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Life Experience: *Freddy Got Fingered* As Neo-Surrealist Masterpiece

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LIFE EXPERIENCE: FREDDY GOT FINGERED AS NEO-SURREALIST MASTERPIECE

by

FRANK KOSHEL

A master’s thesis submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Liberal Studies in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, The City University of New York

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by

Frank Koshel

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Liberal Studies in satisfaction of the thesis requirement for the degree of Master of Arts.

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ABSTRACT

Life Experience: Freddy Got Fingered as Neo-Surrealist Masterpiece

by

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The late Roger Ebert was known for his entertainingly harsh reviews. The review he wrote of the 2001 film *Freddy Got Fingered* is one notable example. “The day may come when ‘Freddy Got Fingered’ is seen as a milestone of neo-surrealism. The day may never come when it is seen as funny,” wrote Ebert in his April 20, 2001 review of the film. Humor is subjective and there is no accounting for taste but this thesis will prove that the much-maligned film *Freddy Got Fingered* is a milestone of neo-surrealism. *Freddy Got Fingered* director Tom Green has a past that colors the perception people have of *Freddy Got Fingered* but the film truly deserves to be respected as a neo-surrealist masterpiece. A major studio producing an avant-garde film as bizarre as *Freddy Got Fingered* is rare and the fact that it was even made is an accomplishment unto itself. This thesis will closely analyze the film scene-by-scene and validate the surrealist bonafides that the movie possesses. The thesis will point out the similarities to classic Surrealist films like *Un Chien Andalou* and *Anemic Cinema*, among many others. There are scenes containing various “Easter eggs” that allude to the origins of Surrealist cinema. The themes and sensibility of the film can be linked to Surrealist co-conspirator and avant-garde artist Antonin Artaud, who revolutionized theatrical sensibilities with his 1938 work *The Theatre and Its Double*. *Freddy Got Fingered* is a masterpiece of neo-surrealism and this thesis proves it.
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Introduction

The late Roger Ebert was known for his entertainingly harsh reviews. The one he wrote of the 2001 film *Freddy Got Fingered* is one notable example. "The day may come when ‘Freddy Got Fingered’ is seen as a milestone of neo-surrealism. The day may never come when it is seen as funny," wrote Ebert in his infamous review of the film. In this dissertation I will argue, contrary to Ebert, that the day that *Freddy Got Fingered* may be seen as a milestone of neo-surrealism is not some far off time in the future. That day is today.

I feel that considering that very few of the readers of this thesis will have seen the film, it is required that I give a sequential reading of the film that focuses closely on the motifs and sensibilities that this movie shares with other Surrealist classics. I will contrast Freddy with many Surrealist films but most often *Un Chien Andalou*, the Surrealist masterpiece directed by Luis Bunuel, which is characterized by one scholar as a passionate call to crime.

Critics might say that Tom Green heard this call and stole millions of dollars from 20th Century Fox and made a movie that was a crime against audiences. For example, *Freddy Got Fingered* swept the “Razzies” at the 22nd Golden Raspberry Awards in 2001, an awards show that for almost 40 years specializes in acknowledging the worst movies of the year. *Freddy Got Fingered* won the awards in the Worst Picture, Worst Director, Worst Screenplay and Worst Actor categories. Green personally accepted the awards and had to be removed from the stage when he would not stop playing the harmonica. I will argue, however, that *Freddy Got Fingered*...
Fingered not only was underserving of any “Razzie” awards but deserves serious consideration as a seminal work of modern surrealism.

From the very beginning Freddy Got Fingered seems to share a certain sensibility with Un Chien Andalou, as the film was “designed to create a series of violent antagonisms within the viewer through shock, titillation, and repulsion.”\textsuperscript{4} Un Chien Andalou is now recognized as a masterpiece and considered a milestone of surrealism, but like Freddy Got Fingered it had its fair share of detractors at the time. Federico Garcia Lorca called Un Chien Andalou “a tiny little shit of a film” and Henry Miller called it “a gob of spit in the face of art.”\textsuperscript{5} Luis Buñuel was not unprepared for the negative reception, as he had brought rocks with him to the premiere in case the film led to violent reprisal from the audience. Tom Green himself surely was prepared for a similar reaction based on his track record but even he was taken aback at the level of vitriol he found in some of the test audiences responses to Freddy Got Fingered. Green wrote in his autobiography Hollywood Causes Cancer that one of the nicer comment cards said that the film was “the biggest piece of shit I’ve ever seen.”\textsuperscript{6} Bunuel and his Un Chien Andalou collaborator Salvador Dali had similar reputations as “enfants terribles” but managed, with time, to become iconic figures of mainstream European culture.\textsuperscript{7}

Tom Green seemed to experience a reversal of this, having known mainstream success before venturing out into more avant-garde territory. Green was a part of the mainstream American youth culture when the Tom Green Show premiered on MTV in the late 90s. The level of his

\textsuperscript{7} Adamowicz, p.1.
infamy grew from the outrageousness of his stunts, from fellating a marshmallow to placing a giant sculpture of his parents having sex on their front lawn. These stunts can be read within the context of Surrealist strategies of épater le bourgeois. The need to “shock the bourgeoisie” is just as integral to what Tom Green does in *Freddy Got Fingered* as it was to the original Surrealist filmmakers of 1920s Paris.

Surrealists thus seek to merge the subconscious and the conscious, the dream and reality, into an absolute reality that Andre Breton defined, paradoxically enough, as a surreality. Breton wrote the first *Surrealist Manifesto* in 1924, laying the blueprint for the surrealist ethos. Here Breton defines surrealism as pure psychic automatism that is intended to express thought that is dictated in the absence of all control exerted by reason. True artists must abandon intelligent criticism of their actions for “lucidity is the great enemy of revelation.” The filmmaker David Lynch is generally regarded as being most associated with modern Surrealism but there are other directors like Tim Burton and Jim Jarmusch whose surrealist attitudes emerge despite any conscious knowledge of the genre and it is this category of directors to which Tom Green probably belongs. The visual and thematic connections of *Freddy Got Fingered* to Surrealism are evident, whether Tom Green was conscious of them or not. Surrealism is generally described by scholars as the filmic realization of the subconscious, so to make a Surrealist masterpiece without being conscious of it makes it even better. Indeed, the technique of allowing the dictates of the subconscious to manifest themselves in Surrealist art

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is known as automatism.\textsuperscript{12} Surrealism likewise attempted to break with traditional art forms.

The famous surrealist Man Ray considered the principles of Surrealism to be “irrationality, automatism, psychological and dramatic sequences without apparent logic, and complete disregard for conventional storytelling.”\textsuperscript{13}

I would suggest that these are fitting quotes for \textit{Freddy Got Fingered}, a film that was so far removed from the usual Hollywood studio fare that audiences could not recognize the film for what it truly was, a modern Surrealist comedy. Tom Green created a truly polarizing movie, people either love it or hate it. Humor is a very subjective thing but one can appreciate the surrealist underpinnings of the film without finding any of the numerous comedic scenes funny. \textit{Freddy Got Fingered} in no way conforms to the conventional expectations of the average Hollywood studio production. This hostility to the mainstream is also part and parcel of the Surrealist identity.\textsuperscript{14}

The A.V. Club film critic Nathan Rabin wrote in his positive review of \textit{Freddy Got Fingered} that films like the one Tom Green made are not supposed to be produced, that the Hollywood studio system is designed to keep a film like \textit{Freddy Got Fingered} from ever being made.\textsuperscript{15} Hollywood studios operate as a business and keep the bourgeois from being shocked as a general rule of thumb. Traditionally, films that are beyond the norm have found their home with the trash aesthetic that filmmakers such as John Waters and Ed Wood have popularized.

The Nobel Prize winning Mexican writer Octavio Paz characterized the artistic movement of the

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{13} Rudolf E. Kuenzli, \textit{Dada and Surrealist Film} (Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1996), p.3.
\end{flushleft}
art form that is surrealism as the last great spiritual revolution of the West and it is this revolutionary spirit that *Freddy Got Fingered* brought to turn-of-the-century comedies.\textsuperscript{16}

\textsuperscript{16} Talens, p.67.
Analysis of the Film

Let us consider the plot of the film as we begin our close reading of it. *Freddy Got Fingered* appears on first viewing to be a movie about the childish behavior of grown men, like the Luis Bunuel films *Viridiana, El,* and *The Criminal Life of Archibaldo de la Cruz.*\(^{17}\) The character of Gord Brody, played by Tom Green himself, reflects the protagonist of the Joris-Karl Huysmans novel *A’ Rebours.* This classic 1884 French novel embodied the anti-bourgeois ethos that Surrealism possesses. Gord, like the character Jean des Esseintes, is an eccentric recluse who has been living in his parents’ basement that is now finally going out into the world at the age of 28 to work at a cheese sandwich factory and pursue his dreams of becoming a famous animator. The pressure that Gord’s father puts on him to get out of the house and get a job is synonymous with the pressure the father of young Jean puts on his son in *A Rebours.* “Good day, goodbye, be good and work hard,” is what his father would tell Jean des Esseintes.\(^{18}\)

The film co-stars respected actor Rip Torn as his father Jim Brody. Torn had just wrapped up an Emmy winning stint as Artie on the groundbreaking HBO series *The Larry Sanders Show* and though that is what he was most known for at the time Torn himself was no stranger to avant-garde cinema. Torn starred in the infamous Norman Mailer avant-garde film *Maidstone,* where Torn and Mailer engaged in a real brawl while undoubtedly under the influence of various substances. The casting thus hints at an experimental media context for this apparently trashy


film. The structure of the film is similar to the archaic structure of *Un Chien Andalou* in that both films have narrative structures that do not fit into the norms of conventional cinema. *Freddy Got Fingered* starts out as a basic “dreamer-goes-to-Hollywood-to-make-it-big” storyline but that plot is discarded early in the film as Gord moves back to his parents’ house in Portland. *Un Chien Andalou* has the famous prologue featuring the razor cutting an eye in an extreme close-up, which then cuts to a title card with the inscription “Eight years later.” Traditional narratives need not apply in these and other Surrealist masterpieces.

The movie opens to Gord playing with his drawings on his bed in the basement room of his parents’ house. The drawings feature a beaver being yelled at by another beaver and other ridiculously surreal cartoons like an X-Ray Cat vigilante that can see through wooden doors and a banana wearing a tie that is looking for a job. The first shot of the film is of one of the drawing of the X-Ray Cat, which mirrors the first shot of the Jean-Luc Godard film *Breathless*. The
opening shot of Breathless is the protagonist reading a cartoon magazine featuring a drawing of a little girl. The drawing fills the entirety of the shot the same way the drawings of Gord fill the entire frame of the first scene of Freddy Got Fingered. The beginning of the film is also similar to the beginning of the Surrealist classic Un Chien Andalou, as both movies open with prologues that appear to be non-sequiturs. Freddy Got Fingered opens with Gord playing with his drawings and providing silly narration to a cartoon that makes no sense. Un Chien Andalou begins with the infamous eye-slitting scene which is followed by a wholly unconnected sequence of a man cycling down a Paris street.¹⁹

Similarly, we see Gord skateboarding through a Portland mall on the way to the bus station. Gord skates through the mall in an opening credit sequence where Tom Green gets to show off his skateboarding skills to the accompaniment of the Sex Pistols song “Problems”. In real life Green was indeed an avid skateboarder prior to his television career. Gord then makes his way to the bus station where his family is waiting for him. They consist of his father Jim, mother Julie and younger brother Freddy. Gord goes to get on the bus when his dad surprises him with the keys to a LeBaron with a “#1 son” license plate. Freddy gets jealous and Gord fans the flames of his jealousy by asking Freddy where his LeBaron is and telling him that his parents love him more. These kind of dramatic moments are interspersed with humor which seems to coincide with how Surrealist cinema undermines conventional cinematic emotional tropes. Gord mentions that he's going to be a famous animator like Charles Schultz. This is an homage to avant-garde director Jean Luc Godard who once told actor Elliott Gould that one of his

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¹⁹ Adamowicz, p.32.
favorite American writers was Charles Schultz. As mentioned earlier, the first shot of the Jean-Luc Godard film *Breathless* is a shot of a drawing, just like the opening shot of *Freddy Got Fingered*. Godard had an interest in directing the film adaptation of the surrealist play *Little Murders*, but differences with star Elliott Gould caused the film to be directed by Alan Arkin.20 The film, like *Freddy Got Fingered*, was produced by 20th Century Fox.

Green, like Godard, is fully capable of creating dramatic moments that he intentionally subverts and undermines.21 For example, when Jim presents Gord with a car, the gesture is a heartwarming one as the father appears to believe that his son can do good, but this inspiring moment is brutally undermined when Gord tells an old woman approaching his car to “get the

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fuck out of the way!” Later, when Gord is driving down the highway in his LeBaron convertible
the scene also evokes the beginning of Breathless, the seminal Jean-Luc Godard film that
ushered in the French New Wave. Gord drives down the road similarly admiring the country
when he is amazed to see a rather well-endowed horse being readied to mate with a female
horse. This seems to be a parody of the phrase “this is the country!” that Michel exclaims while
driving through the French countryside. Gord cannot resist the urge to leap out of his new car
and jerk off the stud horse. The fact that Gord would jump out of his car to masturbate a horse
may seem like a disgusting non-sequitur, but consider that one of the most famous Salvador
Dali paintings is titled The Great Masturbator.22

There is a deleted scene from the film where Gord drinks milk straight from the udder of a cow.
Tom Green had already done this on his MTV show. This would not have been the first time

22 Talens, p.52.
someone has been shown drinking milk from an udder on the big screen, as the Luis Bunuel film

Los Olvivados also shows a young boy drinking milk straight from the teat. In Freddy, the

camera cuts to a close-up of the eye of the horse, which is very similar to the shot of the eye in
Un Chien Andalou before the eye is slit open with the razor. The cross fade of the map with

Gord driving down the road is also reminiscent of the cross fade from Un Chien Andalou when
the man is riding down the street on his bicycle. Gord arrives in Hollywood to the tune of “I’ve

Gotta Be Me” performed by Sammy Davis Jr. The song not only reflects the attitude of the

protagonist but of director Tom Green and his need to make a movie all his own.

The next sequence features Gord starting his job at a cheese sandwich factory in Hollywood,
where he makes fun of the absurdity of traditional masculinity manufactured by Hollywood like
cheese sandwiches on an assembly line. Gord picks up a giant sausage and jumps on the
assembly line, waving around the giant sausage as if it was his own enlarged phallus and
exclaiming that he is a sexy boy and shouting ding-dong at the other workers. Feminist theorist
Laura Mulvey writes on the paradox of phallocentrism that depends on the image of the
castrated woman to give order and meaning to its patriarchal world in narrative cinema.23
Gord brushes the face of a woman with his sausage phallus while she is working on the
assembly line. This woman is wearing a hairnet, symbolizing, perhaps, a castration of feminine
freedom and beauty. This image of phallocentric domination is subverted by the silliness of the
scene, suggesting the patriarchy is like the emperor with no clothes.

Gord next goes to the Radioactive Animation Studio to show his drawings to Dave Davidson,
getting past the building security by uttering nonsensical noises and phrases that leaves the
security guy befuddled. Gord takes the elevator up to the Radioactive Animation Studio where
we see a long tracking shot of Gord walking and talking with the secretary through the
animation offices. The tracking shot is not necessarily a Surrealist hallmark but demonstrates
the skills of Tom Green as a director. Gord tries to find Dave by saying that he is Quincy from
the coroner’s office and that his wife Linda is dead. You can see in the background of the scene
a surreal looking wall-sized drawing that says “TV wants you dead!” The secretary, played by
Drew Barrymore, feels awful about the news. Gord sees this emotionally vulnerable moment
as a time to hit on her, causing her to be enraged and call security. The secretary calls Gord “a
skinny loser,” which would be a surreal thing for Tom Green to hear in the moment from his
real life romantic partner in the moment. Green had actually proposed to Drew a week before

production was to start on Freddy Got Fingered so having her on the set in her role as a secretary was a chance for him to see the fiancé he had such a passion for at the time.24

Gord then goes to a fancy restaurant called Movers & Shakers, clearly a derisive comment on the rich bourgeois class that frequent such fancy restaurants, and is dressed incongruously as an English bobby to give himself the authority in which to find Dave Davidson and show him the drawings that are his passion. Gord asks everyone that he encounters in the restaurant if they are Dave Davidson, including an incredulous woman that points out to Gord that she is a woman. The absurdity of asking a woman if she is Dave Davidson might be read as an homage to the gender-defying ethos of modern Surrealist directors like David Lynch and the perversely anarchic Pedro Almodovar.25

24 Green, p.193.
25 Cook, p.581.
Dave Davidson eventually reveals himself to Gord and is in disbelief that this guy has tracked him down just to show him his drawings. Gord follows him out of the restaurant as he leaves, telling Dave Davidson that all his friends think his drawings are funny. This could be taken as a commentary on the insular nature of the Surrealist scene of the 1920s, how close-knit a community it was and how most outsiders in the mainstream didn’t get what was going on.

The drawings that Gord has brought to the restaurant to show Mr. Davidson have a stylistic similarity to the Surrealist artwork of Salvador Dali. Gord shows Dave Davidson his drawings while he is waiting for the valet. Davidson says his drawings are stupid, with an emphasis on the baboon eyes and dripping sauce that even Gord seems to realize is stupid as he describes it. The perspective of Mr. Davidson seems like it could be a pre-emptive jab at the lack of understanding critics will have of *Freddy Got Fingered*. The sack full of baboon eyes dripping in sauce is strongly reminiscent of the eyeballs in the Hans Richter work *Filmstudie*. Gord is angrily depressed after being subjected to the criticism of Dave Davidson, taking his gun and
threatening to blow his brains out as a result of his artistic incompetence. This moment in the film illustrates what Ferdinand Alquie writes in *The Philosophy of Surrealism* that “there is only one step from fury to suicide.”²⁶(Alquie50)

Gord takes the advice of Dave Davidson and quits his shitty cheese job. Next we see Gord driving back home to Portland to live with his parents so he can concentrate on his drawings. Gord sees a dead moose in the middle of the road and hears the voice of Dave Davidson telling him to get inside the animals. The idea of getting inside the animals is a parallel to the Surrealist writer Antonin Artaud in the way that the actor physically becomes the animal. It also resonates in a paradoxical way with his theory of how acting should be that Artaud puts forth in his book *The Theatre and It’s Double*. Artaud recommends that an actor has to use physical techniques, the first idea Gord gets in his head when he sees the dead moose is to

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understand the animals in a way that Artaud would. Artaud was concerned to create a new theatrical language by physically becoming an animal, Gord goes and gets inside the animal literally. The experimental theater movement uses the body of the actor as a living thing to express character and Artaud served as the inspiration for using these exercises to breakdown language for the exclusive use of actions. Unfortunately, the extent of film work that we have of Artaud is his script for *The Seashell and the Clergyman* and his acting work in *Fait Divers*.

Artaud planned to direct his own film, *The Butcher’s Revolt*, but failed to acquire the necessary funds to finance the film.27

As we have seen, then, Gord takes literally Davidson’s advice to get inside the animals by eviscerating a dead moose that he finds dead in the middle of the road. *Un Chien Andalou* also features dead donkeys on top of pianos and another kind of hooved animal that looks like a smaller version of a moose minus the antlers. Bunuel’s subsequent film *L’Age d’Or* also begins with a long sequence showing scorpions. There will be an even stronger likeness to the *Un Chien Andalou* donkey scene later on in the movie. Gord sees the same stud horse from earlier in the process of mating on the way back home and starts eating voraciously, establishing a

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Figure 9 – Andy accidentally hurts himself.

commonality between the ecstasies of sex with the orgiastic pleasure of gluttony. The scenes with the horse and the earlier “sexy boy” scene suggest a similar preoccupation with the phallus that Surrealist artist Salvador Dali had in his artwork.

Gord arrives back home and a little boy named Andy runs into his car face first while welcoming him home and his face becomes a bloody mess. The gratuitous violence that Andy will be subjected to throughout the course of the film is similar to the way the protagonist of the Luis Bunuel classic *L’Age d’Or* gratuitously shoots a child. Julie is serving roast beef for dinner and conflict erupts between Gord and his father Jim when Gord declares his intentions to eat a chicken sandwich instead of the roast beef he finds boring. Jim throws the chicken sandwich to the dogs and Gord goes outside to work on his half-pipe with his friend instead of eating dinner. The electric nail gun that Gord uses is so loud that it wakes his dad up as well as the neighbors. The commotion causes Jim to bellow extremely loud noises to shut everyone up, which leads to
Gord’s friend Darren asking if his dad has bowel problems. The mentioning of bowel problems could be construed as a reference to coprophilia, something that is evident in the Luis Bunuel film *L’Age d’Or*. The use of noise and non-verbal language is also a manifestation of the Artaud style of expression. Gord finishes his half-pipe and his friend breaks his leg skateboarding on it. Gord proceeds to lick the open wound after his father throws their skateboard on it. The pleasures of licking and other oral fixations are also prominent in Bunuel and Dali’s *L’Age d’Or*, where a young woman appears to fellate the foot of a marble statue. This and other scenes in the movie can be described as slapstick comedy. Salvador Dali, who was of course an important figure in the early Surrealist movement of 1920s Paris, believed that cinematic slapstick was a perfect expression of Avant-grade art in popular culture. Dali has had an influence on comedy that has spanned decades. For example John Cleese of the comedy group
Monty Python paid homage to Dali with an impression of him in the comedy classic *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*.\(^{28}\)

Gord then visits the hospital and meets Betty. She appears to be perfect as she is both smart and beautiful but after Gord desperately scribbles down her number, the camera reveals that she is in a wheelchair as she rolls away to attend to her hospital duties. The beautiful Betty who is unable to walk is reminiscent of the glamorous Catherine Deneuve on crutches in the Bunuel film *Tristana*. The beautiful Betty in her wheelchair corresponds closely to the surrealist quest for “convulsive beauty” as defined by Andre Breton in his *Second Manifesto of Surrealism*. This quest must fulfill three conditions: it must be discovered by chance, it must answer in some ways to the poet’s desire and it must combine contradictory attributes like explosive/immobile and strength/fragility.\(^{29}\)

Gord comes upon Betty purely out of chance. He only meets her at the hospital because he is visiting his friends who is there due to his broken leg. Betty has an enthusiasm for life that is explosive but her legs have been rendered immobile for reasons that are never explored in the film. Betty says something that is awkward and that shared awkwardness fulfills the need of our poet, which in this case is the protagonist Gord. The character of Betty appears to be a direct reference to the surrealist film *Fando y Lis*, directed by Alejandro Jodorowsky. Lis is a paraplegic just like Betty; and that is not all the film has in common with *Freddy Got Fingered*. *Fando y Lis* was so poorly received at the Acapulco film festival that a riot broke out and it was

\(^{28}\) Harper and Stone, p.109.

subsequently banned in Mexico. The fact that Betty is a blonde could also be a nod to the 1926 surrealist book *Le Paysan de Paris* written by surrealist author Louis Aragon, one of the most important works to come out of Surrealist movement of Paris. Aragon was known for his humor and *Freddy Got Fingered* is considered by some to be one of the funniest movies in cinematic history.³⁰

Gord proceeds to visit his laid-up friend in his hospital bed and excitedly tells him about the pretty girl he just met while a pregnant woman next to him tells them to shut up. Gord starts to violently mess around with his broken leg, which could be an allusion to *L’Age d’Or* where we see the protagonist kick over a blind man. The scene is accompanied, inexplicably, by tribal Indian music as Gord decides to help the pregnant woman by delivering her baby. The woman is not pleased with this and screams for a doctor to come in and deliver her baby in what test audiences revealed to be their least favorite scene of the film.³¹ This scene is reminiscent of *Eraserhead*, a brilliantly crafted Surrealist nightmare directed by David Lynch. *Freddy Got Fingered* and *Eraserhead* represent opposite ends of the Surrealist spectrum as *Freddy Got Fingered* is a Surrealist comedy and *Eraserhead* is a masterpiece of Surrealist horror.

*Eraserhead* reflects the anxiety and fear that the protagonist has of fatherhood. This scene shows Tom Green eagerly delivering a newborn baby, the opposite vibe of *Eraserhead*. Whereas in *Eraserhead* the father winds up killing his freakish spawn, Gord saves the baby that is born stillborn by spinning it around with its own umbilical cord as it creates a bloody mess.

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around the hospital room. Gord leaves the hospital a hero but not before he then proceeds to cut the umbilical cord with his teeth, signifying an embrace of fatherhood and foreshadowing his eventual maturation. The scene could also be a reference to the scene in *Breathless* where the young couple are discussing her possible pregnancy. The jump cuts in this scene are very quick, just as *Breathless* used a high percentage of jump cuts.32

Later Gord visits Betty at her home and she reveals her fascination with rockets to Gord. Betty and her obsession with rockets might seem like a random pre-occupation but it makes sense when you look at it from a Surrealist perspective. The reason for this fascination with rockets can be explained using the Surrealist interpretation of a romantic object of desire, as desires creates a Surrealist object.33 The rockets are the objects that Betty has channeled her desires into while she has been without a romantic partner, now she has Gord and her desire can now be transferred from the rockets to his phallus. Betty asks Gord to whack her crippled legs with

32 Cook, p.445.  
33 Harper and Stone, p.34.
Figure 12 – Gord satisfying his new girlfriend.

A bamboo stick. This is evocative of the opening scene of the Luis Bunuel film *Belle de Jour*, which opens with Catherine Deneuve being whipped in a sadomasochistic exercise. And Bunuel’s later *Le Fantome de la Liberte* features a whipping scene where the roles are reversed, with a female dominatrix whipping a man. The sexual satisfaction that Betty receives from the attention given to her legs is a reversal of one of the most famous scenes in *L'Age d'Or*, where, as mentioned earlier, the female protagonist obsessively sucks the toes of a statue. *Freddy Got Fingered* sees the male protagonist Gord as the one engaged in podophilia as he canes the legs of a woman that are as stiff as a statue. Haim Finkelstein recognizes how Surrealist art utilizes a “whole gallery of sexual symbols and signs that offer latent sexuality in varying degrees” and this scene features several noteworthy examples.34

34 Finkelstein, p.68.
Gord is really getting into the caning when he goes too far and hits Betty in the face with the bamboo stick. Betty is upset but shakes it off and proceeds to give Gord fellatio to reciprocate the sexual satisfaction she felt with her legs being caned. Gord is reluctant and asks if she wants to go for a walk, Betty points out that she can’t walk. She eventually gives Gord the fellatio she so desires to give him despite the fact he has an umbilical cord taped to his stomach. The umbilical cord represents that Gord is mentally still in a child-like state, which explains his reticence for being fellated and suggests that Gord is so emotionally stunted that at 28 years old he is still a virgin.

Gord is receiving oral sex from Betty when the camera pans to a shot of six photos representing the progress of the Eiffel Tower being build. The stages of construction of the Eiffel Tower is supposed to be an allusion to the growing erection that Gord is receiving as a result of his blowjob, but it also can be taken as an homage to the birthplace of the Surrealist movement. Paris was of course the epicenter of the Surrealist movement in the 1920s, starting in 1924 as
an outgrowth of the Paris dada movement. The visual presence of Paris at the end of this scene cements the surreal intentions of director Tom Green. This scene is a prime example of the Surrealist take on romance, the best since L’Age d’Or. Romance has always been of great importance to Surrealist artists, as Andre Breton considered Surrealism to be the heir to Romanticism.

Freddy joins the family for breakfast and espouses all of the platitudes regarding hard work that were the hopes of Jean’s father in A Rebours. Freddy is what society has deemed to be a responsible adult, the opposite of the creative pursuit that Gord desires in his hopes to become an animator. The family is having their breakfast when Jim notices that Gord has been using

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37 Harper and Stone, p.34.
38 Huysmans, p.5.
the shower an extraordinary long time, causing Freddy to lamely joke that Gord should save some of the water for the fishes. Jim goes down to the basement level to investigate and uses various methods to affect the temperature of the water. He turns off the hot water valve and then flushes the toilet after breaking down the door. Jim opens the shower doors to find that Gord is in the shower dressed in a scuba suit pretending the soap on a rope is a treasure. Gord finding the treasure is an example of the Surrealist notion that Surrealist artist Max Ernst referred to as the “found-interpreted object.” The flaunting of the soap displays an audacity that angers his dad and that is characteristic of surrealism. Jim grabs his son and throws him out of the shower, causing a hail of broken glass and making the soap fall in the toilet. The shot of the soap on a rope falling in the toilet is visually reminiscent of the opening scene from

Figure 16 – Gord crosses his fingers in the hopes of finding a job.

*Eraserhead*, where the giant spermatozoon falls into a pool of water. Jim tells Gord to get out and look job, insensitive to the fact that the whole reason that Gord has moved back to live with his parents is so that he can concentrate on his drawing without having to worry about getting a shitty job like the one he had in Hollywood.

Gord and his younger brother Freddy discuss their current situations over breakfast in the next scene and take turns disparaging each other. Gord says that his father is driving him crazy, suggesting that all of the antics that occur at this house are a reflection of that madness. Likewise Surrealists such as Man Ray aimed to simulate the madness of pathological compulsion through the surrealist movement. Freddy thinks that Gord needs to grow up and get a job, Gord asks Freddy to keep his fingers crossed that he will find a “jobbie”. Freddy represents the values of capitalist culture through his job at the bank, while the ethos of

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41 Harper and Stone, p.19.
Surrealism places itself in direct conflict with capitalism. Gord’s predisposition to being an animator in a world where this doesn’t represent a real job reinforces this struggle.\textsuperscript{42}

In the next sequence, Gord is trying to work on his drawings while The New York Dolls song \textit{Personality Crisis} plays during the scene. The New York Dolls infamously cross-dressed and struck a very bizarre sight on stage. The surrealist film \textit{Emak-Bakia}, directed by one of the original Surrealist artists Man Ray, and the surrealist precursor \textit{Entr’acte} both feature transvestism.\textsuperscript{43} The concept of personality ties with Freud’s theory regarding the structure of personality. Sigmund Freud was of course a significant influence to early Surrealist artists.\textsuperscript{44} The early Surrealists that had grown disenchanted with the Dada movement used Freudian techniques as a springboard to Surrealism.\textsuperscript{45} The fact that Gord is at home working on his drawings while the adults are away at work suggests a crisis in his personality that signifying dome emotionally stunted growth. Freud supposes that memories of the unconscious are unaffected by time and continue to affect people in any stage of adult life.\textsuperscript{46} Gord is struggling to find inspiration and is unable to draw anything. Gord scribbles on the paper in manner that resembles the artwork associated with the technique of frottage, the creation of which is credit to Surrealist artist Max Ernst. Gord is seen smoking in this scene, the only time in the film we see him smoke. This smoking scene could also be an homage to fellow director Luis Bunuel appearing at the beginning of \textit{Un Chien Andalou} when he is smoking a cigarette.

\textsuperscript{43} Short, p.25.  
\textsuperscript{46} Harper and Stone, p.26.
The next scene shows Jim arriving home after a long day of work to find Gord running around in front of a mirror calling himself “The Backwards Man.” Gord put on a suit backwards where the
front side with his tie is on his back so it looks like his head is turned completely around backwards. The use of the mirror in this scene brings to mind the use of mirrors in the Maya Deren film *Meshes of the Afternoon*. Gord is running back and forth in front of the mirror as the female protagonist of *Meshes of the Afternoon* sees a mirror image of herself running away while she is looking out of the window. There is also the ghastly visage of a Grim Reaper looking figure with a mirror for a face and the mirror shots in her bedroom that reinforce the mirror motif in *Meshes of the Afternoon*. “The Backwards Man” scene in *Freddy Got Fingered* relates the plight that Gord is experiencing in his efforts to become a professional animator to the multiple reflections in mirrors and windows featured in *Meshes of the Afternoon* that represent the pursuit of the deeper self.47

Gord is now back with Betty and he is whipping her legs with a black leather riding crop instead of a bamboo stick. Betty goes to give Gord a blowjob but he is uncomfortable and refuses to let Betty un-buckle his pants. There is then a tug-of-war between Gord and Betty that is reminiscent of the rape attempt in *Un Chien Andalou*, except in this instance the gender roles are reversed and the woman is being the aggressor.48

Gord wants the couple to go on a date before there is any more fellatio and says he wants their “sucking to date ratio” to be far more balanced. A series of photographs titled *1929* by Surrealist visionary Man Ray also features a woman fellating an unseen man. The passion Betty has for giving blowjobs is a direct reference to these Man Ray photographs. The importance to the Surrealist movement of Man Ray is significant. The obsession Betty has with giving head is

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47 Short, p.177.
48 Talens, p.53.
also similar to the passion the female protagonist in the Alejandro Jodorowsky film La Cravate has with severed heads. The passion that Betty has for fellatio is the “amour fou” of Freddy Got Fingered, “amour fou” being French for insane love. Gord and Betty are reminiscent of the couple that are the stars of the Luis Bunuel film L’Age d’Or represented the ultimate on-screen surrealist example of “amour fou.”

Gord and Betty next go to a fancy restaurant where his parents also happen to be eating. Andy and his father are also there celebrating his birthday. Gord is pretending to be a stockbroker, reinforcing the lies he told Betty at the hospital when they first met. Gord is playing around with a whole fish that looks a lot like the fish from the Salvador Dali painting The Disintegration

49 Short, p.118.
of the Persistence of Memory. Fish were a symbol of life for Dali and the fact that Gord devours the fish while angrily mimicking a stockbroker could be construed as a commentary on the role of the modern businessman. Jim then discovers Gord at the fancy restaurant as he is pretending to be some sort of mover and shaker, a callback to the earlier restaurant Movers and Shakers where he found Dave Davidson. Gord is trying to get Jim to be cool and play things off, pretending that he is one of his subordinates and calling him Timmy. Jim talks about Betty being in a wheelchair and responds to her asking if he has a problem with her legs by saying that she either has a problem with her legs or is just lazy. Gord tells his dad to shut up and a fracas ensues. Jim calls Betty a retard slut whore and she says she is not retarded. Jim throws a bottle at Gord that winds up hitting Andy in the face in a continuation the running gag of him being randomly injured. Gord takes a violin from one of the members of the orchestra and plays it on top of a bar while repeatedly exclaiming “this is a fancy restaurant!” Gord then takes
the violin and smashes it in a close-up shot that very well could be an homage to the respectable looking gentleman in *L’Age d’Or* kicking a violin down the street and is also visually reminiscent of the 1922 Andre Masson oil painting *Pedestal Table in the Studio*. The French painter Masson was associated with surrealism as the term became popularized by Andre Breton. The mise-en-scene of Surrealist film was often influenced by Surrealist painting.\(^5^0\)

Betty bails Gord out of jail. Betty doesn’t think his father likes her because he called her a retard slut whore. Betty asks what Gord really does for a living and he tells her that he is an animator. Betty tells Gord to eat and play some music while drawing. Gord next rigs a pulley system so he can eat sausage and play the organ and draw. Gord tells his friend that he can’t think of anything to draw because he is so stupid but his friend sees the drawings that Gord has drawn of his dad, suggesting that true art comes from the subconscious and not from conscious

thought. This philosophy is at the heart of the Surrealist perspective. Surrealists seek to merge the subconscious and the conscious, the dream and reality, into an absolute reality that André Breton defined, paradoxically enough as we mentioned earlier, as a surreality. Breton wrote the first *Surrealist Manifesto* in 1924, laying the blueprint for the surrealist ethos. Here Breton defines surrealism as pure psychic automatism that is intended to express thought that is dictated in the absence of all control exerted by reason.\(^{51}\)

Gord plays a song that asks his dad if he would like some sausages. The sausages tied to a string are visually reminiscent of *Un Chien Andalou* and the Maya Deren film *Witch’s Cradle*. The particular visual motifs that these movies share with *Freddy Got Fingered* aside, this scene also represents the surrealist ethos as it relates to the creation of absurd objects.\(^{52}\)

Jim walks in and is annoyed by what he sees and derisively calls his son a genius for figuring out how to eat sausages while working on his stupid drawings. Jim seems to recognize exactly what is going on as soon as he walks in the door, suggesting that he is quite attuned to the creative peculiarities of his son. This aspect of his character suggests that the anger he feels for his son is quite possibly a subconscious form of resentment he feels for having to support a family and not being able to live a creative, carefree life himself. Jim grabs the strings and smashes his organ in a fit of rage. Julie has to restrain Jim from physically assaulting a defenseless Gord. Jim remarks how Gord would be sewing soccer balls at the age of five if he grew up in a third-world country like Pakistan and goes outside muttering to himself how he has to bust his ass working for his family. Jim gets in his truck and runs over the half-pipe that Gord and his friend

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\(^{51}\) Bigsby, p.37.

\(^{52}\) Finkelstein, p.79.
have worked so hard-on. Gord is absolutely devastated and in order to get back at his dad tells his mom to fulfill her sexual desires by having sex with basketball players, Greeks and men from Greece. Louis Aragon, in the French magazine *La Revolution Surrealiste*, mentions Byron’s Greece, so both this and *Freddy Got Fingered* mention Greece in their Surrealist work.53

The relationship between man and woman is a major theme in the work of Luis Bunuel and the sentiment that a woman needs to rid herself of patriarchal morality is also strong. Likewise in *Freddy Got Fingered* Julie initially plays the part of an obedient housewife, but when Gord suggests that she has sex with other men you can see the longing in her eyes to fulfill the sexual desires she has been denied for years. The actress that plays Gord’s mom Julie, the veteran actress Julie Hagerty (veteran of crazy comedy *Airplane!* [1980]), expresses this subtle yearning

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flawlessly. The fact that Gord telling his mom to have sex with other men is his way of trying to rid her character of the patriarchal morality of his father. 54

We next see the family at group therapy. There is palpable tension in the room as Jim states that as long as Gord is in his house, he makes the rules. Gord subsequently states his desire to eat chicken burgers with a contrarian exuberance that angers his father. Gord accuses his dad of molesting his brother Freddy, stating that he fingers him, which is the titular line in the film as the this is the basis for calling the film Freddy Got Fingered. The Luis Bunuel directed film *Los Olvidados* also touches on the subject of pedophilia with the character of Don Carmelo, further linking the exploration of this taboo theme with Surrealist artists. Jim calls Gord a liar but Julie questions whether Jim really did molest Freddy. The therapist says that she is required by law to notify the authorities of these allegations of abuse.

54 Talens, p.59.
There is a bust of Sigmund Freud that is visible in the background near the window that you can see behind some close-up shots of Gord while he lies about his father molesting his brother Freddy. Aside from being an explicit reference to psychoanalysis, this scene is a clear example of the black humor that Andre Breton developed while studying Sigmund Freud’s concept of humor.\footnote{Finkelstein, p.78.} This black humor is evident in *L’Age d’Or*, which features the sexually frustrated man tearing apart the bedroom of his lover in a fit of rage and throwing numerous things out the window, including the bust of a Roman Senator.\footnote{Hedges, p.105.} Gord smashes open the window with the bust of Sigmund Freud, he jumps from his perch atop the window and escapes from his enraged father. A key component of Freudian psychology is the study of the unconscious, and
Surrealists saw film as a way of representing the relation of psychoanalysis to matter.\textsuperscript{57}

Surrealists, in turn, loved films that presented untamed desire, as well as slapstick comedies.\textsuperscript{58}

Famously Freud revealed how the repressions of modern society were unconsciously enacted in collective and individual ways. Surrealists were also interested in the way these repressions were unconsciously expressed in popular culture. As is well known, \textit{Un Chien Andalou} collaborator Salvador Dali took direct inspiration from the seminal Sigmund Freud work \textit{The Interpretation of Dreams}.\textsuperscript{59} Tom Green uses a film that was much entwined in turn-of-the-century pop culture to express a Surrealists sensibility that is suppressed by the major studios. The bust of Sigmund Freud in this scene is a wink and a nod to this noble endeavor.\textsuperscript{60}

The family therapist next arrives at the Brody home with a police escort and while Freddy is watching video of testicular surgery being performed. The testicles that are being operated on are those of Tom Green, who had to have a lymph node removed due to his testicular cancer. Green had the whole ordeal documented for the MTV show he had at the time of the diagnosis. I would liken the footage to the scene in \textit{Eraserhead} where the father cuts open the bandages of the spermatozoon to reveal nothing but internal organs. Freddy is watching this footage when the psychiatrist arrives with a police officer to take Freddy into protective custody. Gord is working on his drawings when his dad comes in with a bottle of Wild Turkey and starts tearing them up and sticking them up his ass. Gord says “Fuck you, dad” and then he

\textsuperscript{57} Richardson, p.12.
\textsuperscript{58} Bordwell and Thompson, p.452.
\textsuperscript{59} Harper and Stone, p.39.
\textsuperscript{60} Richardson, p.16.
pulls down his pants and tells Gord to fuck him. When his mom Julie sees this she drops her cup of tea and runs away. Incest has been a theme in Surrealist films since the silent-film era. Antonin Artaud considered the incestual Lucas van den Leyden painting “The Daughters of Lot” to render all subsequent paintings inane and useless. Anemic Cinema by Marcel Duchamp features the phrase that is roughly translated as “incest or passion of family, in too much drawn blows.” This phrase is powerfully relevant to the scene, as Jim starts to stick various cartoons that were drawn by Gord up his own ass after telling his own son to fuck him in the ass.

This incident with his father apparently pushes Gord to his breaking point and in the pouring rain he dramatically throws his drawings away in the trash. In a callback to the career he gave

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Artaud, p.33.
up earlier in the film, Gord gets a job at a local cheese sandwich restaurant called Submarine Supreme. Gord visits Betty where she is working on her new rocket powered wheelchair and tells her that he is giving up his dreams of being an animator. When she questions this, Gord thinks that she should give up her endeavors as well. Gord calls Betty and himself a couple of stupid idiots and chastises her for always being about the rockets. Gord drives away and Betty slumps against her rocket-powered wheelchair in despair. The kindred spirit that Betty thought she could dream with has succumbed to the negativity of reality. The perilous moments of the movie are thus when reality intrudes on the surreality of the film.

The next scene shows Freddy sitting on the couch watching *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* and wearing a No More Secrets t-shirt at the Institute for Sexually Molested Children. Freddy tries
to tell the kids there that he was not abused but they don’t believe him. The kids comfort him and tell him that everything will be OK. Gord is working at the cheese sandwich shop and responds angrily to a customer that reports to him that he did not put enough cheese in his cheese sandwich. He throws a massive amount of cheese on the sandwich and tells the customer to stick it up his bum-bum. This is a reference to the Tom Green music video “The Bum Bum Song,” which is fairly weird if not strictly speaking surreal. The next scene shows Julie walking out on Jim, thinking he is a child molester. Jim tries to keep Julie from leaving by saying that whatever she saw was taken completely out of context. He defends himself by saying that Gord said “Fuck you, dad” and saying “Don’t you get it fuck me fuck you” as Julie drives off in a taxi while Andy and his father are now playing catch outside on the front lawn. All the commotion causes his distracted father to hit Andy in the face with an overthrown baseball, continuing the running gag of Andy being maimed throughout the film. Gord is mopping the
tables at Submarine Supreme when he sees a news report that Betty has created her rocket wheelchair and is inspired to quit his shitty cheese job at Submarine Supreme and go back to being an animator. Gord therefore leaves home to go back to Hollywood which leads to his father accosting his friend at the bank in order to find out where Gord is going. Gord’s friend Darren is subjected to repeat abuse as Jim kicks him in the cast, his role in the film seeming to be randomly abused like the character of the next-door neighbor boy Andy.

The song that is played over this mini-montage is a song by the pop-punk band Green Day. The director could have picked any number of similar sounding Green Day songs for this scene but he chose the track *Blood, Sex and Booze*. The fact that the song plays over the establishing shot of the Hollywood sign could be construed as a commentary on the town, but it can also be taken as homage to the use of tango music in *Un Chien Andalou*. Tango music in the 1920s was
associated with adultery and other taboo subjects.\textsuperscript{62} Gord barges into Dave Davidson’s office to show him his cartoon, \textit{Zebras in America}. Jim arrives at his office as well, throwing the secretary out of his way and chasing Dave Davidson around the office. Dave Davidson is so impressed by what he thinks is a presentation that he writes Gord a check for one million dollars for the rights to \textit{Zebras in America}.

A promotional trailer is shown for the new cartoon series \textit{Zebras in America}. The cartoon is supposedly about a group of zebra centaurs from Africa that move to America and try to assimilate. Salvador Dali had prominent depictions of Africa in his paintings. \textit{The Poetry of America}, and \textit{Geopoliticus Child Watching the Birth of the New Man} features images of the continent of Africa in both of the paintings. The animation style of \textit{Zebras in America} bears a

\textsuperscript{62} Talens, p.63.
resemblance to the most surreal cartoon to ever be broadcast in America, the popular 90s cartoon *Ren and Stimpy*.

Gord shows up at the bank where his friend works, with a shark tied to his convertible. The reason why a shark is tied to his convertible is never explained in the film. Darren is not happy to see Gord as he is afraid his dad will attack him if they are seen together. Gord shows his friend the check he just got for one million dollars and has him put the rest of it in a savings account. Gord then rents a helicopter using his newly acquired wealth and visits Betty at her apartment. Gord gives Betty a bag of jewels to make things up to her and show her his love. The bag of jewels could be seen as an homage to the opening scene of the 1954 surrealist film *Inauguration of the Pleasure Dome* directed by Kenneth Anger. This is the point in an average romantic comedy where the protagonist will try to win back his love. Green sets up a romantic scene on a rooftop with Gord and Betty meeting to the Percy Sledge rendition of *When a Man*
Loves a Woman. The author Herbert Read considers Surrealism to be a reaffirmation of the romantic principle, so this scene and the passion Gord and Betty share for themselves and their creative endeavors confirms that sentiment. This romantic scene with Gord and Betty expressing their love for each other on the roof is a scene worthy of Luis Bunuel. This sequence, like the classic Bunuel films Un Chien Andalou and L’Age D’Or, simultaneously evokes and mocks the narrative conventions of classic cinema.

Gord next dresses up like a Black Ops agent and tranquilizes his dad in order to hire construction workers to move his house from the suburbs of Portland to Pakistan. This uses up all of the money he got for selling his Zebras in America to Dave Davidson. The fact that the

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64 Short, p.118.
Gord is from Portland is interesting. The most seminal figure in Surrealist cinema since the initial group of Bunuel and company from Paris in the 1920s is David Lynch, who grew up in the Pacific Northwest and it was his move from this idyllic setting to the slums of Philadelphia that inspired the bleakness of *Eraserhead*.

Jim wakes up in Pakistan and notices a camel. Jim then chases Gord through the desert wearing only his pajamas. The silly image of a menacing individual running through the desert in his pajamas is akin to the way the threatening military officer in *The Seashell and the Clergyman* is dressed in baby clothes.65

Gord, then, jacks off an elephant and the elephant proceeds to ejaculate all over his dad. Gord and his father wind up in the sand, echoing the final scene of *Un Chien Andalou* where the man and the woman are buried in the sand. Gord and his father have a heart to heart talk in the

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65 Bordwell and Thompson, p.452.
sand that is edited with a shot/reverse shot style that suits the relatively realist performance style of the scene, but the heartfelt understanding that they reach is interrupted when they wind up getting captured by terrorists. Andre Breton would go from movie house to movie house in Paris and see several films in one afternoon, thus creating a kind of discontinuous montage. The dissonant tonal shifts in Freddy Got Fingered seems to be inspired by the activities of Breton, as Tom Green goes from the sight of an elephant ejaculating all over a man to a scene where father and son have an emotional reconciliation. Breton would go on to write Le Manifeste du Surrealisme in 1924, codifying the sensibilities of the emerging Surrealist culture in the definitive Surrealist manifesto.

Gord and his father are hauled away by terrorists and put in a cage that is being pulled through the desert by a camel. This scene is visually reminiscent of Entr’acte where a camel is pulling a hearse while being followed by numerous people. Entr’acte was an early precursor to the
Surrealist film movement, directed by Renee Clair and featuring important Surrealist artists Marcel Duchamp and Man Ray in cameo roles.

Back in the USA - Julie, the mother of our protagonist that left her husband over his perceived pedophilia, sees her son on TV being held hostage while she is bed with Shaquille O’Neal. The appearance of basketball legend Shaquille O’Neal is reminiscent of another slapstick comedy that features surreal humor, Airplane!, which, as mentioned earlier, also co-stars Julie Hagerty. The movie also features a cameo by NBA Hall of Famer Kareem Abdul Jabbar in an equally surreal scene. This scene functions as a hilarious call back to when Gord implored his mother to go out and satisfy her sexual desires with basketball players and Greeks. This scene represents
her liberation as a woman, which ties into the surrealist exaltation of women as an allegory of liberty and equality.\textsuperscript{66}

Gord and his father are welcomed home at Portland International Airport. There is a huge crowd and somebody is holding up a sign that asks “when the fuck is this movie going to end”? It is the kind of self-reflective moment that has always been associated with Jean-Luc Godard.\textsuperscript{67}

There is a different sign that says “you rock my brown hole,” another example of coprophilia.

Next, there is then a heroic shot of Gord against the backdrop of a fade-in of the American flag, a fittingly absurd final shot for an absurdly surreal film that uses a similar fade-in technique that is utilized in the bicycle riding scene in \textit{Un Chien Andalou}. The film does not end with this shot


\textsuperscript{67} Jane Feuer, \textit{Film Genre Reader II} (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995), p.454.
and instead ends on the shot of Andy’s father being covered in his son’s blood, although he tells his father that he is all right after supposedly running into an airplane propeller. Tom Green did not want the child to be all right, he wanted the child to die. The surrealist artist adopts an analogous attitude towards the derangement of cruelty as that of Lautreamont and the Marquis de Sade and this attitude is reflected in the scenes where the little boy is repeatedly maimed. The original cut of *Freddy Got Fingered* was rated NC-17, which Tom Green thought was only given to films that featured “porn- with murder.” The ending had to be changed to with Andy telling his father that he is all right, one of the changes that eventually gave the film an R rating.

The screen fades to black and we go into the credits where a song by popular rapper Eminem is playing. Tom Green himself is name-checked in the song; and since Green was himself an aspiring rapper who had some success in Canada, this association with an upper echelon artist like Eminem must have felt quite surreal. Green equates the genre of rap music with *Freddy Got Fingered* and the reaction most critics had with the film, saying that rap is “something adults rarely listen to but always have a bad word to say about.” As mentioned earlier, the tango that features in *Un Chien Andalou* was also considered a scandalous musical genre at the time.

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68 Alquie, p.54.
69 Green, p.215.
Conclusion

The author Wallace Fowlie considers surrealism to be the “most vital and renovating movement of modern thought and art.”\textsuperscript{70} Freddy Got Fingered put the modern back in neo-surrealism with a 21\textsuperscript{st} century comedy that combines all the mise-en-scene of classic Surrealist art and cinema with turn-of-the-century youth culture. The surrealist writer Antonin Artaud believed that the spirit of anarchy was the root of all poetry and that spirit permeates \textit{Freddy Got Fingered}.\textsuperscript{71}

There is nothing formulaic or predictable about any of the scenes in the film, except that, in an inexplicable running joke, Andy is probably going to somehow get hurt again.

The premise of \textit{Freddy Got Fingered} is a classic Bildungsroman infused with the spirit of a genuine avant-garde Surrealist like Antonin Artaud or Luis Bunuel. In artistic terms Tom Green is not of course the greatest of directors, but he does display a basis competence in filmmaking that allows for the humor to be funny, as opposed to the amateurism of the production. He is capable of directing exceptionally well-made tracking shots, as shown in his scene with Drew Barrymore and, later in this film, when we follow a young child running through the home of sexually molested kids that establishes the predicament that Freddy finds himself in as a result of his Gord’s false accusations. Talented actors like Rip Torn, Julie Hagerty and Anthony Michael Hall elevate the quality of every scene they appear in and give the film tremendous comedic credibility. This is in contrast to a notoriously bad quality film like \textit{The Room} directed by Tommy Wiseau (2003), where the extreme fragmentation of the narrative is an inadvertent consequence of awful direction and the acting is so poor that it creates unintentional laughter.

\textsuperscript{71} Artaud, p.42.
solely due to the extreme amateurism of the production. Wiseau’s kind of filmmaking, unlike Green’s, requires no talent and is in no way an homage to any surrealist sensibility.

*Freddy Got Fingered* is a film that critics simply did not know what to make of when it premiered fifteen years ago. The one critic that was astute enough to mention the film in the same breath as neo-surrealism was Roger Ebert. Finally I would define the term “neo-surrealism” as the revival of surrealism mixed with contemporary popular culture. Although somewhat forgotten today, director Tom Green played a prominent part in American pop culture at the turn-of-the-century. *The Tom Green Show* on MTV was successful enough with their young demographic that Regency Enterprises and distributor 20th Century Fox provided Green with a sizable budget of $14 million dollars to make his own feature film.

The turn-of-the-century was a time inundated with movies geared to a young audience that featured very low-brow humor and were very juvenile in nature. Roger Ebert wrote in his review that “when David Spade got buried in crap in *Joe Dirt*, and when three supermodels got buried in crap in *Head Over Heels*, and when human organs fell from a hot-air balloon in *Monkeybone* and were eaten by dogs, and when David Arquette rolled around in dog crap and a gangster had his testicles bitten off in *See Spot Run*, and when a testicle was eaten in *Tomcats*,...there had to be a film like *Freddy Got Fingered* coming along.” Ebert includes *Freddy Got Fingered* with these less ambitious movies. But, I would suggest finally, that from this moment forward Tom Green’s neglected and despised film can be recognized as the masterpiece of neo-surrealism that, ironically enough, Roger Ebert suspected it might be.

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Filmography


*Anemic Cinema*. Dir. Marcel Duchamp. 1926. Short


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