

What happens when queer drag queens and Republican Neocon ideologues adopt the same icons? What does doing double duty do to that which is iconized? In this paper I examine current discourses of sexual orientation and sexual identity and the ways in which these discourses use and abuse the iconic afterlife of Plato and his *Symposium*. This paper focuses on the appropriation of Platonic iconography in two texts, *Hedwig and the Angry Inch*, a 1997 stage musical and 2001 film, and *Being Human: Core Readings in the Humanities*, a 2003 anthology released by President Bush's Council on Bioethics and edited by Leon R. Kass, M.D.

To assert Plato's queerness and queer iconic status is to read his body of works in a particular way; this paper's construction of Plato as iconically queer is predicated upon the themes and figures of the *Symposium*, most pointedly in two portions of the dialogue. The first is Aristophanes' encomium to love (189c-193e), the creation myth in which prelapsarian antecedent heterosexuals, homosexuals and lesbians are split in two by a jealous Zeus; the second is Alcibiades' encomium to Socrates (215a-222b), in which the queer-coded socialite cum military man owns up to his failed attempts to seduce Socrates. Through these textual mouthpieces, motifs and metaphors, I argue, Plato constructs a queer identity.

Moving from Athens to Hollywood, I read *Hedwig* as an iconic embodiment of the speeches of both Aristophanes and Alcibiades. The movie's central song, "The Origin of Love," adapts Aristophanes' cosmological account with enticing fidelity, and in the film, the song is accompanied by a cartoon depiction of the fall of our whole ancestors. Yet the film's discursive relationship with Plato moves beyond the level of allusion and the character Hedwig problematizes the film's thematic interrogation of Platonic iconography: Born a male, having endured a botched sex reassignment surgery, Hedwig performs as a drag queen, the iconic embodiment of gendered performativity and queer camp sensibility, and embodies the limits of binaristic ideologies of gender and sexual orientation. Hedwig, neither anatomically male nor female, neither medically intersex nor transgender, fits neither into Aristophanes' schemes nor our own. I argue that Hedwig should be read as the figure of Hermes on the morning after Alcibiades' alleged iconoclastic statue smashing.

Moving to Washington, D.C., I look to queer anti-icons and anti-queer icons, represented by Kass's *Being Human*, whose bibliographic entry attributes authorship directly to President Bush's Council of Bioethics. Taking the stance that any text proffered by the Bush Whitehouse is always already ideologically overdetermined, this paper's interest in *Being Human* stems from the curious fact that Kass ends up anthologizing the very same passage from the *Symposium* that the Hedwig libretto includes in its appendix, Alcibiades' speech (215a-222b). Kass's anthology seeks to repurpose the Platonic text for its own ideological ends, to unqueer Plato by a strategy of silence and evasion. Kass reframes Aristophanes' discussion around heteronormative, de-eroticized speculations about the somatic origins of love, and performs his own iconoclasm against the queerly iconic Plato.