communities and interpreted in myriad ways that need not agree with each other, but with cross-cultural psycho-physiological traits in common. I do not claim, however, that Circuiteers’ communal experience of transcendent solidarity is the same core experience as sacred trance in Candomblé. I would contend only that there is a common spiritual heritage in terms of rhythm, music, and dance.

One clear distinction in these core experiences is the necessary presence of non-corporeal spirits in Candomblé and the rare appearance of such spirits in the Circuit. Hufford defines “spiritual belief” as “the belief that spirits and a distinctly spiritual domain exist” (“Beings” 15). Circuit spirituality, however, is non-religious and noncommittal about the existence of nonliving spiritual beings. The spirits honored by Circuiteers on the dance floor are their own. This is different from the spiritual beliefs of most organized religions, including the cosmology, highly liturgical praxis, and multiple deities of Candomblé. The core experience of transcendent solidarity within the flexible spirituality of the Circuit need not result in a coherent belief system at all. As a secular-based, spiritual community, belief in anything—even belief in the shared experience of transcendent solidarity (which remains

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6. I did not join Circuit-folk in order to study them, however. I was first a member of the Circuit community who then decided to formally observe it as an ethnographer.
unmarked, unregulated, undisciplined, and unenforced)—is not a pre-
requisite for membership in the Circuit community.

My background as a scholar of religion, an initiated member of the
Candomblé community, and a participant-observer in the Circuit com-
munity informs how I outline the core experience of the Circuit as a
spiritual praxis that does not dictate beliefs to its proponents. The rel-
ative unimportance of belief is not without precedent in more disci-
plined and codified spiritual praxes; Candomblé is based on a profound
respect for ritual propriety and etiquette shown to the living, the dead,
and the gods without a necessary belief that the dead and the gods
exist as sentient beings. Candomblé and Circuit communities place lit-
tle value in creeds or dogma.

Ethnographies establish researchers’ credentials as legitimate schol-
ars. They also tend to legitimize cultures. In his article, “Belief and the
American Folk.” Patrick Mullen offers an insightful analysis of folklore
at the turn of the millennium:

We as folklorists have a tendency to celebrate the people and com-
munities we work with, and as a result we have produced numerous
valuable, although sometimes overly idealized, studies of marginalized
cultures. We have turned away from the overt pathologizing of the folk
but not completely from idealizing and romanticizing them (130–31).

When the folk are praised, folklorists praise themselves. Folklorists
often court the admiration of the folk by being their champions. Such
affirmation, idealized as it may be, is a means by which the folk gain
self-legitimization and the respect of others. This tendency is, basically,
an insider’s emic position, rather than an outsider’s etic one, and should
be acceptable as long as folklorists clearly state their positionality.

Ethnographies can be sites for the production of pleasure for folklor-
ists and the folk, but praising the folk is not the only means of pleasure
available to folklorists who wish to engage those who read their works.
Negatively criticizing the folk can generate pleasures associated with
insult, confession, exposé, and status reassurance. Academic and non-
scholarly audiences love dirt as well as glitter.

Personally, I find it necessary to dish on (describe the scandalous)
Circuit folk, especially as counterpoint since I idealize the Circuit com-
munity as the possessors of a form of masculinity that could lead to
world peace. I would appear naïve, uninformed, or even fanatical if I
did not titillate the reader with some confirmation as to how harmfully
excessive and transgressive the Circuit community can be. By dishing
and idealizing the Circuit, I hope to avoid excessive pathologizing or
romanticizing the community.
Hufford says, “A reflexive account of our knowledge-making work can give us a more accurate sense of where we are, because it will always require us to tell how we got there” (“Scholarly Voice” 74). With my feet dancing in both worlds—those of scholar and folk—I understand the importance of being reflexive and transparent. We as ethnographers should tell our readers how we got there. Nevertheless, I refuse to tell everything, especially when it involves intimate, confidential knowledge of participants.

In order to maintain the ethos of respect that I learned in Brazil, I adhere to the reciprocal ethnography of Elaine Lawless, which entails a commitment to modify reflexive ethnography away from self-absorption. I heed Lawless’s criticism that many of those who engage in reflexivity “are talking about ethnography more than they are doing it”:

My work with these women [Pentecostal preachers] is reflexive in that I readily acknowledge my presence in the research and the possible and very real effects my presence has on the field experience. And my work is “reciprocal” in that we, the women and I, have established a working dialogue about the material, a reciprocal give and take. This process is not to be understood as reciprocity, where obligation or payment is the motivating factor—but reciprocal, in the (I hope) best sense of sharing and building knowledge based on dialogue and examined/re-examined knowledge.... While I fully acknowledge that I am writing this book, I am committed to presenting the work as collaborative, as dialogue, and as emergent, not fixed. (61)

For these reasons, I have included commentary from a member or ally of the Circuit at the end of each chapter in this book. But reciprocal ethnography has not been employed equally with all the groups that are discussed in this work; there are only five soldiers (two active duty) who speak in it, and five no-longer-active Ravers. Nevertheless, I have some credentials representing these groups. I have insider status as a soldier (United States Marine Corps, graduated from Parris Island on March 17, 1983). I have attended seven or so raves, including the grand Ultra Music Festival in Miami in 2007 and 2008. But I have never attended a terrorist training camp, nor have I corresponded or associated with any known terrorists. One can only do so much.

Definitions: Spirituality and Religion

“Spirituality” and “religion” are defined here within a spectrum of possibilities. Spirituality is a personal relationship between human beings and the divine. Religion is a codification of that personal relationship.

7. Nevertheless, terrorist voices are in the last chapter via quotes taken from Mark Juergensmeyer’s book, Terror in the Mind of God.
These definitions are similar to those of Robert C. Fuller in his work, *Spiritual, but Not Religious*, concerning what he calls “unchurched people.” Fuller says that there is a significant group of Americans who define themselves as spiritual without subscribing to any religious denomination:

They feel a tension between their personal spirituality and membership in a conventional religious organization. Most of them value curiosity, intellectual freedom, and an experimental approach to religion. They often find established religious institutions stifling.... Genuine spirituality, they believe, has to do with personal efforts to achieve greater harmony with the sacred. For them, spirituality has to do with private reflection and private experience, not public ritual. (4)

Although many people claim to be spiritual but not religious, the two terms are better understood in relation to each other rather than in opposition. Instead of asking if practices or persons are either spiritual or religious, the issue would be determining how they are spiritual and how they are religious.

I also seek to bridge the gap between an etic, secular perspective on group experience and an emic spiritual one, between Durkheim’s effervescence as a strictly collective phenomenon triggered by group dynamics and emic claims that such a phenomenon transcends the group that performs and experiences it. We as scholars should feel free to take such emic claims seriously. We can stand on middle ground; these ecstatic experiences need not be explained away with purely secular as opposed to spiritual interpretations. We can frame unchurched, untempled, and unmosqued rituals of collective effervescence as secular and spiritual without necessarily having to certify their spiritual efficacy.

When dealing with spirituality, I am taking my scholarly inquiry into the mystical realm of the unspeakable. As George Bataille says, in beautiful language bordering on madness,

The object of desire is the universe, in the form of she [sic] who in the embrace is its mirror, where we ourselves are reflected. At the most intense moment of fusion, the pure blaze of light, like a sudden flash, illuminates the immense field of possibility, on which these lovers are subtilized, annihilated, submissive in their excitement to a rarefaction which they desired. (*The Accursed Share* Vol. II 116)

This is, as Foucault tells us in equally evocative language,

The zone of Bataille’s language, the void into which it pours and loses itself, but in which it never stops talking—somewhat like the interior, diaphanous and illuminated eye of mystics and spiritualists that
marks the point at which the secret language of prayer is embedded and choked by a marvelous communication which silences it. (Religion and Culture 69)

In asserting the existence of Circuit spirituality, I try to speak softly about that zone of lovely insanity and avoid the temptation to rationally describe the lived experience of transcendent solidarity as other than a collective and beautifully undisciplined prayer performed by cracked-out, horny mystics whose communal voice “is embedded and choked by a marvelous communication which silences it.”

Labels and Lingo

Certain words are capitalized to indicate community affiliation. For example, “Straight,” “Gay,” “Queer,” “Lesbian,” “Bear,” “Leather,” “Black,” “White,” “Circuit,” “Circuiteer,” “Rave,” and “Raver” refer to marked communities. When not capitalized, those terms that have dual meanings are used in their non-social senses. The word “straight,” for example, means “not bent.”

General categories that deal with gender, sexual orientation, and biological sex are not treated as marked communities because they are more applicable to populations from which communities may or may not be derived. “Feminine” and “masculine” are terms that deal with gender identity and its performance, as are “femme,” “butch,” “nelly,” “macho,” and “drag.” The words “female” and “male” refer to biological sex, not social constructs. The words “homosexual” and “heterosexual” are sexual orientations, not communities. One can be homosexual (an orientation) and not be Gay (a member of a community that includes and celebrates diversity in orientation, gender expression, and sexual physiology).

One of the richest words in this book is “house,” which can refer to a Candomblé religious community, a non-sanguinal family of inner-city Gay men who compete in the Ballroom scene, an overarching category for many genres of electronic music, and a dwelling place. Since house signifies communities in the first two cases, it will be capitalized in reference to them, but not the third and fourth definitions.

I also want to include as much of the rich verbal wordplay of the Circuit as possible. Words like hottie (good-looking person), fag (term of endearment between Gay men), and fierce (awesome) are employed in the text to give the reader an approximation of how they are used in Circuit verbal performance.
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