

phylosophe

By Judith Butler

Transcript of *YouTube* clip, February 23, 2007

- 1 There's a story—that came out around, I don't know, eight years ago—of a young man who lived in Maine, and he walked down the street of his small town where he had lived his entire life. And he walks with what we call a "swish"—a kind of . . . his hips move back and forth in a "feminine" way. And as he grew older—14, 15, 16—that swish, that walk became more pronounced, OK, and it was more dramatically feminine, and he started to be harassed by the boys in the town. And soon two or three boys stopped his walk, and they fought with him.
- 2 And they ended up throwing him over a bridge and they killed him.
- 3 So then we have to ask: Why would someone be killed for the way they walk? Why would that walk be so upsetting to those other boys that they would feel that they must negate this person, they must expunge the trace of this person, they must stop that walk, no matter what, they must eradicate the possibility of that person ever walking again?
- 4 It seems to me that we are talking about an extremely deep panic or fear, an anxiety that pertains to gender norms.
- 5 And if someone says you must comply with the norm of masculinity, otherwise you will die, or I kill you now because you do not comply, then we have to start to question what the relation is between complying with gender and coercion.