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## Narcissizing the Saxophone

Amanda Materne

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September 20, 1996

Ms. Holly J. Nichols, Chair  
3rd Annual Symposium  
Women Studies Program  
URI -- Roosevelt Hall  
Kingston, RI 02881


Dear Ms. Nichols;

My name is M. Amanda Materne, and currently I am a graduate student pursuing my masters degree with a double emphasis in English Literature and Rhetoric at New Mexico State University. I received information through email on the "Perspectives on Progress: The 3rd Annual Symposium on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Issues" to be held April 10-12, 1996, and am enclosing an abstract of my paper which I would like to have considered for your symposium. The title of my paper is "Narcissizing the Saxophone: Constructing Our Sexual Repression Through Linguistic and Musical Discourse". It would most likely fall into your category of Sexuality in Music.

In reference to personal information, as previously stated I am currently pursuing a double-emphasis at NMSU, where I have taught courses in freshman composition and classes in technical writing. I received a double bachelor's degree from Bowling Green State University(1994) in both music performance and English. I am currently a member of the Transcontinental Saxophone Quartet, which has done several American and European tours, as well as has won several chamber ensemble competitions.

I look forward to hearing from you, and thank you in advance for considering my paper.

Sincerely,

  
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## Narcissizing the Saxophone:

### *Constructing Our Sexual Repression Through Linguistic and Musical Discourse*

Foucault argues that society's expansive discussion of sexuality has in actuality resulted in even more repression; he contends that through our speech we limit ourselves. This dynamic corresponds in musical discourse, especially given the similarities between the voice of the saxophone and the human voice. These similarities allow society to construct a narcissistic, in effect self-reflexive, view of the saxophone, one which is largely visible and audible in jazz. Examples of this narcissism abound and are capitalized within jazz music, along with the media's representation and promotion of the saxophone. This capitalization of jazz, and along with it the saxophone, allow for Foucault's dynamic.

To illustrate my thesis I will examine points of similarity and connect these points not only through a discussion and explanation of Foucault's ideas, but also through outlining the history of the saxophone and its connections to jazz music. Connecting jazz to human sexuality, a commonplace in musical analysis, I will demonstrate the pertinence of society's narcissism, especially concerning how it is projected onto the jazz saxophone's voice. Specific recordings--the actual use of the saxophone's voice--exhibit techniques used by saxophonists to align the sax voice with the human voice, resulting in a transferred sexuality. Media representations will further illustrate the point that the packaging of specific recordings promotes the subtle sexuality society anthropomorphizes onto the saxophone. I will show through these promotional and packaged forms of rhetoric, in conjunction with the saxophone's voice, how society actually exhibits the same repressive tendencies Foucault argues we have constructed in our linguistic sexual rhetoric.