

boys (including Keanu Reeves and River Phoenix) on the covers start talking to each other. Van Sant shot this a la *Hollywood Squares* with the actors talking behind glass. This for me is one of the film's most memorable, among many, amazing cinematographic images.

Mike and Scott soon are dumped by Hans ("this guy's a real pervert, I can tell" says Mike as he falls into another dreamstate) in Portland at the base of a statue to "The Coming of the White Man." After Scott's games with his real Dad, the mayor, and with his street Dad, Bob, Scott and Mike head off to Idaho in search of Mike's mom. They enter the state on Mike's undulating road "like no other road, . . . like a face - like a fucked up face," riding the bike they had "caught with much ease." Unable to start it, they retire under a ledge to escape the rain and huddle by a small fire in what, for me, is the pivotal scene of Mike's struggle to come out:

Mike: "If I had a good family, a normal family. . . I would like to talk with you - I don't feel I can be close to you. . . What do I mean to you?"

Scott: "I'm your friend."

Mike: "Yes, it's good to be a friend. Two guys can love each other, Mike. I could love someone even if I weren't paid for it ... I love you.. I want to kiss you.

The scene ends with Scott inviting Mike to come lie beside him even as the straight prisoner does for William Hurt in the analogous moment in *Kiss of the Spiderwoman*. In an interview in the *Bay Area Reporter* (10/17/91), van Sant says "it was River's idea in the fireside sequence to declare his love for Scott and we just decided to go with it."

Scott and Mike's adventures in Idaho, at an inn called The Family Tree, include hilarious entertainment with the lecherous Hans who shows up again. The wonderful three-way sex with Hans (Udo Kier), Mike and Scott is shown in rapidly sequenced still shots that pile up in our minds, but if watched closely show Scott enjoying deeply being fingerfucked (oh play my own erotic idaho).

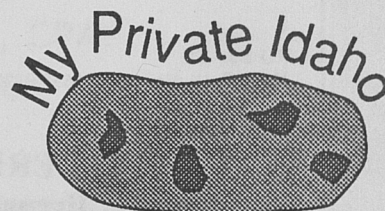
The sale of their bike to Hans enables Mike and Scott to fly to Rome to continue the quest for Mike's mother, Sharon. By now, Scott's maturity clock has run long enough for him to fall in love with Carmella (Chiara Caselli) who lives where Sharon had been a year before and where Mike's yearning for his mother is shown most urgently. The rapid-pace stills of Scott and Carmella making love seal Scott's return to the straight and narrow of heterosexuality. He sends Mike on his way with a little cash and a return airticket. Back in Portland, Scott, in a three-piece suit, rides in a limousine past Bob and Mike who are seen as lowlife. In an expensive bistro surrounded by Democratic Party manipulators as well as the rich, closeted queer, Hans, Scott makes his first crucial political speech:

Scott-Prince Hal to Bob-Falstaff: "I don't know you old man. Please leave me alone, my former psychedelic teacher, street mentor. Don't come near me."

In response, Bob dies and Mike returns to his narcoleptic road, accepting his fate as a salmon swimming upstream. The parallel with the final shot of Bob in the *Drugstore Cowboy* is striking. Bob (Matt Dillon) lies hooked to intravenous tubes in an ambulance after having been shot and is fantasizing his return "ride to the fattest pharmacy in town," drug heaven for someone *Drugstore Cowboy* reinforced this inevitability, which all my straight, good-thinking friends wanted to

deny, by introducing the queer American saint, William S. Burroughs, author of *Queer* and *Naked Lunch* and father of beatnik explorations beyond the main stream. In *Cowboy*, Burroughs is old Tom the priest who "shot a million bucks in his arm" and who gives Bob lessons on how to live on the edge of the main flow. He takes Bob for a walk and points out "works of art." "Look at the pole on that tree there" he says as the only thing we can see is a handsome pair of legs and ass in jeans walking by behind Tom and Bob. Tom keeps up his flow of drugs even while in a methadone program. Bob, having paid what he saw as his debt to a hex and having gotten the cops off his back, will resume his flow of drugs. Similarly, we know that Mike will keep up his injections of erotic narcolepsy as he floats against the stream.

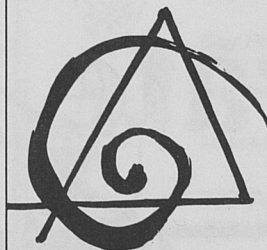
For me, *Idaho* suggests that modern day queers would do well to beware mortgaging our dreams to assimilationist Prince Hals, though like the salmon, we may have little alternative as we are driven by our own private moons and our search for family. We resist calling ourselves queer, yet find that our true family is not biological. For us, *Home On The Range* plays, perhaps even on a 1950's Hammond organ, when we are on the road to our private idaho.



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