# On a Discursive Conversation between Queer Theory and Sociology

Jason Theodore Mokrovich

Submitted in Fulfilment of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Department of Sociology, Anthropology, and Applied Social Sciences
Faculty of Law, Business, and Social Sciences
University of Glasgow

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# Acknowledgments

Throughout the course of the following project, there were many times when I lost faith in it and myself, and I wondered if I would ever complete it or, at the very least, feel that completion was attainable. There were times when I could not put pen to paper. The activity and its investments were testing. Thoughts, feelings, emotions, and imaginings were difficult to capture. The right words were not forthcoming. Sentences, paragraphs, and sections proved to be even more difficult. There were times when I felt isolated. I had no true sense of belonging. I felt I was up against an establishment, up against convention, and I felt lost, yearning to arrive somewhere, to be housed by someone. There were times when I felt I was doing this project for someone else and not for myself. It simply became an activity, a chore that I had to coax myself into doing. I was told by some that it was a means to a greater end that I just had to learn to struggle and cope with. There were times when I became my worst critic, even more so than those who were actually my critics. There were times when I wished I could start all over again and go down a different path, perhaps one that did not involve studying for a doctorate degree. But here I am now, completing the final words, the final sentences, the final paragraphs, and the final section of my project. I have arrived, and I feel as though I have arrived. The project and its process made me stronger, more confident, and a more faithful believer in what it seeks to do, in what it says. I began this project in the face of scepticism, and now I complete it knowing that it needed to be done. This would have never happened without the support of a number of significant social actors.

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Jason T. Mokrovich

Glasgow

# Abstract

Dominated by a number of humanities-based disciplines and influenced by Lacanian psychoanalysis and French poststructuralism, queer theory emerged in the early 1990s as a critical project that problematised the theorisation of sexuality and its relation to lesbian and gay politics. Its emergence was marked in part by problematising theoretical formulations on sexuality put forward by White gay male historiographers and sociologists in the 1970s and '80s. Arguing against a stable and unified notion of homosexuality, queer theory broadly claimed that: (1) sexual identity is normative and exclusionary; (2) sexual identity is not stable and unified but variable and multiple insofar as it is an intersection of gender, race, class, ethnicity, and nationality; and (3) homosexuality should not be studied in and of itself or vis-à-vis heterosexuality but as the product of a 'modern regime of sexuality,' which organises society into heterosexuals and homosexuals.

Although queer theory has made gestures towards a social analysis of sexuality and sociologists have attempted to engage with queer theory, their relationship has been mainly unproductive. On the one hand, sociology has largely failed to read queer theory carefully and critically by conflating it with a queer subject or a set of misinterpreted theoretical formulations, with the effect of misconstruing the project. On the other hand, queer theory has largely failed to acknowledge and engage with sociology both theoretically and methodologically, despite having critiqued the discourse of White gay male historiography and sociology. This relationship has resulted in the crystallisation of disciplinary alliances, stalling movement towards disciplinary cross-fertilisation between the two.

The purpose of the thesis is to have a discursive conversation between queer theory and sociology. I want to consider the current unproductive relationship between the two. From both a queer and sociological perspective, I will examine, problematise, and rework

sociology's uncritical reading of queer theory and queer theory's general failure to acknowledge and engage with sociology, with the intent to move them towards disciplinary cross-fertilisation. I will argue that disciplinary cross-fertilisation can only happen if sociology reads queer theory carefully and critically and queer theory and sociology facilitate and promote discursive spaces that are theoretically and methodologically integrated. In considering their relationship, I will draw upon a number of diverse theoretical perspectives, for example: social-historical constructionism, symbolic interactionism, poststructuralism, and feminist theory. I will also draw upon my ethnographic work on gay male male-to-female drag that took place in the United States between September 1995 and June 1997, with a brief revisit in February 1999. I will finally conclude by proposing that an 'outsider-within perspective' serve as a basis for future engagement between queer theory and sociology. It is my opinion that the facilitation and promotion of queer and sociological perspectives that are neither full outsiders nor full insiders to their disciplinary domain would generate the conditions for disciplinary cross-fertilisation.

# *Introduction*

## On a Discursive Conversation between Queer Theory and Sociology

> Nothing that God ever made is the same thing to more than one person. That is natural. There is no single face in nature because every eye that looks upon it sees it from its own angle. So every man's spice-box seasons his own food. Naturally, I picked up the reflections of life around me with my own instruments, and absorbed what I gathered according to my inside juices.
>
> —Zora Neale Hurston, *Dust Tracks on a Road*
> (quoted in Hernández 1995, pp. 155-56)

### By Way of Introduction

The following narrative shall be my point of departure, which I believe is symptomatic of the general relationship that currently exists between queer theory and sociology. It also elucidates the driving force that motivated me to seriously consider the relationship, which has mainly been unproductive. No-one who has been caught up in it has been untouched by its disciplinary undertow, to say the very least.

During the summer of 1995, before enrolling in my third year of undergraduate studies in sociology/anthropology and gender studies at Lewis and Clark College in Portland, Oregon, United States, I began work on a self-designed independent study course, which focused on sexuality in a social, cultural, and historical perspective. It later spiralled into two additional self-designed independent study courses, which delved deeper into the topic over two semesters. The divine Diane was my course instructor/mentor/interlocutor/co-conspirator. Her fractured identity: a poststructuralist cyborg masquerading as an anthropologist who liked to remain faithful to her anthropological roots from time to time. In addition to spawning my ethnographic work on gay male male-to-female drag, which I discuss in Chapter Four, the course, along with Diane's unequivocal talent

of persuasion, introduced me to and subsequently inculcated me into the still-evolving multidisciplinary project of queer theory. While I was drawing up the reading list for the course, Diane suggested that I balance my emphasis on the work of White gay male historiographers and sociologists of the 1970s and '80s with work by more contemporary theorists of sexuality, particularly those who played within queer domains.[1] I ran with her suggestion.

Throughout the semester-long course, I read and engaged with them alongside each other. However, I did not engage with them in parallel to each other. Although I did have a certain respect for their varied histories, disciplinary locations, methodologies, and theoretical formulations, I did not strictly treat them as two separate registers of thought that could not be in conversation with one another. Engagement was much more active and critical. I had them continually cross paths, whether they were in congruence with each other from different angles or were in radical disagreement with the other. Radical disagreement was not a bad thing, however. It was not something to be lamented. Rather, it was very productive. I was interested in how the insights of one project flagged up gaps in the other. I was particularly interested in how such insights enabled me to work through such gaps and further close them in. Their subject matter was diverse, for example: the (lesbian and gay) subject, identity politics, discourse, social roles, scripts and scripting, norms, social structure, and representation.

However, when I began intellectual pursuits in sociology on this side of the Atlantic, my queer leanings did not encounter a warm reception. I not only encountered ill sentiments and resistance but outright rejection as well. I was made to feel as though I should just walk right back on the plane that I disembarked from and keep my ideas on the other side of the Atlantic. I encountered this reception from both my own disciplinary location and ones that I thought would have been sympathetic or, at the very least, tolerant (for example, English literature, theatre studies, and film studies). Several instances vividly come to mind, which occurred

while I was scouting universities to enroll in for my doctorate degree (They shall remain nameless.). In one instance, upon arriving at a senior lecturer's office, the senior lecturer disclosed that she had heard within the 'corridors of the department' that I was a 'Butlerian.' She proceeded with laughter and indicated that "Butler's thought was not welcome over here." According to her, I would struggle to find like-minded people. This exchange took place before she even properly introduced herself to me! Once another senior lecturer in the same department learned of my queer leanings, he accused me of working against the study of sexuality. He prematurely presupposed that I would deny an 'objective reality' and experience of it, the agency of the lesbian and gay subject, and the existence of a subject who could represent lesbian and gay folk. In another instance, a postgraduate co-ordinator asked me what was currently on my reading list. I indicated that I was rereading Judith Butler's *Bodies That Matter* (1993) alongside Michel Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* (1977). He replied: "Butler gets off the ground, but she never really lands."

This distaste towards queer theory continued when I began my degree. Disciplinary walls and boundaries were usually thrown up in front of me when I attempted to work across and between queer theory and sociology. I was warned by some 'Marxists' and 'Weberians' within my academic institution and other ones that I should not divert my attention away from classical theorists of sociology (for example, in addition to Karl Marx and Max Weber, Émile Durkheim, George Herbert Mead, and Georg Simmel). I was continually reminded that they are, after all, the building blocks of sociology. My interest in a poststructuralist discourse was viewed as mere philosophical play far removed from 'real matters' that sociologists preoccupied themselves with. This springing up of disciplinary walls and boundaries only intensified and solidified as I progressed through my first year of study. I found it increasingly difficult to have any conversations between queer theory and sociology that did not

involve pulling me in one direction: sociology. I was told by some that this was for my own benefit.

Prone to resisting discipline and revelling in my unruliness, I began questioning and examining why there were currents in sociology that resisted any investments in queer theory (on both sides of the Atlantic). This led me to initially question and examine the general relationship between queer theory and sociology. I quickly discovered that disciplinary alliances were deep-seated within both queer theory and sociology, whether spoken or unspoken, and that those alliances worked in different ways to stall movement towards some good, productive disciplinary cross-fertilisation. I then realised that a challenge was being presented to me: to problematise those disciplinary alliances. As anyone who knows me can attest, I have never been known to refuse a challenge that I think is worthwhile, so, in the words of Zora Neale Hurston, "I picked up the reflections of life around me with my own instruments, and absorbed what I gathered according to my inside juices" (quoted in Hernández 1995, pp. 155-56).

## Purpose

From the beginning, queer theory is linked to sociology. Queer theory's emergence on the critical scene as a troublemaking, interrogatory project in the early 1990s was marked in part by the problematisation of theoretical formulations on sexuality made by White gay male historiographers and sociologists in the 1970s and '80s, particularly social-historical constructionist accounts of sexuality.[2,3]

As I will reiterate and expand upon in later chapters, social-historical constructionist accounts of sexuality contended that sexuality is a product of culture, society, and history. In line with homosexual affirmative politics of the late 1960s and '70s on both sides of the Atlantic, the 'modern' Homosexual was central to social-historical constructionism. Although sexuality was understood to be a variable construction, a stable and unified figure of homosexuality dominated their formulations. This figure

was usually male, White, and Western. It was understood to act as a representative foundation for homosexuals (lesbians and gays) to rally around within dominant political discourses and to contest the violence waged against them by heteronormativity.

Dominated by a number of humanities-based disciplines (for example, English literature, the history of consciousness, art history, film studies, and cultural studies) and heavily influenced by French poststructuralism and Lacanian psychoanalysis, queer theorists took issue with this figure of homosexuality and its relation to homosexual politics in three main respects. In the first instance, queer theorists maintained that the homosexual subject does not strictly represent lesbian and gay folk though an identity category because identity categories are not merely descriptive, simply reporting on some perceived homogenous constituency. They are also and mainly normative and exclusionary. Queer theorists argued that we need to inquire into what the subject and identity category authorise and exclude and to safeguard those exclusions for possible future uses. In the second instance, which is an extension of the first objection, queer theorists contended that sexual identity is not stable and unified. Drawing upon the work of lesbians and gay men of colour (for example, Alarćon *et al.* 1993; Anzaldúa 1987; Chung *et al.* 1987; Delany 1985, 1987, 1991; Lorde 1982; Moraga 1986; Trujillo 1991), queer theorists formulated a claim that sexual identity is variable and multiple. It is variable and multiple insofar as it is not just a question of sexuality but is also one of gender, race, class, ethnicity, and nationality. Sexuality is an intersection of these markers of identity/difference, whether they converge with or diverge from one another. This is the theoretical thrust behind Teresa de Lauretis' introduction of the identity term 'queer' in place of the identity formula 'lesbian and gay' (1991b, p. ii). In the third instance, queer theorists argued that historiographers' and sociologists' emphasis on the homosexual subject reproduces and reinforces the hetero/homosexual binary, that 'modern regime of sexuality' that

"perpetuates the heterosexualization of society" (Seidman 1996a, p. 12). Steven Seidman captures queer theory's objection very well:

> Modern Western affirmative homosexual theory may naturalize or normalize the gay subject or even register it as an agent of social liberation, but it has the effect of consolidating heterosexuality and homosexuality as master categories of sexual and social identity; it reinforces the modern regime of sexuality (1996a, p. 12).

Queer theorists maintained that homosexuality should not be studied in and of itself or vis-à-vis heterosexuality. Rather, it should be the study of "those knowledges and social practices that organise 'society' as a whole by sexualizing—heterosexualizing or homosexualizing—bodies, desires, acts, identities, social relations, knowledges, culture, and social institutions" (Seidman 1996a, p. 13). This is the bold thesis of Sedgwick's queer project *Epistemology of the Closet* (1990):

> *Epistemology of the Closet* proposes that many of the major nodes of thought and knowledge in twentieth-century Western culture as a whole are structured—indeed, fractured—by a chronic, now endemic crisis of homo/heterosexual definition, indicatively male, dating from the end of the nineteenth century. . . .
>
> In arguing that homo/heterosexual definition has been a presiding master term of the past century, one that has the same, primary importance for all modern Western identity and social organization (and not merely for homosexual identity and culture) as do the more traditionally visible cruxes of gender, class, and race, I'll argue that the now chronic modern crisis of homo/heterosexual definition has affected our culture through its ineffaceable marking particularly of the categories secrecy/disclosure, knowledge/ignorance, private/public, masculine/feminine, majority/minority. . . (pp. 1, 11).

Within sociological discourse, Seidman has remarked that "[s]ociologists have both much to learn from [q]ueer theory and the

opportunity to make a serious contribution" (1996a, p. 13). Although queer theory has made gestures towards a general social analysis of sexuality and sociologists have made moves to open dialogue and engage with queer theory (namely Beemyn and Eliason 1996 and Seidman 1996b), the relationship between them has mainly been unproductive. The fault does not strictly lie at the front door of either queer theory or sociology. Both disciplinary locations can be held accountable. On the one hand, social critiques of queer theory (both sociological and general ones) have largely failed to read the multidisciplinary project carefully and critically (for example, Edwards 1998; Gamson 1996; Goldman 1996; Namaste 1996; Wolfe and Penelope 1993). This has had the damaging effect of producing very contestable, yet uncontested versions of queer theory, which have permeated and (mis)informed sociological discussions on the project. For example, Ki Namaste (1996) claims that queer theory's discursive analysis of transgender subjectivity ignores and subsequently distorts the social realities of transgendered people. However, a lot of work on transgender subjectivity within queer quarters has incorporated the social realities of transgendered people (for example, Bornstein 1992; Ekins and King 1996; Feinberg 1993, 1996; Ferris 1993). On the other hand, although queer theory felt licensed to problematise theoretical formulations on sexuality made by White gay male historiographers and sociologists, it has rarely, if never, acknowledged and actively engaged with sociology since problematising them, both theoretically and methodologically (for example, Butler 1993; Butler and Rubin 1997 [1994]; de Lauretis 1991a; Fuss 1991b, 1991c; Sedgwick 1990). For example, a surface review of Diana Fuss' edited anthology *Inside/Out* (1991b) demonstrates that queer theory's investment in textualism has largely overshadowed sociological ways of methodologically approaching a subject/object of study. This has even been the case when queer theorists have made social gestures about their subjects/objects of study, as well as when opportunities to engage with sociological discourse have been presented to them.

There has been an unproductive disciplinary undertow to sociology's uncritical readings of queer theory and queer theory's general failure to acknowledge and actively engage with sociology. In their own way, they have acted as a means to erect disciplinary walls and boundaries and stall movement towards disciplinary cross-fertilisation. This has resulted in a crystallisation of disciplinary alliances across discursive arenas for engagement, subjects/objects of study, theoretical toolkits, and methodological approaches.

What I want to do within this thesis, then, is to have a discursive conversation between queer theory and sociology. More specifically, I will examine, problematise, and rework the current unproductive relationship between the two, from both a queer and sociological perspective, with a view to move the relationship in the direction of good, productive disciplinary cross-fertilisation. I also want to propose, at least initially, how queer theory and sociology might move in this direction. It is my strong belief that queer theory and sociology cannot learn from each other and make a 'serious contribution' to each other's debates and formulations on sexuality (as well as other subjects/objects of study) until their current relationship is first examined, problematised, and reworked.

## The Trajectory of the Thesis

The theoretical perspectives that (in)form the focus of the thesis are diverse. Quite a few of them do not sit nicely next to each other. On the other hand, some of them have formed alliances or have been in conversation with one another on occasion, which makes it very difficult to neatly separate and pigeonhole them. Of course, each perspective has its own internal differences as well, which complicates matters even more. They include: social-historical constructionism, discourse analysis, Lacanian psychoanalysis, symbolic interactionist theory, the labeling approach, sex role theory, poststructuralism, and feminist theory. Although the theoretical perspectives of the thesis are diverse, there is a thread that holds the thesis together (which also threatens to pull it apart

at the same time): the disciplinary undertow that has permeated the current relationship between queer theory and sociology.

Chapters One and Two are an extension of each other and are respectively titled "For a More Careful, Critical Reading I and II."[4] From a queer perspective, I consider the failure of social critiques of queer theory (both sociological and general ones) to read the multidisciplinary project carefully and critically. In particular, I examine, problematise, and rework the tendency of social critiques to conflate queer theory primarily with one queer thinker or a set of misinterpreted theoretical formulations. The subject matter of the conflations include: transgender subjectivity via Judith Butler (1990, 1993); the analysis of race and other markers of identity/difference via Bad Object-Choices (1991) and Teresa de Lauretis (1991a); discourse; the deconstruction of the lesbian and gay subject; the identity term 'queer'; and the analytic separation of gender and sexuality. I argue and demonstrate that these conflations have produced contestable versions of queer theory. They have not only erased queer theory's variegated depths but have also usually acted as a means to erect disciplinary walls and boundaries. I propose that disciplinary cross-fertilisation can only happen if sociology reads queer theory carefully and critically. Chapter One focuses on the mechanics of conflating queer theory, whereas Chapter Two focuses on what a careful, critical reading entails. Judith Butler's (1992 [1991]) examination of the question of postmodernism informs my analysis of conflating queer theory, and Michel Foucault's (1980) thoughts on local criticism inform what I mean by a careful, critical reading. Within each chapter, I then set out to productively rework some conflations of queer theory by performing and offering careful, critical readings. The primary aim of these readings is to bring to the surface some of queer theory's variegated depths and move sociology in the direction of disciplinary cross-fertilisation.

I shift the grounds of belonging in Chapter Three, "Some Critical Citations." From a sociological perspective, I use the presupposition of a queer theorist as a springboard to consider a general failure on the part of

queer theory. I examine and problematise the significance of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's presupposition that sexuality-centred terms of analysis were underdeveloped at the time she conceived her project *Epistemology of the Closet* (1990). Her presupposition analytically excludes, through erasure, a set of sociological terms for analysing sexuality that predated her project (for example, the labeling approach, symbolic interactionist theory, and social-historical constructionism). I propose that Sedgwick's presupposition is 'significant' insofar as it is in line with queer theory's general failure to acknowledge and actively engage with sociology. I argue and demonstrate that this failure has primarily taken place through the conflation of Michel Foucault with social-historical constructionism. This conflation has not only operated to erase sociological social-historical constructionist accounts of sexuality from queer readings and writings but has also acted as a means to preclude engagement with sociological inquiry in general. In the second section of the chapter, I set out to productively rework this exclusion by bringing to the forefront a number of sociological essays and texts that shaped social-historical constructionist perspectives, namely: Mary McIntosh's classic and widely-cited essay "The Homosexual Role" (1968) and John H. Gagnon's and William S. Simon's essay "Introduction: Deviant Behavior and Sexual Deviance" (1967a) and text *Sexual Conduct* (1973b). The primary aim of these readings is to partly acknowledge a set of sociological terms that contributed to the theorisation of sexuality. In addition, these readings demonstrate that well-cultivated terms for analysing sexuality predated Sedgwick's *Epistemology of the Closet* (1990). The third section of the chapter then interweaves queer theory with sociological inquiry to illustrate that there is room for disciplinary cross-fertilisation. In order to move them in this direction, I then initially propose that queer theory and sociology develop and establish discursive spaces within which there is an integration of both queer and sociological terms of analysis. This is recurrent in the next chapter, and I formally formulate it as a way forward in the concluding one. I specifically turn to

the work of Gagnon and Simon (1986) on 'cultural sexual scripts,' Sedgwick (1990) on a set of mutual contradictions that have been central to twentieth-century understandings of homo/heterosexual definition, and Butler (1993, 1995) on the subject and agency.

Whereas Chapter Three focuses on theory, Chapter Four focuses on methodology, which is reflected in its title: "A Question of Methodology." I use the methodological preoccupation of Judith Butler as a springboard to examine and problematise queer theory's broad methodological approach to investigating its subjects/objects of study: textualism. In the first section of the chapter, I argue and demonstrate that Butler's choice of textualism over a methodological approach that is based within social life not only inhibits her form performing a more developed social analysis of drag in *Bodies That Matter* (1993) but is also in line with queer theory's investment in textualism. This investment has acted as a means to erect disciplinary walls and boundaries and ward off actively engaging with sociology. In relation to how Butler's methodology constrains her analysis of drag, I draw upon some work that employs or incorporates methodological approaches that are based within social life (for example, face-to-face interviews, observation, and questionnaires). I particularly draw upon the work of Esther Newton (1972) on normative gay male male-to-female drag subject positions and their regulation. In relation to how queer theory's investment in textualism has erected disciplinary walls and boundaries, I conduct a brief, surface review of a couple key queer texts: Teresa de Lauretis' specially-edited issue of the journal *differences*, "Queer Theory: Lesbian and Gay Sexualities" (1991a), and Diana Fuss' edited anthology *Inside/Out: Lesbian Theories, Gay Theories* (1991b). In a similar fashion to the previous chapter and in an effort to move queer theory and sociology in the direction of disciplinary cross-fertilisation, I argue for the creation of discursive spaces within which queer and sociological methodological approaches are integrated. In the second section of the chapter, I offer such a discursive space. This takes place by integrating and reengaging Butler's textualist analysis of drag with

ethnographic fieldwork that I conducted on gay male male-to-female drag in the United States. My focus will be Butler's analysis of the centrality of a 'morphological ideal' in respect to subjectivity and the production of dominant subject positions.

Chapter Four is longer in length than the other chapters. Whereas the first two chapters are an extension of each other and are just over the same length as the third one, 50 pages, Chapter Four is 100 pages. The chapter is significantly longer because I included my fieldwork on drag. It is my belief that a conversation on methodology between queer theory and sociology would not have been as productive if I had approached it by simply incorporating the fieldwork of other social researchers. To a certain degree, I would have been just as guilty as queer theory for studying a subject from a distance.

In the concluding chapter, "Coda," I consider how my relation to my fieldwork as neither a full outsider nor a full insider generated a distinctive perspective, drawing upon Patricia Hill Collins' (1990) notion of the 'outsider-within perspective.' I propose that this angle of vision serve as a basis for future conversations and work between queer theory and sociology, with the belief that it will move the two in the direction of disciplinary cross-fertilisation.

# Chapter One

## For a More Careful, Critical Reading (I): Problematising the Subject of Queer Theory

> Do all these theories have the same structure (a comforting notion to the critic who would dispense with them all at once)? Is the effort to colonize and domesticate these theories under the sign of the same, to group them synthetically and masterfully under a single rubric, a simple refusal to grant the specificity of these positions, an excuse not to read, and not to read closely? . . .
>
> In a sense, this gesture of conceptual mastery that groups together a set of positions . . . enacts a certain self-congratulatory ruse of power.
>
> —Judith Butler, "Contingent Foundations" (1992 [1991], p. 5)

### Introduction and Purpose

In an effort to begin to shift the grounds of belonging, I want to focus, within the next two chapters, on the failure of social critiques of queer theory (both sociological and general ones) to read the multidisciplinary project carefully and critically. At this juncture, I want to examine, problematise, and rework the tendency of social critiques to conflate queer theory primarily with one queer subject.[1] Recent social critiques of queer theory have been founded upon an underlying presupposition: there is a 'subject' of queer theory who is fully representative of the disciplinary location and for whom all of it can be critiqued (for example, Edwards 1998; Goldman 1996; Namaste 1996; Zita 1994). Judging by some of the literature, we know who this subject usually is: Judith Butler. Although this subject is partially constituted within the project of queer theory (she straddles several disciplinary locations) and, furthermore, rightly or

wrongly, has been equated with the project by queer and non-queer theorists alike, she cannot be made to stand masterfully in for the whole of it as though she is somehow fully representative of it. She has even publicly disavowed this reduction (Butler 1991). The same can be said for any other thinker who toils within queer domains. There are just as many internal wranglings and differences within queer theory as there are alliances and similarities. For example, whereas Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble* (1990) conceptualises gender and sexuality as inseparable, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick does not treat them as the same question in *Epistemology of the Closet* (1990). Further, different queer theoretical formulations are culturally, socially, and historically specific. For example, they are informed by a range of humanities- and, to a lesser degree, social sciences-based disciplinary locations and interests, which also have their own specificity and internal differences (for example, the history of consciousness, English literature, film studies, and art history). Nonetheless, queer theory's variegated depths cannot exist within a social critique that conflates it with a queer subject because the internal logic of the conflation presumes that the subject is fully representative of it. Subsequently, queer theory's variegated depths are erased from the very beginning. In these respects, then, the queer subject who is conflated with queer theory is not 'the' representative of it but is a restricted, forced substitution who produces a certain version of it. Having said this, I believe that the labour and economics of this synthetic production is more serious than we may first believe.

Indeed, the conflation of queer theory with a queer subject does not simply produce an exclusionary version of queer theory. At the same time, I would like to suggest that it is usually a means for social critiques to erect disciplinary walls and boundaries. Therefore, what I want to problematise is far from a modest intervention. In addition to demonstrating how the conflation is an exclusionary production, I want to use it as a springboard to challenge its disciplinary undertow. It is not until

sociology facilitates and promotes a more careful, critical reading that it can then move towards disciplinary cross-fertilisation.

My objective, to begin with, is to explore the labour and economics of the synthetic production I have begun to outline. This will take place by critically examining a couple social critiques of queer theory: Ki Namaste's (1996) contention that queer theory has conventionally distorted transgender subjectivity by ignoring the social realities of transgendered people and Ruth Goldman's (1996) argument that queer theory is largely a product of White academics that has failed to integrate a sustained analysis of race (in addition to other markers of identity/difference such as class and bisexuality). I will sketch the outlines of their arguments, examine how their arguments conflate queer theory primarily with one queer subject, chart how the conflation operates, and suggest that it is a means to erect disciplinary walls and boundaries. Butler's (1992 [1991]) examination of the question of postmodernism will largely support my analysis and arguments in this first section.

The second section of the chapter will then set out to productively rework the labour and economics of this conflation. In other words, I want to bring to the forefront and demonstrate some of queer theory's variegated depths. This will take place by offering a brief reading of a methodological/theoretical contention between Butler (1997a [1994]) and the editors of the anthology *The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader* (Abelove *et al.* 1993), to which she is paradoxically a contributor. More specifically, Butler problematises an analogy that is made by the editors to illuminate the kind of issues that resonate in lesbian and gay studies and argues against the demarcation of proper research objects that it engenders. The primary aim of this reading is to practically do what sociology has failed to do by and large: carefully and critically read queer theory. In addition, this careful, critical reading will demonstrate that queer theory cannot be strictly fabricated with one queer subject. By the time we have completed this reading, we will know only too well that such a fabrication is and always will be suspect.

However, before I begin the above investigation, there are two issues that I want to briefly address so that my intentions are clearer and I might be able to quell any trepidations that you may have with what I have proposed so far.

In the first instance, I want to briefly clarify my position on a queer subject representing queer theory and the issue of representation in general. Although I problematise representational gestures throughout the thesis, I am not suggesting that there are no subjects who constitute and represent queer theory. Queer subjects are not only constituted by queer theory but are also the very vehicles through which queer theory is further constituted. They are also the very vehicles that enable us to piece queer theory together (as well as dismantle it) in order that we may understand it, whether partially or more fully. In these respects, I do not always take issue with the representational gesture that represents queer theory through a queer subject, a theoretical formulation, or even a number of them. To a large degree, I make representational gestures about queer theory and sociology in this chapter and following ones. However, the representational gesture that represents queer theory through a queer subject or a theoretical formulation must understand and acknowledge that the representation that has been made is itself a construction, which is contingent upon and, hence, constitutive of the context within which it is being constructed. Furthermore, construction takes place through a set of exclusions that do not show once the representation has been established. Consequently, any representation of queer theory is and always will be partial. It is from this angle, as I have already begun to outline, that I take issue with the tendency of social critiques to conflate queer theory with a queer thinker. This will be expanded upon more fully in the first section of this chapter and will generally be recurrent in later ones, although from a different angle.

In the second instance, I want to clarify my usage of Butler to productively rework the labour and economics of conflating queer theory, as well as my usage of her to make representational gestures about queer

theory in later chapters. Indeed, Butler is, to say the very least, commonplace throughout the thesis. She dominates both my critiques of sociology and of queer theory. In this light, the moderate critic might be suspicious of my usages of her and read them as performing the very same conflation that this chapter seeks to problematise and later ones thematically take up from a different angle. In other words, how can I, at the same time and nonetheless in this chapter, problematise the conflation of queer theory with Butler and use her to rework the conflation? Furthermore, as another example, how can I, at the same time and nonetheless in the third chapter, problematise the queer conflation of social-historical constructionism with Foucault and use Butler to demonstrate the conflation? Where is the logic in this contradictory use of Butler? Why not use other queer thinkers to perform these analyses? As a rejoinder, in the first instance and as I have just outlined, my usages of Butler must be understood as making general constructions of queer theory, which are always contextual and partial. I make this clear throughout the thesis, even when I produce general constructions that relate to neither Butler nor queer theory (for example, social-historical constructionism in Chapter Three). In the second instance, although Butler is commonplace throughout the thesis, she is not the only queer subject who I draw upon. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, Teresa de Lauretis, Diana Fuss, Henry Abelove, Michèle Aina Barale, and David M. Halperin also inform the thesis, and this definitely does not take place from the sidelines. In the third instance, I perform a reading of Butler alongside other queer theorists in this chapter in order to demonstrate that she cannot masterfully stand in for the whole of queer theory. Lastly, my usages of Butler are motivated less by the desire to make general, partial constructions of queer theory and are motivated more by the pleasure produced for me in surveying her subject matter and theoretical formulations, whether or not I concur with her. Indeed, I make this clear at several points in the thesis, particularly in Chapter Four:

> I must admit at this juncture that I am seductively drawn to Butler's analysis of drag, and, furthermore, I will not offer an apology to those who are offended by this open and frank admission. Throughout her discursive analysis of drag in *Paris is Burning* (1991), she traverses some tricky and sticky terrains (some more than others): the 'subject,' identity, and agency are all topical in relation to sexuality, gender, race, and class. Her analysis is insightful and useful at both the intellectual and political levels. I strongly believe that the theoretical insights that arise out of her analysis are particularly useful for a broad-based queer politics that is not only critical of the matrices of power within which it is constituted and it opposes but is also critical of its own politics from within (p. 139).

## Section I: The Conflation of Queer Theory with a Queer Subject

### i. The Queer Subject

Namaste's essay, "'Tragic Misreadings'" (1996), is a critique of how transgender subjectivity has been examined and formulated within queer theory (pp. 183-84).[2] He begins his essay with the observation that there has been a 'veritable explosion' of work on transgender subjectivity within queer theory over the years. He cites some of this work: Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble* (1990) and *Bodies That Matter* (1993), Marjorie B. Garber's *Vested Interests* (1992), Carole-Anne Tyler's "Boys Will Be Girls" (1991), and Michael Moon's and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's "Divinity" (1990). Although Namaste characterises them as 'veritable' at first, he quickly contends the very opposite in the next sentence: "these works have shown very little concern for those who identify and live as drag queens, transsexuals, and/or transgenders" (1996, p. 183). Namaste is pointing out that transgendered people have been objects rather than subjects of study within queer theory, whereby the project has failed to inform their analyses of transgender subjectivity by incorporating the social realities of transgendered people. This has particularly taken place in

discussions on transgender subjectivity's violation of compulsory heterosexuality's binary sex/gender system. According to Namaste,

> critics in queer theory write page after page on the inherent liberation in the transgression of gender codes, but they have nothing to say about the precarious position of the transsexual woman who is battered, and who is unable to access a woman's shelter because she was not born a biological woman (1996, p. 184).

Namaste chooses to demonstrate the effects of this objectification by first examining the work of Butler, particularly her argument on gender performativity as set out in *Gender Trouble* (1990) (1996, pp. 185-86). This first takes place by Namaste justifying his point of departure: "It is useful to begin this discussion with the work of Judith Butler, since the publication of *Gender Trouble* [1990] played a tremendous role in the development of queer theory" (1996, p. 185). This justification is then followed by a general summary of Butler's argument. According to Namaste, Butler argues that drag reveals the imitative nature and structure of compulsory heterosexuality's imaginary sex/gender system. By miming the social category of 'woman,' drag artists demonstrate that the social category is not the cultural interpretation of the female sex, whereby sex is understood as the pre-given, natural foundation of gender. This semblance and misnomer is only achieved through a process of 'metalepsis'—the process by which "the effects of meaning [read: sex] are taken to be the cause of its [read: gender's] articulation" (Namaste 1996, p. 185). It is in this respect that gender is an imitation without an origin for Butler.

Although Namaste acknowledges that Butler's argument is an 'important one' and her work in general has been instrumental to the on-going development of queer theory as a trouble-making, interrogatory project, he takes issue with it (1996, p. 186). He maintains that Butler's failure to take account of the context (read: the social reality) within which drag artists' performances of gender usually occur distorts transgender

subjectivity. According to Namaste, although Butler rightly examines drag artists' gender performances in relation to compulsory heterosexuality, they usually occur in a social space that is the product of gay male culture, which has its "own complicated relations to gender and gender performance" (1996, p. 186). The production and regulation of gender within such a social space usually makes it very difficult for a drag artist to open up its terms on gender. For example, many gay male bars have drag artists perform on stage but deny entry to women, transvestites, and transsexuals. Furthermore, although drag artists in such bars are permitted to circulate, they remain peripheral to most activities of the social space, particularly ones that relate to the celebration of gay masculinity/maleness (for example, cruising in a darkroom). They are usually only permitted to circulate on the stage, and the only trace of femininity and femaleness is usually understood as nothing more than pure entertainment. In this light, for Namaste, transgender subjectivity is not as transgressive as Butler purports.[3]

Namaste continues to demonstrate queer theory's distortion of transgender subjectivity by turning to Butler's (1993, pp. 129-33) discursive analysis of the death of a character in the film *Paris is Burning* (1991), Venus Extravaganza (1996, pp. 188-89). This is topical in Chapter Four. The film documents the tragic fate of Venus, a pre-operative male-to-female transsexual drag artist and prostitute who is killed by one of his/her male clients. In short, Butler argues that Venus' death is a question of gender and not one of Venus' transsexual status. Conceived in this way, Namaste maintains that Butler denies violence against transsexuals. Namaste takes issue with Butler's argument because her failure to take account of the context (read: the social reality) within which Venus is killed distorts transgender subjectivity. According to Namaste, violence against transsexuals is very much a part of their subjecthood. He believes that *Paris is Burning* (1991) made this very clear. For example, Namaste cites a comment that is made in the film by one of Venus' friends shortly after his/her death: "That's part of being a transsexual and

surviving in New York City [read: violence against transsexuals]" (1996, p. 188). In this light, according to Namaste, had Butler been more attentive to Venus' social reality, then she probably would have revised her analysis of Venus' death and more accurately represented transgender subjectivity.

In conclusion, although Namaste clearly states that he does not want to reject queer theory's examination of transgender subjectivity outright, he does gesture that it is a framework that he would not rely on to capture transgender subjectivity: "Call me old-fashioned, but I believe in the elaboration of organic intellectual practices, in which academics create knowledge useful to activist communities and provide a productive translation of civil and political societies" (1996, p. 197). He would rather rely on anthropology and sociology: "Historically, the disciplines of sociology and anthropology have produced some of the most insightful work on transgender issues . . . this scholarship has attained canonical status" (Namaste 1996, p. 193).

In addition to queer and non-queer representations of transgender subjectivity, Namaste's critique is founded upon an underlying presupposition that is representational in nature. His critique presumes that there is a subject of queer theory who fully exemplifies how the project has examined transgender subjectivity. That subject is, without question, Butler. This is demonstrated at both the micro and macro levels of his critique. Take his critique at the micro level for example. Throughout Namaste's critique, there is a consistent gliding between queer theory (read: the signified) and Butler (read: the referent), whereby they are understood to be interchangeable or capture the other at once (italics my emphasis): "It is useful to begin this discussion with the work of *Judith Butler*, since the publication of *Gender Trouble* [1990] played a tremendous role in the development of *queer theory*" (1996, p. 185); "This proposition is surely an important one, and *Butler's* work has been instrumental in the advancement of *queer theory*. . ." (1996, p. 186); "The violation of compulsory sex/gender relations is one of the topics most frequently addressed by critics in *queer theory*" (1996, p. 183); "critics in

*queer theory* write page after page on the inherent liberation in the transgression of gender codes. . ." (1996, p. 184); "Although *Butler* locates these spaces in relation to heterosexual hegemony, she refuses to examine this territory's own complicated relations to gender and gender performance" (1996, p. 186); "why is it that transgendered people are the chosen objects of the field of *queer theory*, and why does the presentation of these issues ignore the daily realities of transgendered people?" (1996, p. 184); "*Butler's* most recent work continues this distortion of transgender realities" (1996, p. 188); and "We need to challenge *Butler's* negation of transgender subjectivity" (1996, p. 188). Butler's status as the subject of queer theory is bolstered even more when Namaste's critique is examined at the macro level. Namaste's critique of queer theory is primarily, if not exclusively, informed by Butler. Although Garber (1992) and Tyler (1991) receive some airtime in Namaste's critique, there is no sustained examination of their work. Their airtime is not the same in either quantity or intensity as Butler. Further, even when Garber and Tyler are examined within Namaste's critique, they are examined within the framework of Butler's terms. Following the logic of Namaste's underlying presupposition, then, the whole of queer theory can be legitimately critiqued through Butler: if Butler is the champion of queer theory and how it has examined transgender subjectivity, then her shortfalls must be representative of it at the same time.[4] Goldman's (1996) critique of queer theory is also founded upon the same underlying presupposition, although the queer subject is a different one.

In brief, Goldman's essay, "Who is that *Queer* Queer?" (1996), is partly a critique of how race has been examined within queer theory (she also critiques how class and bisexuality have been examined) (pp. 169-70). For Goldman, the emergence of queer theory brought with it a sense of hope and a set of raised expectations. According to Goldman, when she stumbled across queer theory during its inception, she thought that she had finally found a productive framework within which she could potentially explore how representations of gender, race, class, and

sexuality (with an emphasis on bisexuality) intersected with one another in popular culture. She makes it quite clear that her attraction to the framework was not merely a professional one. It was also a personal one insofar as she thought that the framework might enable her to find her 'queer' self, being a bisexual, a Jew, a feminist, an anti-capitalist, and an anti-racist herself. However, when she began to work within the framework, her hopes quickly faded and her expectations turned into misgivings: "I found that it was very difficult to apply existing queer theory to popular culture without collapsing some of the very nuances that I was trying to highlight. This led me to begin to consider some of the existing tensions and contradictions within and without queer theory. . ." (Goldman 1996, p. 169). Goldman maintains that 'race' has been one of those nuances collapsed. According to Goldman, race has been at the far margins of queer theory.

Goldman begins and ends her critique of how race has been examined within queer theory by turning to Teresa de Lauretis' co-edited anthology *How Do I Look?* (1991), which was the output of a conference in New York City in October 1989 on queer film and video and produced under the edited name of Bad Object-Choices (1996, pp. 172-73). She first justifies her point of departure. Goldman chose this piece of work because it was published alongside de Lauretis' (1991a) specially-edited queer theory issue of the journal *differences* and both have been cited by queer and non-queer theorists as founding texts that have been seminal to the production of queer knowledge. This justification is followed by a launch into how de Lauretis uses her editorial authority to put race at the margins of the anthology. Goldman maintains that although de Lauretis gives space to articles by and about queer people of different racial identities, the anthology largely promotes essays written by White lesbians and gay men and produces theories that either make abstractions of race or ignore questions of race altogether. In short, she produces a queer theory that is limited in the way that it thinks about queerness. For Goldman, de Lauretis' marginalisation of race brings to the forefront her

uneasiness with the way in which the identity term 'queer' has largely operated to erase differences within queer theory: "[U]nless we strive to elaborate its meaning whenever we use it in our theories, it becomes like theoretical tofu: it will simply absorb the meaning of whatever particular aspect or aspects of queerness we are addressing" (1996, p. 172). This analysis of de Lauretis' anthology is followed by a general characterisation of queer theory. Goldman insists that queer theory has largely been a product of Whiteness—its theorising subjects, its subjects/objects of study, and its theoretical formulations. She also maintains that queer theory's Whiteness has further distanced gay, lesbian, bisexual, and queer scholars of different racial identities from the academy, since the academy is already largely structured around Whiteness. This has had an unfortunate effect: "[A]s a result, many lesbian, bisexual, queer, and gay scholars [of different racial identities] . . . choose to focus on issues of race and not issues of gender and sexuality" (Goldman 1996, p. 172).

In this light, Goldman takes issue with de Lauretis' call for queer theory contributions from lesbians and gay men of different racial identities (1996, pp. 172-73). Goldman cites de Lauretis' call, which is made in her introduction to the specially-edited queer theory issue of *differences* (1991b):

> The differences made by race in self-representation and identity argue for the necessity to examine, question, or contest the usefulness and/or the limitations of current discourses on lesbian and gay sexualities. . . . Those differences urge the reframing of the questions of queer theory from different perspectives, histories, experiences, and in different terms (1996, p. 173).

For Goldman, a 'fundamental problem' underlies de Lauretis' call: "[I]t leaves the burden of dealing with difference on the people who are themselves different, while simultaneously allowing [W]hite academics to continue to construct a discourse of silence around race and other queer perspectives" (1996, p. 173). Goldman maintains that this burden only has the unfortunate consequence of pitting a minority group against itself

from within. Those working and writing from a different, 'other' queer perspective will always be setting themselves up in opposition to dominant queer theory discourses, "drawing attention to the ways in which certain parts of [themselves] . . . are consistently being left out of the discourse" (Goldman 1996, p. 173).

In conclusion, Goldman proposes that queer theory needs to broaden and deepen the ways in which it thinks about queerness (1996, pp. 179-80). This is not just a question of race for Goldman. It is also one of class and bisexuality. According to Goldman, this should not occur in the way that de Lauretis suggests: within the margins of dominant queer theory discourses by different, 'other' queer perspectives. Rather, this should take place across the board: "What I am suggesting is that we strive to continuously problematise that which we have created—that we identify the constructed silences within our work and transform them into meaningful discourses" (Goldman 1996, pp. 179-80).[5]

In line with Namaste, Goldman's critique is also founded upon the same underlying presupposition. Her critique presumes that there is a subject of queer theory who is fully representative of it. However, unlike Namaste, the subject of Goldman's critique is not Butler. de Lauretis is understood to be the subject who represents how queer theory has examined race. This is also demonstrated at both the micro and macro levels of her critique. Throughout Goldman's critique, there is a consistent gliding between queer theory and de Lauretis, as though one can be exchanged for the other or captures the other at the same time (italics my emphasis): "In 1991, *Teresa de Lauretis* introduced the term *'queer theory'*. . ." (1996, p. 171); "*de Lauretis* explains that the term *'queer'* was suggested to her by a 1989 conference whose proceedings were subsequently published in the book *How Do I Look? Queer Film and Video* [Bad Object-Choices 1991]" (1996, p. 172); "*How Do I Look? Queer Film and Video* [the editorial property of *de Lauretis*] does contain several articles by and about 'queer people of color,' but . . . from the field's [*queer theory's*] inception. . ." (1996, p. 172); "All the anthologies on *queer theory*

include work by lesbians and gays of color, but we rarely find [W]hite lesbian or gay theorists discussing how intersections between anti-normative identities [for example, racial] inform or affect one's queer perspective" (1996, p. 172); "[I]t [*queer theory*] has been similarly structured around [W]hiteness" (1996, p. 172); and "*Teresa de Lauretis* calls for contributions to *queer theory* by other than [W]hite lesbians and gays. . . . The fundamental problem with this line of reasoning is that it . . . simultaneously allow[s] [W]hite academics to continue to construct a discourse of silence around race and other queer perspectives" (1996, pp. 172-73). Again, similar to Namaste's critique, de Lauretis' status as the subject of queer theory is bolstered even more when Goldman's critique is examined at the macro level. Her critique is not informed by a range of queer theorists but is solely based on the work of de Lauretis. Therefore, following the logic of Goldman's underlying presupposition, the whole of queer theory can be legitimately critiqued through de Lauretis: if de Lauretis is 'the' representative of how queer theory has examined race, then the gaps in her examination must be representative of it.

### ii. The Labour and Economics of the Queer Subject

As I explained in the introduction of this chapter, there is, to a certain degree, a real, instrumental necessity for a subject of queer theory. Whether for the purpose of drawing upon queer theory to support an analysis, critiquing the same, or even both, a queer subject is a useful vehicle through which we can piece queer theory together in order to draw conclusions about it (for example, who speaks as a queer theorist and for queer theory, what constitutes its subjects/objects of study and methodological trajectory, where queer conversations take place, and what theoretical formulations underpin those conversations). In other words, a queer subject enables us to understand the stuff that queer theory is made up of. For Namaste, Butler is the queer subject who provides insight into how queer theory has examined transgender subjectivity. For Goldman, de Lauretis is the queer subject who provides

insight into how queer theory has examined race. Without a subject of queer theory, then, there would be no understanding of queer theory. However, paradoxically, Butler's (1992 [1991]) critical examination of the question of postmodernism promotes a very different understanding of the queer subject who is made to stand masterfully in for queer theory. The queer subject and the issue of representation take on a completely different meaning.

Butler's "Contingent Foundations" (1992 [1991]) wastes no time in asking 'the' question, which is one of the central foci of her essay. It begins by asking 'the' question full frontally in its very first lines: "The question of postmodernism is surely a question, for is there, after all, something called postmodernism?" (Butler 1992 [1991], p. 3). Butler seems rather reluctant to answer the question herself. It raises more questions than definite answers for her. The question of postmodernism is followed by a set of questions for Butler, and these questions are probably not exhaustive for her:

> Is it an historical characterization, a certain kind of theoretical position, and what does it mean for a term that has described a certain aesthetic practice now to apply to social theory and to feminist social and political theory in particular? Who are these postmodernists? Is this a name that one takes on for oneself, or is it more often a name that one is called if and when one offers a critique of the subject, a discursive analysis, or questions the integrity or coherence of totalizing social descriptions (1992 [1991], p. 3)?

To a certain degree, Butler concedes in answering the question of postmodernism in the next paragraph. However, she is not interested in offering her own definitive definition. Rather, she offers a definition that underscores how the term has been used:

> I know the term from the way it is used, and it usually appears on my horizon embedded in the following critical formulations: 'if discourse is all there is. . . ,' or 'if everything is a text. . . ,' or 'if the

> subject is dead. . . ,' or 'if real bodies do not exist. . . .' The sentence begins as a warning against an impending nihilism, for if the conjured content of these series of conditional clauses proves to be true, then, and there is always a then, some set of dangerous consequences will surely follow (Butler 1992 [1991], p. 3).

Butler's reluctance to offer a definitive definition sets the stage for her essay. Indeed, Butler's essay is not about answering the question of postmodernism in a conventional sense. Rather, the question of postmodernism is a question of convention for Butler. She is interested in critically examining how the term has been conventionally used and has conventionally operated in academic and political discourses (for example, Benhabib 1990) (Butler 1992 [1991], pp. 4-7). According to Butler, the term has been conventionally conflated with a number of theorising subjects and theoretical positions, whether rightly or wrongly:

> A number of positions are ascribed to postmodernism, as if it were the kind of thing that could be the bearer of a set of positions: discourse is all there is, as if discourse were some kind of monistic stuff out of which all things are composed; the subject is dead, I can never say 'I' again; there is no reality, only representations. These characterisations are variously imputed to postmodernism or poststructuralism, which are conflated with each other and sometimes conflated with deconstruction, and sometimes understood as an indiscriminate assemblage of French feminism, deconstruction, Lacanian psychoanalysis, Foucaultian analysis, Rorty's conversationalism, and cultural studies. On this side of the Atlantic and in recent discourse, the terms 'postmodernism' or 'poststructuralism' settle the differences among those positions in a single stroke, providing a substantive, a noun, that includes those positions as so many of its modalities or permutations (1992 [1991], p. 4).

Butler maintains that the conflation presumes that there is a congruence between the theorising subjects and theoretical positions who/that are understood to make up postmodernism. Therefore, according to the logic of this conflation, a theorising subject/theoretical position can be made to stand in for the whole of postmodernism. Furthermore, if the theorising subject/theoretical position is found to be problematical, then his/her/its shortfalls must be representative.

Butler takes issue with this conflation because it erases postmodernism's differences (1992 [1991], pp. 4-5). It also wrongly ascribes a number of theorising subjects and theoretical positions to postmodernism who/that, otherwise, would not align themselves/be aligned under the sign. For example, according to Butler, Lacanian psychoanalysis in France 'officially' sets itself up against postmodernism; Kristeva condemns postmodernism; Foucauldians usually do not relate to Derrideans; Cixous and Irigaray are opposed to each other; the only link between French feminism and deconstruction is between Cixous and Derrida, and it is a 'tenuous' one; and there is only a 'certain affinity' in 'textual practices' between Irigaray and Derrida. Furthermore, according to Butler, Biddy Martin (no reference provided by Butler) has rightly pointed out that most of French feminism subscribes to the notion of 'high modernism' and the 'avant-garde,' and this subscription questions whether some or all of the aforementioned French feminists can be conveniently grouped under the sign of postmodernism. In this light, for Butler, although Jean-François Lyotard championed the term 'postmodernism,' he cannot be made to stand in for the whole of it as though he is fully representative of what other purported postmodernists have been up to. For example, "Lyotard's work is . . . seriously at odds with that of Derrida, who does not affirm the notion of 'the postmodern,' and with others for whom Lyotard is made to stand" (Butler 1992 [1991], p. 5).[6] Therefore, according to Butler, if Lyotard is found to be problematical, then his shortfalls cannot be strictly understood as representative of postmodernism. In a strong sense, the erasure of postmodernism's

differences goes against Butler's understanding of postmodernism: "[I]f I understand part of the project of postmodernism, it is to call into question the ways in which such 'examples' and 'paradigms' serve to subordinate and erase that which they seek to explain" (1992 [1991], p. 5).

For Butler, then, any one thinker or theoretical position who/that is made to stand in for the whole of postmodernism is far from a mere representation (1992 [1991], pp. 5-7). In other words, they are not merely vehicles through which we derive a notion of what postmodernism is. Butler maintains that they are also a restricted, forced substitution who/that produce a certain version of postmodernism:

> For the 'whole,' the field of postmodernism in its supposed breadth, is effectively 'produced' by the example which is made to stand as a symptom and exemplar of the whole; in effect, if in the example of Lyotard we think we have a representative of postmodernism, we have then forced a substitution of the example for the entire field, effecting a violent reduction of the field to the one piece of text the critic is willing to read, a piece which, conveniently, uses the term 'postmodern' (1992 [1991], p. 5).

It is only through this production for Butler that a thinker or theoretical position achieves the semblance and misnomer of being 'the' representative of postmodernism. It is paradoxical, for Butler, that those who conflate postmodernism usually want to, at the same time and nonetheless, "ward off the peril of political authoritarianism" (1992 [1991], p. 5).[7]

In closing, Butler does not in any way suggest that we should do away with representational foundations of postmodernism (as if we really could) or become antifoundationalists (1992 [1991], p. 7). They themselves are "different versions of foundationalism and the sceptical problematic it engenderes" (Butler 1992 [1991], p. 7). Rather, for Butler, "the task is to interrogate what the theoretical move that establishes foundations *authorizes,* and what precisely it excludes or forecloses" (1992 [1991], p. 7, italics included in original).

Indeed, in line with Butler, I would argue that the social critique that conflates queer theory with a queer subject erases its variegated depths. Take for instance Goldman's (1996) critique of how queer theory has examined race. If Goldman's characterisation of queer theory through de Lauretis is further examined outside or, paradoxically, within her editorial reign (for example, de Lauretis 1991a), then a very different picture of queer theory is painted. Queer perspectives on race, as well as ones on class, ethnicity, and nationality, have been more central to the project than she purports. This is reflected in Sedgwick's understanding of the identity term 'queer' and her acknowledgement of important work done by academics/artists of different racial, ethnic, and national perspectives:

> [A] lot of the most exciting recent work around 'queer' spins the term outward along dimensions that can't be subsumed under gender and sexuality at all: the ways that race, ethnicity, postcolonial nationality criss-cross with these *and other* identity-constituting, identity-fracturing discourses, for example. Intellectuals and artists of color whose sexual self-definition includes 'queer'—I think of an Isaac Julien, a Gloria Anzaldúa, a Richard Fung—are using the leverage of 'queer' to do a new kind of justice to the fractal intricacies of language, skin, migration, state. Thereby, the gravity (I mean the *gravitas,* the meaning, but also the *center* of gravity) of the term 'queer' itself deepens and shifts (1993a [1993], pp. 8-9, italics included in original).

Further, the task of examining questions of race, class, ethnicity, and nationality has not been a burden. It has not been the sole responsibility of different, 'other' perspectives. In addition to work by lesbians and gay men of colour that fundamentally informed the emergence and development of queer theory,[8] the work of academics who have been party to 'dominant queer theory discourses' have further broadened and deepened the ways in which queer theory has thought about queerness across racial, class, ethnic, and national lines (for example, Bergmann and Smith 1995; Butler 1993; Butler and Martin 1994a, 1994b; Dorenkamp and

Henke 1995a, 1995b; Garber 1992; Parker *et al.* 1992; Sedgwick 1992). For example, this is the main aim of Butler's and Martin's specially-edited queer theory issue of the journal *Diacritics*:

> *Diacritics* graciously asked us to edit an issue on gay and lesbian studies [queer theory], and we took the occasion to broaden the scope of that request to include work that interrogates the problem of cross-identification within and across race and postcolonial studies, gender theory, and theories of sexuality. We chose to expand our emphasis in order to avoid static conceptions of identity and political alignment. 'Queer theory' has promised to complicate assumptions about routes of identification and desire. We wanted to test that promise by soliciting essays that analyze critical, even surprising, boundary crossings (1994b, p. 3).

Nonetheless, because the internal logic of Goldman's conflation presumes that de Lauretis is fully representative of queer theory, queer perspectives on race cannot, at most, exist or, at the very least, be central to dominant queer theory discourses. Thus, they are summarily erased through de Lauretis. According to the broad logic of Goldman's essay, the same can be extended to queer perspectives on class, ethnicity, and nationality.

The same can be said of Namaste's (1996) critique of queer theory. If Butler is construed as 'the' representative of how queer theory has examined transgender subjectivity, then a vast amount of investigations is erased through the representational gesture that has been made. A lot of work on drag, transgenderism, transsexualism, and transvestism within queer domains has incorporated the social realities of transgendered people, and the momentum of this work has increased since Namaste made her characterisation (for example, Alderson and Anderson 2000; Bornstein 1992, 1998; Conner 2004; Ekins and King 1996; Feinberg 1993, 1996; Ferris 1993; Garber 1989; Hausman 1995; Haynes and McKenna 2001; Nestle *et al.* 2002). For example, the autobiographical experiences of male-to-female transsexuals Jan Morris (1974) and Renée Richards (1983) inform Garber's (1989) analysis of how transsexuals paradoxically

seek to fix what they blur: sex and gender. The day-to-day experiences of transsexuals and transvestites are also included in Richard Ekins' and David King's (1996) edited anthology on the pathological limitations of the medical categories transsexualism, transvestism, and gender dysphoria, and their anthology locates those experiences within a social-historical context.

I would therefore suggest that we read and understand Butler and de Lauretis as depicted in Namaste's and Goldman's critiques differently. In line with Butler's examination of the question of postmodernism, they are not 'the' representatives or mere representatives of queer theory who can stand in for the whole of it. Butler is not 'the' queer subject who provides the first and last insight into how queer theory has examined transgender subjectivity. de Lauretis is not 'the' queer subject who provides the first and last insight into how queer theory has examined race. Rather, they are a restricted, forced substitution who produce a certain version of queer theory. It is only by setting Butler and de Lauretis up as 'the' subjects of queer theory that they achieve this semblance and misnomer.

However, there is usually more than just this immediate effect of producing an exclusionary version of queer theory. In line with Butler (1992 [1991]), I would suggest that there is usually a disciplinary undertow to conflating queer theory. In her examination of the question of postmodernism, Butler questions the motivation for producing a synthetic notion of postmodernism through Lyotard. She gestures that it is a means for those who do not subscribe to postmodernism to erect disciplinary walls and boundaries (as cited in the epigraph of the chapter):

> Do all these theories have the same structure *(a comforting notion to the critic who would dispense with them at once)*? Is the effort to colonize and domesticate these theories under the sign of the same, to group them synthetically and masterfully under a single rubric, a simple refusal to grant the specificity of these positions, an excuse not to read, and not to read closely? (Butler 1992 [1991], p. 5, italics my emphasis).

Although Butler understands the conflation as a means to dismiss postmodernism in its entirety, there will be different degrees of erecting disciplinary walls and boundaries: from merely creating a distance to creating a distance and identifying with another disciplinary location to totally creating a distance and strictly identifying with another disciplinary location. In effect, Goldman's conflation appears to be on the lower end of the scale (as previously cited): "I found that it was very difficult to apply existing queer theory to popular culture without collapsing some of the very nuances that I was trying to highlight. This led me to begin to consider some of the existing tensions and contradictions within and without queer theory. . ." and "As I have illustrated in this essay, existing queer theory, despite attempts to avoid normativity, harbors a normative discourse around race, sexuality, and class. Those of us who fall outside of this normativity . . . must position ourselves and our work in opposition to it" (pp. 170, 179). Namaste's conflation also erects disciplinary walls and boundaries. However, he appears to be on the higher end of the scale (some of which was previously cited): "Call me old-fashioned, but I believe in the elaboration of organic intellectual practices, in which academics create knowledge useful to activist communities and provide a productive translation of civil and political societies" and "Were critics in queer theory to address these . . . issues, the field as we know it would be radically displaced" (Namaste 1996, pp. 197-198). Namaste clearly states which disciplines he aligns himself with: "Historically, the disciplines of sociology and anthropology have produced some of the most insightful work on transgender issues . . . this scholarship has attained canonical status" (1996, p. 193).

It is paradoxical and unfortunate that Goldman herself, on the one hand, calls on queer theory to identify its 'constructed silences' and "transform them into meaningful discourses" (1996, pp. 179-80) and, on the other hand, does not perform such an analysis of her own critique. It is indeed the failure of social critiques like Namaste's (1996) and Goldman's (1996) to consider the constructed silences of their conflation

that is stalling them from producing more meaningful and productive discourses on queer theory. I particularly take issue with such readings/constructions of queer theory when they erect disciplinary walls and boundaries. If sociology wants to move in the direction of disciplinary cross-fertilisation, then it needs to bring to the surface the constructed silences that problematise the representational gesture that produces a synthetic notion of queer theory, transforming it into a more meaningful discourse on queer theory. In other words, sociology needs to bring to the surface queer theory's variegated depths by facilitating and promoting a more careful, critical reading. The following careful, critical reading is performed and offered in order to bring to the forefront and demonstrate some of queer theory's variegated depths.

## Section II: A Careful, Critical Reading of Queer Theory

### i. Against Proper Research Objects

When Abelove's, Barale's, and Halperin's (1993) introduction to their edited anthology *The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader* is read alongside Butler's introductory essay, "Against Proper Objects" (1997a [1994]), to the second specially-edited queer theory issue of the journal *differences* (Weed and Schor 1994), it becomes very clear that there is no simple 'one size fits all' when it comes to representing queer theory.[9] In fact, the essays do not need to be read alongside each other in order to read their differences. Their differences are topical for Butler in part of her essay. Butler herself problematises what Abelove, Barale, and Halperin propose. In short, she problematises an analogy that is made by the editors to illuminate the kind of issues that resonate in lesbian and gay studies and argues against the demarcation of proper research objects that it engenders.

The editors of *The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader* make an analogy with feminist inquiry to highlight the kinds of issues that lesbian and gay studies focuses on (Abelove *et al.* 1993, p. xv). With reference to an essay by the feminist historian Joan Kelly-Gadol (1976) on the

methodological implications of women's history, Abelove, Barale, and Halperin remark that

> women's history is not intended to be merely additive, its effect is not to introduce another sub-department of history into the traditional panoply of historical fields. . . . Rather, women's history seeks to establish the centrality of *gender* as a fundamental category of historical analysis and understanding—a category central, in other words, to each of those previously existing sub-departments of history (1993, p. xv, italics included in original).

The editors then claim that lesbian and gay studies does the same but rather focuses on different research objects: "Lesbian/gay studies does for *sex* and *sexuality* approximately what women's studies does for gender" (Abelove *et al.* 1993, p. xv, italics included in original).

Butler points out that the editor's analogy sets out the proper research object of feminist inquiry (1997a [1994], p. 4). According to the editors, feminist inquiry "includes any research that treats gender *(whether female or male)* as a central category of analysis" (Abelove *et al.* 1993, p. xv, italics my emphasis). Butler maintains that their parenthetical reference suggests that gender is interchangeable with 'female or male.' According to Butler, this understanding of gender goes against the way in which the sex/gender distinction has been conventionally understood and formulated within feminist domains: female and male are associated with sex, whereas the social categories of men and women belong to gender.[10] In this light, Butler contends that the editor's analogy conflates sex with gender. Gender, the proper research object of feminist inquiry, is understood as a biological binary.

It is significant for Butler how the term 'sex' operates in the editors' analogy (1997a [1994], p. 4). As Butler is correct to point out, although 'female or male' appears in their formulation of gender as the proper research object of feminist inquiry, the term sex does not explicitly appear. It is only implied at the time gender is reduced to sex. It is however later made explicit in the editors' analogy but alongside one of the two proper

research objects that pertain to lesbian and gay studies (as previously cited): "Lesbian/gay studies does for *sex* and *sexuality* approximately what women's studies does for gender" (Abelove *at al.* 1993, p. xv, italics included in original). For Butler, sex in this context does not simply designate 'sexual desire and practice.' It also designates, in the Foucauldian sense, "a regime of identity or a fictional ideal by which sex as anatomy, sensation, acts, and practices are arbitrarily unified" (Butler 1997a [1994], p. 4). By definition, as she is correct to point out, the Foucauldian sense of sex includes what the editors attribute to feminist inquiry: identity and attribute ('female or male'). Thus, according to Butler, the editors' analogy moves from a formulation of feminist inquiry that conflates sex with gender to a formulation of lesbian and gay studies that explicitly includes and exceeds the sex of feminist inquiry. In the context of lesbian and gay studies, then, sex does not simply include identity and attribute ('female or male'). It also includes sexual practices, acts, sensation, and so on.

As the analogy is now set up, then, there appears to be a commonality between feminist inquiry and lesbian and gay studies: sex or, more specifically, identity and attribute ('female or male'). The sex that is conflated with feminist inquiry's proper research object, gender, is an explicit proper research object of lesbian and gay studies. However, according to Butler, that commonality is refused through 'elision' or the semantic separation and redistribution of sex's constitutive parts:

> Whereas 'sex' in the elided sense attributed to feminism will mean only identity and attribute, 'sex' in the explicit and lesbian/gay sense will include and *supersede* the feminist sense: identity, attribute, sensation, pleasures, acts, and practices. Thus 'sex' in the sense deployed by lesbian and gay studies is understood to include the putative feminist binary (female or male) but also to imply the second proper object of lesbian and gay studies: 'sexuality' (1997a [1994], pp. 4-5, italics my emphasis).

In other words, by assimilating sex in its elided sense to the set of terms that the analogy explicitly claims to be the proper research objects of lesbian and gay studies, 'sex and sexuality,' sex supersedes its feminist connotation and a demarcation is made between feminist inquiry and lesbian and gay studies. Put more simply, the analogy construes sex as sexuality, with the result that a distinction is made between feminist inquiry and lesbian and gay studies. Butler points out that this distinction is in part made by assimilating sexual difference to a unitary sex: "Sexual difference, irreducible to 'gender' or to the putative biological disjunction of 'female or male,' is rhetorically refused through the substitution by which a unitary 'sex' is installed as the proper object of inquiry [of lesbian and gay studies]" (1997a [1994], p. 6). As the analogy is finally set up, then, gender as sex is the proper research object of feminist inquiry, whereas sex as sexuality is that of lesbian and gay studies. In other words, feminist inquiry is divorced from sexuality and lesbian and gay studies is divorced from gender.

Butler problematises the different valences that sex carries in each context (1997a [1994], pp. 7-8). On the one hand, Butler maintains that very little feminist research reduces gender to a binary biological frame. According to Butler, this has mainly and only taken place in feminist investigations of the sex/gender distinction. Butler cites Sherry Ortner, Harriet Whitehead, Moira Gaetens, Evelyn Fox Keller, and Joan W. Scott as examples (no references). As Butler is correct to point out, even Kelly-Gadol's (1976) essay understands sex as a 'fully social category.' Butler indicates that feminists have worked against gender being reduced to a binary biological frame in two main quarters: (1) work on the biological sciences and (2) work within feminism that examines the interconnections between gender, race, and sexuality and how gender is the product of these vectors of power. In respect to the former quarter, she cites Ruth Hubbard, Anne Fausto-Sterling, Monique Witting, Donna Haraway, and Helen Longino as examples (no references). In respect to the latter quarter, she cites Norma Alarcón, Cherríe Moraga, Chandra Mohanty,

Valerie Smith, Hortense Spillers, and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak as examples (no references). On the other hand, Butler maintains that many lesbian and gay scholars work across both feminist inquiry and lesbian and gay studies, and they would problematise a unitary notion of sex, which elides the significance of sexual difference in the discursive constitution and materialisation of sex.[11]

Butler is drawing attention to her dissatisfaction with a current in queer theory (1997a [1994], pp. 1-3).[12] She is dissatisfied with a current that has made a demarcation of proper research objects between feminist inquiry and queer theory. According to Butler, a distinction has been made between theories of gender and theories of sexuality, and the theoretical investigation of gender has been properly allocated to feminist inquiry and the same of sexuality has been properly allocated to queer theory. As I will discuss in Chapter Three, Sedgwick makes this demarcation of proper research objects in *Epistemology of the Closet* (1990).[13]

In the main, Butler is dissatisfied with the move to demarcate proper research objects because it denies the work of feminist and queer inquirers who work across the two domains, particularly those who perform challenges from each domain's alterities (1997a [1994], pp. 1-3). According to Butler, for those who work across feminist inquiry and queer theory and "insist on continuing the important intellectual tradition of immanent critique," they are usually construed as having turned against the domain that they problematise: "if one analyzes the heterosexist assumptions of feminist inquiry, one will be construed as 'anti-' or 'post-' feminist; if one analyzes the anti-feminism of some gay and lesbian theory, one will be construed as hostile to that lesbian and gay theory" (1997a [1994], p. 1).[14] Butler suggests that this denial of or resistance to immanent critique is symptomatic of an identity politics that believes that challenges from within its own ranks can only weaken a movement.

Butler maintains that if feminist inquiry and queer theory want to remain 'vital,' 'expansive,' and 'self-critical,' then they must make room "for the kind of immanent critique which shows how the presuppositions of one

critical enterprise can operate to forestall the work of another" (1997a [1994], p. 1). In other words, feminist inquiry and queer theory need to take account of how they may be complicitous with other forms of oppression and vectors of power, whether they are homophobic, misogynistic, racist, colonial, or class-based. In these respects, then, Butler argues against the demarcation of proper research objects. This demarcation would probably only weaken rather than transform and strengthen feminist inquiry and queer theory from within.

# Chapter Two

## For a More Careful, Critical Reading (II): Problematising Some Misinterpreted Queer Theoretical Formulations

> I would say, then, that what has emerged in the course of the last ten or fifteen years is a sense of the increasing vulnerability to criticism of things, institutions, practices, discourses. . . . But together with this sense of instability and this amazing efficacy of discontinuous, particular[,] and local criticism, one in fact also discovers something that perhaps was not initially foreseen, something one might describe as precisely the inhibiting effect of global, *totalitarian theories*. . . . the attempt to think in terms of a totality has in fact proved a hindrance to research.
>
> So, the main point to be gleaned from these events of the last fifteen years, their predominant feature, is the *local* character of criticism. . . . I believe that what this essentially local character of criticism indicates in reality is an autonomous, non-centralised kind of theoretical production, one that is to say whose validity is not dependent on the approval of the established regimes of thought.
>
> —Michel Foucault, "Two Lectures"
>
> (1980, pp. 80-81, italics included in original)

### Introduction and Purpose

In the previous chapter, I examined the tendency of social critiques of queer theory to conflate it with a queer thinker. This took place by charting how the conflation violently operated, and I suggested that it was a means to unproductively erect disciplinary walls and boundaries. Towards the end of this examination, I pointed out that if sociology wants to move towards disciplinary cross-fertilisation, then it needs to bring to the surface

queer theory's variegated depths by facilitating and promoting a more careful, critical reading of queer theory. I then performed and offered a brief careful, critical reading, which demonstrated that a single queer subject cannot be conflated with queer theory, as though he/she is somehow fully representative of it. To a certain degree, the chapter focused more on the conflation itself than what I meant by a careful, critical reading. I did gesture that it entailed bringing to the surface the constructed silences that problematise the representational gesture that produces a synthetic notion of queer theory (whether through a queer subject or a theoretical formulation), but I did not elaborate on it any further. The chapter can therefore be said to be deficient in this respect. In this light, this chapter is an attempt to pick up where my suggestion was left and give it more substance. This will take place by considering the tendency of social critiques to conflate queer theory with a set of misinterpreted theoretical formulations. However, before I outline the trajectory of the chapter, I want to briefly share an experience of mine, which I believe elucidates what I want to examine.

As a sociologist with queer leanings, I have been recently caught up in quite a few discussions on current theories of sexuality, whether consciously seeking them out of my own accord or being actively solicited to participate in them by both queer and non-queer folk. These discussions have been somewhat ambivalent for me. On the one hand, I relish, even revel in, the camaraderie that they have fostered. The occasion to meet in a pub with politically- and academically-minded dykes, poofs, bisexuals, trannies, and pro-homosexuals has been a damn good excuse to drink with friends and catch up on how we are reworking and reinventing the world around us. Of course, the discussions have also acted as another effective channel for us to spread the latest gossip to have just rolled over in bed. On the other hand, I loathe the dogmatic lines of affiliation that they have drawn and promoted, if not solidified. I have often left them thinking that it is a miracle if we ever invite an open dialogic space for our differences and wondering what in the world prevents us

from questioning our own attachments to the grounds by which we theorise. Perhaps this is a confession of my own academic paranoia: a fear that I might lose my sense of self or be put out of control. While many important interventions have taken place in these discussions, which have challenged many of our own assumptions, both commonsensical and theoretical, they have been marred by an accompanying viciousness and distrust that has goaded us to produce strident cries of identification. The tenor has been callous if not downright bloody. Somehow the idea of forming articulations among our differences gives way to the all-too-often, by-now calculable move to 'camp' it up, that is, to strictly identify ourselves with one theoretical project or the other, whether it be postmodernism, poststructuralism, symbolic interactionism, social constructionism, or materialism for example. Elspeth Probyn has referred to this camping as "[getting] in on the star-coded politics of identity" (1992, p. 502). The project of *Vertretung*[1] has been central to the framing of our discussions; the critic as proxy installs him/herself as sovereign within a field of fraught fidelities.

One of our discussions in particular found me in this embattled position: the efficacy of queer theory in relation to lesbian and gay politics. Most of the discussion's participants generally did not find any value in investing in queer theory and were of the opinion that it, at the very least, weakened or, at the very most, totally undermined lesbian and gay politics. Their reservations were structured as some of the following formulations: "if lesbian specificity is problematised by queer theory, then. . ."; "if there are no real bodies for queer theory, then. . ."; and "if queer theory claims that there is no true distinction between sex and gender, that is, sex is actually gender, then. . . ." What I understood to be a set of misinterpreted theoretical formulations conflated with queer theory was countered by me with a set of rejoinders: "yes, queer theory problematises the specificity of lesbian subjectivity, but. . ."; "yes, there are no real bodies for queer theory, but. . ."; and "yes, queer theory argues that there is no true distinction between sex and gender, but. . . ." Unfortunately, my

spontaneous theoretical reflex only installed a set of theoretical formulations in place of another, and I was just as guilty of conflating queer theory. This only had the effect of shutting the discussion down and crystallising our disciplinary alliances. What was lost in the exchange was a more careful, critical reading of queer theory, that is, a more localised reading. This kind of exchange would have probably facilitated a more informed and accurate reading of queer theory. Further, it may have facilitated a space for, paraphrasing Stuart Hall (1990, pp. 236-37), alternative forms of representation, which would have enabled us to work with(in) our differences and construct new kinds of theoretical perspectives from which to work across and between disciplines.

Since queer theory's emergence, social critiques of the project have conflated it with a number of theoretical formulations, which have been understood as foundationalist premises of the project (for example, Gamson 1996; Jeffreys 1993, 1994; Parnaby 1993; Wolfe and Penelope 1993). Some of their subject matter have included discourse, the deconstruction of the lesbian and gay subject, the identity term 'queer,' and the analytic separation of gender and sexuality. They have come under heavy criticism by these social critiques for a number of reasons, for example: the dismissal of reality, the denial of agency, and the death of the lesbian and gay subject. To install one's self within these terms is to turn against the sexuality that queer theory conceptualises. Conceived in this way, these social critiques have written against and distanced themselves from queer theory's theoretical formulations. However, had these social critiques read queer theory more carefully and critically by localising their readings, then they probably would have read queer theory differently. In other words, they probably would not have misinterpreted queer theory as the dismissal of reality, the denial of agency, and the death of the lesbian and gay subject. Nonetheless, queer theory remains conflated with a set of misinterpreted theoretical formulations. This has only had the effect of erecting disciplinary walls and boundaries and stalling movement towards disciplinary cross-fertilisation. What I want to

do here, then, is to examine, problematise, and rework some misinterpreted theoretical formulations that have been conflated with queer theory. In doing so, I will argue for a more careful, critical reading of queer theory, that is, a more localised reading. Michel Foucault's thoughts on local criticism, as outlined in "Two Lectures" (1980), will largely inform what I propose. The second section of the chapter will then seek to rework this conflation by performing and offering a careful, critical reading of a couple of queer theoretical formulations in greater detail: one on the deconstruction of the lesbian and gay subject and the other on queer theory's usage of the identity term 'queer' and its relation to gender and lesbian specificity. It is not until sociology facilitates and promotes a more careful, critical reading that it can then move towards some good, productive disciplinary cross-fertilisation.

## Section I: The Conflation of Queer Theory with Misinterpreted Theoretical Formulations

### i. Some Misinterpreted Theoretical Formulations

Within sociological discourse, there have been calls to retrieve the theorisation of sexuality from what has been often characterised as the latest progeny of the Foucauldian Revolution spawned by literary critics and cultural theorists: queer theory and its linguistic idealism of poststructuralism (Malinowitz 1993; Paris 1993; Plummer 1998).[2] In another corner, lesbian feminist Sheila Jeffreys (1994) has argued that queer theory is a poststructuralist discourse convoluted in a masculinist language, which does not concern itself with questions of gender and lesbian existence. For Jeffreys, queer theory seeks "to establish that the study of sexuality is a field of inquiry quite separate from and impervious to feminist inquiry" (1994, p. 466). Jeffreys contends that if queer theory wants to be of greater ethical and political value, then it must take on board a broader agenda, particularly a feminist one. Indeed, although queer theory's emergence was marked in part by the problematisation of earlier theoretical formulations on sexuality made by White gay male

historiographers and sociologists,[3] its formulations within contemporary sexual theory have not been uncontentious. So, how has queer theory been understood within social critiques?

When queer theory has appeared in social critiques, it has usually been conflated with and structured as the following formulations in some way or another (Bersani 1995; Bonwick 1993; Castle 1993; Cohen 1996; Gamson 1996; Hennessy 1995; Jeffreys 1993, 1994; Link 1993; Maggenti 1991; Malinowitz 1993; Paris 1993; Parnaby 1993; Plummer 1998; Seidman 1993; Smyth 1992; Wolfe and Penelope 1993). The structure and subject matter of these formulations have been very similar to Judith Butler's depiction of the way in which postmodernism has been conventionally understood and has conventionally operated in academic and political discourses (1992 [1991], p. 3-4). The main ones have included, which were previously highlighted in the introduction: "if everything is discourse for queer theory, then. . ."; "if the lesbian and gay subject is deconstructed by queer theory, then. . ."; "if queer theory uses the identity term 'queer' as an umbrella term to describe a number of anti-normative sexual identities, then. . ."; and "if gender and sexuality are analytically separated by queer theory, whereby gender is a question for feminist inquiry and sexuality is one for queer theory, then. . . ." In line with Butler's depiction of postmodernism, queer theory has become an intense site for all sorts of fears and warnings against a kind of 'impending nihilism,' whether cultural, political, or theoretical: "The sentence begins as a warning against an impending nihilism, for if the conjured content of these series of conditional clauses proves to be true, then, and there is always a then, some set of dangerous consequences will surely follow" (1992 [1991], p. 3). These dangerous consequences have been well-rehearsed and well-publicised. Because discourse is the fashionable trend in queer theory, there are only representations. There is no reality and experience of it. At the same time, queer theory's emphasis on discourse denies the voluntarist, active agent. I can never say 'I' again (the reflexive, autobiographical 'I') or claim to wield any power. I am and

only ever will be programmed by discourse, and if the programme goes wrong, then I am a developmental failure. Queer theory's deconstruction of the lesbian and gay subject is the death of the subject. Lesbians and gays cannot speak as and for other lesbian and gay folk. Because queer theory uses the identity term 'queer' as an umbrella term to describe a number of anti-normative sexual identities, it marks the dissolution of gender and lesbian specificity. Queer theory's analytic separation of gender and sexuality is anti-feminist. Queer theorists do not entertain questions of gender because it really is a masculinist discourse.

In line with Butler (1997a [1994], pp. 1-2), I would suggest that there is an undertone to these interpretations of queer theory that is symptomatic of an identity politics that believes that challenges from its own alterities only weakens rather than strengthens lesbian and gay struggles against compulsory heterosexuality and homophobia. In other words, queer theory has been understood as turning against the sexuality that it seeks to conceptualise.

Contrary to queer theory and in an effort to distance themselves from the poststructuralist discourse, some social critiques have insisted that a lesbian and gay subject must serve as a point of departure to rally around within dominant political discourses (Bersani 1995; Castle 1993; Gamson 1996; Link 1993; Wolfe and Penelope 1993). How can lesbians and gays produce a reverse-discourse from and through which to challenge compulsory heterosexuality and homophobia if a lesbian and gay subject does not exist? They have contended that politics is impossible without a foundation. Without a subject, lesbians and gays could not speak as and for fellow lesbians and gays. Without a subject, they could not articulate a viable identity that would contest and undermine the ways in which they have been either misrepresented or made non-existent, unthinkable, and unimaginable by compulsory heterosexuality and homophobia.

Perhaps we should take these trepidations very seriously. Discourse, the deconstruction of the lesbian and gay subject, the identity term 'queer,' and the analytic separation of gender and sexuality are not simple issues,

and definitely are not ones that can and should be fully settled. No amount of reflection can resolve their highly-charged investments and consequences, particularly in relation to lesbian and gay politics. However, time and again I have been struck in many ways by the narrow-mindedness of these debates, when the question has been about either avowing or disavowing queer theory rather than opening up its terms, queering their usages, and constructing new kinds of theoretical perspectives from which to work across and between disciplines. In other words, when the debate has been one of deciding either for or against discourse, for or against the deconstruction of the lesbian and gay subject, for or against the identity term 'queer,' or for or against the analytic separation of gender and sexuality. Queer theory either offends or reconciles, repels or attracts, or breaks or reunites. It cannot help but to enslave or provoke exuberance. Is this all the project holds, however?

It may come as a surprise, though, that to perform and offer a discursive analysis of lesbian and gay subjectivity is not to do away with reality and agency (for example, Butler 1990, 1993; Grosz 1995 [1994]; Scott 1992 [1991]). Rather, it is to take account of the cultural, social, and historical conditions that discursively constitute the lived experiences of lesbian and gay subjects and to locate agency within that constitution. Here, discourse does not simply report on the subject and some prior truth but brings the subject into being and initiates the conditions for agency. It may also come as a surprise that to deconstruct the lesbian and gay subject is to neither negate nor dispense with the notion of identity altogether, as though we cannot speak as and for lesbians and gays (for example, Butler 1990, 1991, 1993; Cohen 1991; Edelman 1994, 1995; Fuss 1989; Sedgwick 1990, 1993a [1993]; Warner 1991). Rather, it is to understand identity as normative and exclusionary and to interrogate what the identity sign and its subject authorise and exclude so that any exclusions are safeguarded for possible future uses. It may once again come as a surprise that the identity term 'queer' does not mark the dissolution of gender and lesbian specificity (for example, Butler 1991,

1993; de Lauretis 1991a, 1991b; Dorenkamp and Henke 1995a, 1995b; Sedgwick 1993a [1993]). Rather, as Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick accurately puts it, 'queer' problematises the notion that lesbian and gay identity is monolithic: "That's one of the things that 'queer' can refer to: the open mesh of possibilities, gaps, overlaps, dissonances, and resonances, lapses and excesses of meaning when the constituent elements of anyone's gender, of anyone's sexuality aren't made (or *can't be* made) to signify monolithically" (1993a [1993], p. 8, italics included in original). In other words, 'queer' plays on sexual identity being a question of the intersection of gender, race, class, ethnicity, and nationality, and it teases the interplay of these constituent and constitutive elements of identity/difference out. It may come as a surprise, again, that the analytic separation of gender and sexuality, whereby gender is the proper research object of feminist inquiry and sexuality is the same of queer theory, does not signify that queer theory is an anti-feminist/masculinist discourse (for example, Abelove *et al.* 1993; Sedgwick 1990). For example, Henry Abelove *et al.* (1993) are pro-feminist, and their analytic separation has been understood as making a distinction between feminist inquiry and queer theory insofar as feminist inquiry "cannot capture the complexity of analysis [of sexuality] that takes place within lesbian and gay studies [queer theory]" (Butler 1997a [1994], p. 6). As another example, Sedgwick has made contributions to feminist inquiry (for example, *Between Men* (1985)), and her call for an analytic separation in *Epistemology of the Closet* (1990) was motivated by her perception that theories of sexuality were underdeveloped at the time of the writing and publication of her project.[4] According to Sedgwick, their development and establishment was contingent upon making them a central interest in and of themselves and not giving way to other disciplinary discourses (for example, feminist inquiry). Further, as discussed in the previous chapter, not all queer theorists have subscribed to an analytic separation of gender and sexuality. For example, Butler has argued against this analytic separation (1997a [1994]), and most of her work concerns itself with the relation

between gender and sexuality (for example, Butler 1990, 1991, 1993, 2000).

### ii. A Careful, Critical Reading of Queer Theory

Why, then, are these theoretical formulations misinterpreted and conflated with queer theory? If queer theory does not designate the dismissal of reality, the denial of agency, the death of the lesbian and gay subject, the dissolution of gender and lesbian specificity, and the legislation of an anti-feminist/masculinist discourse, then what useful purposes do discourse, deconstruction, the identity term 'queer,' and the analytic separation of gender and sexuality serve? Also, interpreted more accurately, what are their risks and limitations if we subscribe to them? It is my strong belief that what is more at risk here is not a critique of queer theory, but, rather, is an informed consideration of the productive contribution that queer theory can make to the theorisation of sexuality, as well as lesbian and gay politics. Foucault's (1980) thoughts on local criticism are particularly useful at this juncture.

In his introduction to the first of two inaugural lectures for his course 'Society Must Be Defended' (1976), Foucault muses over the on-going development of his work since he first took up his chair of 'History of Systems of Thought' at the Collège de France in 1970 (1980, pp. 78-79). The lecture begins with a forlorn confession and apology: his thinking's resistance to discipline. Although Foucault had intended to complete a series of researches of five years in his current lectures, he did not know how to do so. His researches included, for example: notes and observations on sophistry, a history of knowledge of sexuality based on confessional practices of the seventeenth century and infantile sexuality from the eighteenth to the nineteenth century, and some work on the evolution and institutionalisation of psychiatry in the nineteenth century. Foucault writes: "None of it does more than mark time. Repetitive and disconnected, it advances nowhere. Since indeed it never ceases to say the same thing, it perhaps says nothing. It is tangled up into an

indecipherable, disorganised muddle. In a nutshell, it is inconclusive" (1980, p. 78). A problem was coming to head for Foucault. His researches had failed to develop into any continuous whole. Diffused and fragmentary, divergent and indefinite, they had neither a predetermined starting point nor a final destination. In other words, the theoretical unity of his researches was in jeopardy. As Foucault despairingly laments, "it mattered little where they led" (1980, p. 78). In fact, as he discloses, they were mere sketches for others to pursue and divert in other directions and ones for him "to extend upon or re-design as the case might be" (Foucault 1980, pp. 78-79). This confession and apology does indeed seem rather harsh considering that some of his researches had just been published or were near publication at the time of his lecture (in French): *Discipline and Punish* in 1975 and *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1* in 1976.

Foucault is drawing attention to an increasing trend that had emerged over the past 10 or 15 years at the time of the writing of his lecture, which is characteristic of the way in which his then-current research projects methodologically theorised: the local character of criticism (1980, pp. 79-83). In support of this sort of research and theorising, Foucault argues against what he refers to as 'totalitarian theories' (1980, p. 80). He suggests that the sociology of delinquency and criticisms of the asylum methodologically theorised in this way. Foucault contends that the methodological move to theorise in totality, that is, to work and think in terms of coherence and systemisation, proves to be a stumbling-block to research. According to Foucault, this kind of theorising buries and disguises the social and historical contents of its subject matter within a functionalist language, further instituting and legitimating an appropriate, comprehensive, and centralised theoretical framework. In other words, theory becomes a conceptual and defining apparatus by and though which subjects of study become meaningful and *only* meaningful within its terms. What gets lost in particular are the 'ruptural effects' of the social and historical contents of its subject matter (Foucault 1980, p. 82). These ruptural effects, on the one hand, interrogate the coherence of its

formulations and, on the other hand, expose them as contingent and contestable. Foucault instead argues for a 'return of knowledge' (1980, p. 81). In other words, he argues for a kind of non-centralised theoretical production that pays particular attention to local criticism. Foucault writes (as previously and partly cited in the epigraph):

> So, the main point to be gleaned from these events of the last fifteen years, their predominant feature, is the *local* character of criticism. That should not, I believe, be taken to mean that its qualities are those of an obtuse, naïve, or primitive empiricism; nor is it a soggy eclecticism, an opportunism that laps up any and every kind of theoretical approach; nor does it mean a self-imposed ascetism which taken by itself would reduce to the worst kind of theoretical impoverishment. I believe that what this essentially local character of criticism indicates in reality is an autonomous, non-centralised kind of theoretical production, one that is to say whose validity is not dependent on the approval of the established regimes of thought (1980, p. 81, italics included in original).

Foucault's points are well-taken. It is my belief that fundamental mistakes can be made when social critiques only think in terms of totality rather than paying particular attention to local criticism, as though theories offer themselves up in organised bundles and can be easily taken from a shelf. By thinking in terms of totality, social critiques can significantly bury and conceal queer theory's variegated depths within the terms of their conflation. In other words, what can get lost are those 'ruptural effects,' which would interrogate a coherent notion of queer theory. If this was the case, then, a contestable, yet uncontested version of queer theory would result and remain. Unfortunately, this has usually been the case, as the previously-cited social critiques demonstrate. However, had they moved beyond their conflation and read queer theory more carefully and critically by localising their readings, then they probably would have teased out the ruptural effects of their conflation. This, most likely, would have facilitated

and promoted a more accurate reading and productive criticism of queer theory. More importantly, it may have facilitated and promoted disciplinary cross-fertilisation. Nonetheless, because they do not move beyond their conflation, queer theory remains misinterpreted, and there is no potential for thinking, reading, and writing across and between disciplines. The debate is only a question of deciding either for or against queer theory. The same goes for queer theory being conflated with a queer thinker.

As I made clear in the introduction of the previous chapter, I am not suggesting here that we cannot make representational gestures about queer theory through a queer subject, a theoretical formulation, or even a number of them. In part, they are the very vehicles that enable us to piece queer theory together in order that we may understand it. However, we need to ask ourselves the following question: what are the risks when we only think in terms of totality by conflating queer theory with either a queer subject or a theoretical formulation? As I have already demonstrated, we risk misinterpreting queer theory and erasing its variegated depths. I also intimated that we risk considering the productive possibilities that queer theory opens up, particularly for lesbian and gay politics. Further, we stall movement towards disciplinary cross-fertilisation. I would like to suggest, then, that social critiques should not simply think in terms of totality when it comes to engaging with queer theory, if this can even count as engagement in the first place. Engagement should be and needs to be balanced with more careful, critical readings, that is, more localised readings, which tease out the ruptural effects of any grand gestures that are made about queer theory. It is my belief that this would usher in more informed and accurate readings of queer theory. It would also make the conditions ripe for sociology and queer theory to work with(in) their differences so that they could construct new kinds of theoretical perspectives from which to work across and between disciplines. I perform and offer the following careful, critical readings of queer theory in an attempt to move sociology in this direction.

## Section II: Some More Careful, Critical Readings of Queer Theory

### i. "If the lesbian and gay subject is deconstructed, then. . . ."

Judith Butler has pointed out that it seems to many that it is a political necessity to articulate an identity, through a subject, that represents lesbians and gays because they are being publicly erased and obliterated by compulsory heterosexuality and homophobic strategies (1991, p. 19). We have been lead to believe that this should happen regardless of its price. In other words, its benefits will outweigh its costs. This presumption that politics requires a lesbian and gay subject in advance has featured in lesbian and gay politics, as well as in both older and more contemporary sexual analyses of various kinds (Bersani 1995; Cass 1979; Castle 1993; Dank 1971; D'Emilio 1983; Epstein 1987; Gamson 1996; Link 1993; Ponse 1978; Smith 1988, 1990; Troiden 1988; Weeks 1977; Wolfe and Penelope 1993). However, this is by no means enough. It is about time that we feel good about being lesbian and gay (The proclamation 'Gay is good!' is still very pertinent.). This is indeed incontrovertibly important taking into account that lesbian and gay lives are usually either misrepresented or do not even make their way into the thinkable, the imaginable, and the desirable.

Whether on the scene of (inter)national lesbian and gay activism, in the academic journals and 'zines, on the streets, in the privacy of our own homes, or even in our classrooms, compulsory heterosexuality and homophobic strategies pervade our every thoughts, moves, and intimacies (or lack of them). This is a time when the utterance 'I am a homosexual' in the United States military does not merely describe or report on a defiled and offensive 'lifestyle' but is also construed as homosexual conduct in and of itself, that is, performing precisely what the utterance discloses (Butler 1997b, p. 122; Halley 1996). This is a time when, although later abandoned, a financial and moral alliance was seriously considered between one of Scotland's most powerful banks, The Bank of Scotland, and 'God's prophet on earth,' the Born-again Christian crusader Pat Robertson (Hall and Nairn 1999, pp. 12-13). Having said this, chief

executive Peter Burt of the banking institution did not consider the joint venture to be a moral one. It was only a coincidence that Robertson believed that all feminists were bra-burning lesbians responsible for the breakdown of the 'family,' gay males were actually Nazi Satanists in disguise, and Hindus had no business administering government policies. This is a time when Tinky Winky of the Teletubbies is 'outed' by the United States Moral Majority leader Jerry Falwell (O'Bryan 1999, p. 31). According to Falwell, Tinky Winky is a 'screaming queen' who can no longer hide in the closet: his costume is purple (one of the gay pride colours), he has an antenna shaped like a triangle on his head (the gay pride symbol), and he occasionally carries a handbag around (a sure sign of a cosmopolitan kind of girl). In a strong sense, for Falwell, Tinky Winky is the archetypal gay male. Gay males are, in his little twisted fantasy, the exploiters and converters of children (those digital signals transmitted though the television are a ploy to convert), the paradigmatic exemplars of mincing obscenity, and that identity which cannot or dare not be. *And this is a time when* we are haunted by high prevalence rates of lesbian and gay adolescent suicides (Gibson 1989). For lesbians and gays, the hard statistics come as no surprise: in the United States, lesbian and gay teenagers are two to three times likelier to attempt suicide than others, approximately 30% of teen suicides are those of lesbian and gays, and one-third of lesbian and gay teenagers reported that they had attempted suicide.

It is my belief that the statistics on lesbian and gay adolescent suicides highlight the profligate effect compulsory heterosexuality and homophobic strategies have on lesbians and gays. They also highlight the degree to which compulsory heterosexuality and homophobic strategies will go to erase and obliterate the existence of lesbians and gays. Yet, these statistics do more than just represent the violence waged against lesbians and gays. They are violence in their literal exegesis, hitting home very hard. Within the aforementioned terms, then, lesbians and gays are not only the unthinkable and unimaginable, the unliveable and unviable but

are also death itself or, at the very least, the threat of death. It is therefore understandable that there have been calls for a lesbian and gay subject to represent and initiate lesbian and gay interests in political domains. If lesbian and gay lives are being misrepresented, excluded, erased, and obliterated by compulsory heterosexuality and homophobic strategies, then the political task must be to contest and develop a resistance against the violence that is being waged against them. A reverse-discourse is unthinkable without a foundation. Without a subject, as previously remarked, lesbians and gays would not be able to represent one another. Further, they would not be able to articulate a viable identity that would challenge and disable the cultural, social, and political conditions of their subordination.

However, queer critiques of representation and identity politics have taken issue with the lesbian and gay subject serving as a political point of departure—the so-called 'deconstruction of the lesbian and gay subject.' This has taken place in the writings of Judith Butler (1990, 1991, 1993); Ed Cohen (1991); Teresa de Lauretis (1991b); Lee Edelman (1994, 1995); Diana Fuss (1989); David M. Halperin (1995); Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (1990, 1993a [1993]); and Michael Warner (1991) in some way or another. Within this framework, the identity categories 'lesbian' and 'gay' have appeared in inverted commas. Queer theorists have questioned the viability of a subject representing lesbians and gays through an identity category. In the main, they have contended that a subject cannot fully or adequately represent lesbians and gays.

This suspension of identity has been understood by social critiques as the death of the subject (Bersani 1995; Castle 1993; Gamson 1996; Link 1993; Wolfe and Penelope 1993). In other words, it has been understood as a bidding farewell to the articulation of lesbian and gay realities and experiences. We cannot speak as and for lesbians and gays through a subject. Susan Wolfe and Julia Penelope convey this understanding in the introduction to their anthology on lesbian cultural criticism:

> We [cannot] afford to allow privileged patriarchal discourse (of which poststructuralism is but a new variant) to erase the collective identity Lesbians have only recently begun to establish. . . . For what has in fact resulted from the incorporation of deconstructive discourse, in academic 'feminist' discourse at least [feminist discourse in queer theory], is the word Lesbian has been placed in quotation marks, either used or mentioned, and the existence of real Lesbians has been denied, once again (1993, p. 5).

For Wolfe and Penelope, the deconstructive discourse that encases the identity term 'Lesbian' in inverted commas signals the erasure and denial of a lesbian subject. The Lesbian, within this destructive deconstructive discourse, does not exist. There is no real Lesbian who represents a lesbian existence through the identity category. The Lesbian or, more accurately, the 'lesbian' is only an empty placeholder that she clings to, dead. Understood as the death of the lesbian and gay subject, these social critiques have contended that queer theory's deconstructive exercise is either anti-political or, worse yet, power (read: compulsory heterosexuality and homophobia) in recoil: 'isn't the death of the lesbian and gay subject a refusal to engage in politics?' or 'isn't the death of the lesbian and gay subject how compulsory heterosexuality and homophobic strategies would have it, that is, lesbians and gays don't constitute a (legitimate) subject position?'

I previously implied at the beginning of this subsection that the lesbian and gay subject has not solely featured in contemporary sexual analyses. Previously and usually referred to as the 'Homosexual,' the lesbian and gay subject had a central place in social-historical constructionist accounts of sexuality in the 1970s and '80s. It had a notable place within Steven Epstein's essay "Gay Politics, Ethnic Identity" (1987) in particular. Epstein argues for the political utility of reappropriating ethnicity as a model for gay identity and resistance:

> How do you protest a socially imposed categorization, except by organizing around the category? Just as blacks cannot fight the arbitrariness of racial classifications without organizing *as blacks,* so gays could not advocate the overthrow of the sexual order without making their gayness the very basis of their claims (1987, p. 19, italics included in original)

In other words, organising around the identity category enables gays to contest their social labelling and fight back against the 'sexual order.' I elaborate on this centralisation within social-historical constructionism in Chapter Three.

I do have some questions about lesbians and gays organising as an 'ethnic minority' (Is the very use of inverted commas a sign that I am about to either dismiss or negate such a notion altogether?). If we organise around an identity category, what will be its strategic aim? Who and what will discursively constitute the version that is circulated? What exclusions will be subsequently produced by the consolidation of identity, that is, who and what will not be represented by the identity category? In short, what will be the benefits and costs of consolidating identity? Butler, Cohen, and Fuss also echo the sentiments of these questions:

> There is no question that gays and lesbians are threatened by the violence of public erasure, but the decision to counter that violence must be careful not to reinstall another in its place. Which versions of lesbian or gay ought to be rendered visible, and which internal exclusions will that rendering visible institute (Butler 1991, p. 19)?

> So, although the assumption that 'we' constitute a 'natural' community because we share a sexual identity might appear to offer a stable basis for group formations, my experience suggests that it can just as often interrupt the process of creating intellectual and political projects which can gather 'us' together across time and space. By predicating 'our' affinity

upon the assertion of a common 'sexuality,' we tacitly agree to leave unexplored any 'internal' contradictions which undermine the coherence we desire from the imagined certainty of an unassailable commonality or of incontestable sexuality (Cohen 1991, p. 72).

> Is politics based on identity, or is identity based on politics? . . . Can feminist, gay, or lesbian subjects afford to dispense with the notion of unified, stable identities or must we begin to base our politics on something other than identity? What, in other words, is the politics of 'identity politics' (Fuss 1989, p. 100)?

For the previously cited queer theorists, the subject does not fully or adequately represent lesbians and gays through an identity category because identity categories are never merely descriptive for them, simply reporting on a perceived homogenous constituency. They are also normative and exclusionary. The subject who is made to stand in for an identity category sets out the criterion by which it is discursively constituted. As such, the identity category that is used to represent lesbians and/or gays will proceed with a set of legitimations and exclusions, and representation will only be extended to those lesbians and gays who meet its discursive criterion.

This questioning and suspension of the subject should not be understood as a thorough dismissal or negation of the lesbian and gay subject or doing away with the political usefulness of identity categories. Butler persistently reiterates this throughout her work: "Obviously, the political task is not to refuse representational politics—as if we could" (1990, p. 5); "Clearly, I am not legislating against the use of the term [lesbian or gay]" (1991, p. 16); and "the category . . . does not become useless through deconstruction" (1993, p. 29). Rather, the deconstruction of the lesbian and gay subject should be understood as inquiring into what the subject and identity category authorise and exclude and safeguarding those exclusions for possible future uses. Any articulation of identity is

contingent and partial. This unsettling of the identity category's foundationalist weight thus enables the identity category to be a permanent site of variable meanings and serve multiple purposes, which, of course, can never be fully known in advance. This is to politicise, transform, and strengthen lesbian and gay identity and politics from within.[5]

**ii. "If queer theory uses the identity term 'queer' as an umbrella term to describe a number of anti-normative sexual identities, then. . . ."**

Questions of gender and (lesbian) sexuality have had a central place within queer theory. In the main, the task has been twofold.

In the first instance, queer theorists have taken issue with the risks and limitations of some feminist attempts to invoke sexuality as an issue of sexual difference, particularly the work of Catherine MacKinnon (1982, 1987) (Butler 1993, pp. 238-39; de Lauretis 1988; Sedgwick 1990, pp. 31-32). MacKinnon theorises sexuality within a structurally-determined framework of sexual difference. She contends that sexual relations of domination and subordination institute and maintain gender categories: "Sexuality is to feminism what work is to [M]arxism . . . the moulding, direction, expression of sexuality organizes society into two sexes, women and men" (MacKinnon 1982, pp. 515-16). Within this sex hierarchy, 'men' are defined by their dominating social position over women, whereas 'women' are defined by their subordination to men. Here, sexual difference is not only understood as the inculcation of sexual relations but is also understood as the primary object of sexuality. However, the previously-cited queer theorists have argued that the rigid framework ignores other forms of sexuality that do not take sexual difference as their primary object or are not about object choice at all (for example, homosexuality, bestiality, intergenerational sex, sex with multiple people, commercial sex, the use of manufactured objects, and public sex). Butler has further problematised the general privileging of sexual difference (1993, pp. 93-140, 167-85). For Butler, "the disjunctive ordering of the

human as 'masculine' or 'feminine' . . . take[s] place not only through a heterosexualizing symbolic with its taboo on homosexuality, but through a complex set of racial injunctions which operate in part through the taboo on miscegenation" (1993, p. 167). In other words, sexual difference is also a set of heterosexualising and racialising norms. In this light, for example, the theoretical framework that locks sexuality within a structurally determined framework of sexual difference can inadvertently reproduce and further reinforce heterosexist assumptions of maleness and femaleness without realising it. Therefore, the analysis that foregrounds the monolithic workings of a vector of power over another, whether it be gender, sexuality, race, class, ethnicity, or nationality, ignores their interconnectedness, proceeding with exclusions that might well question the premises that are being made.

In the second instance, queer theorists have problematised the continuing failure within academic and political discourses to render gender and lesbian sexuality visible in the identity formula 'lesbian and gay' (as well as the identity constituent elements of race, class, ethnicity, and nationality) (Butler 1991, 1993; de Lauretis 1991a, 1991b; Dorenkamp and Henke 1995a, 1995b; Sedgwick 1993a [1993]). According to de Lauretis, at the turn of the 1990s, 'lesbian and gay' or 'gay and lesbian' was the then-current identity formula used by academics and political activists to refer to lesbians and gays (1991b, pp. iv-v). It had superseded the earlier ones of 'gay' and 'homosexual,' which, as mentioned in the previous subsection, had roots within academic and political discourses of the late 1960s and '70s. de Lauretis cites examples of how the identity terms 'gay' and 'homosexual' had been used in titles of 'classic works' by White gay male historiographers and sociologists (1991b, pp. iv-v). Some of them include: *Homosexual: Oppression and Liberation* (Altman 1971); *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities: The Making of a Homosexual Minority in the United States, 1940-1970* (D'Emilio 1983); "Gay Politics, Ethnic Identity" (Epstein 1987); *The Making of the Modern Homosexual* (Plummer 1981b); and *Coming Out: Homosexual Politics in Britain from*

*the Nineteenth Century to the Present* (Weeks 1977). According to de Lauretis, this discourse of White gay male historiography and sociology on sexuality was mainly, if not exclusively, male-orientated and had little, if no, understanding of female/lesbian sexuality, which was its own separate enterprise (1991b, pp. iv-v). de Lauretis writes:

> [an] understanding of female socio-sexual specificity . . . developed separately from the printed discourse on white lesbianism that started with Jeanette Foster's *Sex Variant Women in Literature* (1956) and continued with, among others, Sydney Abbott and Barbara Love's *Sappho Was a Right-on Woman* (1972), Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon's *Lesbian/Woman* (1972), Jill Johnston's *Lesbian Nation: The Feminist Solution* (1973), Ti-Grace Atkinson's *Amazon Odyssey* (1974), Dolores Klaich's *Woman Plus Woman* (1974), Barbara Ponse's *Identities in the Lesbian World: The Social Construction of Self* (1978), to Adrienne Rich's "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence," first published in *Signs* in 1980. Those early titles remark an emphasis on gender and socio-cultural specificity—woman, lesbian, feminist, amazon—that is absent from the previous set, but has characterized lesbian thought and self-representation from early on (1991b, pp. iv-v).

de Lauretis contends that usages of the superseded identity formula 'lesbian and gay' maintained this marginalisation of women's 'socio-sexual specificity.' According to de Lauretis, the shorthand was, more often than not, exclusionary and ignored questions of gender and lesbian sexuality: "our 'differences' . . . are less represented by the discursive coupling of . . . 'lesbian and gay,' than they are elided by most of the contexts in which the phrase is used; that is to say, differences are implied in it but then simply taken for granted or even covered over by the word 'and' (1991b, pp. v-vi.). Whether "by extending the male form of (homo)sexuality to females," assuming the latter was only a 'slight variation' of the former, or merely considering lesbian sexuality as an afterthought, lesbianism was the lesser

of two sexualities represented in and by the discursive coupling of 'lesbian and gay' (1991b, p. iv).

de Lauretis introduces and proposes the identity term 'queer' in place of 'lesbian,' 'gay,' and 'lesbian and gay' (1991b, pp. iv-v). She does not want 'queer' to reproduce their 'fine distinctions' or to gravitate towards any one of them and their 'ideological liabilities,' but, rather, "to both transgress and transcend them—or at the very least problematize them" (1991b, pp. v). In other words, she wants 'queer' to problematise exclusionary uses of identity. Within academic and political discourses, 'queer' has come to signify not just lesbians and gays. It has been used as an umbrella term to signify a number of anti-normative sexual identities. Sedgwick has outlined some of them:

> [p]ushy femmes, radical faeries, fantasists, drags, clones, leatherfolk, ladies in tuxedoes, feminist women or feminist men, masturbators, bulldaggers, divas, Snap! Queens, butch bottoms, storytellers, transsexuals, aunties, wanna-bes, lesbian-identified men or lesbians who sleep with men, or . . . people able to relish, learn from, or identify with such (1993a [1993], p. 8).

Although the introduction of 'queer' marks an important shift in problematising exclusionary uses of the identity formula 'lesbian and gay,' it has seemed to some social critiques that this alternative both confirms and refutes queer theory's own enterprise (Bonwick 1993; Castle 1993; Jeffreys 1993, 1994; Maggenti 1991; Parnaby 1993; Smyth 1992). In particular, these cited social critiques have taken issue with queer's gender and lesbian non-specificity. According to these social critiques, if queer theory uses the identity term 'queer' as an umbrella term to describe a number of anti-normative sexual identities, then gender and lesbian specificity dissolve in any uses of the generic term. Philippa Bonwick captures these sentiments very well: "Perhaps the most damaging aspect of the pervasive push to be queer is that it shrouds lesbians in an ever thicker cloak of invisibility. . . . Queer totally ignores the politics of gender. Using a generic term wipes out women again" (1993, p. 10). Bonwick

further conveys how queer's gender and lesbian non-specificity has been understood by these social critiques. They have suspected that it is an extension, more so a *reproduction*, of how the identity formula 'lesbian and gay' has historically operated within academic and political discourses: the exclusion of questions of gender and lesbian sexuality. In this light, the identity term 'queer' has been translated as anti-feminist and a further affirmation of gay male sexuality and supremacy: 'queer' is "[a]nother way in which lesbians are being pulled back into cultural subordination to gay men" (Jeffreys 1993, p. 143). As it is set up, then, 'queer' is understood as a backlash.

However, queer's gender and lesbian non-specificity is not the dissolution of gender and lesbian sexuality. It is not a reproduction of the identity formula 'lesbian and gay.' For de Lauretis, the non-specificity of queer seeks to problematise and amplify differences within the identity terms 'lesbian,' 'gay,' and 'lesbian and gay' and reformulate sexual identity. Drawing upon writings of lesbians and gay men of colour,[6] de Lauretis' thesis is that sexual identity can no longer be understood as stable and unified, divorced of other markers of identity and difference (for example, gender, race, class, ethnicity, and nationality). Rather, sexual identity is always "emergent . . . and thus still fuzzily defined, undercoded, or discursively dependent on more established forms," that is, an intersection of gender, race, class, ethnicity, and nationality (de Lauretis 1991b, p. i). de Lauretis wants 'queer' to play on sexual identity being a permanent state of becoming, that is, 'emergent,' and tease out and examine the ways in which sexual identity is not just a question of sexuality but is also one of gender, race, class, ethnicity, and nationality.

This general understanding of lesbian and gay identity and/or the identity term 'queer' has featured in different ways in a number of queer works (Bergmann and Smith 1995; Butler 1993; Butler and Martin 1994a, 1994b; Dorenkamp and Henke 1995a, 1995b; Garber 1992; Parker *et al.* 1992; Raffo 1997; Sedgwick 1992). For example, Dorenkamp's and Henke's edited anthology *Negotiating Lesbian and Gay Subjects* (1995b)

is a collection of 10 essays that were generated for and presented at the fifth annual Lesbian and Gay Studies Conference held over three days at Rutgers University, New Jersey in 1991 (Dorenkamp and Henke 1995a, pp. 1-3). In line with de Lauretis (1991b), Dorenkamp and Henke and their contributors work from the premise that lesbian and gay identity intersects with other non-hierarchical markers of identity and difference (for example, race, class, nationality, language, religion, and ability), which subverts the notion that it is monolithic: "while it may be possible to be a lesbian or gay man, it is never possible to be only a lesbian or gay man" (1995a, p. 2). In this light, according to Dorenkamp and Henke, "the essays in *Negotiating Lesbian and Gay Subjects* [1995b]. . . are in radical disagreement with one another. Such discord is not a bad thing, however, as it continually forces us to critically rethink the ways in which we negotiate lesbian and gay subjectivity—both for ourselves and for others" (1995a, p. 3). The subjects of the essays are queerly diverse, for example: Sylvia Molloy (1995) considers the relation between gay literary figures, particularly Wilde, and the construction of Latin American national (masculine) identity at the turn of the nineteenth century *('modernismo')*; Joseph A. Boone (1995) examines the construction of the sexual Arab 'other' in relation to the West's colonising ethos; and Richard Fung (1995) muses over the processes he went through in becoming gay and Asian, which were both simultaneous and distinct.

In short, Sedgwick best captures the thrust of the identity term (as partly cited in the previous broad section):

> That's one of the things that 'queer' can refer to: the open mesh of possibilities, gaps, overlaps, dissonances, and resonances, lapses and excesses of meaning when the constituent elements of anyone's gender, of anyone's sexuality aren't made (or *can't be* made) to signify monolithically. . . . A lot of the most exciting recent work around 'queer' spins the term outward along dimensions that can't be subsumed under gender and sexuality at all. . . (1993a [1993], pp. 8-9, italics included in original).

I would further add that 'queer' is not a cumulative list of identity components marked by those proverbial commas. 'Queer' is constituted through their convergence with and divergence from one another.

# Chapter Three

## Some Critical Citations:

## Problematising the Queer Erasure of Sociological Inquiry

> Sadly, queer theory represents an uncritical citation of its disciplinary and national locations: a repetition of American, humanities-based scholarship which actively ignores the history of ethnographic cultural studies, as well as the historical contributions of sociology and anthropology to investigations of sexuality and gender.
>
> —Ki Namaste, "'Tragic Misreadings'" (1996, p. 197)

### Introduction and Purpose

In a concerted effort to continue to have good faith in our ability to shift the grounds of belonging, I now want to focus, within the next two chapters, on an unproductive queer presupposition and an unproductive queer preoccupation, both of which have put a stranglehold on that good faith. However, I am not merely concerned here with their unproductiveness in the simplest sense, that is, precluding engagement with sociological inquiry. I am also interested in how their unproductiveness has productively constituted and demarcated the contours of queer disciplinary pursuits. Furthermore, and perhaps more importantly, I am interested in opening up possibilities for reengagement of that productivity.

At this juncture, I want to problematise and rework the significance of an underlying presupposition that is used to legitimise the methodological/theoretical point of departure of the project of one of queer theory's queerest and thorniest thinkers: Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's *Epistemology of the Closet* (1990). In particular, I want to problematise and rework her presupposition that 'antihomophobic terms of analysis' were considerably underdeveloped at the time of the writing and publication of her project. Her usage of antihomophobic terms of analysis simply, yet problematically designates a set of theoretical terms for

analysing sexuality and not other markers of identity/difference as well (for example, gender, race, and class).[1] For those of us who are trained in flexing the muscle fibres of our sociological imagination, it comes as no surprise that quite the opposite is true: a fertile set of terms for analysing sexuality was well-cultivated by sociologists before Sedgwick even began to conceive her project. Nonetheless, her underlying presupposition analytically works to exclude, through erasure, those fertile terms from the parameters of her project. It is as though they never existed.

The labour and economics of Sedgwick's underlying presupposition is 'significant' insofar as it is symptomatic of queer theory's all-too-often, by-now calculable failure to acknowledge and actively engage with practitioners of sociology. This failure has primarily taken place through the conflation of Michel Foucault with social-historical constructionism. When this has taken place, it has operated to erase sociological social-historical constructionist accounts of sexuality from queer readings and writings, which, in turn, has acted as a fulcrum to preclude any kind of engagement with sociological inquiry in general. In this light, the larger motive driving this chapter is not to simply take issue with Sedgwick's underlying presupposition. It also seeks to problematise and rework the exclusion of sociological inquiry from queer critical engagement in general. Central to this erasure is the simultaneous production of queer disciplinary terms and practices.

My objective, to begin with, is to explore the significance of Sedgwick's underlying presupposition. I will briefly sketch the outlines of her presupposition, examine its acute implications and consequences, and demonstrate how it is damagingly in line with and generative of queer knowledge.

The second section will then set out to productively rework Sedgwick's presupposition, including its significance. This will take place by bringing to the forefront, through readings, a select number of essays and texts that have proven to be durable and notable investigations of sexuality within sociological social-historical constructionist quarters. They include Mary

McIntosh's classic and widely-cited essay "The Homosexual Role" (1968), which was influenced by mainstream structural-functional role theory and the labeling perspective, and John H. Gagnon's and William S. Simon's *Sexual Conduct* (1973b), which was influenced by symbolic interactionist theory. Prior to unpacking *Sexual Conduct* (1973b), I will be reading an earlier essay of Gagnon and Simon, "Introduction: Deviant Behavior and Sexual Deviance" (1967a), which outlines a structural-functionalist theory of sexuality. The primary aim of these readings is to practically do what queer theory has failed to do: *partly* acknowledge a set of sociological terms for analysing sexuality. In addition, these readings will demonstrate that well-cultivated terms for analysing sexuality pre-existed the conception of *Epistemology of the Closet* (1990).

Please note that I intentionally and cautiously use the word 'partly.'[2] This is the case because I cannot masterfully group a set of investigations under the single and static heading of 'social-historical constructionism.' No single compilation exists or ought to exist in the strictest sense. As Carole S. Vance is correct to point out, "[t]he widespread use of social construction as a term and as a paradigm obscures the fact that constructionist writers have used this term in diverse ways. . . . The intellectual history of social construction is a complex one" (1998 [1989], pp. 162, 164). For example, some social-historical constructionists have argued that certain aspects of sexuality are fixed (for example, desire and erotic interest) whilst others are not (for example, sexual identity). On the other hand, some have argued that every aspect of sexuality, even its deepest recesses, is socially constructed and historically specific.[3] Furthermore, what right do 'I' have to make judgment on who/what ought to designate social-historical constructionism? A move to produce some grand notion of social-historical constructionism would only reproduce yet another version in place of queer theory's version and similarly open myself up to misrepresentation, suspicion, and protestation as to who/what constitutes social-historical constructionism. Thus, I can only make partial,

provisional acknowledgements here and now. I also take this issue up in the next chapter.

It is fair to accept that I do not intend to create some synthetic notion of social-historical constructionism. It is also fair to accept that I do not have any right to make a final judgement on who/what constitutes social-historical constructionism. However, there is one significant issue of methodology that remains unaccounted for: why do I choose to publicise the aforementioned pieces? Is this a conscious decision that is politically wrought from the very beginning, in the sense of the politics that engulf disciplinary identifications? The answer is an outright 'no.' I have chosen to elaborate on McIntosh's "The Homosexual Role" (1968) for three significant reasons. In the first instance, the timing of its publication coincided with homosexuals politically contesting their cultural conditions on both sides of the Atlantic. In the second instance, it contributed to that protestation theoretically within sex research and sexual theory. In the third instance, her reconceptualisation of homosexuality as a 'role' challenged sex role theory of her day. I have chosen to elaborate on Gagnon's and Simon's work because it highlights a theoretical tension between social theories of sexuality of their day. I elaborate on these points in the second section.

Of course, the aforementioned sociological pieces will be given their own privileged discursive space for the time being. However, I loathe having them lie dormant for too long for the very simple, yet important reason that we need to move beyond sticking to our guns. What I want to do is conjugate a couple of theoretical lines interweaving queer theory with sociological inquiry in order to demonstrate that there is potential for disciplinary cross-fertilisation and to initially suggest how we might move in this direction. This will firstly involve an extended reading of Gagnon's and Simon's (1986) use of 'cultural sexual scripts' to conceptualise the production of interpersonal and intrapsychic scripted sexual behaviour (a revision of their earlier work). It will then briefly link with Sedgwick's (1990) hypothesis that a set of mutual contradictions has been central to

twentieth-century understandings of homo/heterosexual definition. At the end of making this link, I use the work of Butler (1993, 1995) on the subject and agency to briefly highlight Gagnon's and Simon's over-theorisation of the social actor and to initially propose how they might reconsider their humanist leanings.

## Section I: The Significance of a Queer Presupposition

### i. Sedgwick's Queer Presupposition

In laying out the methodological/theoretical trajectory of her assertive and unapologetic book *Epistemology of the Closet* (1990), Sedgwick informs the reader of her genuine decision *not* to pursue an integration of feminist (that is, gender-centred) and antihomophobic (that is, sexuality-centred) terms of analysis (pp. 14-16). Rather than explore how they might productively intersect, Sedgwick wants to attend to a more urgent and much-needed 'divergent' project: the further cultivation of antihomophobic terms of analysis. Indeed, according to Sedgwick, "[t]he only imperative that the book means to treat as categorical is the very broad one of pursuing an antihomophobic inquiry" (1990, p. 14). In this light, according to Sedgwick, the present project pursues a very different path in both its 'subject matter and perspective' than its predecessor, *Between Men* (1985), to the extent that *Between Men* is a 'fusion' of feminist thought and antihomophobic concerns.[4]

Sedgwick legitimises her methodological/theoretical point of departure by arguing that antihomophobic terms of analysis are considerably underdeveloped (1990, p. 16). This is done by making a brief distinction between the disciplinary rootedness of feminist and antihomophobic terms of analysis. According to Sedgwick, when the disciplinary crudeness of antihomophobic terms of analysis is weighed up against the analytical and critical leverage of feminist terms of analysis, that crudeness is outweighed by the latter's more established, resourceful analytical and critical leverage ('We've come a long way, baby!'). Sedgwick pressingly writes:

> I have made this choice [to pursue an antihomophobic inquiry] largely because I see feminist analysis as being considerably more developed than . . . antihomophobic analysis at present—theoretically, politically, and institutionally. There are more people doing feminist analysis, it has been being done longer, it is less precarious and dangerous (still precarious and dangerous enough), and there is by now a much more broadly usable set of tools available for its furtherance. This is true notwithstanding the extraordinary recent efflorescence of gay and lesbian studies, without which, as I've suggested, the present book would have been impossible; that flowering is young, fragile, under extreme threat from both within and outside academic institutions, and still necessarily dependent on a limited pool of paradigms and readings (1990, p. 16).

However, it is worth noting that the underdevelopment of antihomophobic terms of analysis does not solely motivate and legitimise Sedgwick's decision not to pursue an integration of terms of analysis (1990, p. 16). Their very cultivation is radically contingent upon that decision as well. According to Sedgwick, the success in cultivating antihomophobic terms of analysis largely depends on making them a central interest in and of themselves and not a sentimental marginality giving way to other, more established disciplinary discourses. Their marginalisation would risk a premature development. It is not until a reflexive centrality has been established that antihomophobic inquirers can then begin the difficult, yet crucial task of widening their circumference and exploring their variegated depths with other disciplinary discourses.

In light of Sedgwick's argument, we might draw the following conclusions, to which, in fact, she does gesture (1990, pp. 14-16). Firstly, antihomophobic terms of analysis are currently in the making at the time of the writing and publication of *Epistemology of the Closet* (1990) and are awaiting the right conditions and special care and attention needed for their flowering—theoretically, politically, and institutionally. Secondly, it is

thus her project that is pleased to make available new and productive antihomophobic terms of analysis. Thirdly, *Epistemology of the Closet* (1990) will be one of *the* starting points for other like-minded antihomophobic inquirers to cultivate antihomophobic terms of analysis. Fourthly, once a sense of belonging has been established, then the history of that grounding will provisionally date back to *Epistemology of the Closet* (1990). Of course, the latter conclusion will be coextensive with the glorification and canonisation of her heuristically powerful project.

These renderings seem especially true if we take stock of the focal readings and the limited theoretical toolkit fuelling Sedgwick's project altogether. They consist of:

1. Foucault's poststructuralist, social-historical constructionist account of sexuality, *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1* (1978): "[I]n accord with Foucault's demonstration, whose results I will take to be axiomatic, that modern Western culture has placed what it calls sexuality in a more and more distinctively privileged relation to our most prized constructs of individual identity, truth, and knowledge, it becomes truer and truer that the language of sexuality not only intersects with but transforms the other languages and relations by which we know" (Sedgwick 1990, p. 3);
2. Henry James' writings of male homosexual panic (1947, 1964): "In the work of . . . James, among others, male homosexual panic was acted out as a sometimes agonized sexual anesthesia that was damaging to both its male subjects and its female non-objects" (Sedgwick 1990, p. 188);
3. two texts dating back to the year 1891,[5] Herman Melville's *Billy Budd, Sailor* (1984) and Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1949): "The year 1891 is a good moment to which to look for a cross-section of the inaugural discourses of modern homo/heterosexuality. . . . *Billy Budd* and *Dorian Gray* are among the texts that have set the terms for a modern

homosexual identity. And in the Euro-American culture of this past century it has been notable that foundational texts of modern gay culture . . . have been the identical texts that mobilized and promulgated the most potent images and categories for (what is now visible as) the canon of homophobic mastery" (Sedgwick 1990, p. 49);

4. Friedrich Nietzsche's philosophical enterprise (1966, 1968, 1973, 1979): "Nietzsche offers writing of an open, Whitmanlike seductiveness, some of the loveliest there is, about the joining of men with men, but he does so in the stubborn, perhaps even studied absence of any explicit generalizations, celebrations, analyses, reifications of these bodies as specifically same-sex ones" (Sedgwick 1990, p. 133);
5. Marcel Proust's *Remembrance of Things Past* (1982): "[*Remembrance of Things Past*] has remained into the present the most vital center of the energies of gay literary high culture, as well as of many manifestations of modern literary high culture in general. It offers what seems to have been the definitive performance of the presiding incoherences of modern gay (and hence nongay) sexual specification and gay (and hence nongay) gender: definitive, that is, in setting up positions and sight lines, not in foreclosing future performance. . ." (Sedgwick 1990, p. 213); and, lastly,
6. Gayle S. Rubin's widely-read essay "Thinking Sex" (1984): "This book will hypothesize, with Rubin, that the question of gender and the question of sexuality, inextricable from one another though they are in that each can be expressed only in the terms of the other, are nonetheless not the same question, that in twentieth-century Western culture gender and sexuality represent two analytic axes that may productively be imagined as being as distinct from one another as, say, gender and

> class, or class and race. Distinct, that is to say, no more than minimally, but nonetheless usefully" (Sedgwick 1990, p. 30).

### ii. The Working of Sedgwick's Queer Presupposition

I must admit, at this juncture, that I am drawn to Sedgwick's purposeful attempt to further develop antihomophobic terms of analysis. Furthermore, I applaud the magnetic relation that her project can potentially foster with another like-minded antihomophobic inquirer. I strongly believe that our power to survive is contingent upon us taking hold of and running with our talent to produce, test, and use fresh resources of antihomophobic terms of analysis for marking, unmarking, and remarking the world around us, a world that has too easily, too readily, and too often learned to violently mark us as 'other non-objects' for its continued sustenance and maintenance. This is not mere trivial play. It is deadly serious play born out of the sheer necessity to survive. However, despite her purposeful attempt, I find it somewhat disconcerting. In particular, I take issue with her underlying presupposition of having to work with a more or less bare garden. We have been closer to the development of antihomophobic terms of analysis than what she has us believe. To be more blunt, it has already happened. Where were you, Eve?

The cultivation of terms for analysing sexuality long ago flowered within sociological domains, particularly through the labeling approach and symbolic interactionist theory (for example, Gagnon 1977; Gagnon and Simon 1967b, 1970, 1973a, 1973b, 1986; McIntosh 1968; Plummer 1975, 1981b, 1982); ethnomethodology (for example, Garfinkel 1967); social-historical constructionism (citations to follow); and materialist approaches (for example, Delphy 1977; Smith 1988; Smith 1990; Wittig 1980). The social-historical constructionist work of Steven Epstein (1987), David Greenberg (1988), David Greenberg and Marcia Bystryn (1984), Stephen O. Murray (1984), Barbara Ponse (1978), and Jeffrey Weeks (1977, 1981, 1985, 1986, 1989 [1981]), in particular, have enabled that flowering to grow, blossom, and mature with increasing rapidity each season. Drawing

from the labeling approach, symbolic interactionist theory, and ethnomethodology and influenced by feminism and Marxism, social-historical constructionist perspectives formulated thoughts on the origins, changing form(ation)s and roles, and meanings of sexuality, particularly that of the 'modern' Homosexual. They also formulated thoughts on repression and political strategies of resistance. Broadly, social-constructionist perspectives challenged biological and transcultural/historical understandings of sexuality, particularly those put forth by sexologists in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (for example, Sigmund Freud, Havelock Ellis, and Richard von Krafft-Ebing). Rather than asserting the naturalness of sexuality over time and across cultures, they argued that it is a variable construction shaped by culture, society, and history. This revision of sexuality is topical in the next broad section of the chapter.

However, Sedgwick's underlying presupposition works to exclude, through erasure, these sociological terms from the parameters of her project. Her underlying presupposition does not simply legitimise her methodological/theoretical point of departure. It also acts as one of the discursive means by which the parameters of her project are constituted and demarcated. Because terms for analysing sexuality are considerably underdeveloped for Sedgwick, well-cultivated ones cannot possibly exist within the parameters of her project. The possibility of their existence is incompatible with the internal logic of her project. As a consequence, her underlying presupposition analytically erases the aforementioned sociological terms from the outset.[6]

### iii. The Production of Queer Disciplinary Pursuits

Perhaps I am being too pedantic, making an undue fuss of an underlying presupposition that seeks to legitimise the methodological/theoretical point of departure of one queer thinker, one queer project. It may very well be the case that Sedgwick's underlying presupposition can be written off as an inefficacious or innocuous error. The moderate critic might further

concede that her presupposition is simply ignorance in its purest form. After all, she is a literary critic and not a practitioner of sociology. We cannot expect her to be well-versed or even familiar with sociological inquiry. However, as Sedgwick is correct to point out in her very same project, *paradoxically*, ignorance cannot be understood as a 'single Manichean, aboriginal maw of darkness' or similarly labelled as an 'originary, passive innocence,' as the architectonics of the Enlightenment would mistakenly presuppose (1990, pp. 7-8). Rather, ignorance is 'ignorance *of* a knowledge,' with its own "material or rhetorical leverage required to set the terms of, and to profit some way from," a particular flow of knowledge, whether that knowledge is understood as true or false (Sedgwick 1990, pp. 8, 11 italics included in original). In other words, because ignorance is 'ignorance *of* a knowledge,' ignorance designates a material and rhetorical wielding and collusion of knowledge or, rather, is knowledge in its constitutional and/or material effects. According to Sedgwick, "such ignorance effects can be harnessed, licensed, and regulated on a mass scale for striking enforcements," productively constraining people, material conditions, meanings, and/or (non-)subject positions (1990, pp. 4-5, 8). In this light, we might then begin to ask how her underlying presupposition is simultaneously structured by and generative of a particular flow of knowledge. Perhaps *queer* knowledge?

Although *Epistemology of the Closet* (1990) does not make any explicit reference to the term 'queer' and, hence, 'queer theory,' the timing of its publication and wider circulation within literary criticism and lesbian and gay studies at the turn of the 1990s coincided with, although by no means metonymically, the publication of a number of explosive queer works (for example, Bad Object-Choices 1991; Butler 1990; Cohen 1991; de Lauretis 1991a, 1991b; Fuss 1991b, 1991c). Together, these loosely-, yet tightly-knit works, including *Epistemology of the Closet* (1990), have broadly constituted and demarcated the disciplinary terms and practices of queer theory, whether or not their authors intended them to have such a reverberating effect in the first place. By using 'disciplinary terms and

practices,' I mean, for example: who speaks as a queer theorist and for queer theory, who participates in conversations and to what extent, what constitutes its methodological/theoretical trajectory and subjects/objects of study, and within which intellectual arenas conversations are to take place.

It is precisely these kinds of disciplinary terms and practices that have come under scrutiny from within sociological discourse. For some practitioners of sociology, to paraphrase the citation of Ki Namaste (1996, p. 197) in the epigraph, queer theory represents, in the main, an exclusionary textual practice of an elite few within the North American humanities that has repetitively refused to acknowledge and actively engage with contributions made by 'other' disciplinary locations to investigations of sexuality (for example, Epstein 1996 [1994]; Seidman 1996a). In other words, queer theory has evolved into a tightly-knit conglomerate of bedfellows whose intellectual interests and pursuits have been primarily incestuous. Sociological inquiry, in particular, has been one of those 'other' disciplinary locations. Its exclusion from the disciplinary parameters of queer critical engagement has chiefly occurred through the conflation of Foucault with social-historical constructionism.

Foucault's poststructuralist, social-historical constructionist account of sexuality and other writings of different, yet similar subject matter (for example, 1977, 1978, 1980, 1985, 1986) have had a lasting impact on queer critical engagement (for example, Butler 1990, 1991, 1993, 1997b, 1997c; Butler and Rubin 1997 [1994]; Cohen 1991; Halperin 1995; Sedgwick 1990). His work has enabled queer interrogators to think more seriously about, for instance: the horrifying and intimate relation between knowledge and power insofar as "knowledge is the magnetic field of power" (as so eloquently put by Sedgwick 1990, p. 4); the notion of 'sex' as a regulatory ideal whereby biological functions, desires, pleasures, acts, and anatomy are artificially arranged in a particular way for particular strategic aims within a particular cultural, social, and historical context; the disenchantment of libertarian politics; the constitutive and ambivalent role of discourse in the production of subjectivity; and the misnomer of identity

as a totalising construct. David M. Halperin even goes so far as to fanatically declare Foucault's sainthood: "I may not have worshiped Foucault at the time I wrote *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality* [1990], but I do worship him now. As far as I am concerned, the guy was a *fucking* saint" (1995, p. 6, italics my emphasis). Butler and Rubin make a similar emphatic gesture in an interview for the second special queer theory issue of the journal *differences*:

> GR: Yes. "Thinking Sex" [1984] had its roots back in 1977-78, and I started doing lecture versions of it in 1979. I think you were at one of these, at the Second Sex Conference at the New York Institute for the Humanities.
>
> JB: Right. The first time I saw a copy of Michel Foucault's *The History of Sexuality* [1978].
>
> GR: Was I waving it around?
>
> JB: Yes. You introduced it to me.
>
> GR: I was really, just totally hot for that book.
>
> JB: Yes, you made me hot for it too. . . (laughter) (1997 [1994], pp. 77-78).

On the surface, I do not take issue with Foucault's work having a lasting impact on queer theory. How can I? The impact has further spread and deepened sexuality as a topical concern—theoretically, politically, and institutionally. I do have a problem, however, when the impact is productively constructed with *un*productive aims. To be more precise, I have serious reservations with queer theory's tendency to conflate Foucault with social-historical constructionism. Indeed, as Epstein has pointed out in a cautionary essay, for many thinkers of the queer persuasion, "the concept of social construction is assumed to have sprung, like Athena, fully formed from the head of Michel Foucault. . ." (1996 [1994], p. 146). I would suggest that the conflation operates as a reduction that excludes, through erasure, sociological social-historical constructionist accounts of sexuality from queer critical engagement. The aforementioned interview of Rubin by Butler performs this very erasure.[7]

In response to Butler's comment that Foucault's *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1* (1978) was a fruitful alternative to psychoanalysis for Rubin in "Thinking Sex" (1984), Rubin warns against the conflation of Foucault with social-historical constructionism (Butler and Rubin 1997 [1994], p. 88). She takes issue with this conflation because it erases contributions made by other social-historical constructionists. An example is provided by Rubin for the reader. Rubin recounts a discussion about Foucault's work in which she participated on a gay studies list on the Internet. Within the discussion, one of the contributors cited Foucault as 'the' originator of social-historical constructionism. Missing from the contributor's citation was an acknowledgement and further discussion of other important social-historical constructionist works. Consequently, as Rubin remarks, "the key roles of people like Mary McIntosh, Jeffrey Weeks, Kenneth Plummer, and a host of other historians, anthropologists, and sociologists were completely erased. . ." (Butler and Rubin 1997 [1994], p. 88). Indeed, by citing Foucault as *the* originator of social-historical constructionism, the contributor condenses and restricts the empirical/theoretical field of social-historical constructionism within one central figure. This central figure, far from being a mere representation of social-historical constructionism, operates to control the very disciplinary terms and practices by which social-historical constructionism is constituted and demarcated. Subsequently, the work of other important social-historical constructionists is written over and erased. Rubin finds this disparaging because "Thinking Sex" (1984) is indebted to Weeks just as much as Foucault: "Weeks is one of the great under-appreciated figures in gay studies and the social theory of sexuality. He published the basic statement of social construction of homosexuality in 1977 [*Coming Out*], the year before Foucault's *History of Sexuality* [1978] was translated" (Butler and Rubin 1997 [1994], p. 88).

However, within this very same queer context, Butler and Rubin paradoxically perform what Rubin warns against (1997 [1994], p. 91). Following Rubin's parenthetical reference to the importance of Weeks'

contribution to "Thinking Sex" (1984) and the key role of sociologists, among others, to social-historical constructionism, Butler asks Rubin to further explain how Foucault has shaped her thinking. However, this is not a simple, innocuous question. Once it is asked, it concurrently elides Rubin's parenthetical reference to sociologists and conflates Foucault with social-historical constructionism. As a result, sociological social-historical constructionists are erased from their queer intellectual exchange. Unfortunately, Rubin further reinforces this erasure by actually answering Butler's question.

By erasing sociological social-historical constructionists from their queer exchange, I would suggest that it also acts as a fulcrum to further preclude engagement with sociological inquiry in general. The following (under)investments then ensue, which have indeed ensued over time within queer critical engagement: sociologists do not partially speak in the name of queer theory; sociological theory and practice do not in any way constitute queer theory's methodological/theoretical trajectory and subjects/objects of study; queer discussions do not move toward taking place within sociological domains; and the exclusion of sociological inquiry from queer critical engagement differentiates queer theory from other disciplinary discourses. There is no reading, thinking, and writing across and between disciplines. Therefore, on a more general level, the conflation of Foucault does not simply act as a fulcrum to preclude engagement with sociological inquiry. At the same time, it constitutes and demarcates the contours of queer disciplinary terms and practices.

We can now begin to think differently and, of course, *in*differently about Sedgwick's underlying presupposition. Indeed, we cannot write off Sedgwick's underlying presupposition as an inefficacious or innocuous error or further label it as ignorance in its purest form. The very obtuseness of her presupposition is increasingly significant to the degree that its working runs in parallel with a particular flow of queer knowledge: the erasure of sociological inquiry. Of course, the driving force behind each erasure is different. On the one hand, we have an intuition that

informs and structures the methodological/theoretical trajectory of a project and, on the other hand, the centralisation of a figure that pullulates the whole of social-historical constructionism. However, their labour economically functions the same in the end. Having said this, as I have just discussed, the erasure of sociological inquiry is not the only end product. It goes hand in hand with the production of queer disciplinary pursuits. This is, without question, tragic, considering sociological investigations of sexuality brought about a significant paradigm shift within sex research and sexual theory, as Epstein (1996) [1994] and Plummer (1992) outline in fine detail.[8] We therefore cannot assume that sociological contributions to investigations of sexuality are less important, less probing, or less refined than what has come out of queer theory over the years—on the contrary, to say the very least. They are just as important, just as probing, and just as refined, commanding and deserving recognition for their explosive potential to mark, unmark, and remark the world around us.

## Section II: Some Critical Citations

### i. McIntosh: The 'Homosexual Role'

McIntosh's "The Homosexual Role" (1968) is one of those classic pieces of work that somehow exceeds the problematics that it engenders or is engendered by. However, my usage of 'exceed' here does not in any way suggest that the essay's problematics are insignificant or not worthy of revision. Her essay has indeed been carefully and critically examined within sociological discourse: "it raises many more questions than it resolves" (Plummer 1981a, p. 23). The chief of these problematics is the narrow theoretical optic through which it is calibrated (Plummer 1981a, p. 23; Weeks 1989 [1981], p. 98). In its purposive effort to reconceptualise homosexuality as a 'role' through the lens of mainstream structural-functional role theory and the labeling perspective, particularly that of Howard S. Becker (1966) and Erving Goffman (1963), the essay both confirms and refutes the by-now, solidly established flaws of her usage of the concept of role, namely: "reification, over-determination, and

consensual absolutism" (Plummer 1981a, p. 23). In other words, McIntosh falls prey to granting the role god-like agency whereby it is presumed to unilaterally act on and control the social actor. It is as though the social actor is a passive recipient who somehow always freely agrees to take on some pre-ordained cultural law. No room is made available in her essay to consider the significant and consequential gap between the role and the social actor who fails to assume it. There are additional problematics: the existence of a homosexual role in late seventeenth-century England is contestable, definitions of sexuality are indicatively male, lesbianism is overshadowed by male homosexuality, and there is no substantial discussion about more complex subcultural roles (Faraday 1981, p. 115; Marshall 1981, pp. 137-39; Plummer 1981a, pp. 23-24; Weeks 1981, p. 82). However, to dwell on these problematics, no matter how serious they may be, is to overlook the theoretical and political significance of the essay. It is here where my usage of 'exceed' becomes clearer.

At the time of the publication of "The Homosexual Role," 1968, which I alluded to in the previous section, biologically-determined notions of sexuality dominated medical, legal, literary, and psychological discourses on the subject (D'Emilio 1983, pp. 129-48; Weeks 1977, pp. 156-67). In the main, sexuality was conceptualised as an essential and static attribute that a person either 'had' or 'really was,' across cultural, social, and historical contexts. Within this framework, the homosexual was conceptualised as a perverse, subnormal human. Homosexuality was a sickness that threatened the moral fabric and reproductive function of the 'family.' Although these views pervaded popular common sense, as well as moral and legal imperatives and crusades, they did not completely control homosexuality's conceptualisation.

At this time, on both sides of the Atlantic, there was a very public, very visible political contest of homosexual definition (D'Emilio 1983, pp. 223-39; Duberman 1993, pp. 139-212; Weeks 1977, pp. 168-189). Homosexuals were strategically organising around the category in order to shift its conceptualisation from one of pathology to one of social legitimacy

(Of course, this organising was more often fraught with conflicting interests and discourses on homosexuality than with solidarity and agreement.).[9] This protestation culminated into events like the Stonewall Riots of June 1969 in Greenwich Village of New York City, when and where lesbians, gays, drag queens, transsexuals, transvestites, and prohomosexuals rioted against institutionalised homophobia and proclaimed gay was 'good' for five days. McIntosh theoretically contributed to this protestation within sex research and sexual theory. She wild(e)ly inaugurated the notion that sexuality, particularly homosexuality, is not biologically determined. Rather, it is of social concern and inquiry and cannot be divorced from its cultural, social, and historical conditions. This timely and significant suggestion gave rise to a great paradigm shift for many practitioners within sex research and sexual theory and ushered in the beginnings of what would become more commonly known as social-historical constructionism, in its various forms, over time.[10] It is therefore precisely to this extent that her essay by far exceeds the problematics that it engenders or is engendered by. However, biologically-determined notions of sexuality did not lose their diacritical potential to produce and govern discourses on sexuality. On the contrary, they continued and have continued to exert discursive authority, even within quarters of social-historical constructionism (Saghir and Robins 1973; Spada 1979; Whitam 1977). However, what was different was that they could no longer claim propriodescriptive authority.

However, McIntosh's essay does not exceed its problematics solely because it prompted a theoretical shift for practitioners within sex research and sexual theory. It was also an important breakthrough within mainstream structural-functional role theory, which has received very little recognition. In particular, her reconceptualisation of homosexuality as a role inadvertently challenged sex role theory. As R. W. Connell outlines, sex role theory throughout the 1960s was primarily an 'analysis of a normative standard case' (1987, p. 51).[11] The normative standard case designates the abstract and conventional heterosexist nuclear family and

its sexual division of labour and 2.4 children. According to Connell, it was standard because it typified the majority of people's lives. It was normative because both theorists and laypeople presumed that it was the "proper (or socially functional or biologically appropriate) way to live" (Connell 1987, p. 51). Within this framework, homosexuality was understood as a failure to perform a role, that is, the normative standard case. However, if homosexuality is understood as a role, as McIntosh conceptualised it, then homosexuality cannot be a failure to perform a role. That failure is a role that the homosexual is expected to perform in order to be read as a 'homosexual.' In this sense, the homosexual does perform a role. It is only through the acting out of his/her role, that is, the failure to perform the normative standard case, that the homosexual produces the semblance and misnomer that he/she fails to perform a role at all.

In brief, McIntosh takes issue with the formulation of homosexuality as a 'condition.' Using both mainstream structural-functional role theory and the labeling perspective, McIntosh argues that this formulation is a misnomer. Rather, homosexuality should be understood as a 'role,' whose labeling of people as deviant is a social process linked to mechanisms of social control. The social act of labeling serves to: (1) make a distinction between appropriate and misappropriate behaviour and (2) segregate deviants/deviance from the rest of 'normal' society. According to McIntosh, the existence of a specialised homosexual role, particularly a Eurocentric, male one, can be traced to late seventeenth-century England. However, its existence within this particular cultural and historical context cannot be read as a final product of that context. The role's cultural and historical manifestations are highly volatile chiefly insofar as they have been very different across cultural and historical contexts.

However, it is worth noting, before I dive into McIntosh's essay, that her usage of the labeling *perspective* is quite distinct from labeling *theory*, which Plummer briefly outlines (in relation to deviants/deviance and the social act of labeling) (1981a, pp. 19-25). Both fall under the broad

heading of the 'labeling approach' within sociological theory, but they are quite distinct from one another. On the one hand, labeling *theory* usually sets up two generalised propositions and tests their validity against a few examples in order to demonstrate how they are problematical (for example, Farrell and Hardin 1974; Harry and DeVall 1978; Steffensmeier and Steffensmeier 1974; Tanner 1978; Weinberg and Williams 1974). Two propositions frequently put to the test are:

> 1. [d]eviant labels are applied (in formal settings, overtly) without regard to (or independent of) the behaviours or acts of those labelled [whereby labeling is conceptualised as an independent variable] [and]
> 2. [l]abeling produces (stabilizes or amplifies) deviants and deviant behaviour [whereby labeling is conceptualised as a dependent variable] (Plummer 1981a, p. 20).

On the other hand, the labeling *perspective* neither puts a number of generalised propositions to the test nor considers itself as some 'grand theory.' Rather, the labeling perspective "seeks to establish new questions and problems of wider significance" (for example, in addition to McIntosh 1968, Gagnon 1977; Gagnon and Simon 1967a, 1970, 1973b) (Plummer 1981a, p. 23). On this basis, the labeling perspective might ask:

> 1. [w]hat is the nature of deviant labels?
> 2. [h]ow do they arise?
> 3. [u]nder what conditions do the labels become attached to conduct? and
> 4. [w]hat are the consequence of such labelling—both for the individual and the wider society (Plummer 1981a, p. 20)?

McIntosh begins her essay by critiquing the then-commonly accepted view of homosexuality as a 'condition' (1968, pp. 182-83). Her usage of condition designates the broad view of 'scientists' and 'laymen' who understand homosexuality as an essential and defining characteristic that either a person 'possesses' or 'just is,' "in the way that birthplace or deformity might characterize [him/her]" (McIntosh 1968, p. 182). McIntosh

does not specifically name or provide the reader with a general picture of who these scientists and laymen are, but she does examine some of their formulations in order to point out their deficiencies. There are two main ones that she focuses on. The first is the view of homosexuality as a condition that a person either has or does not have. The second is the view of homosexuality as a condition that is either innate or acquired.

In the first view, the human species is understood to be divided into two distinct kinds of people: heterosexuals and homosexuals (McIntosh 1968, p. 182). There is no grey area between this division. A person is either one or the other. However, according to McIntosh, some scientists who hold this view also acknowledge a paradox. There are people who they would not identify as homosexual but who nonetheless exhibit homosexual desires and/or behaviour. For McIntosh, this acknowledgement exposes the limits of their conceptualisation and can act as a critical resource to open up and rearticulate a set of terms. However, these scientists minimise or elide the significance of their acknowledgement and reinforce their conceptualisation by agonising over how to read a homosexual. McIntosh maintains that the same is true of laypeople: "Laypeople . . . discuss whether a certain person is 'queer' in much the same way as they might question whether a certain pain indicated cancer" (1968, p. 182). Further, according to McIntosh, laypeople usually consult scientists for the answer, which, in turn, reinforces the epistemological authority of such experts for producing discourses on sexuality.

The second view is a question of etiology (McIntosh 1968, p. 183). Is homosexuality a condition that is determined from the very beginning (read: innate) or is it one that a person contracts, like the flu, and cannot shake off (read: acquired)? In the first instance, homosexuality is understood as a metaphysical substance whereby the person and homosexuality are one and the same thing. In other words, the homosexual is a self-identical being. In the second instance, homosexuality is understood as a sort of airborne condition whereby the

person and homosexuality are, at first, independent of each other but then become one and the same thing through the person contracting his/her homosexuality. According to McIntosh, the major research task for scientists has been to identify a sample of homosexuals and to test whether their condition is either innate or acquired. However, the evidence has been contradictory and has failed to deliver a decisive answer: "[A]fter a long history of such studies, the results are sadly inconclusive and the answer is still as much a matter of opinion as it was when Havelock Ellis published *Sexual Inversion* [1908] seventy years ago" (McIntosh 1968, p. 183). McIntosh argues that this shortfall is not an issue of crude methodology or inadequate data. Rather, it is an issue of interrogation: "the wrong question has been asked" (McIntosh 1968, p. 183). However, McIntosh does not clarify with the reader what question ought to be asked or, at the very least, what type of question ought to be asked.

Although McIntosh does not subscribe to the notion that homosexuality is a condition, she does find it useful as a 'possible object of study' (1968, p. 183). In particular, she is interested in how it socially operates. She wants to move towards a more *social* analysis of homosexuality.

For McIntosh, the formulation of homosexuality as a condition largely functions as "a form of social control in a society in which homosexuality is condemned" (McIntosh 1968, p. 183). In other words, the formulation does not merely report on the nature of homosexuality for the mere sake of reporting and intelligence sharing, but largely acts as a vehicle to regulate a group of people who are despised and labelled as 'deviant.' It is precisely in this sense for McIntosh that homosexuality is not a static condition of the person but is a social phenomenon from the very beginning.

McIntosh chooses to focus on the social act of labeling of people as deviant and how it operates as a 'mechanism of social control' (1968, pp. 183-84). According to McIntosh, the social act of labeling (1) makes a

distinction between permissible and impermissible behaviour and (2) segregates deviants from the law-abiding. In the first instance, labeling sets limits on what constitutes normal and abnormal behaviour, which enables normal and abnormal behaviour to be policed. As a result, any movement towards or into abnormal behaviour can be read as transgressive/transgression and enforce all the necessary penalties that come with that movement in order to control it. In the second instance, labeling contains deviants within a recognisable group, which keeps the law-abiding free from any contamination.

Because homosexuality is a social phenomenon for McIntosh, she proposes that it is more appropriate and useful to conceptualise it as a 'role' (1968, p. 184). Her usage of 'role' should not be understood as characterising a particular pattern of sexual behaviour. As McIntosh pointed out earlier in her critique, patterns of sexual behaviour do not neatly fall into a set of dichotomised roles. If the concept of role did characterise a twofold pattern of sexual behaviour, then "the idea of a role would be no more useful than that of a condition" (McIntosh 1968, p. 184). Rather, it should be understood as a 'set of expectations.' According to McIntosh, if the concept of role is understood in this way, then it can be dichotomised into that of a homosexual and heterosexual role. McIntosh outlines some expectations of the modern, Western homosexual role (expectations of both homosexuals and nonhomosexuals):

1. a homosexual will be exclusively or very predominantly homosexual in his feelings and behavior;
2. he will be effeminate in manner, personality, or preferred sexual activity;
3. sexuality will play a part of some kind in all his relations with other men; and
4. he will be attracted to boys and very young men and probably willing to seduce them (1968, pp. 184-85).

According to McIntosh, a homosexual role has not always existed (1968, pp. 187-88). For example, McIntosh briefly unfolds a time in

England, the medieval period, where and when homosexual behaviour, later referred to as 'sodomy,' was being rooted out among churchmen. The behaviour of these churchmen was not understood, by and in the name of the law, as that of homosexuals. It was simply understood as sexual acts between men. There was no conscious identity attached to those acts or even the conceptualisation of sexual identity in its own right. As a result, these churchmen were not being punished because they were homosexuals. They were being punished for their 'indecent' acts. According to McIntosh, it is not until the end of the seventeenth-century in England that a specialised homosexual role can be traced. Historical evidence suggests that a 'rudimentary homosexual subculture' existed at this time in taverns and 'houses of resort,' primarily in London. Homosexuals of this period were extremely effeminate in mannerisms and character, and homosexuality and transvestism were considered relatively the same thing. Referents to homosexuals, used by homosexuals, reinforced their effeminacy: 'Molly,' 'Nancy-boy,' and 'Madge-cull.' Homosexuals were also expected to be discrete about their sexual liaisons and relations. McIntosh quotes a writer of 1729 who captured the homosexual role of this period:

> They also have their Walks and Appointments, to meet and pick up one another, and their particular Houses of Resort to go to, because they dare not trust themselves in an open Tavern. About twenty of these sort of Houses have been discovered, besides the Nocturnal Assemblies of great numbers of the like vile Persons, what they call the *Markets*. . . .
>
> It would be a pretty scene to behold them in their clubs and cabals, how they assume the air and affect the name of Madam or Miss, Betty or Molly, with a chuck under the chin, an "Oh, you bold pullet, I'll break your eggs," and then frisk and walk away (1968, p. 188, italics included in original).

For McIntosh, the writer confirms that a recognisable homosexual role was established in England by 1729. However, according to McIntosh, the homosexual role evolved into a very different cultural manifestation by the nineteenth-century. Extreme effeminacy was no longer the fashion of the moment. Homosexuals were predominantly masculine in mannerisms and character, and homosexuality and transvestism were quite distinct from one another. Homosexuals were also more open about their sexual practices.

It should be quite evident by now that McIntosh is pointing out the cultural and historical contingency of the homosexual role. The homosexual role, for McIntosh, is just as much a product of culture and history as it is of social processes:

1. historical contingency:

   prior to the late seventeenth-century, only homosexual acts existed in England;

   during the late seventeenth-century, the existence of a homosexual role can be traced; and

   during the nineteenth-century, the homosexual role in England evolved into a different cultural manifestation

   and

2. cultural contingency:

   taverns and 'houses of resort' were important definitional sites for the late seventeenth-century homosexual role in England;

   homosexuals of late seventeenth-century England were extremely effeminate in mannerisms and character, linked with transvestites, and discrete about sexual liaisons;

   referents to homosexuals during late seventeenth-century England reinforced their effeminacy: 'Molly,' 'Nancy-boy,' and 'Madge-cull'; and

> homosexuals of nineteenth-century England were quite different from those of the late seventeenth-century: masculine in mannerisms and character, distinct from transvestites, and open about sexual practices.

However, the homosexual role is not an end product of culture and history for McIntosh. As her account of the homosexual role in England demonstrates, it is a *variable* cultural and historical product. In other words, the homosexual role does not remain the same across cultural and historical contexts. She further evidences the role's variability by contextualising it within different cultures and historical periods, for example: the passive homosexual and active male partner in the ancient Middle East, boy-man sexual relations in the Aranda of Central Australia, and the berdache of the Mohave Indians in California and Arizona (McIntosh 1968, pp. 185-87). In this light, if there is one thread that holds the homosexual role together for McIntosh, then it is the notion that it is dependent upon its cultural and historical contexts. However, having said this, it is precisely this thread that threatens to pull the role apart.

### ii. Gagnon and Simon: Social Structure, Norms, Scripts, and Sexual Behaviour

Whereas McIntosh distances herself from exploring the relation between the homosexual role and behaviour ("Homosexual behaviour should be studied independently of social roles, if the connection between the two is to be revealed" (1968, p. 189)), Gagnon and Simon put the study of sexual behaviour at the centre of their work on sexuality. This does not suggest that Gagnon and Simon are both one of those behaviourists who were dreaded by many sociologists of their time. Rather, their concern with sexual behaviour is one of social significance and inquiry from the very beginning. To begin to study sexual behaviour, for Gagnon and Simon, is to begin to study the dynamic relationship between sexual behaviour and social structure, norms, and (non)conformity, including the role of the social actor within that relationship.

In their earlier essay "Introduction: Deviant Behavior and Sexual Deviance" (1967a), Gagnon and Simon focus on the relationship between sexual behaviour and social structure, norms, and (non)conformity. Largely absent from the essay is a sustained examination of the role of the social actor within that relationship. In this sense, the essay leans towards a more structural-functionalist theory of sexuality rather than a symbolic interactionist one. It is not until several years later that they examine the social actor's role.

From the start, for Gagnon and Simon, the source of a particular form of sexual behaviour is not to be found in the sexual behaviour itself (1967a, pp. 1-3). Sexual behaviour is more than just a set of acts that exhaustively describe what people do and do not do sexually. Rather, its source is to be found in the social structure of society whereby different forms of collective norms produce and govern sexual behaviour, whether or not they are shared by everyone who comprises collective life. Collective norms can be either institutional or norms of a populace, for example. This understanding of sexual behaviour suggests that (1) the relation between sexual behaviour and collective norms is not a static one but is a dynamic process and (2) constraint is central to the production and governance of sexual behaviour. Furthermore, the centrality of constraint suggests that we can anticipate a violation of collective norms. This introduces a split in sexual behaviour: appropriate and deviant sexual behaviour. In this sense, for Gagnon and Simon, collective norms do not simply produce and govern what is considered appropriate sexual behaviour. They also produce and govern the sexual behaviour of people who do not conform to them. Thus, according to Gagnon and Simon, an examination of sexual behaviour that conforms to the collective norms of a social structure would be totally incomplete and premature without a further examination of sexual behaviour that does not conform to those norms. The same is true of the inverse.

In this light, for Gagnon and Simon, deviant sexual behaviour is not intrinsically deviant (1967a, pp. 1-3). Because deviant sexual behaviour is

the product of a dynamic process between sexual behaviour and collective norms and there have been differences between and within social structures as to what counts as deviant sexual behaviour, there is no universal basis to deviant sexual behaviour. According to Gagnon and Simon, it is usually formal institutional norms, such as those laid down by juridical structures, that are empowered to formally sanction what is and is not considered deviant sexual behaviour, although they do frequently work informally and covertly. However, once a particular form of sexual behaviour is labelled as deviant by institutional norms and a person pursues "a social career as a [sexual] deviant," that sexual behaviour is more likely to be shaped by the norms of a social structure that embraces it (for example, the relation between homosexuals and the homosexual community) (Gagnon and Simon 1967a, pp. 2-3).

According to Gagnon and Simon, the defining of deviant sexual behaviour is not simply the product of institutional norms set by juridical structures (1967a, pp. 4-7). It is more complex. It reflects the correlation between institutional norms, mores, and patterns of sexual behaviour. 'Mores,' for Gagnon and Simon, designate "shared and internalised norms of a populace" (1967a, p. 4). There is usually a high correlation of these norms within a social structure that is 'normatively integrated,' that is, norms are not significantly at odds with each other and most people fulfil them individually and collectively. The same can be true for a social structure that is not significantly normatively integrated but strongly agrees on what constitutes deviant sexual behaviour. Gagnon and Simon cite incestuous behaviour within modern Western society as an example. Institutional norms, through juridical structures, vehemently condemn and sanction the suppression of incestuous sexual behaviour. Just as much as institutional norms oppose and seek to root out incestuous sexual behaviour, most people socially disapprove of it, both individually and collectively. Furthermore, only a relative minority participates in incestuous sexual behaviour. According to Gagnon and Simon, the same is true of rape and the sexual abuse of children. However, having said

this, the degree and scale of minorities who commit these sexual behaviours vary.

Whilst there are forms of deviant sexual behaviour that reflect a relatively high correlation between institutional norms, mores, and patterns of sexual behaviour, there are ones for which that correlation is not as high (Gagnon and Simon 1967a, pp. 4-5). Gagnon and Simon cite masturbation, premarital coitus, and heterosexual mouth-genital contact within modern Western society as examples. For example, at the time of writing their essay, masturbation was not considered sexually deviant by institutional norms (at least masturbation that was singularly explored within the confines of private spaces). There were no specific laws that formally prohibited masturbation within private spaces. Furthermore, masturbation was central to males' sexual development prior to marriage and engaged, on average, by two-thirds of females in the United States. However, at the same time, it was formally damned and prohibited as a selfish act against nature by far-right religious collectives, such as the Catholic Church, and generally viewed by many people as sexually deviant.

There are also forms of deviant sexual behaviour that reflect a high correlation but are not entirely suppressed like incestuous behaviour because of their perseverance (Gagnon and Simon 1967a, pp. 5-6). As a consequence, they can only be governed by norm-enforcing agencies. Gagnon and Simon refer here to homosexual behaviour and prostitution within modern Western society. For example, at the time of writing their essay, homosexual behaviour was formally and strongly defined as deviant by institutional norms and mores. Furthermore, only a relative minority participated in homosexual behaviour. However, because a *sizeable* minority participated in homosexual behaviour, that minority acted as a constraint: "relatively large numbers of persons engaging in such deviant behavior [was] . . . sufficient to constrain norm-enforcing agencies to attempt to regulate either the deviant behaviour or the deviant themselves rather than attempting to suppress it or them entirely" (Gagnon

and Simon 1967a, p. 6). However, it is debatable that these forms of deviant sexual behaviour were not suppressed simply because a sizeable minority participated in them. Would incestuous behaviour have been simply regulated if a sizeable minority participated in it? Gagnon and Simon do not entertain this obvious point.

According to Gagnon and Simon, the degree of correlation between norms relies on different variables (1967a, pp. 6-7). Unfortunately and prematurely, Gagnon and Simon only cite and elaborate on the impact of urbanisation within modern Western society. For example, urban areas are more likely to offer anonymity than rural ones, which enables more people to pursue deviant sexual behaviour with more ease. Urban areas are also more likely than rural ones to accommodate and facilitate social structures that support deviant sexual behaviour. Furthermore, deviant sexual behaviour in urban areas is more likely to be controlled by institutional norms than by mores, whereas the inverse is more likely to be true in rural areas. This may be due to the social nature of urban areas: it is difficult to express a consensual opinion, interpersonal involvement is usually impersonal, and heterogeneity is usually more valued than homogeneity. However, this does not suggest that urban communities are the source and cause of deviant sexual behaviour or that deviant sexual behaviour does not exist or persist within rural ones. Rather, it suggests that a social setting will have an impact on the degree of correlation between institutional norms, mores, and patterns of sexual behaviour for defining deviant sexual behaviour.

It should be quite evident by now that deviant sexual behaviour does not designate a homogenous collectivity of people. The variable correlation between norms is evidence that it can be differentiated. There are three 'rough categories' for Gagnon and Simon (1967a, pp. 8-11). Their rough categories do not suggest that deviant sexual behaviour can be homogeneously subdivided. Rather, they relate to "the social dimensions of the activity itself," that is, they are a social mapping of how deviant sexual behaviour operates within a particular social structure

(Gagnon and Simon 1967a, p. 8). This social mapping is largely contingent upon the correlation between institutional norms, mores, and patterns of sexual behaviour, which I just discussed. Gagnon's and Simon's three rough categories include: 'normal sexual deviance,' 'pathological sexual deviance,' and 'socially-structured sexual deviance.'

Normal deviant sexual behaviour usually corresponds to the second correlation between norms: it is generally frowned upon by institutional norms and mores but practiced by a relatively high frequency of people who are rarely formally punished for their behaviour (Gagnon and Simon 1967a, pp. 8-9). Formal punishments are rarely invoked because it serves a 'socially useful purpose,' articulating "with more fully legitimate expressions of sexuality" (Gagnon and Simon 1967a, p. 8). It is in these respects that normal deviant sexual behaviour is 'normal.' It should therefore be clear, from my previous discussion, that masturbation, premarital coitus, and heterosexual mouth-genital contact fall within this category. For example, at the time of writing their essay, premarital coitus was a legal offence and generally met with social disapproval by the populace. However, a relatively high frequency of males and females in the United States, approximately over half, participated in premarital coitus without any formal punishments invoked. Formal punishments were rarely invoked because pre-marital coitus functioned as "a [natural] process of progressive intimacy and emotional evolvement that appear[ed] to be part of generating the conditions for marriage" (Gagnon and Simon 1967a, p. 8).

There is one additional characteristic of normal deviant sexual behaviour: no social structures are linked to it (Gagnon and Simon 1967a, p. 8). It is not generated by or does not generate any kind of social structure that recruits, organises, and supports it. There are no communities of masturbators, people engaging in pre-marital coitus, and people engaging in heterosexual mouth-genital contact. However, as just discussed, normal deviant sexual behaviour does articulate with legitimate forms of sexual behaviour that are linked to social structures.

Gagnon and Simon understand pathological deviant sexual behaviour as a form of deviant sexual behaviour that "is linked to the contingencies of . . . [the pathological deviant's] biography rather than those of social structure" (1967a, p. 9). Gagnon and Simon cite incest, the sexual abuse of children, voyeurism, and exhibitionism as examples. 'Biography' designates learned responses rooted in the pathological deviant's family or personality. It is here where Gagnon and Simon lean towards a psychological analysis rather than a social one. However, this does not suggest that pathological deviant sexual behaviour does not have any social significance for Gagnon and Simon. As previously discussed, incest and the sexual abuse of children are linked to institutional norms, mores, and patterns of sexual behaviour. Indeed, Gagnon and Simon maintain that the correlation between these norms is high for incest and the sexual abuse of children: institutional norms and mores strongly oppose and seek to suppress them, and a relatively small minority participates in them. In addition, like normal deviant sexual behaviour, Gagnon and Simon maintain that pathological deviant sexual behaviour is not generated by or does not generate any kind of specific social structures. However, this is debatable today. For example, the Internet has largely facilitated and harboured the generation of social structures for child paedophile rings and pornography.

Gagnon and Simon do not specifically name their third rough category, but it can be referred to as 'socially-structured deviant sexual behaviour' (1967a, pp. 9-11). Socially-structured deviant sexual behaviour usually corresponds to the third correlation between norms: there is a high correlation between institutional norms, mores, and patterns of sexual behaviour; however, it is governed rather than thoroughly suppressed because of its sheer perseverance. As a consequence, it gives rise to and is partially shaped by its own social structures. It is precisely this feature that differentiates it from Gagnon's and Simon's other rough categories of deviant sexual behaviour. Its social structures also enable norm-enforcing agencies to keep it under control and in check. It should therefore be

evident that homosexual behaviour and prostitution fall within this category. Again, let us turn to homosexuality as an example. According to Gagnon and Simon, at the time of writing their essay, male homosexual behaviour was closely linked to the 'homosexual community' and its institutions of bars/discos, baths, homophile political organisations, and underground publications. This social structure not only shaped male homosexual behaviour but also enabled the police to contain and monitor it so that the general populace was not contaminated.

I remarked earlier that Gagnon and Simon largely fail to examine the role of the social actor within the relationship between sexual behaviour and social structure, norms, and (non)conformity. The essay outlines a structural-functionalist theory of sexuality—a macroscopic approach. It is not until the publication of *Sexual Conduct* in 1973 that they examine the role of the social actor in greater detail. However, it becomes so central to their work that they abandon examining it within the relationship between sexual behaviour and social structure, norms, and (non)conformity and solely focus on its relationship with sexual behaviour. This is done through their concept of the 'sexual script,' which was primarily influenced by symbolic interactionist theory—a microscopic approach. There is no cross-fertilisation between the two approaches, which explores how they might productively intersect. Rather, they sit on their own. In fact, the sexual script primarily remained a permanent feature of their subsequent work (for example, Gagnon 1977; Gagnon and Simon 1973a, 1973b, 1987a, 1987b; Simon 1996). In this light, the sexual script marks a significant theoretical shift for Gagnon and Simon.

Symbolic interactionist theory is largely the product of the Chicago School (The University of Chicago) of the 1920s (Plummer 1975, pp. 10-11; Plummer 1982, p. 224). It emerged as a dominant strand of sociological theory through the pragmatist/formalist thought of John Dewey (1925) and George Herbert Mead (1934) and the ethnographic studies of urban areas of Ernest W. Burgess and Robert E. Park (1921, 1925 [with Roderick D. McKenzie]) and Ellsworth Faris (1955, 1967). In

the main, symbolic interactionist theory preoccupies itself with the relation between human social interaction and symbolic meaning. It is argued that human social interaction is not simply a set of actions between two or more people or groups of people. It has significant symbolic meanings for symbolic interactionists. People act towards each other according to the symbolic meanings that they attribute to each other. For example, if I come running up to you with two closed fists hovering between us, then you will probably either run away or challenge me. Here, my gestures symbolise a certain meaning for you, you then interpret and give meaning to them, and you then finally act on the basis of that interpretation and meaning. Of course, the context of the social interaction will influence what symbolic meaning you attribute to my gestures and how you interpret and react to them. It may very well be the case that we are good friends and I am being jovial with you. In this case, my gestures will symbolise a different meaning for you, and you will interpret, define, and react to them differently. Having said this, people do not only act towards each other according to the symbolic meanings gestures have. Demeanour, language, and symbols (that is, letters and characters and their combinations) also have symbolic meanings. Further, this example of human social interaction suggests that symbolic meanings are unstable and uncertain and a product of negotiation. In this sense, then, symbolic meanings are not a by-product of human social interaction. They arise within human social interaction.

According to Gagnon and Simon, the relationship between sexual behaviour and the social actor is contingent upon the 'sexual script' (1973b, p. 19). People do not sexually behave towards each other spontaneously, that is, sexual behaviour does not naturally occur. Rather, people sexually behave towards each other according to the symbolic meanings that they have for each other. Symbolic meanings arise from sexual scripts that are learned through primary and secondary socialisation. The sexual script designates a conventional prescription that "defines the situation, names the actors, and plots the behaviour" as

sexual in a particular way (Gagnon and Simon1973b, p. 19). It is not a static product for Gagnon and Simon, but, rather, a dynamic one: "[Sexual] [s]cripts are involved in learning the meaning of internal states, organizing the sequences of specifically sexual acts, decoding novel situations, setting the limits of sexual responses, and linking meanings from nonsexual aspects of life to specifically sexual experience" (1973b, p. 19).

Gagnon and Simon maintain that people are highly unlikely to sexually behave towards each other in the absence of a sexual script (1973b, pp. 19-20). For example, combining the sexually-charged elements of erotic desire, privacy, and an exceedingly attractive person is not necessarily enough to illicit sexual behaviour between people. In order for any degree of sexual behaviour to occur, these elements must be part of a sexual script that is relatively shared among its participants. Gagnon and Simon ask the reader to imagine the following scenario as an example (1973b, p. 20).

Take a run-of-the-mill middle class man (representational politics set aside, please), cut him off from his usual social setting, and situate him in a relatively unknown, private hotel for business purposes. Additionally, endow him with an appetite for sex. After a long day of business pursuits with his clients, he returns to his hotel late at night. Upon fumbling for his keys to open the door to his room, he notices the silhouette of a relatively attractive, nearly naked female further down the corridor. Gagnon and Simon maintain that his initial reaction to the female most likely will not be sexual. Indeed, for the more paranoid man, he probably will look around for signs that his wife is setting him up and seek refuge in his room. For the less paranoid man, he probably will seek refuge in his room with embarrassment. After seeking refuge in his room, his next set of actions probably will not be sexual again. He might return to the corridor to make sure he is on the correct floor and in the correct room. He might also telephone or visit the front desk in order to establish her identity and business. According to Gagnon and Simon, the mere fact that the female is attractive and naked does not guarantee that sexual behaviour will

occur. The middle class man does not necessarily behave sexually because a sexual script does not exist, which identifies both the female and the encounter as sexual. If such a sexual script did exist, then the silhouette of the female probably would have elicited sexual arousal and activity.

There are 'two major dimensions' to sexual scripts for Gagnon and Simon: the 'interpersonal' and 'intrapsychic' (1973b, p. 20). The interpersonal designates what they blandly refer to as the 'external': sexual scripts that structure relatively shared, routine conventions between people so that they can jointly participate in sexual behaviour. The intrapsychic designates what they blandly refer to as the 'internal': sexual scripts that structure and elicit the conditions for psychological and physiological arousal and release. It is here where Gagnon and Simon begin to make a distinction between different 'layers' to the sexual script.

At the level of interpersonal scripting, gestures, demeanours, language, and symbols are elements of the sexual script (Gagnon and Simon 1973b, pp. 20-21). They are the relatively-shared, routine conventions that sexual scripts structure and enable social actors to jointly participate in sexual behaviour. Gagnon and Simon cite language (for example, 'Make me fell like a man/woman!'; 'Come sort me out!'; 'Ohhh!'; 'We're almost there!') and necking and petting as examples. They are shared and routine because they are collectively defined as sexual and learned over time.

At the level of intrapsychic scripting, the meanings of sexual interior states, both psychological and physiological, do not reside within those interior states in and of themselves (Gagnon and Simon 1973b, pp. 21-22). Because the sexual script elicits sexual interior states, their meanings are contingent upon their corresponding sexual script: "meaning is attributed to the interior of the body by many of the same rules as it is to an exterior experience, depending on a vocabulary of motives that makes the biological into a meaningful psychological [and physiological] experience" (Gagnon and Simon 1973b, p. 21). Although not sexually

scripted but scripted nonetheless, Gagnon and Simon cite drug experience as an example. Drug experience designates interior psychological and physiological states: hallucinations, euphoria, paranoia, relaxation of the muscles, and increased heart rate. According to Gagnon and Simon, research has demonstrated that the meaning of a particular drug experience does not strictly derive from its corresponding drug. If it did, people would report the same experiences from the same drug. The experience of a drug is radically contingent upon, for example: the mood of the social location and social actor, the social actor's history of drug usage, and prescriptions for taking the drug. In other words, a drug experience is dependent upon the way in which it is effected, that is, scripted. A script brings together various elements that will elicit the experience of a drug. Therefore, the meaning of a drug experience resides within its script.

The sexual script also structures the bodily activities that potentially release sexual interior states (Gagnon and Simon 1973b, p. 22). Gagnon and Simon turn to heterosexual coitus within modern Western society as an example. Heterosexual coitus involves a number of activities, for example: touching, hand- and mouth-genital contact, rubbing, kissing, and petting. However, these bodily activities are not in isolation to one another for Gagnon and Simon. Rather, they are scripted in a particular way so that they lead to heterosexual coitus, usually advancing from touching and kissing, to petting and rubbing, to hand- and/or mouth-genital contact, and then lastly to coitus. In the course of these bodily activities, sexual arousal transpires and orgasm potentially occurs. Arousal and orgasm are only possible because the sexual script, that is, normal heterosexual activity, assembles and organises bodily activities leading to coitus. However, Gagnon and Simon quickly point out that arousal and orgasm do not simply occur because we are "rubbing two sticks together to produce fire" (1973b, p. 22). On the parts of the social actors, there must be a sexual investment in their bodily activities in order for arousal and orgasm to occur: "Unless the two people involved recognize that the physical events

outlined are sexual and are embedded in a sexual situation, there will not be the potentiation of the physiological concomitants . . . necessary in the production of sexual excitement and the orgasmic cycle" (Gagnon and Simon 1973b, p. 22).

Gagnon and Simon make it quite clear that the sexual script does not designate what they refer to as the 'conventional dramatic narrative form' (1973b, p. 23). In other words, it does not follow the conventional bell-shaped Aristotelian narrative plot form of introduction, rising climax, climax, resolution, and conclusion. For example, different pairs of social actors with the same sexual script can translate its elements differently. There can also be incongruity between social actors with the same sexual script. In these instances, the actual form that the sexual script takes will vary in sequence and duration and, hence, will not strictly follow a conventional form. This incongruity can occur because the symbolic meanings of the sexual script's elements may be linked to different sexually-scripted symbolic universes for the social actors. In this light, according to Gagnon and Simon, the 'dramatic' more appropriately designates the sexual script: "the nonnarrative qualities of modern poetry, the surrealistic tradition, or the theatre of the absurd" (1973b, p. 24).

The theoretical shape that Gagnon's and Simon's work evolves into, that is, from a macroscopic to a microscopic approach, reflects a tension between social theories of sexuality of their day. Plummer outlines this tension.

According to Plummer, social theories of sexuality of their day predominantly approached the theorisation of sexuality at two levels: the macroscopic and the microscopic (1975, pp. 46-52). I briefly outlined them previously in this chapter. Again, macroscopic theories examined the relationship between society and sexuality. Within this approach, the social actor was understood to be born into an 'objective reality,' which defined and regulated the sexuality of the social actor prior to his/her existence. Objective reality designates social institutions and legitimisations. Social institutions included, for example:

1. the family, and gender, providing routine patterns of sexuality through their mere existence;
2. the legal and normative system, providing explicit statements about how people ought to behave sexually;
3. imagery, providing controlling portraits of both 'normal' and 'aberrant' sexuality;
4. belief systems—attitudes and opinions—providing clues as to 'what everybody thinks' about sexuality; and
5. language—providing a rhetoric which through its mere existence gives structure to the sexual world (Plummer 1975, p. 48).

These social institutions were linked to implicit and explicit legitimisations, which operated to uphold an existing social order and make it appear natural. Legitimisations were understood to be informed by medical, theological, juridical, philosophical, and literary discourses. In this light, a macroscopic approach conceptualised the source of sexuality as residing within society. Sexuality was formulated as external to the social actor. Again, microscopic theories examined the relationship between the social actor and sexuality. Within this approach, sexuality was not understood as an external force that preceded the social actor. Rather, sexuality, particularly its meanings, was understood to arise within human social interaction. It was understood to be 'intersubjective,' 'emergent,' and 'negotiated.' In this light, a microscopic approach conceptualised the source of sexuality as residing within human social interaction. Sexuality was formulated as a dynamic product of the interactive social actor. Plummer does not specifically discuss or even cite tenants of each approach for the reader, but it should be evident by now that McIntosh's "The Homosexual Role" (1968) employed a macroscopic approach.

According to Plummer, these two approaches were usually set up against each other during their day (1975, pp. 46-48). Social theorists approached the theorisation of sexuality at *either* the macroscopic *or* the microscopic level. No concerted efforts were made to explore how

sexuality is a product of both 'objective, global realities' and 'micro intersubjective realities.' This was largely the case because the source of sexuality was understood to reside in one or the other, not both (Plummer 1975, p. 48). However, for Plummer, sexuality is not an either/or issue.

Plummer maintains that sexuality is a product of *both* 'objective, global realities' and 'micro intersubjective realities' (1975, p. 47). Plummer specifically draws upon Peter L. Berger's and Thomas Luckmann's (1967) argument that a dialectical relationship exists between the two. Berger and Luckmann write:

> The objectivity of the institutional world, however massive it may appear to the individual, is a humanly produced, constructed objectivity . . . despite the objectivity that marks the world in human experience, it does not thereby acquire an ontological status apart from the human experience that produced it. . . . [Here is] the paradox that man is capable of producing a world that he then experiences as something other than a human product . . . the relationship between man, the producer, and the social world, his product, is and remains a dialectical one. That is man and his social world interact with each other. The product acts back upon the producer. Externalisation and objectivation are moments in a continuing dialectical process. The third moment in this process . . . is internalisation. . . . It is already possible to see the fundamental relationship of these three dialectical moments in social reality. Each of them corresponds to an essential characterisation of the social world. Society is a human product. Society is an objective reality. Man is a social product (1967, pp. 78-9).

According to Plummer, sexuality marks a dialectical relationship between 'objective, global realities' and 'micro intersubjective realities' insofar as the social actor constructs a sexual objective reality, which then becomes routinised and institutionalised as a 'given' over time, which is then internalised and/or modified by the social actor. It may appear to the

reader that this dialectical relationship is a set of discrete and separable dialectical moments, which belies Plummer's contention that sexuality is not an either/or issue. However, he maintains that they are only capable of separation analytically. Within a sexual reality, the dialectical moments of the dialectical relationship are continually in concurrent interaction with each other, whether reinforcing, thwarting, or modifying each other. Plummer calls on social theorists to explore these dialectical moments individually and, more importantly, to begin to understand how they work with each other within the dialectical relationship. Having said this, Plummer only calls on social theorists to move towards such an analysis. He does not explore or perform such an analysis himself: "Their complex interconnection *will* remain a research problem" (Plummer 1975, p. 48, italics included in original).

## Section III: Some Disciplinary Cross-fertilisation

### i. Cultural Sexual Scripts and the Voluntarist Subject

Gagnon's and Simon's "Sexual Scripts: Permanence and Change" (1986) is an extension of *Sexual Conduct* (1967b) and their subsequent work (for example, Gagnon 1977; Gagnon and Simon 1973a, 1973b). Once again, it is primarily preoccupied with the relationship between sexual behaviour and the social actor and how that relationship is contingent upon the sexual script. Further, interpersonal and intrapsychic sexual scripts continue to have the same meanings and significance. Interpersonal sexual scripts are "the ordering of representations of self and other that facilitate the occurrence of the sexual act" and intrapsychic sexual scripts are "the ordering of images and desires that elicit and sustain sexual arousal" (Gagnon and Simon 1986, p. 97). In these respects, "Sexual Scripts" (1986) first appears to uphold their theoretical departure of 1973, moving from a macroscopic to a microscopic theorisation of sexuality through the use of the sexual script. However, I did remark earlier that their theoretical departure *primarily* remained a permanent feature of their subsequent work. The essay moves from a microscopic theorisation of

sexuality to one that attempts to integrate both macro and micro considerations of sexuality, an obvious move that Plummer would support. This is done through introducing a third level of sexual scripts, 'cultural scenarios,' that is, 'cultural sexual scripts.' However, their notion of cultural sexual scripts is thoroughly immersed in symbolic interactionist theory and they do not fully produce the kind of analysis that Plummer advocates in *Sexual Stigma* (1975).

In order to avoid repetition, I will concern myself with Gagnon's and Simon's introduction of cultural sexual scripts and their relationship to interpersonal and intrapsychic sexual behaviour.

For Gagnon and Simon, cultural sexual scripts are to sexual behaviour (at the levels of the interpersonal and intrapsychic) what language is to speech (in the Lacanian sense): they are a precondition for that which is within their operating syntax (1986, p. 98). Here, Gagnon and Simon are pointing out that interpersonal and intrapsychic sexual behaviour are contingent upon a much larger operating syntax: cultural sexual scripts. Cultural sexual scripts "are the instructional guides that exist at the level of collective life," which directly or indirectly script interpersonal and intrapsychic sexual behaviour (Gagnon and Simon 1986, p. 98). Institutions are the primary source of cultural sexual scripts. Gagnon and Simon do not provide examples for the reader, but the subject matter of their work suggests that they probably would have had the following in mind: the 'family' and its prescriptions on maleness and femaleness, 'compulsory heterosexuality' and its prescriptions on sexual object choice, and medical/juridical institutions and their prescriptions on normal and abnormal sexuality.

Interpersonal and intrapsychic sexual behaviour therefore reflect cultural sexual scripts in some way or another. However, Gagnon and Simon do acknowledge that cultural sexual scripts are not strictly predicative of sexual behaviour (1986, pp. 98-99). According to Gagnon and Simon, there is incongruence even within paradigmatic societies, that is, traditional societies, where it is highly unlikely to occur. In order for the

cultural to function as an operating syntax that is reflected in interpersonal and intrapsychic sexual behaviour, two interrelated things must happen according to Gagnon and Simon. In the first instance, cultural sexual scripts must be abstract and general rather than specific. Because social settings can be very specific within any given society and will therefore vary from one to the next within a given society, the cultural cannot script interpersonal and intrapsychic sexual behaviour if they are also specific. It would be like trying to piece together two very different pieces of a puzzle, with no consideration of each piece's specific, unique, and varied contours. However, if cultural sexual scripts are abstract and general, then they are more likely to script interpersonal and intrapsychic sexual behaviour because they are more flexible and adaptive to their specific social setting. In the second instance, room must be made for 'improvisation' or 'tinkering.' It is not enough for cultural sexual scripts to be abstract and general. They will only script interpersonal and intrapsychic sexual behaviour if social actors can modify them. Of course, the degree to which cultural sexual scripts must be abstract and general and can be modified will be dependent upon their social setting and a matter of negotiation.

In this light, cultural sexual scripts do not unilaterally script interpersonal and intrapsychic sexual behaviour (Gagnon and Simon 1986, p. 99). According to Gagnon and Simon, interpersonal sexual behaviour, in particular, "transforms the social actor from being exclusively an actor trained in his or her role(s) and adds to his/her burdens the task of being a partial scriptwriter or adaptor. . ." (1986, p. 99). However, interpersonal sexual behaviour is more than just a variation on a theme for Gagnon and Simon, whereby the social actor slightly modifies cultural sexual scripts in order to make them congruent with his/her sexual behaviour with significant others within a specific social setting. Interpersonal sexual behaviour enables the social actor to wilfully determine or influence how he/she is recognised by other significant social actors, whether that recognition is fulfilled or unfulfilled. In this respect,

Gagnon and Simon understand the social actor as a voluntarist subject. As a result, the social actor displaces cultural sexual scripts as a unilateral structural determinant. The same is true of intrapsychic sexual behaviour.

When there is incongruity between cultural sexual scripts and interpersonal sexual behaviour that is not easily reconcilable, more weight is put on the social actor at the level of the intrapsychic (Gagnon and Simon 1986, pp. 99-100). According to Gagnon and Simon, "[the social actor] transforms the surrounding social world [read: cultural sexual scripts] from the source of desire [read: intrapsychic sexual behaviour] into the object of desire" (1986, p. 100). This inversion opens up a possibility for the social actor to negotiate a degree of congruence between cultural sexual scripts and interpersonal sexual behaviour and to wilfully determine or influence how he/she is recognised by significant others at the level of the interpersonal. Here, again, the social actor is able to maintain his/her agency as a voluntarist subject.

As I previously gestured, Gagnon and Simon maintain that the degree of congruence between cultural sexual scripts and interpersonal and intrapsychic sexual scripted behaviour is partly dependent upon their corresponding type of society (1986, p. 102). Within a paradigmatic society, there is usually a master set of cultural sexual scripts that is mostly shared among its social actors across social settings. Because it is mostly shared, it usually requires few, if any, modifications in order to maintain a congruence with interpersonal and intrapsychic sexual behaviour. Therefore, there is likely to be a high degree of congruence. However, within a postparadigmatic society, that is, a highly differentiated society, the opposite is likely to be the case. Cultural sexual scripts are not uniformly and unilaterally shared among its social actors across social settings. As a result, they usually require significant modification in order to maintain some degree of congruence with interpersonal and intrapsychic sexual behaviour. Therefore, there is likely to be a lower degree of congruence than that of a paradigmatic society.

Sedgwick's queer project *Epistemology of the Closet* (1990) converges with Gagnon's and Simon's notion of cultural sexual scripts. Sedgwick argues that a set of mutual contradictions has been central to modern Western understandings of homo/heterosexual definition: (1) a 'minoritising' and 'universalising' view and (2) a 'gender-separatist' and 'gender-integrative' view (1990, pp. 1-2).

The minoritising view understands homo/heterosexual definition "as an issue of active importance primarily for a small, distinct, relatively fixed homosexual minority," whereas the universalising view understands it "as an issue of continuing, determinative importance in the lives of people across the spectrums of sexuality" (Sedgwick 1990, p. 1). According to Sedgwick, the minoritising view has had its place within essentialist and third-sex theoretical quarters, as well as within civil rights movements (1990, pp. 84-86, 88-90). Within these quarters, homosexuality constitutes a distinct, small group of people (read: the minority) who are defined up against the norm: heterosexuality (read: the majority). The universalising view has had its place within social constructionist quarters, as well as within the lesbian continuum and Freud's thesis that a potential bisexuality lies within each of us. Within these quarters, homosexuality has been largely understood as only one sexual identity within a 'solvent of stable identities,' which constitute one another. Whereas sexuality is encased within brackets in the first view, it exceeds them in the second one.

The gender-separatist and gender-integrative views have specifically shaped homosexual definition within the homo/heterosexual dyad (Sedgwick 1990, pp. 1-2, 86-90). Homosexuality is conceptualised as a gendered category within these views. The gender-separatist view understands it "as reflecting an impulse of separatism—though by no means necessarily political separatism—within each gender," whereas the gender-integrative view understands it "as a matter of liminality or transivity between genders" (Sedgwick 1990, pp. 1-2). According to Sedgwick, the gender-separatist view has had its place within manhood-

initiation and lesbian separatist models of homosexual definition, as well as within the homosocial continuum. Within these quarters, the homosexual has been largely understood as identifying with the gender that mirrors his/her sex. The gender-integrative view has had its place within cross-sex, androgyny, and solidarity models of homosexual definition. Within these quarters, the homosexual has been largely understood as crossing gender boundaries and assuming a gender that does not mirror his/her sex. This has often been read by both gay and non-gay people as an impulse to preserve heterosexual gender relations within homosexual desire. Again, whereas sexuality is encased within brackets in the first view, it exceeds them in the second one.

It should be quite evident that Sedgwick's two sets of contradictions are cultural sexual scripts in their own right. They fulfil Gagnon's and Simon's definition of cultural sexual scripts in two respects. In the first instance, they function as an operating syntax at the level of collective life: "many of the major nodes of thought and knowledge in twentieth-century Western culture as a whole are structured—indeed, fractured—by a chronic, now endemic crisis of homo/heterosexual definition. . ."; "an understanding of virtually any aspect of modern Western culture must be . . . damaged in its central substance to the degree that it does not incorporate a critical analysis of modern homo/heterosexual definition. . ."; and "I am trying to make the strongest possible introductory case for a hypothesis about the centrality of this nominally marginal, conceptually intractable set of definitional issues to the important knowledges and understandings of twentieth-century Western culture as a whole" (Sedgwick 1990, pp. 1-2). In the second instance, the source of their social meaning partly lies within institutions: "The passage of time, the bestowal of thought and necessary political struggle . . . have only spread and deepened the long crisis of modern sexual definition, dramatizing . . . the internal incoherence and mutual contradiction of each of the forms of discursive and institutional 'common sense' on this subject" and "New, institutionalized taxonomic discourses—medical, legal, literary,

psychological—centering on homo/heterosexual definition proliferated and crystallized with exceptional rapidity in the decades around the turn of the century. . ." (Sedgwick 1990, pp. 1-2).

In effect, Sedgwick's project confirms Gagnon's and Simon's notion of cultural sexual scripts. Indeed, her project argues that there are 'instructional guides' that script sexuality at the level of collective life. It proposes that the minoritising/universalising and gender-separatist/gender-integrative views have largely scripted discourses (particularly legal and literary) on modern, Western homo/heterosexual definition. Understood as "a presiding master term of the past century," she further maintains that homo/heterosexual definition has affected broader cultural definitional nexuses, for example: knowledge/ignorance, active/passive, in/out, health/illness, private/public, masculine/feminine, and majority/minority (Sedgwick 1990, p. 11).

Although a link can be drawn between Sedgwick's queer project and Gagnon's and Simon's concept of cultural sexual scripts, their work is informed by different disciplinary locations and theoretical apparatuses. In the first instance, as I mentioned in the first section of the chapter, Sedgwick is a literary critic, whereas Gagnon and Simon are sociologists. In the second instance, whereas Gagnon's and Simon's work is primarily influenced by symbolic interactionist theory, Sedgwick's queer project is a deconstructive exercise, although "in a fairly specific sense" (Sedgwick 1990, p. 9). More specifically, Sedgwick's project examines the asymmetry between heterosexuality and homosexuality whereby:

> [1.] term B [read: homosexuality] is not symmetrical with but subordinate to term A [read: heterosexuality] . . .;
>
> [2.] the ontologically valorized term A actually depends for its meaning on the simultaneous subsumption and exclusion of term B . . .; [and]
>
> [3.] the question of priority between the supposed central and the supposed marginal category of each dyad is irresolvably unstable, an instability caused by the fact that term B is

> constituted as at once internal and external to term A (ibid., p. 10).

There are some further differences. Whereas Sedgwick's arguments are mainly drawn from literary texts, Gagnon's and Simon's formulations are based in social life (I discuss their methodology in the next chapter). Also, Sedgwick focuses on sexuality in general, whereas Gagnon and Simon focus on sexual behaviour. Further, Sedgwick does not really go beyond the level of the cultural, whereas Gagnon and Simon consider the interpersonal and intrapsychic as well.

Granted, there are differences between Gagnon's and Simon's and Sedgwick's work. However, their convergence with one another should not be dismissed because of their differences. It suggests that there is room for disciplinary cross-fertilisation between queer theory and sociology. A brief reading of Gagnon's and Simon's understanding of the social actor as a voluntarist subject in light of Butler (1993, 1995) further highlights that there is potential for this sort of work.

I remarked earlier that Gagnon and Simon understand the social actor as a voluntarist subject. Although cultural scripts are a precondition for interpersonal and intrapsychic sexual behaviour, the social actor is still understood as a subject who wilfully determines or influences how he/she is read by other significant social actors. As a result, the social actor inverts the relationship between cultural sexual scripts and interpersonal and intrapsychic sexual behaviour. This formulation of the social actor is in line with humanist conceptions of the subject, which, coincidently, "[social] constructivism has, on occasion, sought to put into question" (Butler 1993, p. 7). Within this framework, the social actor is (1) free of constraint and (2) the locus of agency. In the first instance, the social actor is understood as an authorial subject who is not constrained in determining or influencing his/her present and future cultural manifestations. In the second instance, agency is understood as an essential capacity of the social actor. The social actor is a Cartesian subject: 'I think, therefore I am.' However, a reading of some of Butler's

(1993, 1995) work on the subject and agency highlights Gagnon's and Simon's over-theorisation of the social actor and suggests how they might reformulate their humanist leanings.

It is trivial that Gagnon and Simon conceive the social actor as a wilful subject free of constraint. How can Gagnon and Simon simultaneously and nonetheless understand the social actor as a wilful subject free of constraint when the social actor's sexual behaviour is conditioned by cultural sexual scripts from the very beginning? Further, constraint is central to their arguments on sexual behaviour in "Introduction: Deviant Behavior and Sexual Deviance" (1967a). Butler takes up a similar question in respect to the relation between the social actor and his/her gender matrix:

> If gender is a construction, must there be an 'I' or a 'we' who enacts or performs that construction? How can there be an activity, a constructing, without presupposing an agent who precedes and performs that activity? How would we account for the motivation and direction of construction without such a subject? As a rejoinder, I would suggest that it takes a certain suspicion toward grammar to reconceive the matter in a different light. *For if gender is constructed, it is not necessarily constructed by an 'I' or a 'we' who stands before that construction in any spatial or temporal sense of 'before.' Indeed, it is unclear that there can be an 'I' or a 'we' who has not been submitted, subjected to gender, where gendering is, among other things, the differentiating relations by which speaking subjects come into being.* Subjected to gender, but subjectivated by gender, the 'I' neither precedes nor follows the process of this gendering, but emerges only within and as the matrix of gender relations themselves (1993, p. 7, italics my emphasis).

Butler points out that the social actor is in no way a voluntarist subject who can wilfully determine his/her gender. The social actor's manifestation as a gendered subject is preconditioned by and emerges within a gender

matrix. As a consequence, constraint is built into the social actor's subjecthood. In this light, if cultural sexual scripts are a precondition of interpersonal and intrapsychic sexual behaviour for Gagnon and Simon, then they will constrain the social actor's sexual behaviour from the very beginning. Therefore, the social actor is not a wilful subject free of constraint. Rather, constraint is built into his/her sexual behaviour. As such, Gagnon and Simon might want to explore how cultural sexual scripts precondition and constrain the social actor's sexual behaviour at the interpersonal and intrapsychic levels.

Further, if the social actor's sexual behaviour is preconditioned and constrained by cultural sexual scripts, then how can the social actor be the locus of agency simultaneously and nonetheless? In relation to discourse, Butler maintains that the agency of the social actor arises out of the social conditions where discourse does not have a firm fix on or cannot firmly fix the social actor. She writes: "If the subject is a reworking of the very discursive processes by which it is worked, then 'agency' is to be found in the possibilities of resignification opened up by discourse" (1995, p. 135). Butler's formulation of agency does not dismiss or minimise the social actor's agency. Rather, it seeks to explore "the concrete conditions under which agency becomes possible" (Butler 1995, p. 136). In this light, agency should not be understood as an essential capacity of the social actor for Gagnon and Simon. Rather, it should be understood as arising within the social conditions where there is incongruity between cultural sexual scripts and interpersonal and intrapsychic sexual behaviour. As such, Gagnon and Simon might want to explore how and to what degree cultural sexual scripts give rise to the social actor's agency.

In light of these readings between Gagnon and Simon, Sedgwick, and Butler, I propose that we seek to create and establish discursive spaces within which there is an integration of queer and sociological terms of analysis, whether they converge with or diverge from one another. This may involve an element of decontextualising and reappropriating a set of terms within reason, but it should not be an excuse to abandon such a

project altogether. It is discursive spaces like the one that I have just begun to create that generate the conditions to explore how a subject/object of study can be conceptualised similarly or differently through a different lens. This promotes more mature and critical reading, thinking, and writing across and between disciplines. I further move in this direction in the next chapter and more forceful formulate it as way forward for future conversations and work between queer theory and sociology in the conclusion of the thesis.

# Chapter Four

## A Question of Methodology:

## Problematising Queer Theory's Textualism

> It should go without saying—but unfortunately needs to be said—that there is considerable space within such an enterprise [queer theory] for the perspectives and approaches of disciplines such as sociology, and indeed substantial need for sociological contributions, both theoretical and empirical. . . . [T]o the extent that queer studies focus[es] overwhelmingly on discourses and texts, crucial questions about social structure, political organisation, and historical context are investigated in only partial ways.
>
> —Steven Epstein, "A Queer Encounter" (1996 [1994], p. 157)

### Introduction and Purpose

In the previous chapter, I explored the wider disciplinary mapping of an unproductive queer presupposition and exploited that presupposition for more productive interdisciplinary pursuits. The chapter predominantly, if not exclusively, focused on the issue of theory rather than methodology or a combination of both. The chapter can therefore be said to be deficient in this respect. Having said this, I never did claim that the chapter sought to be some kind of grand master narrative—the type of narrative Michel Foucault would have written and worked against. In this light, the following chapter is an attempt to address that very deficiency.

At this juncture, I want to consider the significance of a preoccupation of one of queer theory's best known and widely consulted critical thinkers: Judith Butler. In particular, I want to examine, problematise, and rework how she methodologically approaches her subjects/objects of study by performing analyses of texts.[1] Although there are traces of sociological interests and matters of concern within Butler's work, her methodological

approach inhibits a more developed social analysis of her subjects/objects of study. For practitioners of sociology, a social analysis does not reside within a detached textual methodological approach that sits on its own. It resides in one that also actively incorporates the lived experiences of social actors, for example: focus group discussions, face-to-face interviews, (participant) observation, life histories, case studies, or questionnaires. Methodology, for the most part, is rooted in social life. Nonetheless, Butler uncritically fails to incorporate such a rich sociological methodological programme into the parameters of her work (for example, 1990, 1991, 1993, 1997b, 1997c).

Butler's methodological approach is significant insofar as it runs in tandem with queer theory's broad methodological approach to investigating its subjects/objects of study. Although there is local variation from one queer theorist to the next in relation to what subject/object of study he/she may examine, what medium he/she may explore, what theoretical apparatus he/she may employ, or what kind of analysis he/she may perform, queer theorists have primarily methodologically approached their investigations textually. In turn, queer theory's textualism has operated to narrowly define and demarcate its disciplinary terms and practices, particularly how queer critical engagement ought to take place. Sociological ways of investigating queer theory's subjects/objects of study have been excluded from that methodological programme as a result. Therefore, in this light, I use Butler's work as a springboard to problematise queer theory's textualism and, more importantly, rework it in order to offer a more developed social analysis. The main aim here is to move towards broadening and deepening the frame by which queer theory's subjects/objects of study are methodologically approached and to put the social at the centre of queer theory's methodological programme.

My objective, to begin with, is to explore the significance of Butler's methodological approach. This will take place by critically examining the way in which she methodologically frames her analysis of male-to-female drag via Jennie Livingston's film *Paris is Burning* (1991), which is a

dedicated chapter entitled "Gender is Burning" in *Bodies That Matter* (1993, pp. 121-40). I will sketch the outlines of her methodological approach to and subsequent analysis of drag, examine where and how her methodology constrains a more developed social analysis, and demonstrate how it runs in parallel with queer theory's broad methodological programme. In relation to how her methodology constrains her analysis of drag, I will briefly take issue with: (1) the way in which drag is only investigated in relation to compulsory heterosexuality's hegemonic subject positions and not implicated in producing and regulating its own normative subject positions; (2) her rather weak conceptualisation of norms and their intricate workings at different, yet inextricably linked levels; and, implicated within the previous two constraints, (3) her narrow account of the encoding-decoding architecture of the drag represented in *Paris is Burning* (1991). In the process of examining these constraints, I will draw upon the work of Esther Newton (1972) (on normative gay male male-to-female drag subject positions and their regulation), John H. Gagnon and William S. Simon (1967a, 1986) (on norms and scripting), and Stuart Hall (1993) (on the encoding-decoding architecture of the production of messages, that is, production, circulation, distribution/consumption (use), and reproduction). In a similar fashion to the previous chapter, I conclude my examination of queer theory's textualism by proposing that discursive spaces are created within which there is an integration of queer and sociological methodological approaches. It is my belief that such discursive spaces would move queer theory and sociology in the direction of disciplinary cross-fertilisation.

The second section of the chapter will then seek to productively rework queer theory's textualism by offering such a discursive space. The main aim here is to demonstrate how the broadening and deepening of queer theory's methodological programme can lead to a more developed social analysis of a subject/object of study. This will take place by integrating and reengaging Butler's discursive analysis of drag via *Paris is Burning* (1991) with ethnographic fieldwork that I conducted on gay male

male-to-female drag in Portland, Oregon, United States. My work focused on two drag spaces, The Embers Avenue, where the space was predominately patronised by those who identified as 'lesbian,' 'gay,' 'bisexual,' or 'transgender' and Darcelle XV, where the space was predominantly patronised by those who identified as 'heterosexual.' In particular, I will focus on Butler's analysis of the centrality of a 'morphological ideal' in respect to subjectivity and the production of dominant subject positions. My ethnographic work in The Embers Avenue will only inform this discursive space. I expand on this later in the chapter. An outline of my methodological approach and a character sketch of my interlocutors will precede my discussion of my work.

However, before I proceed with the above investigation, there are several issues of definition and intent that I want to clarify.

In the first instance, I want to clarify what I mean when I use the term 'textual analysis' as a methodological approach. I use the term in its broadest sense: a research method that approaches the investigation of a subject/object by performing an analysis of a text in, of, and by itself. A 'text' can designate a play, movie, fiction, music, or sign. The text is both the source and frame by which a textual analysis proceeds. This definition is in line with Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's understanding and usage of the methodological approach in *Epistemology of the Closet*:

> Any critical book makes endless choices of focus and methodology. . . . If the book [*Epistemology of the Closet*] were able to fulfill its most expansive ambitions, it would make certain specific kinds of readings and interrogations, perhaps new, available in a heuristically powerful, productive, and significant form for other readers to perform on literary and social texts with, ideally, other results (1990, p. 14).

However, although I am employing a broad definition of textual analysis, I do want to underscore that there is no one definition that can capture the varied and complex nuances of the methodological approach. As I previously remarked, there will be variation from one queer inquirer to the

next in relation to what subject/object of study he/she may examine (for example, representational politics, drag, transsexualism, queer subjectivity, or lesbian desire), what theoretical apparatus he/she may employ (for example, Derridean, Foucauldian, or Nietzschean, which may be subsequently at odds with each other), what kind of textual analysis he/she may perform (for example, deconstructive, discursive, psychoanalytic, rhetorical, or semiotic), or what medium he/she may explore (for example, movies, fiction, or signs). The possibilities are endless. Therefore, throughout the course of this chapter, if I use the term 'textual analysis' in a general context, then the reader should read it in the broad sense that I offer as a definition. Conversely, if I refer to a specific textual analysis of a specific queer inquirer, then I will recognise and identify its local character.

In the second instance, I want to clarify my promotion of a methodological approach that incorporates the lived experiences of social actors. It is not to be understood as a return to positivism, whereby the social actor is taken as a point of departure for an analysis of the social, devoid of critically interrogating that point of departure in the first place. Within sexual theory and feminist debates, particularly within poststructuralist quarters, an examination of experience has often been perceived as a move towards positivism (Butler 1992 [1991]; de Lauretis 1984; Scott 1992 [1991]). Angela McRobbie captures this view very well in her discussion of the 'three Es' (empiricism, ethnography, and experience) and the 'anti-Es' (anti-essentialism, poststructuralism, and psychoanalysis) within feminist domains (1999 [1997]). According to McRobbie, descriptive humanism has conventionally been understood to belong to the Es and high theory and critical reflection to the anti-Es:

> Ethnography? The truth-seeking activity reliant upon the (often literary) narratives of exoticism and difference? Can't do it, except as a deconstructive exercise. Empiricism? The 'representation' of results, the narrative of numbers? Can't do it either, except as part of a critical genealogy of sociology and its role in the project of

> modernity and science. Experience? That cornerstone of human authenticity, that essential core of individuality, the spoken voice as evidence of being and of the coincidence of consciousness with identity? Can't do it, other than as a psychoanalytic venture (1999 [1997], pp. 75-76).

I am not suggesting that this is an outright misconstrual. Historically, an examination of experience in the social sciences empirically took the social actor as a matter-of-fact point of departure. This was a methodological move that sought to establish it as a 'legitimate science.' However, experience is rarely studied and conceived in this positivistic way today, particularly since Clifford Geertz (1973) outlined his insights on interpreting culture and introduced 'thick description.' According to Geertz, an analysis of culture should not be "an experimental science in search of some law but an interpretive one in search of meaning" (1973, p. 5). In other words, it should be an analysis of the context of the practices and discourses that occur within a particular society. For Geertz, meaning is embodied in symbols, which are vehicles that provide insight into a particular culture. According to Geertz, it is the job of the social scientist to immerse him/herself within culture. The deeper he/she immerses him/herself, then the thicker his/her description will be. It is in this spirit that I promote a methodological approach that incorporates the lived experiences of social actors.

Moreover, I do not assume or even suggest that the drag in my fieldwork is exactly the same as the drag in *Paris is Burning* (1991). In addition to the obvious fact that each have their own geopolitical spaces, each also have their own social structures and histories. Having said this, this essay is not a comparative study of drag in and of itself. Further, Butler's discursive analysis of drag is not part of a study of drag. It is an analysis that supports a larger argument on subjectivity. As I previously outlined, the aim of the chapter is to critically examine and demonstrate how a particular methodology can constrain the analysis of a subject/object under investigation and how the broadening and deepening

of its outlines can lead to a more developed social analysis. It is to this extent that I compare my fieldwork on drag with Butler's discursive analysis of drag via *Paris is Burning* (1991). I reiterate this later in the chapter.

Lastly, the drag represented and examined herein is *North American gay male* drag, that is, gay male male-to-female drag. Because it is a cultural product of North American gay male culture, it has different cultural meanings, social relations, and histories than that of lesbian female-to-male drag, heterosexual drag (male and female), and different forms of British drag. Again, the intent of the chapter is not to explore the differences between these forms of drag. Please consult Roger Baker (1994), David Bergman (1993), Marjorie B. Garber (1992), Judith Halberstam and Annamarie Jagose (1999), and Moe Meyer (1994) for an examination of these different forms of drag.

## Section I: A Question of Methodology

### i. Butler's Take on Drag

Butler methodologically approaches her analysis of male-to-female drag by performing a discursive analysis of drag in the film *Paris is Burning* (1991). Using Louis Althusser's (1971) doctrine of 'interpellation' as a springboard and supporting a larger argument on subjectivity, Butler maintains that drag can be a critical resignification, that is, denaturalisation, of hegemonic subject positions, particularly those of compulsory heterosexuality. However, drag is not always subversive for Butler. It can also be, at the same time and paradoxically, an occasion for hegemonic subject positions to be renaturalised. This is accomplished by focusing on three aspects in the film: (1) the general structure of the drag performances, (2) kinship relations between the drag performers, and (3) a drag performer's effecting of compulsory heterosexuality's binary gender economy.

However, before I begin to unpack Butler's methodological framing and subsequent analysis of drag, I want to offer a narrative summary of

*Paris is Burning* (1991), which is in line with Butler's own summary (1993, pp. 128-29).

*Paris is Burning* (1991) was directed and produced by Jennie Livingston. It documents a world where the Paris runways and Houses of Coco Chanel, Christian Dior, Yves Saint Laurent, and Jean Paul Gaultier intersect with Harlem's very own drag balls and haute couture Houses—the House of Xtravaganza, the House of Labeija, and the House of Ninja. Mademoiselle Chanel is alive and living well. She has just flown into Harlem from Paris, and she is here to stay! Founded, organised, and attended primarily by African-American and Hispanic gay men and male-to-female transsexuals (pre- and post-operative), the Houses sponsor drag balls where drag artists arrive in high fashion with attitude and battle it out between each other in a number of categories that they attempt to approximate.

The categories themselves are marked by social norms. Some categories include, for example: 'executive wear' and 'evening wear' (marked by White high class and all conveniently located on one shop floor), the 'drag queen' (marked by femininity), and the 'military officer' (marked by masculinity and juxtaposed up against the feminine categories). Until Madonna popularised voguing, an 'Egyptian-like' dance form that originated in the Houses, the drag balls were scarcely known to the public. Some of their dancers have materially benefited from the 'Madonna-effect' (as it is now referred to in Scotland). In addition to joining Madonna's stage entourage for her "Blonde Ambition Tour" in 1991, dancers have furthered their careers in choreography and modelling, particularly Willi Ninja of the House of Ninja.

I do not want to suggest that the drag artists who compete in these categories, especially the more affluent and privileged ones, actually constitute and live them outside of the drag balls and Houses. I also do not want to suggest that they lead relatively comfortable lives. As the film disturbingly documents, the discursive and material realities of their daily lives are very much far removed from those spaces. Their realities as gay

men and transsexuals, who are also Black and who are also working class, unemployed, or in 'illegitimate' forms of employment, are marked by violence and rejection, whereby heterosexual, race, and class privilege seek to bring them down and erase them from the map of social legitimacy. For example, the film documents the tragic fate of Venus, a Latina pre-operative male-to-female transsexual prostitute, whose struggle to escape homophobia, racism, and classism by effecting compulsory heterosexuality's gender economy ends in death when one of her male clients discovers her deceptive 'little secret,' that is, she is not a real woman but a transsexual/man. It is precisely to this stark degree that the affluent and privileged categories of the drag balls and Houses are juxtaposed up against the hard streets of Harlem. In this light, the drag balls and Houses act as safe havens where the drag artists can occupy privileged subject positions and survive, ones that would not be reserved, let alone even thinkable, for their 'kind' outside on the streets of Harlem and beyond. As one drag artist accurately puts it in the film, "After all, how many gay black males are there in the business executive ranks?" However, the drag balls and Houses are more than just safe havens for the drag artists. As I will soon discuss, Butler points out that they also allow the drag artists to implicitly, if not explicitly, pass social commentary.

Butler begins her chapter by outlining and expanding upon Althusser's (1971) doctrine of interpellation (1993, pp. 121-24). Generally, it is part of a larger theory of ideology in respect to representation, which draws upon Lacan. For Althusser, representations do not signify some prior, given reality, whereby reality enjoys ontological status free of any social significance. Rather, representations are constitutive of social reality. They are discursive products that arise within social relations. Althusser's doctrine of interpellation is a theory of the juridical and social formation of the subject. The subject is the effect of an authoritative voice, which brings the subject into being as a subject within its language. Butler recounts Althusser's well-known example of interpellation. In brief, there is a policeman who is constitutive and representative of the 'Law.' The

policeman hails a person on the street: 'Hey, you!' The person then turns around and answers to the terms of the Law. Through the act of turning around to answer the policeman's reprimand, the person is subjected to the terms of the Law and assumes a certain order of social existence as a subject as set out by the discursive terms of the Law. Prior to the reprimand, the person did not exist as a subject. It is only through the actual act of turning towards and answering the Law, that is, being subjected to the Law, that the person is formed as a subject. In this light, subjectivation is central to the juridical and social formation of the subject. However, as Butler is correct to remark, it is questionable whether subjectivation is a direct consequence of the Law's reprimand, 'Hey, you!,' or the reprimand's "power to compel the fear of punishment and, from that compulsion, to produce a compliance and obedience to the law" (1993, p. 122). Additionally, it is very questionable whether the social scene of interpellation is as unilateral and uniform as Althusser purports it to be.

As Butler points out, Althusser does recognise that *mis*recognition can exist between the Law and the subject. Althusser refers to these subjects as 'bad subjects.' However, according to Butler, Althusser does not elaborate on "the range of *disobedience* that such an interpellating law might produce" (1993, p. 122, italics included in original). The Law might intend and expect to unilaterally and uniformly interpellate the subject within its discursive terms, but it might produce, instead, a set of unintended and unexpected consequences. More specifically, the subject might reject its terms or mime, embody, and repeat them but mime, embody, and repeat them in such a way that calls them into question (what Butler refers to as a 'parodic inhabiting of conformity'). Regardless of the range of disobedience, disobedience or, more precisely, *the possibility of disobedience* suggests that the monotheistic force of the Law is not strictly unilateral and uniform in its effects. If this was the case, then disobedience would not arise within the social scene of interpellation. However, because the possibility of disobedience always threatens the social scene of interpellation, the Law's status as the divine performative is

permanently vulnerable, always open to resignification. Of course, this will be to varying degrees.

Butler asks the reader to consider the construction of the 'I' in relation to being called a name. Her analysis suggests that although the Law may be enabling, the subject who opposes its discursive terms cannot fully extricate itself from them. The subject is, from the start, radically dependent upon the discursive terms of the Law for its existence as a subject. Without them, the subject cannot come into being. Consequently, according to Butler, the subject who opposes them will express its opposition by drawing from them. Further, it is precisely here where the subject will partly draw its agency: from right within the very heart of power relations that it opposes. However, Butler is quick to qualify that although the subject wields its agency by being implicated within the relations of power that it opposes, implication does not mean that the subject is reducible to the discursive terms of the Law. Furthermore, it does not imply that the subject should not make use of them. In being occupied by the discursive terms of the Law, as well as in occupying them, Butler maintains that the task is to repeat them, but to repeat them in such a way that they reverse and dislocate their original purposes (again, what Butler refers to as the 'parodic inhabiting of conformity'). For Butler, this may risk a reinscription and reconsolidation of the terms of the Law, but it is a risk worth taking nonetheless. It is from this formulation of the disobedient subject that Butler's analysis of drag proceeds in parallel.

Butler begins by outlining the categories that the drag artists compete in. As I previously outlined, the drag artists compete in a variety of categories that they attempt to approximate, which are marked by social norms discursively constituted across the lines of class, gender, and race. In addition to the ones that I have already mentioned, Butler cites the 'Ivy League student' (a product of White culture and a sign of high class); the 'butch queen' (marked both by working class masculinity and femininity); and the 'bangie' (marked by straight, masculine African-American street

culture). Therefore, neither are the categories products of White culture only nor are they constituted by one modality of identity/difference.

However, these categories are not mere trivial play on cultural signs for the drag artists. As Butler correctly points out, 'realness' is central to each category, that is, each category has a standard by which a drag artist's performance of a given category is rated and 'read' by others (1993, p. 129). The degree of success in effecting realness lies in the drag artist's ability to naturalise realness, to produce the notion that he/she is the embodiment of realness. Butler maintains that this is attempted by miming, embodying, and repeating a 'morphological ideal,' that is, a bodily norm particular to a category, which regulates a given performance but for which no performance is able to fully and finally achieve (I explain this point in due course.).

Please note that I encase 'read' in inverted commas. For Butler, the success of a drag artist effecting realness is not about being literally read, whereby being literally read designates a divergence between realness and the drag artist's attempt to effect realness (1993, p. 129). Rather, success is about being *figuratively* read, whereby figuratively read designates a 'transparent seeing,' a transparent doing of the convergence between realness and the drag artist's effecting of realness. Here, the drag artist's effecting of realness *is* realness. There is no distinction between the two. They are relatively one and the same thing. In these respects, the drag balls are competitions of realness for Butler.

Within Althusserian conventional parlance, these competitions of realness are the staging of the social scene of interpellation for Butler (1993, pp. 129-31). By successfully miming and embodying the realness of a particular category, the drag artist gains his/her social existence as a subject of an established category. This staging is significant for Butler. The general structure of the drag performances reveals not so much the realness but the *imitative* nature of the categories. Each category is not representative of some natural sort of being. They only achieve the semblance and misnomer of realness by the drag artists (1) setting them

up as the original, the natural and (2) attempting to mime and embody their originality, naturalness through repetition (what Butler refers to as 'reiteration'). In other words, it is only through a drag artist's performance that a category achieves the semblance and misnomer of originality and naturalness. The realness of a category is itself an effect of a drag artist effecting realness. Therefore, the general structure of his/her performance implicitly rearticulates that realness as a phantasmatic and regulatory construction, which cannot lay claim to originality and naturalness but nonetheless regulates the given performance as such. Accordingly, the realness of the category is *de*naturalised. It is to this extent, for Butler, that no performance is able to fully and finally achieve the realness of a particular category. It can only ever be a fantasy or, more precisely, a failed promise.

This formulation of drag has been central to Butler's doctrine of gender performativity, which was introduced in *Gender Trouble* (1990) and later clarified and strengthened in *Bodies That Matter* (1993). I say 'clarified' and 'strengthened' because it has been significantly misinterpreted within feminist and queer quarters. By Butler citing drag as an example of gender performativity in *Gender Trouble* (1990), some readers, notably Kath Weston (1993), took her to mean that drag was "*exemplary* of [gender] performativity. . . . that all [gender] performativity [was] . . . to be understood as drag" (Butler 1993, pp. 230-31, italics included in original). However, Butler makes it quite clear, in three separate passages in *Bodies That Matter* (1993, pp. x, 125, 230-33), that she did not intend to construe gender as drag whereby "gender was like clothes" and "one woke in the morning, perused the closet or some more open space for the gender of choice, donned that gender for the day, and then restored the garment to its place at night" (1993, pp. x, 231). For Butler, gender is neither like clothes nor a highly reflective choice of a wilful subject free of social constraint. Rather, gender is like drag or is drag to the extent that it is a repeated and highly regulated idealisation of a hegemonic norm (read: compulsory heterosexuality) (Butler 1993, p. 125). As I previously

gestured, gender only achieves the semblance and misnomer of originality and naturalness by (1) compulsory heterosexuality setting it up as original and natural and (2) the subject miming and embodying that originality and naturalness through repetition.

However, a critical distinction needs to be made here. It is the general structure of the drag performances that reveals the imitative nature of the realness of a subject position, not necessarily the drag artists themselves. Drag is not necessarily subversive for Butler (1993, p. 125). The general structure of a drag performance might be implicitly revealing the imitative nature of the realness of a subject position; however, on the surface, something totally different might be happening. For example, a drag artist might be actually renaturalising the realness of a subject position. On the other hand, a hegemonic norm might be renaturalising a hegemonic subject position that a drag artist is attempting to denaturalise through reiteration. Butler further considers how the parodying of norms can be subversive/non-subversive by further considering the kinship relations between the drag performers and a drag performer's effecting of compulsory heterosexuality's binary gender economy (1993, pp. 129-33, 136-37). Whereas the drag performers' kinship relations denaturalise the realness of dominant subject positions, the converse is true for the drag performer effecting compulsory heterosexuality's binary gender economy.[2]

Each House houses or, more precisely, is housed by its own kinship system. For the most part, each kinship system is structurally and discursively based on Western society's conventional heterosexist nuclear family—that privileged familial unit based on biology/'blood' and comprised of relations between a husband/father proper (of the male sex), a wife/mother proper (of the female sex), and 2.4 children proper. Although the heterosexist nuclear family has significantly changed in form and has lost some of its diacritical power to produce and regulate discourses on gender and sexuality since the 1950s, it is still invoked today as the original and natural familial unit, especially since it is structurally and discursively based on biology/'blood.' It is a major defining force of the

concept 'family.' The two are relatively one and the same thing. However, please note that I state that each kinship system is based on this familial unit 'for the most part.' This is because it is not fully replicated by the drag artists. There is no husband/father figure actually present. He is only an absent, imaginary figure but nonetheless one that still exists as a real figure for the drag artists. Having said this, the rest of the familial unit is structurally and discursively fulfilled and subscribes to proper subject positions. The Houses themselves are proper 'houses,' replete with 'mothers' and 'children.' The drag artists who are mothers are mothers who 'mother' their children. That is, they rear, look after, support, and sustain their children—psychologically, emotionally, socially, and materially. And the drag artists who are children are children who are vulnerable and depend on that mothering for their present and future survival. There is, without question, an attachment between those who mother and those who are mothered.

It is to this extent for Butler that the drag artists effect the realness of the subject positions of 'mother' and 'child' as understood by the conventional heterosexist nuclear family. By reiterating the subject position mother, the drag artists effectively naturalise mothering as a role that properly belongs to that of mothers. The same is true for the drag artists who occupy the subject position child. Through their psychological, emotional, social, and material attachments to their mothers, they naturalise those attachments as that of the subject position child. However, in effecting the realness of these subject positions, the drag artists effectively denaturalise the conventional heterosexist nuclear family.

For Butler, the kinship systems of the Houses are a parodic inhabiting of conformity of the heterosexist nuclear family, that is, a resignification of the familial unit. Butler does not specifically elaborate on how they are a parodic inhabiting of conformity, but we might be able to make the following readings (They are not meant to be exhaustive.). In the first instance, the drag artists might effect the realness of mothering as a role

that properly belongs to mothers, but they resignify that subject position insofar as they displace its metaphysical lodging. The drag artists reveal that the subject position mother does not naturally and exclusively belong to the female sex. It is just as easily possible for the subject position to belong to the male sex as well. After all, it is gay men and transsexuals effecting the subject position mother, not the female sex. Just like the general structure of their drag performances would implicitly reveal, the subject position mother only achieves the semblance and misnomer of naturally and exclusively belonging to the female sex by (1) compulsory heterosexuality setting it up as the natural subject position of the female sex and (2) the subject reiterating that naturalness in its discursive, institutional, and material manifestations. Therefore, the discontinuity between the drag artists' sexed body and culturally constructed gender suspends and questions the supposedly-natural binary gender system that underpins the whole of compulsory heterosexuality and, hence, the heterosexist nuclear family. Compulsory heterosexuality's binary gender system presupposes that there are two discrete natural sexes, male and female, that are understood and expressed through two discrete natural genders, man/masculine and woman/feminine, and then through a natural sexuality, heterosexuality. For the drag artists effecting the realness of the subject position mother, gender does not mirror its supposedly-respective natural sexed body. Gender becomes, as Butler has argued elsewhere, "a free-floating artifice, with the consequence that *man* and *masculine* might just as easily signify a female body as a male one, and *woman* and *feminine* a male body as easily as a female one" (1990, p. 6, italics included in original). Here, gender exceeds the binary gender system. In doing so, it resignifies that system not as an interpretation of some natural order of the sexes but as a phantasmatic, yet regulatory ideal.

In the second instance, the drag artists might effect the realness of the heterosexist nuclear family via the subject positions of mother and child, but they do this insofar as they dislodge the concept of family from its ontological lodging. I mentioned earlier that the heterosexist nuclear

family usually sets itself up as the original, the natural familial unit. This is accomplished by claiming that the concept of family is rooted in nature, that is, it is established by biology/'blood.' However, by effecting the heterosexist nuclear family via the subject positions of mother and child, the drag artists suspend and question, as gay men and transsexuals, its naturalness. They demonstrate that gay men and transsexuals can also occupy the same subject positions within a familial unit and likewise sustain one, and they are by no means related to each other by biology/'blood.' In doing so, they reveal not so much the realness but the imitative nature of it. Again, the heterosexist nuclear unit only achieves the semblance and misnomer of originality and naturalness by (1) compulsory heterosexuality setting the concept of family up as rooted in biology/'blood,' (2) compulsory heterosexuality setting all other permutations of the family up as derivative and illegitimate, and (3) the subject reiterating that originality and naturalness in its discursive, institutional, and material manifestations. Revealed in this way, the drag artists' kinship relations effectively denaturalise the concept of the heterosexist nuclear family. Again, it is a phantasmatic, yet regulatory ideal.[3]

Although Butler does not explicitly make the previous readings, she does make it clear that the drag artists' parodic inhabiting of conformity is an enabling occasion for them to guarantee and preserve their present and future existence. As I previously mentioned and as Butler accurately puts it, the drag artists are faced with "dislocation, poverty, [and] homelessness" on a daily basis (1993, p. 137). They live in a reality dominated by the discursive terms, social structures, and material conditions of compulsory heterosexuality, which seek to exclude their kind of people from participating in and reaping the benefits of that reality (across the lines of gender, class, and race). As gay men and transsexuals, they are forced to live in isolation. As gay men and transsexuals, they are not permitted to economically benefit from the fruits of their labour or to participate in a labour market that bears fruit. And as

gay men and transsexuals, they are kicked out of the homes that they were born and reared in and are forced to live rough on the streets. However, by effecting the realness of the heterosexist nuclear family through the subject positions of mother and child, they resignify that familial unit in order to establish and sustain their own familial unit or, more precisely, community. This community is not, as Butler puts it, "a vain or useless imitation [of the heterosexist nuclear family based on biology/'blood']," but one "that binds, cares, and teaches, that shelters and enables" (1993, p. 137). In other words, it is a community that enables them to house and sustain one another as gay men and transsexuals in the face of compulsory heterosexuality. In short, it is a community that enables them to survive—psychologically, emotionally, socially, and materially.

Conversely, for Butler, a drag performer's effecting of compulsory heterosexuality's binary gender economy demonstrates that the parodying of a subject position of a hegemonic norm is not always sufficient to denaturalise it. Indeed, Venus' parodying of compulsory heterosexuality's binary gender economy via the subject position woman implicitly denaturalises gender. However, it is questionable for Butler whether she explicitly denaturalises gender herself. Venus' death finally testifies for Butler that she is unsuccessful in her attempt to denaturalise compulsory heterosexuality's binary gender economy. For Butler, Venus' death demonstrates that a hegemonic norm will go to extreme lengths to renaturalise itself, "that there are cruel and fatal social constraints on denaturalization" (1993, p. 133).

I previously outlined that Venus is a member of the House of Extravaganza. Since she is housed by the House's very own kinship system, she formally goes by the full name of Venus Extravaganza of the House of Extravaganza. As a pre-operative male-to-female transsexual, she has not morphologically changed her sex from male to female yet. She refers to her remaining bits of masculinity as her 'little secret,' what male-to-female transsexuals usually refer to as their 'candy' or 'T.' She

does however take hormone tablets. Venus also tries to pass as White. However, she is light-skinned. Venus is a Latina. Furthermore, Venus lives in poverty. Her only shelter, apart from the House of Extravaganza, is on street corners and within dislocated bedrooms of motels and houses of male customers. She sustains shelter through illegitimate employment as a prostitute. In these respects, Venus is not just a woman. She is also Black and economically and materially underprivileged.

Venus effects the subject position woman as set out by compulsory heterosexuality's binary gender economy. She makes no secret of her motive throughout the film. She talks about her desire to become a full and final woman, to find a man and get married, and to live in the suburbs tending to the daily laundry. In order to effect the realness of the subject position woman, to pass as a full and final woman, Venus compels and effects a mimetic relation between her sexed body (female) (via taking her course of female hormones), culturally constructed gender (woman/feminine) (via subscribing to and taking on female gender roles), and sexuality (heterosexuality) (via desiring and seeking out the male sex). Because her penis can reveal that she is not a real woman, she carefully hides it with precision. To a large degree, she is successful. She is figuratively read as a woman by others within the film, particularly her male clients. However, this does become her downfall.

For Butler, Venus' effecting of the subject position woman implicitly denaturalises it. She reveals that its mimetic relation between sex, gender, and sexuality is not representative of some original, natural essence or order. The subject position woman is an effect of the idealisation and reiteration of a regulatory norm (read: compulsory heterosexuality). However, Butler questions whether Venus *explicitly* denaturalises the subject position herself. She is not totally convinced that she does. Butler does not specifically state her reservations, but we might be able to make the following reading. On the surface, Venus understands her subjectivity as a woman as reflective of a natural essence. She understands herself as a true woman trapped within a

man's body. Furthermore, she understands the mimetic relation between sex, gender, and sexuality as reflective of a natural order. As I previously mentioned, she talks at great lengths about her desire to be a woman (female sex), to live in the suburbs tending to the laundry (female gender role), and to marry a man (heterosexuality). Thus, for Butler, there is a potential split in Venus' success in parodying and denaturalising the subject position woman. The question for Butler is "whether the denaturalization of gender . . . she performs . . . culminates in a reworking of the normative framework of heterosexuality" (1993, p. 133).

Regardless of whether Venus implicitly/explicitly denaturalises/naturalises the subject position woman, Butler correctly points out that Venus' effecting of the subject position is not solely a renegotiation of her gender. It is also a means for her to renegotiate her subjecthood along the lines of race and class. In her pursuit to effect a mimetic relation between her sexed body, culturally constructed gender, and sexuality, she wants "to find an imaginary man who will designate a class and race privilege that promises a permanent shelter from racism . . . and poverty" (Butler 1993, p. 130). This imaginary man is, unsurprisingly, White and of a professional class. Having said this, Butler is quick to point out that gender is not the primary 'substance' or 'substrate' of Venus' subjecthood, with race and class as the additional 'qualifying attributes.' Rather, gender is a "nexus of race and class, the site of its articulation" (Butler 1993, p. 130). In this light, Venus' reiteration of compulsory heterosexuality's binary gender economy is not solely an effecting of femaleness. It is also a reiteration of Whiteness and of a professional class. Ultimately, Venus wants to, at best, be or, at worst, pass as a White, middle/upper-class woman. According to Butler, this is critically significant for the psychoanalytic paradigm.

According to Butler, compulsory heterosexuality's binary gender economy would be referred to as 'the Symbolic' within Lacanian discourse. For Butler, the Symbolic designates a set of "rules that regulate and legitimate realness . . . [and] constitute the mechanism by which certain

sanctioned fantasies, sanctioned imaginaries, are insidiously elevated as the parameters of realness" (1993, p. 130). Within this framework, as Butler is correct to point out, sexual difference is understood as the primary marker in the constitution of the subject. The markers of race and class are considered secondary or derivative. However, *Paris is Burning* (1991) suggests for Butler that the Symbolic is not simply an issue of gender norms: "the Symbolic is also and at once a racializing set of norms, and . . . norms of realness by which the subject is produced are racially informed conceptions of 'sex'" (1993, p. 130). Although Butler does not mention class, she would formulate it within these terms. Accordingly, Butler maintains that the entire psychoanalytic register needs to subjected to such a critique.

Venus may implicitly denaturalise the subject position woman and its normative framework by effecting it, but it is not sufficient to denaturalise it. In her pursuit to find an imaginary man who will secure her effecting of the subject position across the lines of gender, class, and race, Venus becomes a victim. Upon the discovery that her 'natural' sexed body (male) does not mirror the gender (woman/feminine) and sexuality (desiring the male sex/heterosexuality) that she presents, one of Venus' male clients mutilates and kills her for having tricked him into seduction. According to Butler, Venus' death is the renaturalisation of compulsory heterosexuality: "As much as she crosses gender, sexuality, and race performatively, the hegemony that reinscribes the privileges of normative femininity and [W]hiteness wields the final power to *re*naturalise Venus's body and cross out that prior crossing, an erasure that is her death" (1993, p. 133, italics included in original). Indeed, Venus dies because her effecting of the subject position woman defies and questions the naturalness of compulsory heterosexuality's binary gender economy. Her death is the mechanism by which compulsory heterosexuality stamps out and erases the notion that the subject position woman is the effect of the idealisation and reiteration of a regulatory hegemonic norm and, in doing so, renaturalises it as reflective of a natural essence and order of the sexes.

Hence, her death is a means for compulsory heterosexuality to protect and secure its foundations as natural and ward off the possibility of opening up its discursive terms.

### ii. Butler's Under-analysis of the Social at the Expense of Textualism

I must admit at this juncture that I am seductively drawn to Butler's analysis of drag, and, furthermore, I will not offer an apology to those who are offended by this open and frank admission. Throughout her discursive analysis of drag in *Paris is Burning* (1991), she traverses some tricky and sticky terrains (some more than others): the 'subject,' identity, and agency are all topical in relation to sexuality, gender, race, and class. Her analysis is insightful and useful at both the intellectual and political levels. I strongly believe that the theoretical insights that arise out of her analysis are particularly useful for a broad-based queer politics that is not only critical of the matrices of power within which it is constituted and it opposes but is also critical of its own politics from within. In particular, she encourages her readers to seriously consider the following: the realness of a subject position is an effect of the effecting of a regulatory hegemonic norm; a hegemonic norm is and always will be implicated in the present and future discursive manifestations of the subject who opposes its constitution, no matter how and to what degree an identificatory move seeks to oppose that norm; the parodic inhabiting of conformity can be a strategic move to denaturalise a hegemonic norm; and, conversely, the denaturalisation of a hegemonic subject position is in no way free play and can be an occasion for a hegemonic norm to painfully renaturalise itself. However, despite the enabling and productive impulse of her analysis, I do have one strong reservation. In particular, I take serious issue with her methodological framing of drag.

Although there are traces of sociological interests and matters of concern within Butler's analysis of drag, her sole usage of a detached methodological approach inhibits her from offering a more developed

social analysis. For example, because Butler solely relies on *Paris is Burning* (1991) for her analysis of drag and *Paris is Burning* is limited in its content and form, she is unable to explore any of the following sociological questions in great(er) detail. They include but are not limited to:

1. the drag artists denaturalise hegemonic subject positions of compulsory heterosexuality along the lines of gender, sexuality, race, and class by revealing their imitative nature; however, do they produce and regulate their own normative subject positions?
2. if the drag artists produce their own normative subject positions, are they constitutive of an identificatory value system, which avows certain identifications and disavows others?
3. through what mechanisms do they regulate identification? are they institutional, discursive, or material?
4. for those identifications that are disavowed, how do they constitute and sustain the limits of sanctioned identifications? what is the relationship between the two?
5. for those identifications that are disavowed, do they ever open up and resignify the discursive terms of sanctioned identifications, and, if 'yes,' how and under what conditions? conversely, if 'no,' what are the social constraints that prevent them from being opened up, and how are they renaturalised?;
6. the drag artists effect a particular category by reiterating a bodily norm; however, is this the only kind of norm that the drag artists effect? do they also effect institutional norms, mores, or normative patterns of behaviour?
7. are these norms effected differently? are they effected separately or is there a correlation between them? if there is a correlation between them, then are there various degrees of correlation?

8. at what levels do these norms script the drag artists' subject positions: the cultural, interpersonal, or intrapsychic?
9. is there a convergence or divergence between these levels of scripting? what are the social conditions that give rise to a convergence or divergence?
10. the bodily norm of compulsory heterosexuality is not only a gender norm for Butler but is also a race and class norm; however, what does Butler mean by 'race' and 'class'? for example, is class rooted in and driven by market relations or is it part of a larger distribution of power in the Weberian sense (as well as class, status and party)?
11. if the drag in *Paris is Burning* (1991) is understood as a social text that is a product of a complex structure of social relations of encoding and decoding, then what is its encoding-decoding architecture? and
12. how does Butler's disciplinary location inform her decoding of drag? what are the other possible decodings of drag from other social locations?

If Butler had employed or incorporated a sociological methodological programme that is based in social life and actively incorporates the lived experiences of social actors, then she probably would have shed (more) light on some of the aforementioned sociological questions. In other words, she may have produced a more developed social analysis of drag and, subsequently, of subjectivity. Here, I have in mind face-to-face interviews, questionnaires, (participant) observation, focus group discussions, life histories, and case studies. The task, then, for Butler, could be about employing or incorporating a methodological approach (or set of approaches) that examines drag outside of the text. This methodological move is neither intended to work against a textual methodological approach nor is it to be understood as a return to positivism, as I explained in the introduction of the chapter. Rather, its intention is to widen and deepen the examination of a subject/object and

to generate an analysis that is more socially sustained than what a textual methodological approach may produce on its own.

### iii. Normative Drag Subject Positions

*Paris is Burning* (1991) vividly underscores the centrality of the discursive terms of compulsory heterosexuality in relation to the drag artists' subjecthood, both on and off the stage. On stage, compulsory heterosexuality sets out and regulates the discursive terms by which the drag artists effect compulsory heterosexuality's subject positions and gain their social existence. Off stage, compulsory heterosexuality sets out and regulates the discursive terms by which the drag artists are de-legitimised as non-subjects as gay men and transsexuals. Furthermore, both on and off stage, the drag artists effect the realness of compulsory heterosexuality's subject positions in order to denaturalise and resignify them in directions that undermine compulsory heterosexuality. In other words, compulsory heterosexuality is worked so that it can be reworked against itself and the drag artists can attempt to guarantee a more enabling future for themselves as gay men and transsexuals. However, despite the centrality of compulsory heterosexuality, *Paris is Burning* (1991) does not enable Butler to examine whether the drag artists themselves produce and regulate their own normative subject positions.

Esther Newton's classic and widely-cited ethnography on North American gay male male-to-female drag, *Mother Camp* (1972), examines this very point. Her methodological approach enabled her to widen and deepen her examination of drag, with the result that she produces a more developed social analysis than that which *Paris is Burning* (1991) permits and Butler subsequently produces. Her methodological approach is based in social life and actively incorporates the lived experiences of gay male drag artists, their audience, and their employers. This was achieved by conducting ethnographic fieldwork in gay male drag bars in Chicago, New York City, and Kansas City over a fourteen-month period via face-to-face interviews, observation, questionnaires, and informal conversations. By

creating a dialogue with her interlocutors, Newton's fieldwork revealed that drag artists produce and regulate their own normative subject positions (1972, pp. 41-58).

For example, Newton discusses two subject positions that are cultural products of gay male drag: the 'glamour drag queen' and the 'transy drag queen' (1972, pp. 46-51). Glamour drag queens impersonate cultural icons such as Bette Davis, Mae West, Marlene Dietrich, and Judy Garland. Ideally, the glamour drag queen is beautiful in appearance: she is youthful and has supple skin, yet has a good, strong bone structure; she has large, soft breasts; her makeup is not heavy but complementary; her jewellery is classic and minimalist and does not weigh her down; her hair or wig is preferably blond and sophisticatedly coiffed; and she wears an evening gown, preferably high cut and floor length, with matching high heels. Ideally, the glamour drag queen is also a highly-skilled singer and does not lip-sync her songs performed on stage. Further, the glamour drag queen ideally has strong mimicry skills and is versatile throughout her performances in any given night. A true, real glamour drag queen can effectively perform four or more impersonations in one hour. Lastly, the glamour drag queen only does drag in social spaces that are reserved for drag. She never does drag off stage. Drag is a profession, not an identity badge that one wears off stage. On the other hand, transy drag queens do drag differently and for different reasons. In the first instance, drag is not solely reserved for the stage. The transy drag queen does drag off stage in a range of private and public spaces. Also, drag is not a profession for the transy drag queen. Drag is a means for the transy drag queen "to *be* rather than to *imitate* a woman" (Newton 1972, p. 51, italics included in original). Thus, the transy drag queen does not imitate a glamorous cultural icon. Rather, she attempts to pass as an ordinary-looking woman. According to Newton, transsexuals, transgenders, and transvestites usually occupy the subject position of transy drag queen.

The glamour drag queen and transy drag queen are not simply descriptive subject positions of different types of drag artists for Newton.

They are also *pre*scriptive, normative subject positions that set out the discursive terms by which a drag artist becomes a subject of one of them. Again, in order for a drag artist to be a glamour drag queen, she must fulfil and maintain a beauty standard in any given performance; she must sing her own songs rather than lip-sync; she must have strong, versatile mimicry skills and be able to mimic a number of idolised glamour stars; and she must only reserve her drag for the stage. Again and conversely, the transy drag queen does not reserve drag for the stage only and does it in order to be a woman, not imitate a woman. Ideally, she wants to pass as a real, ordinary woman.

These normative subject positions are regulatory for Newton because they are constitutive of the drag artists' own identificatory value system. It regulates which drag subject positions are considered good, normal, and natural, that is, legitimate, and those that are considered bad, abnormal, and unnatural, that is, illegitimate. According to Newton, the glamour drag queen is a subject position that is highly valued by the drag artists and one that they ultimately want to be recognised as by other drag artists. As Newton correctly puts it, "[g]lamour drag and serious drag are synonymous terms to female impersonators" (1972, p. 49). In short, it is a drag subject position that carries high status. Whereas the glamour drag queen designates a legitimate subject position, the opposite is true for the drag subject position of transy drag queen. This is reflected in a couple of Newton's observations:

> A street-oriented boy was changing costume backstage. This revealed that he had on a pair of women's underpants. However, these were not the usual simple nylon briefs worn by the others [the glamour drag queens], but were pink and frilly. The other performers immediately began to tease him about his 'pussy' underpants. He laughed it off, saying, "You old queens are just jealous of my transy panties." However, I noticed that he did not wear them again.

> Another street-oriented boy, who was very much disliked by the other performers, and who had only been working for a few weeks, had outfitted himself largely with skirts and blouses. The emcee began to criticize this, saying his appearance was too transy. Soon the boy was in a state of some anxiety about it, and before he would go on stage he would nervously ask anyone who was standing around, "Does this look too transy?" to which they would always reply, "Yes." When I asked one of the older performers what this meant, he said it meant the boy's drag looked "too much like a real woman. It's not showy enough. No woman would go on stage looking like that" (1972, p. 51).

Additionally the drag artists' identificatory value system is a means for the drag artists to legitimise certain drag subject positions, which, in its absence, would otherwise be de-legitimised by compulsory heterosexuality. According to Newton, the drag artists' identificatory value system primarily legitimises certain drag subject positions by underscoring their context and motivation. As I previously alluded, legitimate drag subject positions, such as the glamour drag queen, are only reserved for the stage and performance and are a means to make legitimate money. In other words, legitimate drag subject positions are equated with professionalism. Here, according to Newton, the drag artists' identificatory value system brings drag under group control and legitimises certain drag subject positions so that dominant culture (read: compulsory heterosexuality) reads them as 'legitimate' rather than 'deviant.' Conversely, according to Newton, the drag artists' identificatory value system further de-legitimises the transy drag subject position, which is already read by compulsory heterosexuality as deviant. Because the context and motivation of transy drag are not equated with professionalism, transy drag is understood as an illegitimate drag subject position.

### iv. Other Kinds of Norms and their Relationship

In the main, *Paris is Burning* (1991) vividly underscores the centrality of only one kind of norm in relation to the drag artists' performances: a bodily norm. As I previously outlined, the categories that the drag artists attempt to effect each have their own bodily norm, which is the standard that regulates a drag artist's given performance and by which his/her performance is read and rated by other drag artists. A drag artist's degree of success in effecting a particular category lies in his/her ability to reiterate the bodily norm of the category as closely as possible, whereby there is a transparent seeing rather than a literal interpretation of the category. Although Butler analyses gender roles and sexuality in relation to the kinship systems of the Houses and Venus' effecting of compulsory heterosexuality's binary gender economy, *Paris is Burning's* (1991) emphasis on bodily norms does not provide the occasion for Butler to provide a more developed social analysis of other kinds of norms that the drag artists might be reiterating in their attempt to effect a particular category.

As I discussed in greater detail in the previous chapter, the work of Gagnon and Simon examines norms in great detail, particularly "Introduction: Deviant Behavior and Sexual Deviance" (1967a), *Sexual Conduct* (1973b), and "Sexual Scripts: Permanence and Change" (1986). Their examination of norms is not in relation to drag but it is in relation to sexuality (particularly sexual behaviour). Their methodological approach enabled them to widen and deepen their examination of norms and provide a more developed social analysis than that which *Paris is Burning* (1991) permits and Butler subsequently produces. Although their work is mainly conceptual and theoretical, it is based on the empirical-theoretical observations of other social scientists who conducted systematic fieldwork in gay male communities through face-to-face interviews, questionnaires, observation, and informal conversations. They include: Nancy Achilles' (1967) work on the homosexual bar as an institution; Evelyn Hooker's (1966) and Maurice Leznoff's and William S. Westley's (1956) formulations

on the 'homosexual community'; Laud Humphrey's work on impersonal public sex among gay men; and Michael Schofield's (1965) sociological typology of homosexuality. By incorporating the empirical-theoretical observations of other social scientists, they revealed how sexuality is regulated by different norms: institutional norms, mores, and patterns of sexual behaviour. Gagnon and Simon were also able to generate a sustained examination of how these norms have varied correlations with one another and are scripted at different, yet interconnected levels: the cultural, interpersonal, and intrapsychic. Nonetheless, Butler cannot consider these kinds of norms and their relationship in respect to the drag artists' performances because she does not expand her methodological approach.[4]

### v. The Encoding-Decoding Architecture of Drag

In relation to the eleventh sociological question and its subsidiaries, Butler's methodological framing of drag precludes a more developed social analysis of the encoding-decoding architecture of the drag represented in *Paris is Burning* (1991). To a certain degree, Butler does examine it (1993, pp. 133-35). In particular, she briefly critiques bell hooks' (1991) critique of the relationship between Livingston's identity, that is, White woman/lesbian filmmaker, and the drag artists' racial identities and how Blackness represented in *Paris is Burning* (1991) is the product of Livingston's specific Whiteness. Butler also briefly considers the relationship between Livingston's identity and the identities of the drag artists and how Livingston's identity enables her to have the power to transubstantiate the gender of the transsexual drag artists from male to female via the phallic camera. However, because Butler's analysis of the encoding-decoding architecture of drag is solely reliant on *Paris is Burning* (1991), she is unable to move towards producing a more developed social analysis. Her insights are only, at best, gestural or, at worst, theoretically ungrounded, sociologically. If she had moved her analysis outside of *Paris is Burning* (1991) by incorporating or employing a methodological

programme that is based in social life, then she may have considered some points that Stuart Hall (1993) makes in his formulation of message production, subsequently producing a more developed social analysis.

Although Hall's formulation is conceptual and theoretical and is not based on any fieldwork that he carried out himself, it does make points and raise questions for the reader that can only be studied by employing a methodological approach that is based in social life. His work did indeed prompt a flurry of encoding-decoding studies within the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at Birmingham in the 1980s, most notably David Morley's (1980, 1981, 1983) work on how social groups interpret a television programme differently.

In brief, Hall's "Encoding, Decoding" is a deep examination and theoretical account of the production and use of messages, particularly in relation to television (1993, pp. 90-94). Writing against mass-communications research's behaviourist tendency to conceptualise message exchange, that is, sender/message/receiver, as a 'tap on the knee cap,' Hall proposes a four-stage communication theory instead. His theory takes into consideration both the dominant encoded meanings of a message and the distinctiveness of each moment of the communicative chain/process. For Hall, a message is produced, disseminated, and sustained by four 'linked, but distinctive' moments: production, circulation, distribution/consumption (use), and reproduction. Each moment is linked insofar as a message is imprinted (encoded) with dominant meanings that are constitutive of institutional discourses and power relations. As a result, the message's reception at each moment is somewhat controlled from the very beginning. However, each moment is distinctive insofar as a message is subjected to each moment's own 'specific modality and conditions of existence,' which can interrupt the passage of a message or interpret its meanings differently (decode). In this sense, for Hall, the communicative chain/process is a 'complex structure in dominance.' Hall provides an example for the reader in relation to the television

communicative process, although his example is more general rather than specific (1993, pp. 92-94).

According to Hall, the institutional structures of broadcasting are tasked with producing a television programme, which he understands as a message. In order to produce a television message with certain encoded meanings, they will first draw upon their own practices, networks of production, and technical infrastructure to inform the message. The message here is in its raw, although dependent form: a set of material instruments, social relations, and organised practices, which work to produce a message. Thus, for Hall, in one sense, the communicative chain/process of producing a message begins here. However, please take note that this is 'in one sense' for Hall. According to Hall, the television message's initial production does not take place within a vacuum: "the production process is not without its 'discursive' aspect" (1993, p. 92). The production of the television message will be informed by other frameworks of knowledge as well, particularly that of the wider media machinery and the socio-cultural and political landscape of the audience: professional ideologies, technical skills that are historically defined, assumptions about the audience, images of the audience, agendas and events of the day, and so on. In this light, for Hall, the target audience is not simply the receiver of the television message but is also its source: "Thus—to borrow Marx's terms—circulation and reception are, indeed, 'moments' of the production process in television and are reincorporated, via a number of skewed and structured 'feedbacks,' into the production process itself" (1993, pp. 92-93).

Broadcasting structures will then circulate the encoded television message in the form of symbolic vehicles. This is another linked, yet distinctive moment of the communicative chain/process for Hall. In order for the television message to be realised by its intended audience, that is, to be put to use or to fulfil a need, it must first be understood and appropriated as a meaningful discourse. According to Hall, the formal rules of discourse and language will transform the encoded television

message into a meaningful discourse. This is done by provisionally decoding it for its audience. Thus, the formal rules of discourse and language are now in dominance, at the linked, yet distinctive moment of circulation. It is this form of the encoded television message that will be decoded by the audience and have an effect. According to Hall, effect here may designate influencing, entertaining, instructing, or persuading, with consequences that may be behavioural, emotional, psychological, ideological, cognitive, or perceptual.

Once the television message is circulated as per the formal rules of discourse and language, then another linked, yet distinctive moment of the communicative chain/process will be initiated: the television message will be decoded by the audience. According to Hall, decoding cannot be understood in simple behavioural terms. There is no immediate effect. Hall writes:

> The typical processes identified in positivistic research on isolated elements—effects, uses, 'gratifications'—are themselves framed by structures of understanding, as well as being produced by social and economic relations, which shape their 'realization' at the reception end of the chain and which permit the meanings signified in the discourse to be transposed into practice or consciousness (to acquire social use value or political effectivity) (1993, p. 93).

In other words, the television message will not be unilaterally decoded by the audience according to its institutional encoded meanings. Its decoding will be partly informed by the audience's own modality and conditions of existence, which are culturally, socially, economically, and politically specific. In this light, according to Hall, the relationship between the television message's dominant encoded meanings and their articulation into the audience's specific modality and conditions of existence may not be perfectly symmetrical. On the one hand, the television message may be symmetrically articulated into the audience's specific modality and conditions of existence, with the result that it will be finally reproduced

according to its dominant encoded meanings. In this instance, the communicative chain/process will be complete. On the other hand, the television message may be asymmetrically articulated into the audience's specific modality and conditions of existence: the television message may be decoded differently (a 'negotiated reading') or invoke non-identification and produce a reverse-discourse (a 'counter-hegemonic' reading). In these instances, the television message's dominant encoded meanings will not be fully reproduced.

A reading of Hall's essay does indeed highlight that a developed social analysis of the encoding-decoding architecture of the drag represented in *Paris is Burning* (1991) cannot be simply restricted to the documentary. It can only be examined outside of, although with, *Paris is Burning* (1991). Some questions that Hall's essay incites include: how is the drag represented in *Paris is Burning* (1991), as well as *Paris is Burning* itself, produced, circulated, distributed/consumed, and reproduced? how are *Paris is Burning's* encoded meanings of drag constitutive of institutional practices, networks/relations of production, and technical infrastructures within the media machinery? how does the socio-cultural and political landscape of *Paris is Burning's* target audience shape and inform its encoded meanings of drag? what are the formal rules of language and discourse that govern *Paris is Burning's* (1991) circulation, and how do they transform it into a meaningful discourse meaningfully decoded for its audience? how does Butler's disciplinary location inform her reading of drag, as does Livingston's and the drag artists' social locations? To this extent, Hall highlights Butler's lack of methodology.

### vi. Queer Theory's Textualism

Perhaps the degree of my criticisms of Butler's methodological framing of drag are a little too severe. Perhaps my criticisms are unfairly weighted more by my sociological leanings than taking into the balance Butler's disciplinary location. Indeed, Butler is a critical feminist theorist who toils in the domains of philosophy, and she is not a practitioner of sociology. In

this light, I can neither expect her to be fully methodologically equipped to examine the aforementioned sociological questions outside of the text nor have those questions at the forefront of her critical horizon. Furthermore, Butler's discursive analysis of drag is not part of a study of drag. It supports a larger argument on subjectivity. In these respects, any fair criticisms need to take into consideration and have a certain respect for the scope and nature of her disciplinary location and its pursuits, as well as the principal subject matter of her chapter. However, I think my criticisms are fair game. In the first instance, as I have demonstrated, there are significant traces of sociological interests and matters of concern within her analysis, particularly in respect to subjectivity, norms, and the encoding-decoding architecture of drag. In the second instance, she does not attempt to examine her sociological leanings in greater detail. In the third instance, she does not employ or, at the very least, incorporate a methodological programme that would more appropriately equip her to examine those leanings. Her sociological leanings are contradicted methodologically in practice. Having said this, the criticisms I make here are less about Butler being well-versed in sociological method herself. Her failure to employ or incorporate a sociological methodological programme is in line with a wider queer preoccupation.

Within sociological discourse, queer theory has come under heavy criticism for its under-analysis of the social at the expense of investing in textualism (for example, Epstein 1996 [1994]; Namaste 1996; Seidman 1993, 1995, 1996a; Warner 1993). Sociologists' reservations have not simply been about texts being objects of study for queer theorists. They have also and mainly been about the way in which queer debates on the social have been largely framed methodologically: textually. They have found it troublesome that queer theorists, on the one hand, make social gestures about sex, gender, and sexuality but, on the other hand, fail to welcome and entertain a methodological programme that facilitates a more developed analysis of the social. For practitioners of sociology, a developed social analysis does not reside in a textual methodological

approach that sits on its own and is detached from the social. It resides in one that actively incorporates the lived experiences of social actors in some way or another, for example (again): focus group discussions, face-to-face interviews, (participant) observation, life histories, case studies, or questionnaires. Methodology is rooted in social life. Nonetheless, sociological ways of investigating subjects/objects of study have largely been excluded from queer theory's methodological programme, and the under-analysis of the social has continued to plague queer theorists. Let us briefly turn to Butler once again as a case in point.

John Hood-Williams and Wendy Cealey Harrison have pointed out that Butler's (1993, pp. 7-8, 232) recurrent example of the 'girling' of girls is partly aligned with functionalist sociology and anthropology (namely Oakley 1981) and fails to perform a more developed social analysis that is akin to "the radicalism implied by Foucault's conception of discourse" (1998, p. 89). According to Hood-Williams and Harrison, "[i]t is unhelpful . . . to find what looks suspiciously like a return to early sociological notions of 'sex role socialization' in her repeated example of the 'girling' of girls. . . . Such an implied movement from 'It's a girl' through 'girling' to woman . . . is far too neat" (1998, p. 89). Ian Burkitt (1998) has also pointed out Butler's under-analysis of the social in light of Foucault. According to Burkitt, Butler's (1990, 1993) formulation that the binary distinctions of gender (man and woman) and sexuality (heterosexuality and homosexuality) are fictive discursive constructions fails to employ a more social reading of Foucault's understanding of power. Burkitt argues against Butler's formulation and understands these binaries as arising in social-historical relations. As another example, Terry Lovell (2003) has argued that Butler's (1997b) emphasis on speech acts and the individual in her theory of iterability fails to examine the social contexts that inform and delimit the capacity of the social actor to disrupt institutional authority.

A surface review of the methodological landscape of a couple key queer texts broadly highlights the degree to which queer theory's under-analysis of the social has been at the expense of investing in textualism.

They include: Teresa de Lauretis' specially-edited issue of the journal *differences*, "Queer Theory: Lesbian and Gay Sexualities" (1991a), and Diana Fuss' edited anthology *Inside/Out: Lesbian Theories, Gay Theories* (1991b).[5]

de Lauretis' "Queer Theory" (1991a) is a collection of eight essays that were presented at a conference on theorising lesbian and gay sexualities held at University of California, Santa Cruz in February 1990 (in addition to de Lauretis' introductory essay) (de Lauretis 1991b, pp. iii-iv). According to de Lauretis, the authors of the essays worked from the premise that homosexuality can no longer be understood as a 'marginal,' 'deviant' sexuality vis-à-vis a 'dominant,' 'proper,' 'natural,' 'stable' sexuality, that is, heterosexuality. Male and female homosexualities are "social and cultural forms in their own right, albeit emergent ones and thus still fuzzily defined, undercoded, or discursively dependent on more established forms" (de Lauretis 1991b, p. iii). This formulation was topical in Chapter Two in relation to queer identity. From this point of departure, the authors of the essays contributed in some way to the overall aims of the conference:

> [1.] to articulate the terms in which lesbian and gay sexualities may be understood and imaged as forms of resistance to cultural homogenization, counteracting dominant discourses with other constructions of the subject in culture. It was also my hope that the conference would also [2.] problematise some of the discursive constructions and constructed silences in the emergent field of 'gay and lesbian studies,' and would further [3.] explore questions that have as yet been barely broached, such as the respective and/or common grounding of current discourses and practices of homo-sexualities in relation to gender and to race, with their attendant differences of class or ethnic culture, generational, geographical, and socio-political location. . . . from there, we could then go on [4.] to recast or reinvent the terms of our sexualities, to construct another discursive horizon, another way of thinking the sexual (de Lauretis 1991b, pp. iii-iv).

The essays' subjects/objects of study are diverse. Some of them include: queer subjectivity and the trope of the vampire (Case 1991); street talk/straight talk as the 'twin rhetorical modes' of discourse on the sexual body and AIDS (Delany 1991); the reappropriation and rearticulation of some of psychoanalysis' concepts for the forging of a lesbian theory (Grosz 1991); Chicano homosexual identity and behaviour (Almaguer 1991); gay male narrative and its relation to the phallocentric libidinal economy (Jackson, Jr. 1991); and the relation between feminism and lesbian sadomasochism (Creet 1991).

de Lauretis claims that the essays' authors come from a wide range of disciplines (1991b, p. xvi). However, their disciplines are mainly humanities-based, for example: performance, film studies, the history of consciousness, and English literature. Only one author is a sociologist: Thomás Almaguer (1991). de Lauretis further claims that a wide range of methodologies are employed. However, they are mainly textual in nature: queer subjectivity and the trope of the vampire are investigated by performing a discursive analysis of the mystical imagery created in the work of St. John of the Cross (1959, 1962), the queer poetry of Arthur Rimbaud (1957, 1976), and Oscar Wilde's queer kiss in *Salome* (1967); street talk/straight talk as the 'twin rhetorical modes' of discourse on the sexual body and AIDS is investigated by performing a discursive and rhetorical analysis of public (dis)information on the subject, particularly newspaper and medical journal articles (for example, the *New York Times* and the *New England Journal of Medicine*); the reappropriation and rearticulation of psychoanalysis for the forging of a lesbian theory is investigated by performing a psychoanalytic critique of Freud's (1955) and Lacan's (1977) fetishism; the relation between gay male narrative and the phallocentric libidinal economy is investigated by performing a psychoanalytic analysis of Robert Glück's fiction and critical writings (for example, 1982, 1985a, 1985b); and the relation between feminism and lesbian sadomasochism is investigated by performing a psychoanalytic analysis of Pat Califia's *Macho Sluts* (1988) and feminist discourses on

sexuality (for example, Chodorow 1989; Cole 1989; Rich 1986; Rubin 1981, 1984). Having said this, Chicano homosexual identity and behaviour are investigated by incorporating the ethnographic work of Joseph M. Carrier (1976a, 1976b, 1989), Roger N. Lancaster (1987), Richard Parker (1989), and Clark L. Taylor (1989), which examined the lived experiences of Mexican and South American gay men and youth through interviews and observation. Here, methodology is based in social life. Not surprisingly, the author who produced this essay is the only sociologist who is publicised. Thus, taking into consideration the disciplinary locations of the participants and the methodologies that they employ, the methodological landscape of de Lauretis' "Queer Theory" (1991a) is a textual fetish. Sociological ways of investigating subjects/objects of study are very much at the margins of queer theory's methodological programme.

Diana Fuss' *Inside/Out* (1991b) is a collection of 17 essays that were presented either at the second annual Lesbian and Gay Studies Conference held at Yale University, New Haven in October 1989 or at other various professional association conferences across the United States (Fuss 1991a, p. v). Some essays were also specifically commissioned for her anthology. In a similar vein to de Lauretis *et al.*, Fuss and her contributors work from the premise that the relationship between heterosexuality and homosexuality can no longer be understood as a simple inside/outside dialectic, whereby a stable and oppositional symmetry (albeit an asymmetrical one) is understood to exist between the two for setting 'borders,' 'boundaries,' 'limits,' and 'margins' (Fuss 1991c, p. 1). Rather, they are simultaneously external and internal to one another: "the denotation of any term is always dependent on what is exterior to it (heterosexuality, for example, typically defines itself in critical opposition to that which it is not: homosexuality)" (Fuss 1991c, p. 1). Some subjects/objects of study where this inside/outside dialectical figure is examined include: gender and sexuality in relation to subjectivity and identity politics (Butler 1991); the politics of gay male drag and its

complicity with phallocentric narcissism (Tyler 1991); representation, surveillance, and the spectacle of gay male sex (Edelman 1991); the representation of lesbianism in classical Hollywood cinema and feminist film theory (White 1991); the production, circulation, and consumption of lesbian narratives within heterosexist culture (Barale 1991); and representations of Rock Hudson's pre- and post-AIDS bodies (before/after, well/ill, 1950s/1980s, and heterosexuality/homosexuality) (Meyer 1991).

In a similar fashion to de Lauretis *et al.*, Fuss and her contributors come from a wide range disciplines. However, they are all humanities-based, for example: English literature, film studies, French, art history, textual studies, and the history of consciousness. None of the contributors come from the social sciences. There are no sociologists. Further, Fuss claims that the contributors employ a 'spectrum' of methodological approaches (1991a, p. v). However, they are all textual in nature: gender and sexuality are investigated by performing a deconstructive critique of subjectivity and identity politics; gay male drag and its phallocentric narcissism is investigated in light of psychoanalytic theory by turning to Leo Bersani's (1987) dense theoretical essay on camp and George Alpert's photographic essay *The Queens* (1975); representation, surveillance, and the spectacle of gay male sex are examined by performing a discursive and psychoanalytic analysis of John Cleland's *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure* (1985), Tobias Smollett's *Adventures of Peregrine Pickle* (1964), and Jacques Derrida's *The Post Card* (1987); lesbian representation in classical Hollywood cinema and feminist film theory is investigated by performing a discursive and psychoanalytic analysis of Robert Wise's horror classic film *The Haunting* (1963) and the work of feminist film theorists (for example, Doane 1987; Mulvey 1981); the production, circulation, and consumption of lesbian narratives within heterosexist culture are examined by performing a discursive analysis of the illustrative and photographic front covers of Radclyffe Hall's *The Well of Loneliness* (1928, 1951, 1964, 1981); and Rock Hudson's two bodies

are investigated by performing a discursive analysis of articles and images in popular magazines (for example, *Maclean's, Photoplay,* and *People Magazine*). Thus, taking into consideration the disciplinary locations of the contributors and the methodologies that they employ, the methodological landscape of *Inside/Out* (Fuss 1991b) can also be characterised as a textual fetish. However, unlike "Queer Theory" (de Lauretis 1991a), there is not even one sociologist who is invited to contribute to the debate. Sociological ways of investigating subjects/objects of study are totally excluded from queer theory's methodological programme. There is indeed a difference between being included within the margins of queer theory's methodological programme and, on the other hand, not being included in it at all. In the former instance, at least sociological ways of investigating subjects/objects of study have a place within queer theory discourse from which they can possibly shape its methodological programme. In the latter instance, the complete exclusion of sociology eclipses its potential to shape the contours of queer theory's methodological programme from the very beginning.

Taking into consideration the context within which Butler's methodological framing of drag is located, it indeed appears to be constitutive of sociology's reservation with queer theory: its methodological preoccupation with textualism. Having said this, queer theory's investment in textualism goes hand in hand with the exclusion of sociological ways of investigating subjects/objects of study. In a similar fashion to the conflation of Foucault with social-historical constructionism, I would suggest that this exclusion acts as a fulcrum to preclude engagement with sociological inquiry in general and to constitute and demarcate queer disciplinary terms and practices. Indeed, as de Lauretis' (1991a) and Fuss' (1991b) collections demonstrate: sociologists do not partially represent queer theory; sociology does not fuel queer theory's methodological approach, theoretical toolkit, and subjects/objects of study; and queer discussions do not show an interest in taking place in

sociological domains. In short, there is no disciplinary cross-fertilisation between queer theory and sociology.

In this light, if we want to move towards producing more developed social analyses within queer theory, as well as facilitating a more productive place for sociology within queer theory, then I suggest that we develop and establish discursive spaces within which there is an integration of queer and sociological methods, which I previously suggested in relation to Butler's analysis of drag. Having said this, I do not know and cannot predict what will constitute these discursive spaces, that is, their precise methods, their subjects/objects of study, where they will occur, who will contribute, and so on. Furthermore, I do not know and cannot predict where and how integration will be possible or a stumbling-block. They will be contingent upon their disciplinary locations, subject/object matter, theoretical toolkits, and methodologies. Here and now I can only gesture that we move towards methodologically-integrated discursive spaces. Perhaps we will be able to draw some general observations once we have developed and established them. It is also my hope that they will eventually begin to blur the distinction between queer and sociological methods. In this spirit, then, I offer the following methodologically-integrated discursive space as but only one possibility of how this might begin to occur. It should therefore be read as *de*scriptive rather than prescriptive, as well as understood as *part of a process* rather than a product in and of itself.

## Section II: Some More Disciplinary Cross-fertilisation

### i. Fieldnotes and Methods

I indicated in the introduction of the thesis that my fieldwork on gay male male-to-female drag (herein referred to as 'drag' unless otherwise noted) emerged out of a self-designed independent study course at Lewis and Clark College during the later part of the summer in 1995. During the second week of the course, my instructor and I met up to discuss my recent reading assignment: Newton's (1972) ethnography on drag

alongside Butler's doctrine of gender performativity, as set out in *Gender Trouble* (1990). Without conflating the two, Newton's ethnographic work provided a context for me to think more practically about Butler's examination of the relation between anatomical sex, gender identity, and gender performance and her argument that drag reveals the imitative structure of gender. It became apparent throughout our exchange that although Newton's ethnography was an invaluable resource that enabled me to better understand Butler's doctrine of gender performativity, it raised more questions for me than it resolved. On a purely theoretical level, her formulation made sense to me, even worked for me. However, when I considered it in a specific social context, questions arose, and the methodological framing of her formulation did not facilitate answers for me. I already highlighted some questions in this chapter. Sensing my frustration throughout our exchange, Diane suggested that I sublimate my penchant for putting on my dancing shoes by doing some ethnographic work at The Embers Avenue, where drag acts were performed. Maybe, just maybe, then, according to Diane, I would settle some of my questions and feel as though I had made some sort of reconciliation with Butler or, at the very least, movement towards reconciliation. When I returned home later that night, I contemplated Diane's suggestion and later found myself at The Embers Avenue thoroughly engrossed in the drag acts that were being performed. From that night onwards, until the summer of 1997, those dancing shoes never did make it back into the wardrobe.

My ethnographic work began in September 1995 and ended in June 1997, with a brief revisit in February 1999. At the time of my fieldwork, Portland was Oregon's largest metropolitan city, with a population of approximately 500,000 people. Its political structures and policies at both the state and local levels were generally liberal in nature, with most politicians aligning themselves with the Democratic Party. Although the Oregon Citizens Alliance (OCA) sought to introduce and pass right-wing legislation and policies across Oregon that protected and promoted the sanctity of compulsory heterosexuality, the main legislative and policy

concerns of the day for Portland included environmental issues, same-sex issues (particularly in relation to housing), equal opportunity issues (particularly in relation to sex and race), and the legalisation of cannabis. Also, Portland was and continues to be the home of a visible and supported lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) community.[6] Gay and bisexual men primarily lived in the northwest pocket of the city centre, whereas lesbians, bisexual women, and transgenders primarily lived in the southeast pocket, giving each area a distinctive cultural flair. Furthermore, a host of social structures facilitating and supporting the LGBT community existed, many of which continue to exist today (2005): approximately 15 LGBT-exclusive bars and clubs; approximately 15 restaurants and cafés predominantly catering to the LGBT community (The Montage was a favourite); three LGBT-exclusive hotels/guest houses; three LGBT-exclusive leather and/or sex shops; one sauna exclusively catering to gay and bisexual men; approximately 35 LGBT groups and organisations (for example, Gay Dads, Parents and Families of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG), HIV/AIDS voluntary organisations, university organisations, rambler groups, reading and writing groups, dating agencies, and leather and fetish groups); a handful of LGBT annual events (for example, Gay Pride); two LGBT publications (a monthly newspaper and an annual 'yellow pages' listing LGBT bars, clubs, shops, and resources); and cruising areas for chance sexual encounters (for example, shopping malls, cafés, points of interest, parks, and beaches).

My fieldwork primarily took place in The Embers Avenue, a bar/dance nightclub that showcased drag acts. The nightclub was located centrally in the city centre. It opened its doors in the mid-1980s and continues to trade today seven days a week. Although it was owned and managed by a White male aged in his late 40s who identified as 'heterosexual,' it primarily catered and traded to the LGBT community. It marketed itself as 'Portland's Longest Running Gay Nightclub.' While I conducted my fieldwork, people who identified as 'gay,' 'lesbian,' or 'bisexual' (both male and female) primarily dominated The Embers Avenue scene on any given

night.[7] The nightclub had a capacity of approximately 200 people, and I approximated that 90% of the people who frequented the nightclub during the weekend (Friday, Saturday, and Sunday) identified as either 'gay,' 'lesbian,' or 'bisexual.' The remainder of patrons identified as either 'heterosexual' or 'transgender.' I was only aware of approximately 10 transgenders who frequented the nightclub at least once a fortnight. Furthermore, there was the very rare occasion when people who identified as 'transvestite' patronised the nightclub. I only encountered three transvestites during the course of my fieldwork, and each of them usually went to the nightclub between one and two times a year. Most people who frequented The Embers Avenue were 'White.' Approximately 5% were either 'African-American', 'Chicano,' or of a 'mixed background' (for example, 'White' and 'African-American'). Most people were also aged in their 20s or 30s, approximately 75%. In addition to the owner, the nightclub was exclusively staffed by White gay males aged in their 20s, 30s, and 40s: one assistant manager, eight bar staff, two cooks, one resident disc jockey, one sound and light technician, three door people, and one cleaner. The nightclub was separated into two main areas. One area was a dance floor that mainly played 1970s and '80s disco and pop music, and the other one showcased drag. Both had bars. The two areas were fully separated by a wall, and there was a double set of doors that provided easy access between them. The drag shows were showcased from Thursday to Sunday evenings, hosted by a different drag emcee each night. At the time of my fieldwork, there were 25 resident drag artists who performed on stage on a regular basis (usually at least once a week), with approximately 10 drag artists performing each night. The Embers Avenue also provided 'open-ended' performance slots within their Friday and Saturday night shows, which were for people who either performed drag on a regular basis in the past or eventually wanted to perform on a regular basis (aspiring drag artists). There were usually four 10-minute slots each night, and they were reserved on the night with the drag emcee prior to the show beginning. There were around a further 15 people who

appeared in drag during the weekend, but they did not perform. They usually circulated in the drag area of the nightclub, socialising with either one another or the drag artists who performed on stage. Their motivation for doing drag varied. Some did drag because they wanted to 'get into the spirit of the night,' whereas some did it because they wanted to be women. In the latter case, most of them were pre-operative transsexuals. Nearly all of the resident drag artists were male and identified as 'gay.' They were also aged in their 30s or 40s and predominantly 'White.' Three of them were 'African-American' and one was 'Chicano.' There was only one female-to-male resident drag artist. She identified as a 'lesbian,' and she was aged in her 30s and 'White.' She performed approximately once a fortnight, which was usually on a Sunday night. From Mondays to Wednesdays, when drag was not being performed on stage, the nightclub hosted theme nights (for example, karaoke and quizzes).

Out of my 23 months in the field, I spent approximately six of them in Darcelle XV as well, which was located several blocks south of The Embers Avenue. It opened its doors in 1967 and continues to trade today four days a week. During the course of my fieldwork, Darcelle XV marketed itself as an entertainment nightclub that put on drag shows. One show was performed on Wednesdays and Thursdays, beginning at 8:30p.m., and there was a double bill on Fridays and Saturdays, beginning at 8:30p.m. and 10:30p.m. The nightclub offered sit-down dinners, and dinner was prior to the first show. Although it was owned and managed by a White male aged in his mid-60s who identified as 'gay,' it primarily catered and traded to patrons who identified as 'heterosexual.'[8] The nightclub had a capacity of approximately 75 people, and I approximated that 95% of the audience identified as 'heterosexual,' was 'White,' and was aged between their 30s and 50s. An equal mix of males and females usually visited in groups of four or six at the time of my fieldwork. No-one patronised Darcelle XV in drag. There were 10 drag artists who performed in the show. All of the drag artists were male, identified as 'gay,' and were aged in their 30s or 40s. Nine of them were 'White,' and one drag artist

was 'African-American.' The owner of Darcelle XV also did drag and usually hosted the shows. The nightclub was staffed by people who identified as 'gay,' 'lesbian,' 'bisexual' (male and female), or 'heterosexual'; were all 'White'; and were all aged in their 30s or 40s: one assistant manager, three bar staff, two cooks, four food/drinks servers, one director/stage manager, one choreographer, one sound and light technician, four door people, and one cleaner.

The drag that was performed at Darcelle XV was different than that of The Embers Avenue. The drag artists at Darcelle XV put on Vegas-style cabaret shows, which comprised of a mixture of singing, dancing, and comedy. They were referred to as 'the cast.' Drag artists performed together and performed songs from a number of musicals. Drag artists also sung solo or did stand-up comedy. Songs were either sung live or lip-synced. There were regular performances of "Boots are Made for Walking" and "Rhinestone Cowboy." In the main, the drag artists did not attempt to impersonate and pass as a particular female iconic persona in their performances. They exaggerated their femaleness in a 'Dame Edna' kind of way in order to come across as eccentric, flamboyant women. The emphasis was on artifice. The drag artists were also employees of Darcelle XV. They had a contract, received a wage, and had a costume allowance. They were further provided with a large dressing room that they shared. On the other hand, The Embers Avenue mainly showcased a string of gay male drag artists who performed female iconic personas and their songs (16 of the 25 resident drag artists). The drag artists attempted to pass as that persona. The emphasis was not on exaggeration and artifice but on reality. Most drag artists performed solo, and they mainly lip-synced. Some iconic personas and their songs included: Whitney Houston ("I Wanna Dance with Somebody"); Chaka Khan ("I'm Every Woman"); and Dolly Parton ("9 to 5"). There were also gay male drag artists who performed on stage like the drag artists at Darcelle XV (8 of the 25 resident drag artists). They previously performed female iconic personas and had established themselves as their own

persona. Some people who appeared in 'open-ended' performance slots also impersonated the aforementioned iconic personas, as well as Donatella Versace, Bette Midler, Cher, and Madonna. However, some exaggerated their femaleness like the drag artists at Darcelle XV. Obviously, they were not their own established persona. Between performances, some drag artists performed stand-up comedy or magic (for example, pulling a rabbit out of a hat or making birds appear/disappear in/from a cage). They performed for no more than 10 minutes. Their performances filled in the stop gap between solo performances. Phyllis Diller and Joan Rivers usually made appearances. The single female-to-male resident drag artist also performed iconic personas. George Michael and Elton John were favourites of hers. Drag artists were not employees of The Embers Avenue. They performed drag as a hobby/interest. They did however receive tips from the audience during their performances, and the owner/manager provided a dressing room for them to share.

The audience of each establishment was also different. Darcelle XV's audience was mostly, if not exclusively, transitory. Patrons did not regularly attend its drag shows. Going to Darcelle XV was like going to see a stage production at the theatre: it was something that people generally did from time to time. On the other hand, The Embers Avenue had patrons who regularly attended the nightclub. During the course of my fieldwork, I encountered quite a few of the same faces on the weekends. There were also approximately 10 patrons who were more or less permanent fixtures during the week and weekend. Also, Darcelle XV charged patrons an admission fee for all shows, whereas The Embers Avenue only charged patrons on certain days and times. A patron paid an eight dollar admission fee for Darcelle XV and between two and five dollars (depending on day and time) for The Embers Avenue at the time of my fieldwork.

After several initial visits, prior to formally commencing my fieldwork, I had a strong premonition that each establishment housed, sustained, and protected its very own tightly-knit drag culture. Some clues gave it away:

some drag artists did not interact with other people who were in drag but did not perform; costumes/dresses ranged from something my mother would wear to something that came off a Hollywood stage set; some drag artists looked like a particular iconic persona, whereas some looked like hyper-effeminate women; and the stage performances were highly polished running to a timetable. Realising the exclusivity of each drag culture, I did not know how best to begin my fieldwork, how best to gain access. The same questions continually went through my mind: would these drag artists take kindly to me invading their space during their performances to ask them to participate in my research? would these drag artists take kindly to me posting a notice about my proposed study of drag next to their billposter? would these drag artists take kindly to me turning up in drag to solicit interlocutors? Luckily, one evening, when I was just beginning to acquaint myself with the drag scene at The Embers Avenue, I met someone who performed drag. This person became my key interlocutor (herein referred to as 'Ray').

I was sitting at the bar with a Cosmo and cigarette, as one does, when a Chicano gay male aged in his late 30s began a conversation with me. We started with usual small talk (for example, our names, who we were with at the nightclub, our occupations, where we lived, where we were from, and the current weather conditions), which then gradually developed into an exchange about our interests, and which then finally lead into me discussing my ethnographic work. I explained that I had just started to hang out at The Embers Avenue in order to study drag culture in relation to sex, gender, and sexuality. While my description was being verbally expressed, a thought was running through my mind: Ray was misreading my intentions for being at the nightclub, and he was only chatting to me because he fancied me. However, to my surprise, he suddenly seemed more interested in my description. Ray quickly interrupted with a question that went something like: 'I know how drag is a 'gender-fuck,' but what does sexuality got to do with it?' Caught off guard, I replied with something along the lines of: 'Let me buy you the next drink; it's on me.' I

went on to answer Ray's question, which then led him to ask further questions and instigate further discussions. During the course of our discussions, Ray told me that he actively took part in the drag scene at The Embers Avenue. He regularly watched the drag acts three nights a week and performed on stage usually once a week on either Friday or Saturday night. Ray had been doing drag on-and-off for about 15 years, of which 10 he usually performed at least once a week. He was also actively involved in Portland's 'Imperial Sovereign Rose Court,' which was Oregon's oldest LGBT non-profit organisation that raised money for charities and put on annual drag competitions in order to crown 'monarchs' who then acted as a board of directors for the organisation. By the end of our conversation, Ray casually, yet genuinely offered to support my fieldwork. Without hesitation, I took him up on his offer. Ray proved to be an invaluable, fruitful interlocutor throughout different aspects of my fieldwork. At the very minimum, Ray introduced me to and immersed me into the Portland drag scene—its social structures, its discursive practices, its history, its performative rituals, its norms, its lexicon, its key performers, its audiences, its social relations, and so on. He also helped me devise and revise questions for face-to-face interviews and postal questionnaires, as well as set up face-to-face interviews, particularly with drag artists who had been a part of Portland's drag scene for more than 15 years. He further enabled me to participate in my fieldwork by using his talents to help me perform drag on stage at The Embers Avenue. In short, the success of my fieldwork, including the self-satisfaction that it produced, was contingent upon Ray. It is indebted to him. In return, I helped him prepare for his own drag performances and remunerated him with gift vouchers at the completion of my fieldwork. I also reimbursed him for any out-of-pocket expenses that related to my fieldwork.

Appendix A outlines the interlocutors who formally participated in my fieldwork. 'Formally participated' designates those interlocutors who participated through research methods that were more formal (for example, face-to-face interviews and postal questionnaires) than informal

(for example, informal conversations) in nature. The tables in Appendix A are subdivided into the two establishments where my fieldwork took place. They are further broken down by categories of people who participated in the fieldwork and their sex, sexual identity, age band, and race. A total of 48 people participated in my fieldwork. Most of them were from The Embers Avenue, 37 (77.1%). Twenty-four (50%) interlocutors were associated with drag in some way or another (for example, performance or non-performance). Eleven (22.9%) interlocutors were members of staff (including owners/managers), and 14 (29.2%) interlocutors were general patrons of The Embers Avenue. Unfortunately, patrons of Darcelle XV did not participate in my fieldwork. As I previously explained, Darcelle XV's patrons were transitory, and there was not an identifiable sample group that I could solicit to interview. Most interlocutors were male, 39 (81.3%), and most interlocutors identified as 'gay,' 29 (60.4%). Equal proportions of interlocutors identified as either 'lesbian' or 'transgender' (including pre- and post-operative transsexuals), 6 (12.5%). Thirty-seven (77.1%) interlocutors were aged in their 30s or 40s, and 45 (93.8%) interlocutors were 'White.' Two interlocutors were 'African-American' and one was 'Chicano.'

I used a range of methods to solicit the views and experiences of the interlocutors. They were primarily qualitative in nature. I conducted semi-structured face-to-face interviews with each of the interlocutors outlined in Appendix A. Appendix B outlines the questions used in the interviews. In addition to Ray arranging interviews for me, interviews were solicited by distributing leaflets and posting calling notices in the nightclubs. After I had been in the field for several months and completed a handful of interviews, there was no need to solicit further ones. People who did drag (whether for performance or non-performance), staff, and patrons (of The Embers Avenue) quickly became aware of my fieldwork and solicited me for an interview without any prompting on my part. Interviews lasted approximately two hours for people who did drag (performance and non-performance), and they were mainly conducted over a cup of coffee

(usually more) at a local café. Interviews with owners/managers, staff, and patrons lasted approximately between 30 minutes and one hour. In addition to set questions, I made room for questions that sought clarification or were in response to answers that led to further, although pertinent discussions. Once themes were established through the interviews, I sent out a postal questionnaire to each of the interlocutors. Appendix C outlines the questions that were included in the postal questionnaire. I employed a postal questionnaire because it was anonymous and enabled the interlocutors to express their views and experiences more openly, which may have been tempered in the interviews because of my status as a researcher. I also collected data through regular observation at the nightclubs. I usually observed the drag scene at The Embers Avenue twice a week at night, although this was reduced to one night when I spent time in Darcelle XV. Observation was both formal (recording notes) and informal (simply soaking up the atmosphere). During the time that I spent at Darcelle XV, I usually observed the drag performances once a week at night. Again, observation was also both formal and informal. In both nightclubs, I did not simply observe the drag performances in and of themselves. I also observed the interaction between people in drag performing, people in drag but not performing (at The Embers Avenue), and the audience. The data that I gathered through observation was simultaneously supplemented by unplanned, informal conversations with people who did drag (both for performance/non-performance), regular patrons (of The Embers Avenue), and staff. An increased awareness of my fieldwork made it difficult for me, from time to time, to observe my field sites in action without being disturbed. While I made observations, people in drag, regular patrons, and staff would engage in conversation with me and subsequently make unsolicited commentaries. Instead of viewing their engagement as nuisance, I saw it as a valuable means to collect additional data from additional interlocutors who did not formally participate in my fieldwork. Lastly, which I previously mentioned, I participated in my fieldwork by

performing drag at The Embers Avenue with the support of Ray. I performed on stage three times during my fieldwork. My participation informs the analysis that will soon follow.

A combination of recording methods was used to document data. In relation to the face-to-face interview, interlocutors chose whether I used a tape recorder or notebook to record data. After recording the data, I formally wrote up notes and later presented them to their respective interlocutor for verification. Amendments were subsequently made if necessary. Most interlocutors preferred me to record their face-to-face interview by taking notes rather than using a tape recorder, 40 (83.3%). In the following analysis, I indicate when I cite an interlocutor who agreed to have his/her face-to-face interview recorded by means of a tape recorder. I recorded data collected through observation by writing notes in a notebook. This took place while I made observations or later on from memory after I left my field sites. I used the same recording method for informal conversations that I had with people in drag, regular patrons, and staff, as well as for my participation in my fieldwork. Conversations that I had with Ray during my participation in my fieldwork were recorded by means of a tape recorder or a notebook.

Prior to conducting face-to-face interviews and deploying the postal questionnaire, I outlined the purpose of each with my interlocutors and gained their permission to participate in my fieldwork. Similarly, if I obtained data from interlocutors through informal conversations, I gained their permission to include the data in my fieldwork. In addition, if an interlocutor did not want to answer a particular question in his/her interview or postal questionnaire, then he/she had the opportunity to either decline and continue with the next one or abort the interview/questionnaire altogether. No-one aborted his/her interview or questionnaire. Permission to analyse and present data collected through my fieldwork was granted by each interlocutor, with the stipulation that it was solely used for the purpose of academic pursuits. I have also used pseudonyms for each interlocutor in order to guarantee that the data is anonymous (each

interlocutor had the opportunity to choose his/her own pseudonym). Because each establishment had only one owner/manager and assistant manager, I gained their consent to use their real name. I also gained the same consent from my only interlocutor who performed lesbian female-to-male drag.

Lastly, I want to clarify the following inquiry that takes place. I briefly discussed this in the introduction of the chapter. Its main purpose is to demonstrate how the widening and deepening of Butler's methodological framing of drag can lead to a more developed social analysis. With this in mind, I had to choose an area to explore that both Butler and I examined. This was compounded by the fact that Butler's chapter is not a study of drag. Her examination of drag supports a larger argument on subjectivity. As a result, I realised that my choice had to consider the substance and scope of her analysis as well. I was not able to reach a decision quickly. I came up with a handful of ideas, ones that I initially thought might be productive to examine. However, when I thought about them further, they went far beyond what Butler was trying to do in her chapter, and I had to abandon them. For example, Butler examines how a heterosexual norm structures Venus' identity. I thought that it might be interesting to examine the role of this norm in respect to the drag artists' sexual identities and further investigate it in light of Richard Troiden's (1988) models of gay identity formation. However, when I thought about this further, I realised that Butler was not attempting to consider different models and processes of identity formation. She was interested in how the norm both secured and threatened Venus' subjectivity, and how this tension led to her death. As a result, I had to go back to the drawing board. It took about a week for the drawing board to produce something worthwhile and realistic: the centrality of a 'morphological ideal.' In light of drag, a 'morphological ideal' is central to Butler's analysis of subjectivity and the production of dominant subject positions. Drag reveals that a dominant subject position is the product of miming, embodying, and repeating a bodily norm. I found this to be the case in my ethnographic work, but there was more than just this

'morphological ideal.' For example, drag artists also had to consider demeanour, lexicon, and social interaction in order to be read as a particular iconic persona. I considered this line of inquiry to be within the bounds of Butler's analysis, and I thought that her formulation would best be explored by bringing to the forefront my participation in the field by impersonating/performing an iconic persona.

Of course, the inquiry's purpose and focus come with considerable costs. They constrain what is included and examined within its parameters, with the consequence that a considerable amount of my fieldwork is excluded. No doubt this will raise many questions and cause frustration for you, the reader. For example, I do not discuss or elaborate on: different drag subject positions (for example, the 'fairy' and the 'grand empress'); rites of passage that come with each subject position; people who arrive in drag at The Embers Avenue but do not perform on stage; social interaction between drag artists and the audience, as well as between themselves; and performative rituals of drag (for example, the grand entrance of the drag emcee). My fieldwork that took place in Darcelle XV also does not qualify within the inquiry's parameters. As I previously discussed, the drag performed at Darcelle XV was 'cabaret-style,' and, in the main, its drag artists did not attempt to impersonate and pass as a particular iconic persona. On the other hand, being a particular iconic persona was central to drag performances at The Embers Avenue, and this sits more nicely with the type of drag that was performed in *Paris is Burning* (1991), which I outlined in the first section of the chapter. Furthermore, since the drag at Darcelle XV was different than that of The Embers Avenue, incorporating them both would have made the chapter unwieldy.

I also had to further constrain the ethnographic data that informs the inquiry. If I had not, then I would have had to diverge and examine some of the aforementioned subject areas that do not fit within the inquiry's parameters. For example, the stages/processes I went through to do drag on stage inform the inquiry. The ethnographic data that I draw upon

details how 'good drag, real drag' *was* done by gay male male-to-female resident drag artists who impersonated/performed a female iconic persona for the stage. Therefore, in order to stay on track and remain within the bounds of the inquiry (as best as possible), I focus on what internally constituted good drag, real drag for them. In the main, I do not incorporate data that details how it was *not* done. If I had incorporated this data, then I would have had to discuss and elaborate on different drag subject positions. The two go hand in hand. This would have then easily led into a further discussion on rites of passage. As a result, I would have diverged from the purpose of the inquiry. Having said this, in order to create a degree of compromise, I do incorporate some data on how good drag, real drag was not done for them, but I do this within reason as not to diverge. In this light, the following inquiry generally reflects the experiences of gay male male-to-female resident drag artists who impersonated/performed or had previously impersonated/performed a female iconic persona on stage at The Embers Avenue and what they considered to constitute 'good drag, real drag.' A total of nine of my interlocutors performed this drag or had performed it in the past. Two of the nine interlocutors had performed a female iconic persona in the past and had become their own persona. They reflected on their past experiences in their interview and questionnaire. All of them were resident drag artists, and most of them usually performed at least once a week. They were all male, identified as 'gay,' and were in their 30s and 40s. The majority was 'White.' One of the interlocutors was 'African-American' and one was 'Chicano.'

I therefore ask that the previous points are kept in mind when reading the following inquiry, particularly that it seeks to broaden and deepen Butler's methodology in order to produce a more developed social analysis (within reason). It is indeed not an ethnography on drag in and of itself. It only scrapes the surface of my fieldwork.

### ii. The Centrality of a Morphological Ideal

When the drag emcee introduced the drag shows at The Embers Avenue, Ray often commented on the quality drag that was about to appear from behind the curtain. He would say something along the lines of: 'Tinseltown has nothing on us, girl. It's pale in comparison to the glam and glitter, the fabulousness that we specially put on show for our very own guests.' Ray was, to say the very least, always right.

The drag shows showcased were, figuratively and literally from time to time, a red carpet affair—from the very moment when the red carpet leading to the entrance of The Embers Avenue was unrolled to right through to the end of the night when the cleaners rolled it back up for the next drag show. The overall show delivered was a 'red carpet' affair insofar as it had a 'Hollywood' edge to it and it was always well-engineered and finely-tuned, calculable and nearly seamless in its structure (for example, the arrival of patrons and drag artists; the entrance of the drag emcee; the mingling of drag artists with the audience during intermission; the announcement of special occasions in the audience by the drag emcee; and the exit of drag artists to post-event parties). Take for instance the arrival of the 'paparazzi' and drag artists when The Embers Avenue held drag pageants. In a similar vein to the Oscars, devout patrons and tourists would attentively arrive an hour before the curtain went up. They would stand to the side of the red carpet outside the nightclub, and the drag artists would arrive one after the other in full costume to make a pre-entrance appearance before making their way to the dressing room to finally prepare for the pageant. A handful of stars would regularly grace the red carpet and commanded patrons' and tourists' attention, for example: Joan Rivers, Elizabeth Taylor, Marilyn Monroe, Whitney Houston, and Diana Ross (known as Ms. Ross to most patrons). Patrons and tourists would not only catch a first glimpse of the stars who were performing but also get a flavour of the latest fashion trends to come off of the catwalk, the accessories that were draping on their bodies, and, likewise, the escorts who were draping around their arm.

Autographs would also exchange hands, and the drag artists/Hollywood stars would pose with their fans for the camera (The drag artists were never camera shy, to say the very least.). According to Carla Jane, who usually performed as a singer,[9] there was no question that their drag shows had to conform to a red carpet standard:

CJ: Our fans expect a lot from us girls [herein referring to the gay male resident drag artists who performed a female iconic persona on stage]. They expect a first rate, well-planned show from start to finish.

JM: What do you mean by 'first-rate' and 'well-planned'; can you please explain further?

CJ: Well, you know, we wouldn't get away with putting on a mediocre show. Simply turning up in women's clothes and last night's lacquer and strutting our stuff on stage to any old music just wouldn't do. . . . We have to carefully plan each show so that they run smoothly, and the girls have to make a real effort with their costumes and make the audience feel like Hollywood has invaded Portland. This makes our drag a quality product in the eyes of our fans. For example, our shows revolve around carefully planned entrances and exits: the arrival of the girls, the grand entrance of Patty La Belle [a drag emcee], mingling with our fans during intermission, etc., etc., etc. And this is really stepped up and magnified when The Embers puts on drag pageants. They're so Hollywood, especially the regular girls. If we didn't live up to such a reputation and give back to our fans they wouldn't bother to come see us. Who would blame them? And where would we be without them, our fans, the audience? The show simply couldn't go on. (recorded)

Indeed, most of the gay male resident drag artists did not simply perform by morphologically changing their bodies to female and dressing up in women's clothes with the aim of compelling the belief that a woman was performing on stage. For them, quality drag involved performing a female iconic persona:

> Why just turn up in women's clothes to try and convince someone that it's a woman performing on stage? Where's the creativity in that? Anyone can do that. It's a lot more tricky to convince someone that you are someone. So why not get into the theatre of it all and be someone for the night? I mean, like Ms. Ross or Marilyn or Whitney. And if you have any bit of talent in your little pinky, then you'll pull it off, and then you'll be doing good drag, real drag (Dita, a drag artist who usually performed as an actress/singer). (recorded)

In addition to the iconic personas who I previously mentioned, the gay male resident drag artists also performed the likes of Patsy (from *Absolutely Fabulous*), Annie Lennox, Dolly Parton, Judy Garland, and Liza Minnelli. The majority of gay male resident drag artists who participated in my fieldwork performed or had performed their persona at least once a week (8). On average, the same drag artists had approximately two iconic personas in their current or past-current repertoire. Resident drag artists usually did not perform more than one persona at any given time. I was only aware of four resident drag artists during my time in the field who sometimes performed two personas in one evening.

As Dita suggested, though, a gay male resident drag artist doing 'good drag, real drag' was not a question of approximating a particular female iconic persona. It was about *being* a female iconic persona and being read as such by other people in drag and the audience ("It's a lot more tricky to convince someone that you are someone. So why not get into the theatre of it all and be someone for the night?"). In a similar vein to Butler's analysis of drag in *Paris is Burning* (1991), then, I would suggest that 'realness' and being a female iconic persona went hand in hand for

the gay male resident drag artists who performed good drag, real drag. As I previously outlined in the first section of the chapter, the drag artists in *Paris is Burning* (1991) compete against each other in a number of categories, which are marked by gender, race, and class norms. Again, some of them include: 'executive wear,' 'evening wear,' the 'Ivy League student,' and the 'butch queen.' Butler correctly points out that 'realness' is central to each category (1993, pp. 128-29, 131). Each category has a standard that a drag artist attempts to effect in order to become and be read as 'the' subject of a particular category. Success in effecting realness is contingent upon the drag artist's ability to produce the semblance that he/she embodies realness. Butler argues that this is attempted by reiterating a 'morphological ideal.' For Butler, a 'morphological ideal' designates the bodily norms that bring into being, constitute, and regulate the subject and his/her body. It is at once 'a figure of a body' and 'no particular body.' It is 'a figure of a body' insofar as it is represented within and through the subject/body that it brings into being, constitutes, and regulates. It is 'no particular body' insofar as no subject/body can be the essential bearer or full, ideal representative of it. The stages/process I went through to do good drag, real drag reveal how a morphological ideal was central to subjectivity for the gay male resident drag artists who performed a female iconic persona. Ray was my mentor throughout each stage/process.[10]

### iii. The Stages/Processes of Doing 'Good Drag, Real Drag'

During one of our weekly meet-ups at The Embers Avenue, after having been in the field for approximately six months, Ray suggested to me that I participate in my fieldwork by doing drag for the stage with his assistance. Ray persuasively argued that impersonating/performing an iconic persona would give me firsthand experience of the practicalities and technicalities of doing good drag, real drag. That is, the type of drag that the gay male resident drag artists were accustomed to doing. Further, on a more general level, doing drag would enable me to critically explore and analyse

my field site through a different lens, and, as a consequence, it might introduce twists and turns into my fieldwork that would produce results different than those of not having done drag. Without hesitation, I took Ray up on his offer, especially since I had no idea of where or how to begin. The following night, I embarked on a couple of the first stages/processes of doing good drag, real drag. For the gay male resident drag artists who performed/had performed a female iconic persona on stage, doing good drag, real drag involved four distinct, yet interconnected stages/processes. They included: (1) 'scoping'[11] who to impersonate/perform; (2) designing and making the costume; (3) rehearsing the iconic persona's onstage and offstage performance; and (4) morphing into the iconic persona.

*Scoping who to impersonate/perform.* After having agreed to do drag, Ray asked me to go away and come back to him the following night with a shortlist of five iconic personas who I was interested in impersonating/performing. He also asked me to outline my reasons for choosing them. According to Ray, we were beginning the first stage/process of doing drag: "Before we can even think about your costume or makeup or practice your performance, we need to think about who you want to be and why. We need a starting point from which we can move forward. I mean, we need to 'scope' your impersonation. This is important and it can make or break you, girl" (recorded). Ray left this task open-ended and did not steer me in a particular direction: he neither suggested who I might impersonate/perform nor did he suggest what the nature of my reasons for choosing a particular iconic persona might be. By the time I actually put pen to paper, I already had a good idea of who I wanted to be and why. I presented my shortlist to Ray the following night, along with my to-the-point reasons (in descending order of preference):

1. Madonna. I've always been a fan of Madonna and I know all her songs very well, including their dance moves. Also, she has many images to choose from. I would probably do either "Vogue" or "Express Yourself" because their dance moves are

calculable and technical and I can perform them from start to finish. Further, Madonna is the 'Queen of Pop.' Do I need a better reason?;

2. Patsy (from *Absolutely Fabulous*). Patsy is the very definition of fabulousness. She is a gay icon, has a good wit about her, can command the audience's attention in the snap of a finger, and dresses in the latest designer gear. She also has the best props: a cigarette in one hand and a bottle of vodka in the other;
3. Whitney Houston. Whitney has good material from the 1980s and '90s and has a very strong voice. Her music is also very energetic and recognisable. She also has quite a few ballads, which could soften the atmosphere of the nightclub. I particularly want to perform her because I think she would be a challenge to impersonate, morphologically and vocally;
4. Dolly Parton. Dolly has a good sense of humour, has a lot of material to draw from, and would probably enable me to interact with the audience quite well between songs. Dolly would create an instant rapport. She is also dramatic in appearance, that is, has a big bust and big hair, which would blend in well with the other drag artists (or, in Dolly's case, stick out); or
5. Chaka Khan. Chaka Khan is a legend in and of herself, and her presence would command the audience's attention and respect from the very beginning. I would sing "I'm Every Woman," which would be instantly recognisable among the audience, especially since it is one of those 'gay anthem' songs.

According to Ray, I hit the nail on the head, and yet, at the same time, I could not be more further from hitting it. On the one hand, Ray thought that I was best suited to impersonate/perform Madonna. On the other hand, he thought that my additional choices were unsuitable and my

supporting arguments were inconsistent, premature, and in a vacuum. Ray noted:

> There's no guiding structure and depth to your decision making process. You're all over the place, girl. If you want to do drag, especially good drag, then you have to think more about things like how suited you are to impersonate a certain Hollywood star, what kind of drag you want to do, if you want to perform on the stage, and the audience's likes, dislikes, and expectations. I mean, there are important things to consider when scoping who you want to impersonate, and you need to take them very seriously. This isn't simply a case of choosing someone who you like or you've always wanted to be. (recorded)

Ray indicated that the resident drag artists usually considered five areas when they chose an iconic persona to impersonate/perform: (1) the compatibility of impersonating/performing a particular persona; (2) the type of drag that was being performed; (3) the context within which the impersonation/performance was taking place; (4) the personas who were currently being impersonated/performed by other drag artists; and (5) resources. Resident drag artists referred to these five principal areas as 'the secret's in the sauce.' According to Ce-Ce, who usually performed as an actress/singer, "[t]he more you take on board these five principals, then the more your impersonation will be saucy [read: successful]. You want to be at your sauciest. Secret's in the sauce!"

The compatibility of impersonating/performing an iconic persona designated how suited a drag artist was to impersonate/perform a particular persona. Drag artists took into consideration: morphology (for example, height, weight, body frame, bone structure, skin colour, and skin texture); voice (for example, accent, range, depth, and strength); personality (for example, an extravert, introvert, or a combination of both); and demeanour. For example, drag artists usually impersonated/performed a persona of the same race/ethnicity. They mainly did not cross racial/ethnic boundaries: "When I started doing drag, I

wanted to be one of those Black divas. You know, like Diana Ross or Chaka Khan. But a White girl trying to pass as a Black girl? It just isn't possible. I have very fair skin, so I'm better off with someone like [X]" (Ce-Ce).[12]

As I outlined in my field notes, drag performances included: singing (including lip-syncing), dancing, a combination of the two, comedy, and magic. Drag artists generally considered the compatibility between the iconic persona and the type of drag that was being performed. For example, Ray indicated to me that if a drag artist wanted to impersonate/perform Shirley Bassey, he/she would not perform magic: "If you're going to do magic, you surely wouldn't pick Shirley Bassey. You'd be out of your mind. Could you imagine her pulling a rabbit out of a hat? She's a diva who belongs on stage, singing" (recorded).

The context within which the impersonation/performance was taking place designated the social conditions of the impersonation/performance. They included: the audience (for example, likes/dislikes; expectations; characteristics such as gender, age, and sexuality; and size); the physical layout of the drag space (for example, the position of the stage, dressing room, audience, and bar in relation to each other); time allotment for the performance; and theme nights (for example, a drag beauty pageant night, 'Let's go to the Oscars' night, and 'Everything Absolutely Fabulous!' night). Likes/dislikes of the audience particularly influenced the iconic persona a drag artist chose to impersonate/perform. This was a deciding factor for some of the drag artists:

> It came down to [X] or [Y]. I couldn't decide. They're both good in their own way. But it was the audience that helped me decide. They like singing and dancing, and [X] fit the bill. They loved her, and I didn't regret my choice (Penny, who performed as actresses/singers and comedians). (recorded)

I do comedy drag, and I always wanted to do [X]. But another drag artist did her years ago. She didn't go down well with the

crowd. They like someone who's eccentric, so I went for [Y] (Eva, who usually performed as a comedian). (recorded)

At times I couldn't choose. There were so many that I wanted to be. When I didn't know, I asked the regulars [regular patrons] what they thought (Donna, who had performed as actresses/singers).

> I wanted to perform [X] for years, but it wasn't the right time. Maybe it just wasn't the right place. The audience really wasn't into country music (Alexis, who had performed as actresses/singers).

Ray further indicated that drag artists chose a persona in light of those who were currently being performed by other resident drag artists:

> It's crucial and imperative that you don't replicate or even do a variation of them [current personas being performed by other resident drag artists]. This would be a grave mistake. First, you'd be copying someone else's creativity and stealing their ideas. Also, the other drag artists would think you don't have any creative flair yourself, and your status as an artiste would go down the drain. Anyway, if you want to do good drag and 'be' someone, then how can you 'be' someone when there's another one of you standing next to you? So, *be* someone, girl; go for it (italics Ray's emphasis). (recorded)

Drag artists only impersonated/performed another drag artist's iconic persona when the drag artist ceased being his/her persona. According to Liza, a drag artist who usually performed as a singer, they were expected to change their iconic personas approximately once a year:

> L: She's really good at performing [X]. But after awhile, the glitter and glam wears off. Look at those boots! She's run them right into the ground. You'd also think she's got nothing left in that closet of hers. She needs to move on.

JM: What do you mean 'move on'?

L: Well, after awhile, about a year, people are tired of the same old act—no matter how many different ways you do it. Especially after you've cooked chicken one thousand and one ways! So, put her to rest and move on. Be someone else.

JM: When should you move on?

L: Probably around a year's time. If you don't do this, you'll lose respect as a drag artist. (recorded)

Once a drag artist ceased being an iconic persona, there was usually a lead in time of six to eight months before another drag artist performed the same persona. The drag artist then changed the iconic persona's image and performance in order to minimise replication and maintain his/her status as a drag artist. Some drag artists also reincarnated iconic personas who they had performed in the past. They too changed the persona's image and performance for the same reasons. They usually did not reincarnate their iconic persona until several years had lapsed.

Lastly, resources designated the discursive, economic, and material means required to support the fruition of the impersonation/performance. They included, for example: time (that is, the amount of time required to plan, organise, and rehearse the impersonation/performance); specialist knowledge and skills (that is, the knowledge base and skills set required to do drag, which were usually linked to experience); capital (that is, money required to fund dresses, wigs, accessories, and make-up); and equipment (that is, props required to support the impersonation/performance, which included backdrops, music, video, and lighting effects). The amount of money drag artists spent on their impersonation/performance varied, but it generally ranged from 100 to 300

dollars (approximately 55 to 165 pounds-sterling). It was dependent upon the iconic persona who was being impersonated/performed, as well as the type of drag that was being performed. For example, it was usually more expensive to perform magic than sing because additional specialist props had to be purchased (for example, a bird cage or a magic top hat). Drag artists also reduced costs by recycling wigs and accessories that they used in prior performances.

Within this framework, Ray outlined why I was best suited to perform/impersonate Madonna:

> First, there's a strong degree of compatibility between you and Madonna. Your morphology is not too dissimilar to Madonna's. You're both of medium height for your sexes. You're both fit, and you both have toned and defined bodies. Also, you both have angular features to your bone structure, and both of you have healthy looking skin that's well maintained and youthful. As for personalities, you're both in between being extraverts and introverts. You're neither over-the-top nor quiet and insular. However, you're both a magnet for a crowd, and you're always the centre of attention. Plus, your voice isn't deep and dark, so you shouldn't stick out like a sore thumb. Although, this doesn't matter as much because you'll probably be lip-syncing on the stage. Then there's your demeanour. Well, let's just say that you couldn't be a more perfect match, 'Little Princess.' You both definitely have attitude!
>
> Now, there's the type of drag to be performed. Since you're inexperienced, I don't think we'll be doing anything technical, like comedy or magic. You definitely don't have enough wit and experience to do comedy drag. Anyway, you have to have an established rapport with the audience to do this type of drag, and it's learned through experience over time. . . . I think it might be best that you lip-sync your performance. Madonna's rendition of

"Vogue" performed at the 1990 Music Video Awards would be a perfect match for you, especially since she performed the song by lip-syncing and you know how to vogue.

Then there's the context and the personas that are already impersonated. She's a good match because no-one else regularly does Madonna, only now and again. And it's usually someone who hasn't been on the regular drag circuit. So, if someone turned up as Madonna on the night, then the other drag artists and the audience would probably think that she was a fan who came to see you perform and nothing more. She's also a good match because most of the gay audience would have grown up with her. . . . "Vogue" will also be ideal for you to perform because of the position of the stage. It's 't-shaped' and cuts right through the audience. "Vogue" needs adequate stage space so that you can strut your stuff, particularly through the crowd. You'll also probably only get a five-minute spot [five minutes to perform; ten minutes in total in order to erect/dismantle any props] since you're a newcomer, so "Vogue" will neatly fit into that time allotment.

Now, there's resources to think about. Well, we really don't have to worry here. I've performed Madonna before, and you'll have me to design and make your costume, as well as any necessary props. I'll also provide support for your make-up, rehearsals, wig, etc., etc., etc. We have about a month and half to two months to prepare, so this should be enough time to get things ready. I reckon we can do Madonna for about a hundred dollars, which you previously indicated is within your budget [our budget ran over by 50 dollars]. So, let's go to work! Where's that credit card, girl? (recorded)

*Designing and making the costume.*[13] After we decided to impersonate Madonna and perform her rendition of "Vogue" for the 1990

MTV Music Video Awards, I asked Ray how we would design and make the dress that she wore (Madonna modelled herself after Marie Antoinette and wore an eighteenth-century styled dress.). However, Ray correctly pointed out that the next stage/process of doing good drag, real drag was not simply that of designing/making a dress but a costume 'in its broadest sense':

> No, no, no, my dear. The next task isn't just about making a dress. Remember, drag isn't just about getting into women's clothes. It can't be reduced to a single garment. It's about creating a persona, being someone for the night. . . . the task is to design and make a costume, my dear. When I say 'costume,' I mean it in its broadest sense. I mean, the whole imagery we'll be impersonating, performing, and bringing to life. This won't just include the outfit, but everything else that comes with it: the accessories, the wig, the make-up, the props. We also have to think about their styles, periods, and origins. You're a walking stage set. (recorded)

Other gay male resident drag artists who performed an iconic persona responded in the same fashion as Ray when I asked them what dresses they wore for their performances. They neither reduced drag to the act of wearing a dress nor did they refer to their dresses as 'dresses.' They wore costumes:

> Well, we really don't call them 'dresses' or 'outfits.' We, I mean us regular girls, we call them 'costumes.' You see, to be [X] isn't just about putting on a dress. It's about the whole package, the artistry, the mystique: the wig, the make-up, the jewellery, the props, you know (Carla Jane). (recorded)

When you say dresses, do you mean 'costumes'? If so, there's been many, and the wigs and jewellery that went with them, well, they were timeless classics. You know, drag is about getting 'dressed up to the nines' and creating the whole image, from the

actual dress to the wig to the jewellery to the make-up. It's about the whole costume (Eva). (recorded)

Dresses are for trannies [transsexuals and transvestites]. I wear a 'costume' because drag is about theatre. To be a Hollywood star is to put on theatre. It isn't about a dress or being a woman. . . . The dress or outfit is only part of the overall theatrical production. You have other things that go with the dress: the shoes, the make-up, the wig, the jewellery, the handbag, the backdrop, etc. So, what I'm saying is that I wear a costume, and the costume is more than just a dress (Penny). (recorded)

Although there was no set prescription for designing and making a costume, especially since a costume was contingent upon who was being impersonated and what type of drag was being performed, knowledge, skills, and experience were required to create one. Ray explained why: "Most of the girls who regularly do drag don't buy or rent their costumes from some costume shop. Good drag doesn't come ready-made. It's about cooking from scratch. We design and make our own costumes. Of course, this doesn't mean we don't look out for the odd accessory" (recorded). Indeed, all of the nine gay male resident drag artists who performed/had performed an iconic persona and participated in my fieldwork designed and made their costumes, which included the costume/dress and supporting props. Wigs were bought in a store, but they styled their wigs themselves. As for accessories, such as shoes, handbags, and jewellery, they bought them in a store as well, but they usually adapted them to suit their needs. My experience of designing and making my costume with Ray demonstrates the process that they generally went through to create a costume, as well as some of the knowledge, skills, and experience that supported the process.

Ray and I began designing my costume by watching and re-watching a video of Madonna's performance of "Vogue" for the 1990 MTV Music Video Awards. While viewing her performance, I was assigned the task of

taking note of the wigs, accessories, and props. This was not a case of simply providing a physical description of what was being worn or used. I also had to describe their styles, periods, and origins, how they were being used, and how each element linked with the other. In a similar fashion, Ray concentrated on taking note of the dresses/costumes and make-up that Madonna and her supporting dancers wore. We then compared notes and drew conceptual models, with descriptions, of the costume/dress (for example, style, materials, and colours); the wig (for example, style, colour, and hair accessories); the make-up (for example, style and colours); the accessories (for example, jewellery and shoes and their materials and colours); and the props (for example, the backdrop for the stage). The conceptual models served as a plan to make the costume. They were not exact replicas of what was being impersonated/performed. Drag artists generally allowed some room for improvisation so that they could make the iconic persona a degree of their own, particularly if the persona had previously been performed by another drag artist. A drag artist might change the colour, material, or detailing of the costume or accessorise it differently. However, improvisation was mostly in keeping with the persona. Once we planned the costume, we constructed patterns for the actual costume/dress and trekked in and out of department stores and material, craft, vintage, and charity shops to buy materials, accessories, and make-up for the costume. In order to cut costs, we decided to use one of Ray's wigs, which we coifed nearer to the time of my performance. Ray constructed the pattern for the costume/dress by studying Madonna's dress and drawing and cutting patterns on newspaper sheets according to my measurements. Ray changed some of the design and detailing of the costume/dress according to our conceptual models (for example, its different layers, cut, cuffs, and colours). Once material was bought for the costume/dress, Ray used the patterns to sew it. This happened alongside us continuing to trek in and out of stores for accessories, make-up, and materials for a backdrop. The costume/dress took Ray approximately four weeks to complete, during which time I had the responsibility of

completing the backdrop for my performance. The backdrop was a painted mural depicting an elaborate drawing room. It was painted onto a white flat sheet so that it could be easily erected and readily removed before and after my performance.

While Ray and I went through these processes to create the costume, he explained some of the knowledge and skills that were required to produce a costume similar to mine. According to Ray, a drag artist would have needed a background in or some knowledge of fashion design, music, art (specific medium not required), art history, architecture, or theatre. Also, a drag artist would have needed to possess an artistic skill (for example, drawing, painting, make-up design, or stage design/production) or, at the very least, an artistic eye. Ray explained why these requirements were needed:

> You just aren't making a dress with some stage props. Such a costume is steeped in history and has cultural and social meanings, and you really need to know what you're doing in order to reproduce that. But then it's not just about what you know or a skill you have. You also need an artistic eye, girl (Ray). (recorded)

All of the nine gay male resident drag artists who participated in my fieldwork had either a degree in or some knowledge of one or more of the aforementioned disciplines. Each of them also possessed one or more of the aforementioned artistic skills. However, Ray stressed that sewing was one of the main skills required to create a costume: "You know, you can have a sound knowledge base or a broad skills set to make a fantastic costume. You can also have creative flair to make it fabulous. But, in the end of the day, you need to know how to sew" (recorded). From time to time, drag artists helped each other out in sewing their costumes, particularly if there was a tricky bit of sewing to be done. They also shared their knowledge base among each other through informal conversations and critiquing other drag artists' performances. They more formally shared it in the next stage/process of doing drag: rehearsals. However,

knowledge and skills were not simply disciplinary. According to Carla Jane, drag artists had "an encyclopaedic knowledge of the yellow pages" (recorded). They knew where to shop for each detail of their costume. In line with my experience of shopping around for my costume, resident drag artists regularly shopped in department stores and material, craft, vintage, and charity shops. They also had a network of contacts in these shops so that they would get first shout on items before they hit the shelf. This was particularly the case in vintage and charity shops because items were one-offs. Carla Jane explained how her relationship with a local vintage shop owner worked to her benefit:

JM: Where do you shop for your costume?

CJ: You see, [X], the owner of the vintage shop around the corner, [X], well, she takes good care of me.

JM: What do you mean by '[X] takes good care of you'; can you explain further?

CJ: Well, I've known [X] for ages. She knows the type of acts that I do down at The Embers, and she usually knows what I like and I don't like and what works and what doesn't. So, I usually go into her shop on a Thursday when she gets new stock in, and she takes me into the back room to look at some gear she thinks I might be interested in. She usually gets it right. This saves me a lot of bother because I get the chance to look at her gear before it goes on the shelf and get to purchase it before the other bitches [the gay male resident drag artists who performed as female iconic personas] get their greedy little hands on them. I mean, her gear is priceless; they're one-offs. You only get one chance to get the best of her gear. I really don't know what I'd do without [X]. I guess I would just be a jealous old bitch towards the other regular girls, always thinking that their latest accessory would have looked better on me. (recorded)

Ray also explained that a drag artist producing a costume similar to mine would have needed extensive experience of using his/her knowledge base and skills set. On average, the nine gay male resident drag artists who participated in my fieldwork had been using their knowledge and skills to create costumes for approximately 10 years. However, experience was not simply reduced to number of years or creating costumes for drag only. Experience was broader for them. It also designated how they had put and continued to put their knowledge base and skills set into practice off of the drag stage, which took place within and across a range of disciplines and mediums. While I was conducting my fieldwork, seven of the nine gay male resident drag artists were additionally putting their knowledge and skills into practice for reasons other than drag. This was highlighted by some of the drag artists' responses to the question "How long have you had experience of using your knowledge and skills to create dresses/costumes for drag?":

> Well, I've been making drag costumes and my own stage sets for so long that I've stopped counting the years. I think it's been around 12 years or so. But, you see, it's really been longer than that. I have a college degree in theatre, and I picked up a lot of skills in costume and make-up design and stage production. I've used these skills for reasons other than drag. I've been extensively involved in the local youth theatre for quite some time, and I've done the costumes and make-up for the actors. I'm currently involved in one right now, *Annie*. I'm making all the costumes (Ce-Ce).

> Oh, I guess I would say that I have 14 years experience. But it's been longer when you consider that I've been using my fashion design degree to make and sell my own label locally. My new season will be showcased in a fashion show for charity in a couple of weeks (Eva). (recorded)

> It's been 11 years. Although, I've used my knowledge and skills longer when you consider that it hasn't always been for drag. I went to college and studied theatre. I specialised in costume design. Since then, I've been involved in making costumes for different productions across the city. Right now I'm involved in making the costumes for *Sweeney Todd* (Penny). (recorded)

*Rehearsing the iconic persona's onstage and offstage performance.*

After Ray and I designed and made my costume, we began the next stage/process of doing drag: rehearsals. According to Ray, there were two performances to rehearse: the iconic persona's onstage *and* offstage performance. The gay male resident drag artists who participated in my fieldwork also did not have a restrictive understanding of performance. They did not restrict performance to a physical stage. It also designated the performance of their iconic persona off the stage:

> You see, when that curtain drops, most people [the audience] think that the show is over for me, that I can just take off my Jimmy Choo shoes and rest my little ole' feet with a nightcap at the bar. But they're wrong. If I want them to continue to think that I'm someone, then I have to continue to be that special someone when I'm off stage. The show must go on (Carla Jane). (recorded)

> Well, when I do my performance, I have to think about how she would perform on stage and how she would perform off stage. You see, it's not just about being on an actual stage. You aren't on a physical stage the whole night while you're doing drag. You'll have breaks while the other drag artists are performing. Although, it's not as though these are real breaks. You'll be interacting with the other drag artists and the audience while you're on your break, and you'll have to continue your performance if you want to pass as someone (Ce-Ce).

Even though the same drag artists literally differentiated their performance, based on the presence/absence of a physical stage, they simultaneously pointed out that such a differentiation was a misnomer figuratively. Their impersonations were always performed on a stage:

> [T]hinking about my performance more, am I really ever off the stage? I have my performance on and off a physical stage, but am I strictly off a stage? The answer to that, my dear, is 'no.' You see, when I literally get off the stage, I'm still performing and trying to be someone as I just said. The audience is still there, and I'm still trying to convince them that I'm someone. So, really, I'm still on a stage performing. I guess I'm kind of always on a stage (Carla Jane). (recorded)

> I might separate my performance by talking about what I do on stage and what I do off stage. But I don't think there's a difference because you're always on a stage. I mean, when I'm off a physical stage, I'm still in the spotlight and trying to be someone, and the audience is still there watching my every move. All the elements of the stage are still there—the script, the lights, the camera, the action, the audience (Ce-Ce).

There were three broad, basic phases to rehearsals for the nine gay male resident drag artists who performed/had performed an iconic person and participated in my fieldwork. Ray provided a good summary:

> We're going to rehearse your stage performance in three phases, which most of the drag artists who do good drag do. First, we'll sit down and plan the performance. We'll then run through several dry runs of it. After that, we'll do a couple dress rehearsals. You'll then be more or less ready to get up there and do your thing. (recorded)

According to Ray, planning the performance designated planning the mechanics of the performance and its elements, for example: the timeframe; the entrance and exit; who would participate in the

performance and how; how props of the performance would work together (for example, the backdrop, music, and lighting); how the drag artist performing would interact with the audience; and the actual performance itself (for example, dance moves, tone of the voice, and demeanour). The 'dry run' phase of rehearsals designated the phase when elements of the planned performance were practised either separately or together. There was no set prescription to where the dry run phase took place, and a drag artist could choose whether he/she wanted to rehearse certain elements in front of a select audience. They usually either took place in the drag artist's home or during the day at The Embers Avenue. Audience members usually included no more than a handful of friends or other drag artists. They provided constructive feedback on elements of the performance and made suggestions. Drag artists usually did not wear their costume during a dry run rehearsal. The length of time of the dry run phase varied, and it was mainly dependent upon the scale of the performance. The dry runs of the nine gay male resident drag artists who performed/had performed an iconic persona and participated in my fieldwork ranged from a minimum of four days to a maximum of a fortnight. The 'dress rehearsal' phase also designated when elements of the planned performance were practiced, but they were practised together from start to finish in sequence as they would be in real time. Dress rehearsals were usually scheduled within a week of the dry run phase ending. On average, the nine gay male resident drag artists who performed an iconic persona and participated in my fieldwork had two dress rehearsals per new performance. A dress rehearsal did not need to take place if the iconic persona had been previously performed by the drag artist and he/she was comfortable with his/her new performance. It included the costume, and it usually took place in the presence of a select audience during the day at The Embers Avenue. Again, audience members usually included no more than a handful of friends or other drag artists, and they provided constructive feedback and made suggestions. There was also an element of drag artists sharing trade secrets (for

example, on the mechanics of the performance or make-up hints). The sound/light technician was also present to provide support. He was paid by the nightclub to provide dress rehearsal slots during the week. My onstage rehearsal demonstrates these three phases. My experience was similar to that of the other nine gay male resident drag artists who performed/had performed an iconic persona and participated in my fieldwork.

Ray and I began rehearsals by mapping out and agreeing the basic mechanics/elements of the performance: the performance would last for the duration of "Vogue" (approximately five minutes); I would enter by popping out from behind the stage curtain and exit by doing a final dance move; and no-one would participate in my performance, except Ray and the sound/light technician who would each provide behind-the-scenes technical support. We then considered how props of the performance would work together. Ray agreed to erect the backdrop before I entered onto the stage, and indicated that he would have the drag emcee stall my entrance until it was ready. Once it was ready, the drag emcee would introduce me over the microphone. This would be the signal for the sound/light technician to play "Vogue" over the sound system and shine the spotlight towards the middle of the stage, when and where I would pop out from behind the stage curtain and perform my first dance move while lip-syncing "Vogue." Ray would then ensure the stage curtain was fully drawn in order to reveal the backdrop to the audience, and the sound/light technician would ensure the spotlight was angled towards me throughout my performance. Once I completed my final dance move, the stage lights would go off and Ray would ensure the curtain was dropped with me behind it. Ray agreed to dismantle the backdrop once the performance was completed. Ray and I also agreed that I would not interact with the audience by voguing in the audience because I did not have extensive experience of creating a rapport with an audience. Ray indicated that this would not detract from my performance since it only involved lip-syncing and dancing. We then lastly planned and agreed how I would actually

perform. Since we had a limited amount of time to rehearse and I had Madonna's performance of "Vogue" on videotape, Ray suggested that I mimic Madonna's dance moves from start to finish. We also agreed that my demeanour throughout the performance should reflect that of Madonna's performance: exude confidence and reflect the airs and graces of the bourgeoisie, with a little 'naughty playfulness' mixed into some of the dance moves. Ray and I took one full evening to plan the performance.

Once Ray and I completed planning the performance, I began to rehearse elements of the performance separately. I then steadily pieced them together by performing them in sequence over a period of two and a half weeks. This included rehearsing the grand entrance, particular dance moves throughout the performance, lip-syncing particular parts of the song, and the final dance move and exit. This mainly took place in front of the mirrored wardrobe in my bedroom. Once I was confident enough to perform some of the elements of the performance in sequence, I subjected Ray and my flatmate to several renditions. They provided me with invaluable feedback on my dance moves and demeanour, and made suggestions on how I could improve. They also provided encouragement, and I became more confident in my performance by rehearsing in their company. Ray then organised three two-hour dress rehearsals that took place in the afternoon over a one-week period at The Embers Avenue, and I invited a handful of friends to each of them so that I could perform in front of a larger audience and receive additional feedback on my performance. Ray and the sound/light technician supported each dress rehearsal as we had initially planned, and Ray helped me get into my costume. I ran through my performance four times from start to finish on each occasion. The dress rehearsals enabled us to rectify technical difficulties with sound and lighting and improve the co-ordination and timing of each element of the performance (for example, erecting/dismantling the backdrop and my entrance and exit). I also became more familiar with performing on an actual stage, especially since

I had no prior experience. My friends provided constructive feedback on my performance and made some suggestions. For example, contrary to what Ray and I had planned, they thought that my performance would be enhanced by me dismounting the stage and voguing within the audience.

While I rehearsed my onstage performance, I simultaneously rehearsed my offstage one. Ray also supported my offstage rehearsals. According to Carla Jane, the resident drag artists who performed an iconic persona placed a lot of importance on rehearsals for the offstage performance:

> Us regular girls, well we know the importance of rehearsing for the offstage performance. You see, it's a lot more difficult to perform your impersonation offstage because you have less control over your performance, your environment. . . . Anything can happen. You're more vulnerable. So, you need to be on the ball and make sure that you can perform your offstage impersonation under any conditions. . . . This means that rehearsing for your offstage performance can be more important and time consuming than your onstage one, and you'll really need to be prepared. (recorded)

Rehearsals for the offstage performance usually took place over an intense three week period, and all of the nine gay male resident drag artists who performed/had performed an iconic persona and participated in my fieldwork used every possible moment of their three weeks to rehearse. They rehearsed their offstage performance in tandem with their onstage one. However, rehearsals for the offstage performance were less in number and intensity if the impersonation had been previously performed and a drag artist was comfortable with his/her performance. According to Ray, rehearsals for the offstage performance focused on impersonating how the iconic persona physically interacted with people; the lexicon that the persona drew upon; the demeanour the persona adopted; and the type of conversations that the persona had with people. Offstage rehearsals for the resident drag artists who performed an iconic

persona initially took place in isolation in some way or another (for example, in front of a mirror or to the sound of music while in the shower) and then gradually took place in informal settings with friends or other drag artists (for example, in a drag artist's home).

Rehearsals for my offstage performance took longer than first anticipated. Ray and I had hoped that I would have been prepared for my offstage performance at the same time as my onstage one, but I had not fully mastered it, and I lacked some confidence. We agreed that an underperformance would threaten me being read as Madonna by the audience and, more importantly, by the resident drag artists. We therefore agreed to rehearse for an additional two weeks so that we could finely tune my performance and produce one that we were very satisfied with. Rehearsals for the offstage performance took place over approximately five weeks. We used Madonna's documentary of her 1991 "Blonde Ambition Tour," *Truth or Dare* (1991), to inform my offstage performance. According to the rear jacket of the documentary, the documentary

> reveals her beauty as she really is, on stage and off—mother figure to her family of dancers, sex goddess to her millions of fans, businesswoman, singer, dancer . . . the biggest star in the world of music. Join her and experience an intimate backstage look at her "Blonde Ambition" tour.
>
> From her hotel room to her dressing room, from her stage show to her boudoir, here is Madonna—outrageous, hilarious, uninhibited.

Putting aside the philosophical debate about whether a documentary can uncover and represent some truth ("reveals her beauty as she really is, on stage and off"), it provided insight into: the different accents and lexicons she adopted when she spoke to different people in different settings; how she physically interacted with people; the type of conversations that she tended to have; and the demeanours that she adopted in the presence of other Hollywood stars. In short, Madonna fluctuated between two accents: a west coast accent and a midwest one. She did not draw upon a

sophisticated or technical lexicon. Her lexicon came across as ordinary. Madonna also tended to affectionately touch people when she interacted, and her conversations revolved around gossip and herself, particularly how other people perceived her. However, her egocentric conversations were balanced with ones in which she assumed a caring role and offered motherly advice to family members and her supporting dancers. Madonna's demeanour was consistent throughout the documentary. She came across as calculating, business-driven, and confident, and she was well aware that she was a diva who set trends and knew how to press peoples' buttons. I initially rehearsed different aspects of this repertoire behind closed doors for a week and a half, usually in front of the mirrored wardrobe. I then gradually adopted and performed Madonna's persona when I went out clubbing with Ray and my friends. Ray provided regular feedback on my performance.

*Morphing into the iconic persona.* The last stage/process of performing an ionic persona involved a drag artist transforming him/herself into the persona who he/she was impersonating. The emphasis was on morphology in the sense of morphing:

> Okay, it's time to get ready. We have already done some practicing so that people think you act like Madonna. You know, the stage performance and demeanour and all. This is fine, but now you need to look like Madonna. You see, you can act like her very well and have everyone convinced by your onstage and offstage performance that you are her. But being Madonna isn't all about your performance. You also have to look like her, and if you don't look like her, then forget about people thinking you're Madonna. So we need to transform you into Madonna and get you into your costume (Ray). (recorded)

For the gay male resident drag artists who performed an iconic persona, morphing involved (1) transforming their sexed body into the sexed body of the persona so that there was a congruence between sex and the gender that they were presenting and (2) shaping the finer details of their

newly-morphed sexed/gendered body so that it mirrored the persona as closely as possible. Finer details included, for example: bone structure; bodily features such as beauty marks; lip shape and size; skin tone; and eyebrow shape and colour. This involved using a range of techniques with the help of make-up, garments, and various tools (for example, clippers and electrical tape). The transformation was finally complete when the drag artist put on his/her costume. Resident drag artists morphologically transformed themselves on two occasions: dress rehearsals and the live performance. The nine gay male resident drag artists who performed/had performed an iconic persona and participated in my fieldwork usually spent two hours morphing themselves. This normally occurred several hours before the dress rehearsal or the live performance and in their own home. Most of them chose to morph themselves at home rather than at The Embers Avenue because they did not have to transport all of the gear they used to morph themselves (for example, make-up, clippers, hair blow dryer, and electrical tape). They also morphed at home because arriving as themselves spoiled them being read as their iconic persona by others. They considered their performance to begin once they set foot onto the pavement leading to The Embers Avenue:

> I generally don't turn up as myself and use the dressing room to get changed. What would my fans think? They're here to see [X], not me. They'd think: 'There's [Y] going to get ready to be [X].' It would spoil it all [the performance]. My performance begins as I walk up that street (Liza). (recorded)

However, when drag artists were pushed for time, they transformed themselves backstage in the dressing room. They also used the dressing room to refresh their transformation in between their performances. My transformation into Madonna for my onstage debut highlights the techniques generally used by the gay male resident drag artists to morph themselves into their iconic persona.

Ray and I began my morphological transformation two and a half hours before our planned 8:30p.m. arrival at The Embers Avenue. The

transformation took place in my flat, and it took the full time we set aside for it. First, we transformed my sexed body into the sexed body of Madonna in order to create a congruence between sex and the gender that I was presenting. We then concentrated on shaping the finer details of my newly-transformed sexed/gendered body so that it closely resembled Madonna's.

Transforming my sexed body required three areas to be attended to: removing my body hair, concealing my penis, and creating the illusion of boasting breasts. We began the first phase by shaving off the hair on my body that the costume did not cover or could potentially be revealed if the costume was tampered with. This included my legs and arms, the top of my feet and toes, the back of my hands, under my arms, my torso, my front and back neck, my shoulders, and my face. We used an electric shaver as opposed to a razor and blade so that we did not risk irritating my skin. The gay male resident drag artists usually removed their hair by waxing, since it removed hair at the root and resulted in a more natural appearance. We also used hair clippers to cut my hair short at the sides and the back of my head in case the wig did not completely hide my hair. Drag artists who had long hair usually did not sacrifice it, and they hid their hair by pulling it back with hairpins and a hairnet. Ray and I decided to lastly pluck my eyebrows since Madonna had very thin ones at the time of her performance and mine were slightly thicker (Ouch!). Some drag waxed their eyebrows off rather than pluck them. It was simply a matter of personal preference. Once we removed my body hair, we concealed my penis. Ray advised me to relieve my bladder before we began, since concealing my penis would inhibit me from going to the toilet at free will. This was why some of the gay male resident drag artists did not drink in between their performances:

> Have you ever noticed that some of the girls don't drink in between their performances? They even refuse drinks from their fans! This is because their penis is tightly concealed and they just can't whip it out. And if they need to go to the toilet, then they have the

> whole bother of having to undo it, and then they have the whole bother of having to tightly conceal it again. This will be a sobering experience for you (Ray). (recorded)

'Tightly concealed' was an understatement, to say the very least. Ray had me put on a tight pair of flesh coloured high-cut briefs with my penis and testicles stretched backwards between my legs. He then used electrical tape to tape from the front to the back of the briefs, passing between my legs. This ensured that my penis and testicles stayed in place and that their bulge was not visible. He lastly masked the electrical tape by having me put on another tight pair of high-cut briefs, followed by tights. According to Ray, some drag artists went a step further and used tape to tuck their testicles up into their abdomen. We lastly created the illusion of breasts. Drag artists used one of two methods to create breasts. If a drag artist had enough body fat or muscle, he/she used strong adhesive tape or a corset to press the pecks together. Otherwise, he/she wore a bra with 'falsies' (fake breasts) or socks in it. We opted for the latter, since I did not have enough body fat or muscle to create the illusion of breasts.

Once we had a clean slate on which to work, we began to shape the finer details. Again, these techniques generally reflected the ones used by the gay male resident drag artists to morph themselves into their iconic persona. First, Ray applied a heavy layer of liquid foundation to my skin in order to create a uniform colour, from my forehead down to my torso and from the back of my ears and neck down to my shoulders. We chose a very pale flesh colour since Madonna's skin tone for "Vogue" was bordering on pasty white. Once the foundation was completely applied and adapted to my skin temperature for five minutes, Ray told me to close my eyes and hold my breath for 10 seconds. Taken off guard, he quickly sprayed hairspray over the areas where he applied foundation. Ray explained that the hairspray was used to set the foundation and ensure that it did not thin and run due to the high temperature of the nightclub. We then began to transform my lips and eyes. Again, we used pale colours since Madonna used pale ones: flesh-coloured lipstick with a hint

of pink and cream-coloured eye shadow with gold highlights. Since my lips were not as pronounced as Madonna's, Ray transformed them by drawing thicker lips on my face with a lip pencil. He then filled them in with lipstick, had me blot them with a tissue, repeated the same process again, and then finally finished them with a hint of lip gloss. The eyes required three areas to be attended to: the eyelids, eyebrows, and eyelashes. He transformed the eyelids by applying eye shadow across the eyelid and using gold eyeliner to draw a line from the inner corner of the eyelid to the crow's feet. He then used a brown-coloured eyebrow pencil to create long, thin eyebrows and used a gold-coloured one to add highlights to them. Madonna's eyelashes were very pronounced, so we applied two sets of eyelashes. Ray added volume and definition to them by applying a thick layer of mascara. We then applied some rosé-coloured loose powder foundation to my cheeks in order to create the illusion of a strong bone structure, since Madonna's cheekbones were prominent in her performance of "Vogue." In order to set the newly-applied make-up and reset the foundation previously applied to my face, torso, neck, and shoulders, Ray applied another layer of hairspray. While the hairspray dried, Ray attached French-manicured nails to my non-existent fingernails, and he then painted both my fingernails and toenails. We chose to paint them light pink in order to bring out the pink in my lipstick more. Ray completed the make-up regime by lightly dusting white talcum powder over the areas where he applied foundation, so that my skin tone matched Madonna's more closely. Talcum powder was also used because it would soak up the excess sebum produced by my skin during the performance and maintain a matte appearance.

Ray finally completed my morphological transformation by assisting me to put on the costume. Ray first assisted me into the costume before affixing the wig because I had to put my head through the costume in order to get it on. Once the costume was on and properly ruffled, Ray complimented it with additional parts of the costume: he affixed a band of faux pearls to my neck (similar to a choker, although broader); he attached

a faux pearl bracelet to my wrist; he attached dangling clip-on faux pearl earrings to my ears; he slipped my fingers through fake diamond rings with gold bands; he pinned a broach to my dress, with an ostrich feather protruding from it; he slipped my feet into brown leather high heels; and he had me carry a tiny velvet purse, which held my money, lipstick, and mirror. Ray completed the costume by affixing the wig he coiffed to my head. All of the nine gay male resident drag artists who performed/had performed an iconic persona and participated in my fieldwork always affixed their wig after they had their costume on so that it did not get de-coiffed. He used approximately eight pins to hold it in place, tidied it up, and then finally set it with an additional layer of hairspray. The wig was coiffed an hour before he arrived at my house to morphologically transform me. It arrived on a mannequin head. Drag artists usually coiffed their wig on a mannequin head immediately before they morphologically transformed themselves. Their wig would loose its hold and style if they coiffed it any sooner. Ray used an auburn-coloured wig, since Madonna's wig was of a similar colour, and he styled it as a 'beehive' with curls dangling from it. He also attached pearls and ostrich feathers to the wig in order to make it more dramatic.

Drag artists also transformed themselves psychologically while transforming themselves physically. It was not enough that they physically looked like their iconic persona on stage. They had to feel that they were their persona:

> Performing someone is not just about looking like them. It's also a state of mind. You have to mentally feel that you're that person. If you don't, it'll show in your performance (Donna).

> When I went up there and I had my costume on with all my jewellery, I'd tell myself that I was [X], that they [the audience] were here to see [X]. I had to give off that vibe, they could sense it (Alexis).

> I gotta make sure I feel like [X] on the stage. If I don't, they [the audience] surely won't think so (Carla Jane). (recorded)

The nine gay male resident drag artists who performed/had performed an iconic persona and participated in my fieldwork psychologically transformed themselves in a number of ways, by either: singing along to the music of the persona who was being performed; doing some of the dance moves of their performance; looking into the mirror and telling themselves that they were the very definition of their persona; talking and interacting like their persona would; or a combination of any of the aforementioned. I psychologically transformed myself into Madonna for both my dress rehearsals and live debut performance by singing 'Vogue' along with Madonna in the background and doing some dance moves.

After approximately ten weeks, I was now ready for my performance. I was now Madonna. Strike-a-pose, vogue!

### iv. Postscript: Lights, Camera, Action!

Prior to my debut performance, a handful of people were aware of what Ray and I were planning: my course instructor, a few of my friends, and the sound/light technician. No-one else was aware, or, at the very least, we had the premonition that no-one else was aware. Ray and I believed that if my performance was disclosed to the resident drag artists and regular patrons, then they would read me as a 'researcher' in the first instance and not potentially as 'Madonna.' In other words, my status as a researcher would overshadow my performance, that is, my effecting of Madonna. It would be read and rated through that lens. As a result, I would not be able to appraise my performance in its own right. We therefore decided not to disclose my performance to others. The flexibility of The Embers Avenue's weekend shows facilitated anonymity, and we believed that our approach was ethically sound because anonymity was built into the shows. As I discussed in my field notes, The Embers Avenue provided a number of 'open-ended' performance slots within their Friday and Saturday night shows, whereby aspiring drag artists or people who

had previously performed drag could perform on stage. No-one knew in advance of the night who would perform in these slots. Securing a slot simply required a performer to appear in drag with music in hand and reserve one with the drag emcee at least half an hour before the show began. Some performers were regulars of The Embers Avenue drag scene and therefore known when they reserved a slot, whilst others were external to the drag scene and therefore unknown.

Ray and I arrived approximately half an hour before the Saturday night show began, and he reserved a slot for me. In order to maintain my anonymity, I only socialised with Ray and my friends until Ray and I went back stage to prepare for my performance. However, while we were socialising with one another, we sensed that the resident drag artists knew or at least suspected I was performing Madonna. They were repeatedly glancing at us and then engaging in a flurry of conversation between themselves. Of course, we may have been misinterpreting and assigning the wrong meaning to their interaction, but our premonition was not simply based on observation. It was also spawn by a general feeling in the air, one of those feelings that escape description and require a person to be present to understand and appreciate. Our premonition was indeed later confirmed, but not that evening. A cold had got the better of me, and I left immediately after my onstage performance. It was confirmed about a week later. While I was perusing the shops on 21st street within the northwest pocket of the city centre, I bumped into a couple of the resident drag artists who saw my performance (Portland felt like a small city more often than not.). They were only too pleased to have bumped into me. Whilst they were quick to praise my performance, they were very quick to tell me that they knew it was me as Madonna before I hit the stage. What confirmed their suspicion? Ray was often seen with me in my field site. As a result, the resident drag artists viewed my performance through the lens of my status as a researcher. The degree of its success, then, was contingent upon the lens that it was read and rated through, which was further compounded by the fact that I only performed my onstage

performance of Madonna due to my cold. My observational notes and feedback that I received from some resident drag artists in their interview provide some insight into the success (or otherwise) of my performance.

Following my performance, I documented my experience. My observational notes detailed perceptions, as well as feelings. I reflected on: the mechanics and elements of my performance (for example, the entrance/exit, dance moves, erecting the backdrop, and lip-syncing); how I felt immediately before, during, and after my performance; the degree to which I read myself as Madonna; and how I perceived the audience to read and rate me as Madonna. Although they are presented in abridged form (excerpts are omitted where there are ellipses), they are generally reflective of what I perceived and felt at the time. In general: the mechanics/elements of my performance ran according to plan, although I slightly tripped while emerging from behind the curtain and my dance moves were not as strong when I descended into the crowd (which was unplanned); I felt like and read myself as Madonna once I began to perform, but not to the same degree towards the end of my performance; and, although I had suspicions that the resident drag artists knew that I was performing Madonna, the audience as a whole read and rated me as 'Madonna,' particularly when I descended into the audience and 'Madonna' was repeatedly chanted at the end of my performance. My notes read:

> I'm in the thick of this cold, and it couldn't have happened at a worse time. I don't think it affected my performance on stage because I had a lot of adrenaline running through my body like nobody's business at the time. It caught up with me, though, when I finished my performance. I was too exhausted afterwards. I had to go home. It's a shame because I practiced all those weeks for my offstage performance, and I wanted to see if I could pull it off. But then I have to remind myself that I pulled off a great deal. I've never been on stage before, and I haven't done drag before. I shouldn't be hard on myself. I need to keep everything in

perspective. . . . I think my performance went really well, and I think the drag artists and audience read me as Madonna. Although I have a sneaky suspicion that they may have known it was me. . . .

When Ray and I went back stage, I didn't really have time to think whether I was Madonna. Well, at least at first. We were too busy getting ready for the show. Things seemed to be going to plan. The last performance finished and there was someone on doing comedy. The curtain was closed, so Ray was erecting the backdrop. It didn't take much time. He knew what he was doing. We had already run through this. But once it was up, I began focusing on what was happening on the other side of the curtain. I could hear the comedian and the audience laughing. I then got thinking about my performance and got nervous. What did we plan to do first? Was I going to pop out from behind the curtain or was the curtain going to be raised? . . . I thought: 'Oh, Jason, what shit did you get yourself into?' . . . But I couldn't escape now. I heard the audience clapping. It was too late now. Luckily, right before "Vogue" started playing, Ray smiled and reminded me to pop out from behind the curtain.

And you know what? When I popped out and performed my first dance move while lip-syncing, I felt different. Don't get me wrong, I was a little off balance when I popped out. I slightly tripped over my costume, but then I don't think it was noticeable. I forgot that I always felt different when "Vogue" was on. It was euphoria, and when I sung "when all else fails, and you long to be something better than you are today, I know a place where you can get away, it's called a dance floor and here's what it's for," I felt I was fully Madonna. There was no nervousness. There were no inhibitions. I was Madonna and I was performing her dance moves spot on.

My twists and turns were so perfect, Madonna would have been proud. . . .

We decided that I wouldn't go into the audience, but I think because I got into it so much and some of the audience and drag artists were doing some voguing themselves, I went off the stage. I did some vogue moves in the audience, and they did some along with me. I went wild and they went wild! They were also touching my costume as I swept by them, through the audience. One person even kissed me on my bosoms! But my dance moves started to get a little sloppy because they depended on how the other person was voguing, and I remember telling myself to get back on stage. . . .

I think I started to become more conscious of what I was and was not doing when I got back on stage because I felt my performance was a little sloppy in the audience. The nerves started kicking in a little, and I was gaining consciousness as Jason again. But I remember telling myself to snap back into Madonna, and luckily one of my favourite parts of the song was kicking in: "Greta Garbo and Monroe, Deitrch and DiMaggio. . . ." And I felt more like Madonna, but not in the way that I did in the beginning or when I first went into the audience. But the audience was still into my performance, singing and dancing, so I must have been giving off the Madonna vibes. They still must have thought I was her. . . .

Before I knew it, the curtain was down and I was out of breath. I was shattered. Ray was there, and all I can remember is him continually telling me how well I did and hearing the crowd chanting 'Madonna, Madonna, Madonna. . ." in the background. The rest is just a big blur. I was still coming off a high, kind of like when you've run a mile and are still out of breath. You feel

> disorientated. But I felt tired, and I needed to get home. . . (Sunday, 5 May 1996).

During some of the regular drag artists' face-to-face interviews, I asked them for feedback on my performance. Their feedback was twofold. In the first instance, they remarked on my identity/status. Although they acknowledged and valued my approach to my research by participating in my fieldwork, they reminded me that I was a researcher and not a drag artist. I had not earned the status of drag artist by learning drag over time and 'moving up the ranks' so to speak—of my own accord. I relied on Ray to hold my hand to perform drag. Nonetheless, they were impressed with the overall quality of my performance, considering my status and the fact that I had no previous experience of performing on stage. In the second instance, they remarked on my performance: its mechanics and elements and the degree to which they read and rated me as Madonna. They more or less confirmed my perception of the performance. In general, they believed that the mechanics of the elements of my performance ran smoothly and connected very well, from the entrance to the actual performance (lip-syncing and dancing) to my interaction with the audience to the exit. One drag artist noticed that I had tripped over my costume when I emerged from behind the curtain, whereas the other three drag artists did not take notice. He/she did however comment that he/she only saw me trip because of where he/she was positioned in relation to the stage. They thought that my lip-syncing was in timing with Madonna and that my dance moves replicated Madonna's performance of "Vogue." Two of the drag artists inquired if I had had any formal dance training in the past. They were all pleased with my interaction with the audience by descending the stage and dancing with audience members. In doing so, they believed that I created an instant rapport with the audience and commanded its utmost attention. Whereas I thought that my dance moves were slightly sloppy while I was interacting with the audience, they made no mention of them as such. They generally read and rated me as Madonna in three respects. In the first instance, they believed that I

succeeded in morphing myself into Madonna. According to them, I was successful in (1) creating a congruence between sex and the gender that I was presenting and (2) shaping the finer details of my newly-sexed/gendered body so that it mirrored Madonna. In particular, they commented that: my body hair was well-removed in order to produce the appearance of soft, supple skin; my penis was well-concealed; my breasts were 'busty'; and my skin tone, bone structure, lips, and eyes matched that of Madonna's. In the second instance, they generally believed that my performance gave the impression that I believed that I was Madonna. According to them, I did not come across as nervous or conscious of who I was performing. I exuded Madonna naturally. I came across as a diva who was confident in her performance and knew that all eyes were on her because she was a trend setter. In the third instance, they lastly believed that audience members confirmed I was Madonna by: voguing along with me, touching me as I swept past, kissing me on the bosoms like one of Madonna's dancers in her performance, and chanting 'Madonna' at the end of my performance.

### v. Just a Morphological Ideal?

In line with Butler's formulation, my methodological framing of drag demonstrates how a morphological ideal was central to realness and subjectivity. More specifically, the stages/processes I went through to effect, to be Madonna involved miming, embodying, and repeating a morphological ideal particular to Madonna. This morphological ideal was present in each stage/process in some way or another. Take for instance the first stage/process of doing drag: scoping who to impersonate. One of the principal areas that I had to take account of when choosing which iconic persona to impersonate/perform was how compatible my morphology was to the persona I might impersonate/perform. I had to take into consideration, for example: height, weight, body frame, bone structure, and skin texture. Again, Ray outlined why I was best suited to impersonate/perform Madonna: "You're both of medium height for your

sexes. You're both fit and you both have toned and defined bodies. Also, you both have angular features to your bone structure, and you both have healthy looking skin that's well maintained and youthful" (recorded). Take for instance the second stage/process of doing drag as another example: designing and making the costume. The bodily figure of Madonna dressed as Marie Antoinette in an eighteenth-century stylish dress for her performance of "Vogue" for the 1990 MTV Music Video Awards was central to Ray and I designing and making my costume—from studying the costume to constructing patterns to buying materials, accessories, and make-up. Take for instance the fourth stage/process of doing drag as one last example: morphing into the iconic persona. In order to produce the notion that I was Madonna, Ray and I morphed my sexed body into the sexed body of Madonna and shaped the finer details of my new sexed body so that it closely mirrored that of Madonna's. For example, we used electrical tape to stretch and conceal my penis and testicles between my legs. We also plucked my eyebrows and created long, thin ones with an eyebrow pencil since Madonna had very thin ones. We further applied rosé-coloured loose powder foundation to my cheeks in order to create the illusion of a strong cheekbone structure similar to Madonna's.

It is important to make a note here, though. Miming, embodying, and repeating a morphological ideal particular to Madonna was not simply an issue of repeating Madonna's morphology in the metaphysical sense. For Butler, a 'morphological ideal' designates the bodily norms that bring into being, constitute, and regulate the subject across the lines of gender, race, and class. Take for instance the fourth stage/process of doing drag as an example. Concealing my penis and testicles between my legs with electrical tape, plucking my eyebrows and creating new ones with an eyebrow pencil, and creating a strong cheekbone structure with rosé-coloured loose powder foundation were not an issue of miming, embodying, and repeating Madonna's morphology devoid of any social significance. Rather, they were a means to create a congruence between sex and gender according to compulsory heterosexuality's binary gender

economy, whereby my new sexed body (female) mimicked the culturally constructed gender that I was presenting (woman/feminine). In this sense, then, concealing my penis and testicles, plucking my eyebrows, and creating a strong cheekbone structure was also an issue of miming, embodying, and repeating Madonna's morphology within compulsory heterosexuality's binary gender economy.[14] Take for instance the second stage/process of doing drag as another example. Using the bodily figure of Madonna dressed as Marie Antoinette to design and make my costume/dress was not an issue of miming, embodying, and repeating that bodily figure within a vacuum. It was also the reiteration of a class norm. Her bodily figure was that of a bourgeois female particular to eighteenth-century France. Ray subtly suggested this when he explained why a particular knowledge base and skills set was required to produce a costume similar to Madonna's:

> You just aren't making a dress with some stage props. *Such a costume is steeped in history and has cultural and social meanings, and you really need to know what you're doing in order to reproduce that.* But then it's not just about what you know or a skill you have. You also need an artistic eye, girl (italics my emphasis). (recorded)

Within these terms, then, it might not be accurate to state that being Madonna simply involved miming, embodying, and repeating a morphological ideal *particular* to Madonna. Her body is the nexus of a morphological ideal's articulation and materialisation. Being Madonna also involved miming, embodying, and repeating a morphological ideal *constituted within and through* Madonna, which, in the words of Butler, is at once 'a figure of a body' and 'no particular body.'

On the one hand, my methodological framing of drag does indeed demonstrate Butler's suggestion that a morphological ideal is central to realness and subjectivity. And yet, on the other hand, my participation in the field questions Butler's formulation and methodological framing. As I outlined in the previous broad section of the chapter, *Paris is Burning*

(1991) mainly underscores the centrality of a bodily norm. Because Butler's examination of realness and subjectivity is solely predicated on *Paris is Burning* (1991) and *Paris is Burning* is limited in its content and form, her formulation is restricted to and by a bodily norm. If she had broadened and deepened her methodological framework by employing or incorporating a sociological methodological programme that is based in social life and actively incorporates the lived experiences of social actors, then a morphological ideal may not have been just as central to her formulation.

Take for instance the stage/process of scoping who to impersonate. To effect realness, to be Madonna, compatibility also had to take into consideration, for example: voice (for example, accent, range, depth, and strength); personality (for example, an extravert, introvert, or a combination of both); and demeanour. Again, Ray outlined why Madonna and I were compatible:

> As for personalities, you're both in between being extraverts and introverts. You're neither over-the-top nor quiet and insular. However, you're both a magnet for a crowd and you're always the centre of attention. Plus, your voice isn't deep and dark, so you shouldn't stick out like a sore thumb. Although, this doesn't matter as much because you'll probably be lip-syncing on the stage. Then, there's your demeanour. Well, let's just say that you couldn't be a more perfect match, 'Little Princess.' You both definitely have attitude! (recorded)

Take for instance the third stage/process of doing drag as another example, rehearsing the persona's onstage and offstage performance. While the bodily figure of Madonna dressed as Marie Antoinette was pivotal to the onstage performance, I also had to mime, embody, and repeat how Madonna socially interacted with an audience and how she actually performed "Vogue" in order to be read and rated as her. The same can be said for the offstage performance. Although I did not perform my offstage performance for my debut, I had to be able to reiterate, for

example: the accent that she adopted, which was a mixture of a west coast accent and a midwest one; the lexicon that she drew upon, which was not sophisticated or technical but ordinary; the way she physically interacted with people, which involved affectionately touching people; the demeanour that she adopted, which was calculated, business-driven, and confident; and the type of conversations that she had with people, which were egocentric and balanced with ones in which she assumed a caring role and offered motherly advice.

In this light, my methodological framing of drag reveals that although a morphological ideal was central to realness and subjectivity for the drag artists, effecting realness, being an iconic persona was not simply an issue of miming, embodying, and repeating a bodily norm. Having said this, Butler's analysis is not explicitly making the claim that a bodily norm is central to drag. Her analysis inadvertently makes this claim. As I previously discussed, Butler's analysis of drag is not a study of drag. It supports a larger argument on subjectivity. Butler is using the leverage of drag to demonstrate that dominant subject positions are the result of the miming, embodiment, and repetition of a bodily norm, and drag reveals how a bodily norm is not natural and original but *imitative*. Indeed, in attempting to be read and rated as 'the' subject of a category by miming, embodying, and repeating a morphological ideal particular to a category, the drag artists in *Paris is Burning* (1991) rearticulate that ideal as imitative. This is the main thrust behind Butler's doctrine of gender performativity, which was touched upon earlier in the chapter:

> To claim that all gender is like drag, or is drag, is to suggest that 'imitation' is at the heart of the *heterosexual* project and its gender binarisms, that drag is not a secondary imitation that presupposes a prior and original gender, but that hegemonic heterosexuality is itself a constant and repeated effort to imitate its own idealizations. . . . In this sense, then, drag is subversive to the extent that it reflects on the imitative structure by which hegemonic gender is

> itself produced and disputes heterosexuality's claim on naturalness and originality (1993, p. 125).

However, what my fieldwork on drag does suggest is that the production of dominant subject positions will not simply be a question of miming, embodying, and repeating a bodily norm. It suggests that it will also be a question of reiterating gestures, demeanours, behaviours, and language. My fieldwork also suggests that they will not be reiterated in isolation from one another. The production of a dominant subject position will be the nexus of their interplay with one another.

Although not the purpose of my ethnographic work and not necessarily that of Butler's project, what I would suggest, for further investigation, is that Butler's formulation on subjectivity be widened and deepened by turning to symbolic interactionist theory. The work of Gagnon and Simon (1967a, 1973b, 1986) and Plummer (1975, 1982) in particular would prove useful. I think that their insights on human social interaction and meaning would be useful to consider how the production of dominant sexual subject positions is the interplay of both bodily norms *and* normative gestures, demeanours, behaviours, and language. Of course, for Plummer, as I outlined in the previous chapter, the production of dominant sexual subject positions would not simply be the product of the social actor. It would reflect the dialectical relationship between 'objective, global realities' and 'micro intersubjective realities.' The task, then, would be to examine this dialectical relationship, and to consider how it forms, constitutes, and regulates dominant sexual subject positions.

# Coda

## Moving in the Direction of Disciplinary Cross-fertilisation

> Black women's position in the political economy, particularly ghettoization in domestic work, comprised another contradictory location where economic and political subordination created the conditions for Black women's resistance. . . . The result was a curious outsider-within stance, a peculiar marginality that stimulated a special Black women's perspective.
>
> —Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought* (1990, p. 12)

### The 'Outsider-within Perspective'

My relation to my fieldwork on gay male male-to-female drag was an ambivalent one. I touched on most of the following points in the previous chapter.

On the one hand, I was not a full outsider. From the very beginning and throughout the course of my fieldwork, I was methodologically immersed in it. I was in direct interaction and dialogue with interlocutors through face-to-face interviews, regular observation, and informal conversations. This level of immersion and commitment quickly proved fruitful. Within several months of being in the field, there was common knowledge of my research among drag artists, staff, and patrons (of The Embers Avenue). This resulted in me not having to solicit interviews or instigate conversations. Interlocutors approached me of their own accord, eager to share their experiences and views, as well as to voice their support for my research. This familiarity and active participation instilled a sense of belonging as a group member in both field sites, and I even developed friendships with a couple interlocutors (previous patrons) that still hold strong today. A sense of belonging was further strengthened by my participation in the field. By doing drag, I got an insider's view on how

to do good drag, real drag for the stage. Ray selflessly supported me through the different stages/processes to do drag and, along the way, he shared his top tips and secrets that were usually only known to the drag artists.

The research methods that facilitated my insiderness were unequivocally influenced and shaped by my feminist upbringing. Without totally rejecting positivist research methods, my feminist mentors at Lewis and Clark College trained me to balance them by breaking down the barrier that they erected between the researcher and the researched. That is, in a feminist spirit (for example, Cook and Fonow 1986; Harding 1987; Oakley 1981; Reinharz 1983; Smith 1987; Stanley and Wise 1983), I was trained to bring to centre stage the lived experiences of interlocutors and to challenge positivist methods that instituted and maintained a strict separation between the researcher and the researched in the name of impartiality, objectivity, and analytic rigour.[1] The view was that there was no strict separation between the 'objective' and the 'subjective' in the production of knowledge, that all knowledge was 'situated' and 'partial' (Haraway 1988), and that employing methods that actively engaged with the lived experiences of interlocutors would strengthen rather than weaken the research process and product.

Although the research methods that I employed promoted interlocutors to voluntarily participate in my fieldwork, I had to ask myself *why* they were so willing to cooperate with me. In an essay on and titled "The Politics of Feminist Research" (1982), Angela McRobbie poses (and to a certain degree answers) the same question to/for Ann Oakley (1981) and her research on women giving childbirth. McRobbie remarks:

> But what I think Oakley fails to recognise is the way as a researcher she had everything going for her. At no time does she dwell on the question of their co-operation. She doesn't concern herself with the fact that pregnant, in hospital, often cut-off from family and relatives, its no surprise that the women were delighted to find a friendly, articulate, clever and knowledgeable women to

> talk to about their experiences. Surrounded by distant and aloof doctors and over-worked nurses, their extreme involvement in the research could also be interpreted as yet another index of their powerlessness (1982, p. 57).

McRobbie brings to the surface for me my uneasiness with the relationship between me and my interlocutors, particularly the drag artists. Portland may have had some strong liberal leanings, but the drag artists in my research lived within a sexual reality dominated by the discursive terms and material conditions of heterosexism and homophobia. In order to attempt to survive the all-too-often damaging effects of heterosexism and homophobia, they had to negotiate their sexuality along the lines of gender, class, race, and ethnicity on a daily basis. This took place with a range of social actors, for example: partners, family members, friends, employers, course instructors, religious folk, and 'democratic' representatives within political domains. In the face of their powerlessness outside of The Embers Avenue and Darcelle XV, drag was a means for them to feel good about themselves and their sexuality within a supportive environment. Although drag artists indicated that they solicited me to participate in my fieldwork because they were curious about what I was up to, many times I got the impression that their willingness to share information was a means to legitimate not only their interest in drag but also their sexuality. To a certain degree, then, my research rode on the back of their powerlessness. In some instances, this may have had the effect of them disclosing information on drag and/or their lived experiences as sexual minorities that they later regretted disclosing upon reflection. Unfortunately, I will never fully know the degree to which this was the case. Having said this, their vulnerability reminded me that there could never strictly be an equal relationship between us. More importantly, it reminded me that although I was employing particular methods in order to generate 'better' data that reflected the complexities of their lives, my status as a researcher and the research process itself could potentially be exploitative. After all, as the researcher, I was the person in

charge. I had the power to devise, arrange, conduct, edit, analyse, and eventually benefit academically from the research. I had the power to appropriate and give voice to largely muted and disempowered subjects.

In order to address and level out the imbalance of power between me and my interlocutors, I negotiated (or at least attempted to negotiate) our relationship in three main respects. The overall thrust was to treat interlocutors as 'people' and not as, in the words of Kim L. V. England, "mere mines of information to be exploited by the researcher as the neutral collector of 'facts'" (1994, p. 82). In the first instance, I adopted a 'supplicant' role, shifting a lot of power over to my interlocutors. I was the one who was ignorant or lacked in-depth knowledge of drag (at least initially). My interlocutors were the ones who had greater knowledge. They were the ones who had insight into its social structures, discursive practices, performative rituals, norms, lexicon, rights of passage, different subject positions, and so on. In engaging with interlocutors, I acknowledged and exposed my lack of in-depth knowledge and emphasised my reliance on their knowledge, views, and experiences to inform my research. In the second instance, I actively involved interlocutors in the research process, enabling them to perform the role of researcher. Ray supported me to devise and revise questions for face-to-face interviews and questionnaires, and he organised some interviews with interlocutors for me. I also verified data obtained through interviews with their respective interlocutor, and interlocutors had the opportunity to edit their data, whether deleting or adding information. Lastly, there was a reciprocal relationship between me and my interlocutors. I was of the view that if interlocutors were taking time out from their often-hectic lives to support my research, then I should reciprocate. This happened in three ways. While conducting interviews or engaging in informal conversations, interlocutors were generally curious about my research and my personal biography. They asked specific questions about my personal life ('Where do you study?'; 'Where do you live?'; 'Do you have a partner?'; or 'Do you parents know you are gay?') and the motivation and objectives of my

research ('What are you studying?'; 'Why are you studying drag?'; 'Are you interested in becoming a drag artist?'; or 'What do you hope to get out of your research?'). For the most part, I answered their questions, and I got the impression that my responses were sufficient to fuel their curiosity. However, on some occasions, questions were either inappropriate ('Are you a 'top' or a 'bottom'?') or very personal ('What did your parents say when you told them that you were gay?'), and I extended the same ground rules for answering questions in interviews to me. In these instances, I politely did not respond or disclosed only partial information. I also reciprocated by supporting Ray and his drag performances. I shopped with him for costumes, make-up, and accessories, participated in his 'dry run' and dress rehearsals, and assisted in his actual performance by erecting/dismantling stage props. I further supported theme nights (for example, drag beauty pageants and 'Let's go to the Oscars' nights). When time permitted, I sold tickets, erected billposters, and helped to decorate each establishment.

On the other hand, I was not a full insider to my fieldwork, which my 'supplicant' role signals. Despite firmly planting myself within my field sites, doing the 'local thing,' and being supported and generally accepted by my interlocutors, I was not a full member of either drag culture. Drag certainly was not 'free play' at The Embers Avenue and Darcelle XV. After several 'recky' visits of my field sites, I knew or, at the very least, had a strong premonition that it was not an activity that someone could simply participate in by walking off the street directly onto the drag stage, donning a persona as and when he/she pleased. The conversations, the familiar (body) language, the larger-than-life personas, the fabulous fashion, the high-energy music, the first-class performances, and the intimate interaction between different drag artists, staff, and patrons were very suggestive. Each establishment had its very own exclusive drag culture, and, over time, I came to appreciate what this meant and entailed. I realised or experienced my marginality in three main respects throughout the course of my fieldwork.

In the first instance, my fieldwork heavily relied on the support of Ray. I was disorientated when I initially planned and devised my fieldwork prior to getting my hands dirty in the field. I did not know who my interlocutors should be, how I could best gain access to them, and what questions I should be asking. Ray gave me direction. In addition to supporting me to do drag, helping me to construct questions for interviews, and arranging some interviews, which I previously mentioned, Ray provided me with a sound knowledge base of the Portland drag scene, introduced me to some of Portland's oldest drag dearies, and enabled me to have access to those who had an influential stake in the drag scene. My research would not have been as full and rich without his 'full-insider' knowledge and experience. In the second instance, my status as a researcher had, to a certain degree, an inhibiting effect on information some interlocutors shared with me in their face-to-face interviews. Although interlocutors were generally willing to participate in my fieldwork and share information with me, some interlocutors were guarded, at least initially, about both the quality and quantity of information they shared in interviews. This observation emerged because some information shared in the interviews varied in both quality and quantity from one interlocutor to the next. Further, some information was richer in quality and greater in quantity in the anonymous postal questionnaires than in the interviews. In the third instance, my participation in the field hit home hard that I really was not a drag artist. Although my debut drag performance was generally well-received by both drag artists and patrons, some resident drag artists who regularly performed on stage at The Embers Avenue reminded me that I was a researcher and not a drag artist. Carla Jane summarised their view:

JM: Did you see my performance of Madonna down at The Embers the other night, with me voguing up and down the stage?

CJ: Yes I did, girl. I was with the other regular girls.

JM: What did you think? Be honest.

CJ: Well, I couldn't fault your costume and makeup. Your performance was spot-on. The entrance, your voguing, the lip-syncing, the music, the backdrop, the exit all worked well together. The crowd seemed to really get into it. Sometimes it's hard to get them going. Everything seemed to go smoothly. It all connected, but [hesitation] I don't know. Who am I to know? What does anyone know? [pause]

JM: Go on, tell me what you really thought. I won't take offence.

CJ: Are you sure?

JM: Go on.

CJ: Don't take offence, but who gave you permission to go up on stage like that? You jumped the queue, girl. It takes years of experience to become a drag artiste, and you've got to earn the respect of the regular girls. We all know that Ray helped you, so don't get hot-headed and think you're one of us. We see you as a researcher first. (recorded)

Taken together, then, I was neither a full outsider nor a full insider to my fieldwork. I did not have a full sense of belonging in some totalising way. Did I lament this ambivalence, this precarious relation to my fieldwork? Did it prove to be a stumbling-block? I think Patricia Hill Collins' (1990) thoughts on the 'outsider-within perspective' are useful at this juncture. They are useful for reflecting on: (1) my position as a fieldworker, a position shared by other who may put as much emphasis on *participation* as on observation in the positivist sense and (2) the relation between queer theory and sociology and my movements around/between them.

For Collins, Black (read: African-American) women's position in the wider political economy, which she understands to be largely the product of White patriarchy, is unstable and ambivalent (1990, pp. 10-13). On the one hand, the wider political economy institutes and maintains Black women's subordination. On the other hand, it is a catalyst for the formation of a 'Black women's culture of resistance.' Collins maintains that

this culture is grounded within traditional African(-American) culture and constitutes a unique perspective, which she terms the 'outsider-within perspective.'

According to Collins, before World War II in the United States, the ghettoisation of Blacks by first slavery and then segregation on both sides of the North-South divide acted as a contradictory location for the emergence of a Black women's culture of resistance (1990, pp. 10-11). Although the main aim of ghettoising Blacks was political and economic control and exploitation, their confinement as a separate and distinct community also enabled them to craft and express an independent and alternative worldview. For Collins, a 'worldview' broadly designates a framework that a culture "uses to order and evaluate its own experiences" (1990, p. 10). Collins maintains that African-Americans' worldview is based in traditional West African culture:

> By retaining significant elements of West African culture, communities of enslaved Africans offered their members alternative explanations for slavery than those advanced by slaveowners. . . . Confining African-Americans to all-Black areas in the rural South and northern urban ghettos fostered the continuation of certain dimensions of this Afrocentric worldview (1990, p. 10).

According to Collins, Black women were integral to maintaining and transforming an Afrocentric worldview. From a number of identity positions (for example, mother, othermother, teacher, and sister), Black women drew upon an Afrocentric worldview to develop formulations on Black womanhood. What emerged was an Afrocentric women's culture of resistance. Collins writes:

> Within African-American extended families and communities, Black women fashioned an independent standpoint about the meaning of Black womanhood. These self-definitions enabled Black women to use African-derived conceptions of self and community to resist negative evaluations of Black womanhood

> advanced by dominant groups. In all, Black women's grounding in traditional African-American culture fostered the development of a distinctive Afrocentric women's culture (1990, p.11).

Black women's marginality through their ghettoisation in paid domestic work marks another contradictory location for Collins (1990, p. 11). Like the general ghettoisation of Blacks, their ghettoisation did not simply institute and maintain political and economic subordination by White patriarchy. It also fostered the conditions for a Black women's culture of resistance. Collins maintains that paid domestic work enabled African-American women to view White elites (both 'actual' and 'aspiring') from perspectives that were illegible or unknown to Black men and White elites themselves. According to Collins, through their work, Black women did not simply perform domestic duties for their White families. They also formed strong connections with their employers and their children. This relation to their work was an ambivalent one. Collins writes:

> On one level this insider relationship was satisfying to all concerned. Accounts of Black domestic workers stress the sense of self-affirmation the women experienced at seeing [W]hite power demystified. But on another level these Black women knew that they could never belong to their [W]hite 'families,' that they were economically exploited workers and thus would remain outsiders (1990, p. 11).

Collins maintains that their relation to their work as neither full insiders nor full outsiders resulted in generating a distinctive angle of vision, which she terms the 'outsider-within perspective.'

Collins proposes that Black women's outsider-within perspective and grounding within traditional African(-American) culture "provide the material backdrop for a unique Black women's standpoint on self and society" (1990, p. 11). Collins provides an example for the reader (1990, pp. 11-12). She turns to an observation made by Nancy White (a Black domestic labourer and inner-city resident) on a contradiction between the actions and ideologies of a dominant group. White remarks:

> Now, I understand all these things from living. But you can't lay up on these flowery beds of ease and think that you are running your life, too. Some women, [W]hite women, can run their husband's lives for a while, but most of them have to . . . see what he tells them there is to see. If he tells them that they ain't seeing what they know they *are* seeing, then they have to just go on like it wasn't there (quoted in Collins 1990, p. 11, italics included in original)!

For Collins, White's observation not only illustrates the suppression of a knowledge of a subordinate group by a dominant one but also highlights how White's position as an outsider-within generated a distinctive perspective on this process. According to Collins, White's Blackness did not allow her to be a full insider to the dominant group. It ensured that she was an outsider. As Collins correctly points out, "[s]he can never be a [W]hite middle-class woman lying on a 'flowery bed of ease'" (1990, p. 12). However, she was not a complete outsider. Her domestic work gave her access to the dominant group and enabled her to formulate "an insider's view of some of the contradictions between [W]hite women thinking that they are running their lives and the actual source of power and authority in [W]hite patriarchal households" (Collins 1990, p. 12). According to Collins (1990, p. 12), African-American women have generally questioned the contradictions between White patriarchy's ideologies of womanhood and Black women's status: "If women are allegedly passive and fragile, then why are Black women treated as 'mules' and assigned heavy cleaning chores?" However, she acknowledges that the distinctive perspective generated by being a 'devalued worker' can result in internalising oppression. African(-American) and Black women's culture then become critical re(sources), and indeed have, for alternative explanations.

In line with Collins' thoughts on Black women's contradictory location in paid domestic work, my ambivalent relation to my fieldwork as neither a full outsider nor a full insider did not prove to be a stumbling-block to my research. It had quite the opposite effect. I alluded to this in the previous

chapter on my discussion about my participation in the field by doing drag. It enabled me to generate an outsider-within perspective, that is, a distinctive angle of vision. It is distinctive insofar as I was able to view drag from a perspective that was largely obscured from those who were either external to or thoroughly entrenched within it. An example readily comes to mind.[2]

After I went through the different stages/processes to do drag, I made some observational notes on the subjects the drag artists were miming:

> Doing drag definitely confirmed to me that I'm not cut out for it. I found it thoroughly exhausting, and I've found it very difficult to shake off this cold ever since I went through the different stages and processes to do it. But it has confirmed something else for me, something I think that even the regular girls don't think about or haven't thought about, unless of course you probe them further. Those who do drag might think they're miming Marilyn or Ms. Ross or Elizabeth Taylor, but, in effect, they are also miming a number of normative drag subject positions: the fairy, the drag queen, the grand empress, and so on. Each one has its own set of prescriptions and conventions, and the stages/processes I went through to do good drag, real drag outlined those of the drag queen. Of course, I violated some of the prescriptions and conventions of the drag queen subject position. As one of the regulars told me, I skipped the queue. I didn't go through the different rites of passages to do the drag I was doing, and a drag queen certainly wouldn't have relied on the help of another person to do drag, like I did with Ray. These kinds of prescriptions/conventions are always there, that is, they underlie performances, but they're never really spoken about explicitly. They're mainly unspoken, as well as the drag subject positions that they make up (Wednesday, 15 May 1996).

As I previously iterated, my status as a researcher did not allow me full membership of either drag culture. It ensured that I was an outsider. My

observations reflect this outsiderness: "Doing drag definitely confirmed to me that I'm not cut out for it. . . . I didn't go through the different rites of passages to do the drag I was doing, and a drag queen certainly wouldn't have relied on the help of another person to do drag, like I did with Ray." However, I was not a complete outsider. Doing drag gave access to The Embers Avenue's drag culture, and it enabled me to formulate a distinctive insider's view for which the drag artists had no explicit realisation: "[I]t [drag] has confirmed something else for me, something I think that even the regular girls don't think about or haven't thought about. . . . Those who do drag might think they're miming Marilyn or Ms. Ross or Elizabeth Taylor, but, in effect, they are also miming a number of normative drag subject positions: the fairy, the drag queen, the grand empress, and so on."

## The 'Outsider-within Perspective' as a Way Forward

I propose that Collins' (1990) notion of the 'outsider-within perspective' serve as a basis for future conversations and work between queer theory and sociology. What this essentially entails is both queer theory and sociology facilitating and promoting queer and sociological perspectives that are neither full outsiders nor full insiders to their disciplinary domain. These are perspectives whose precarious disciplinary location enables them to view a subject/object of study from an angle that would largely be obscured from perspectives that were thoroughly entrenched within either queer theory or sociology. It is my strong belief that it would make conditions ripe for good, productive disciplinary cross-fertilisation and the generation of new perspectives.

To a large degree, it is from and through this perspective that I examined, problematised, and reworked the unproductive relationship between queer theory and sociology throughout the thesis. In the first two chapters, from a queer perspective, I considered the failure of social critiques of queer theory to read the multidisciplinary project carefully and critically by conflating it primarily with one queer thinker or a number of

misinterpreted theoretical formulations. In the following two chapters, from a sociological perspective, I considered queer theory's failure to acknowledge and actively engage with sociology both theoretically and methodologically. Taken these chapters together, I was neither a full outsider nor a full insider to either disciplinary location. Rather, I was an outsider-within. This enabled me to generate a distinctive perspective on the current relationship between queer theory and sociology and to begin to move them in the direction of disciplinary cross-fertilisation. To a certain degree, this did occur, particularly in the third and fourth chapters. In Chapter Three, I created a theoretical discursive space within which both queer theory and sociology could simultaneously inhabit and productively converse so that I could highlight similarities and reconsider some shortcomings. In Chapter Four, I created a discursive space within which I integrated both queer and sociological methodological approaches in order to demonstrate how the broadening and deepening of a methodological approach could lead to a more developed social analysis of a subject/object of study.

In proposing that an outsider-within perspective serve as a basis for moving forward, I am not suggesting that queer theory and sociology abandon perspectives that are thoroughly entrenched within their own disciplinary location. Similarly, I am not suggesting that queer theorists and sociologists abandon their own disciplinary location and become thoroughly versed in the other. Queer and sociological perspectives that are well-embedded within their own disciplinary location have their own distinctive perspective, and they are much-needed in order to bring different angles of vision to the discussion table. I do however take issue with them when they sideline alternative perspectives and erect disciplinary walls and boundaries, stalling movement towards some good, productive disciplinary cross-fertilisation. Current engagement (or lack of engagement) between queer theory and sociology needs to be balanced with outsider-within perspectives. This cannot and should not take place within the margins. They need to be central to engagement. If they do not

become central, then queer theory's and sociology's current relationship will remain an unproductive one, a question of deciding either for or against queer theory, for or against sociology. I therefore present this as a challenge to queer theory and sociology.

# Appendices

## Appendix A: Interlocutors

**Table One. Interlocutors who formally participated in fieldwork by establishemt and sex (1)**

| Establishment/Interlocutors | Number | Sex (4) | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | Male | Female |
| **The Embers Avenue** | | | |
| Male-to-female resident drag artists (2) | 9 | 9 | 0 |
| Female-to-male resident drag artists (2) | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Interlocutors who did male-to-female drag on stage in 'open-ended' slot | 3 | 3 | 0 |
| Interlocutors who did female-to-male drag on stage in 'open-ended' slot | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Interlocutors who appeared in male-to-female drag but did not perform on stage | 2 | 2 | 0 |
| Interlocutors who appeared in female-to-male drag but did not perform on stage | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Owner/manager | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| Managerial staff | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| Staff (3) | 4 | 4 | 0 |
| General patrons | 14 | 9 | 5 |
| **Total** | 37 | 29 | 8 |
| **as percentage of total number** | | 78.4% | 21.6% |
| **Darcelle XV** | | | |
| Male-to-female resident drag artists | 6 | 6 | 0 |
| Owner/manager | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| Managerial staff | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| Staff (3) | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| **Total** | 11 | 10 | 1 |
| **as percentage of total number** | | 90.9% | 9.1% |
| **Total** | 48 | 39 | 9 |
| **as percentage of total number** | | 81.3% | 18.8% |

Notes

(1) Data presented is as at 15 June 1997.

(2) Resident drag artists usually performed at least once a week.

(3) Staff included bar staff, door people, sound and light technicians, and cooks.

(4) 'Sex' designates legally-registered sex status at birth.

**Table Two. Interlocutors who formally participated in fieldwork by establishemt and sexual identity (1)**

| Establishment/Interlocutors | Number | Sexual identity (4) | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | G | L | B | T (5) | H |
| **The Embers Avenue** | | | | | | |
| Male-to-female resident drag artists (2) | 9 | 9 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Female-to-male resident drag artists (2) | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Interlocutors who did male-to-female drag on stage in 'open-ended' slot | 3 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Interlocutors who did female-to-male drag on stage in 'open-ended' slot | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Interlocutors who appeared in male-to-female drag but did not perform on stage | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 |
| Interlocutors who appeared in female-to-male drag but did not perform on stage | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Owner/manager | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Managerial staff | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Staff (3) | 4 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| General patrons | 14 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 2 |
| **Total** | 37 | 20 | 6 | 3 | 6 | 3 |
| **as percentage of total number** | | 54.1% | 13.5% | 8.1% | 16.2% | 8.1% |
| **Darcelle XV** | | | | | | |
| Male-to-female resident drag artists | 6 | 6 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Owner/manager | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Managerial staff | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Staff (3) | 3 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| **Total** | 11 | 9 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| **as percentage of total number** | | 81.8% | 9.1% | 9.1% | 0.0% | 0.0% |
| **Total** | 48 | 29 | 6 | 4 | 6 | 3 |
| **as percentage of total number** | | 60.4% | 12.5% | 8.3% | 12.5% | 6.3% |

Notes

(1) Data presented is as at 15 June 1997.

(2) Resident drag artists usually performed at least once a week.

(3) Staff included bar staff, door people, sound and light technicians, and cooks.

(4) 'Sexual identity' designates the sexuality interlocutors identified as: gay male (G), lesbian (L), bisexual (B), transgender (T), or heterosexual (H)

(5) 'Transgender' includes transgenders, pre-operative transsexuals, and post-operative transsexuals.

**Table Three. Interlocutors who formally participated in fieldwork by establishemt and age band (1)**

| Establishment/Interlocutors | Number | Age band | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | 21-29 | 30-39 | 40-49 | 50-59 | 60+ |
| **The Embers Avenue** | | | | | | |
| Male-to-female resident drag artists (2) | 9 | 0 | 4 | 5 | 0 | 0 |
| Female-to-male resident drag artists (2) | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Interlocutors who did male-to-female drag on stage in 'open-ended' slot | 3 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Interlocutors who did female-to-male drag on stage in 'open-ended' slot | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Interlocutors who appeared in male-to-female drag but did not perform on stage | 2 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Interlocutors who appeared in female-to-male drag but did not perform on stage | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Owner/manager | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Managerial staff | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Staff (3) | 4 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| General patrons | 14 | 5 | 3 | 4 | 2 | 0 |
| **Total** | 37 | 8 | 16 | 12 | 2 | 0 |
| **as percentage of total number** | | 21.6% | 40.5% | 32.4% | 5.4% | 0.0% |
| **Darcelle XV** | | | | | | |
| Male-to-female resident drag artists | 6 | 0 | 3 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| Owner/manager | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Managerial staff | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Staff (3) | 3 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| **Total** | 11 | 0 | 5 | 5 | 0 | 1 |
| **as percentage of total number** | | 0.0% | 45.5% | 45.5% | 0.0% | 9.1% |
| **Total** | 48 | 8 | 20 | 17 | 2 | 1 |
| **as percentage of total number** | | 16.7% | 41.7% | 35.4% | 4.2% | 2.1% |

Notes

(1) Data presented is as at 15 June 1997.

(2) Resident drag artists usually performed at least once a week.

(3) Staff included bar staff, door people, sound and light technicians, and cooks.

**Table Four. Interlocutors who formally participated in fieldwork by establishemt and race/ethnicity (1)**

| Establishment/Interlocutors | Number | Race/Ethnicity | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | White | African-American | Chicano |
| **The Embers Avenue** | | | | |
| Male-to-female resident drag artists (2) | 9 | 7 | 1 | 1 |
| Female-to-male resident drag artists (2) | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Interlocutors who did male-to-female drag on stage in 'open-ended' slot | 3 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| Interlocutors who did female-to-male drag on stage in 'open-ended' slot | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Interlocutors who appeared in male-to-female drag but did not perform on stage | 2 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| Interlocutors who appeared in female-to-male drag but did not perform on stage | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Owner/manager | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Managerial staff | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Staff (3) | 4 | 4 | 0 | 0 |
| General patrons | 14 | 14 | 0 | 0 |
| **Total** | 37 | 36 | 1 | 1 |
| **as percentage of total number** | | 94.6% | 2.7% | 2.7% |
| **Darcelle XV** | | | | |
| Male-to-female resident drag artists | 6 | 5 | 1 | 0 |
| Owner/manager | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Managerial staff | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Staff (3) | 3 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| **Total** | 11 | 10 | 1 | 0 |
| **as percentage of total number** | | 90.9% | 9.1% | 0.0% |
| **Total** | 48 | 46 | 2 | 1 |
| **as percentage of total number** | | 93.8% | 4.2% | 2.1% |

Notes

(1) Data presented is as at 15 June 1997.

(2) Resident drag artists usually performed at least once a week.

(3) Staff included bar staff, door people, sound and light technicians, and cooks.

## Appendix B: Face-to-face Interview Questions

### General Questions

1. What is your date of birth?

2. What is your sex on your birth certificate?
   - Male
   - Female

3. What sexuality do you identify with?
   - Gay
   - Lesbian
   - Bisexual
   - Transgender
   - Pre-operative transsexual
   - Post-operative transsexual
   - Heterosexual
   - Other (please specify)
   - I wish not to disclose my sexuality

4. What is your race/ethnicity?
   White
   African-American
   Chicano
   Mixed
   Other (please specify)

5. Which establishment are you mainly associated with?
   The Embers Avenue
   Darcelle XV

6. Which category best describes you?
   Male-to-female drag artist who regularly performs on stage (usually at least once a week)
   Female-to-male drag artist who regularly performs on stage (usually at least once a week)
   Do male-to-female drag on stage in an 'open-ended' slot
   Do female-to-male drag on stage in an 'open-ended' slot
   Appear in male-to-female drag but do not perform on stage
   Appear in female-to-male drag but do not perform on sage
   Owner/manager
   Managerial staff
   Staff
   General patron

**Questions for interlocutors who performed drag on stage**

1. How long have you done drag, whether for performance (for the stage) or non-performance (not for the stage)?

2. How long have you done drag for performance?

3. What type of drag have you performed? (e.g., singing, dancing, or comedy)

4. Who have you impersonated/performed as?

5. What kind of costumes/dresses have you worn on stage while impersonating/performing as someone? Please describe some of them.

6. What do you think patrons expect when they come to see a drag show at The Embers Avenue/Darcelle XV?

7. Currently, how often do you usually perform on stage per week?

8. Who do you currently perform on stage as?

9. Please run me through the processes you go through to do drag, from selecting who you want to be/perform as to the actual performance?

10. Where do you shop for your costumes/dresses, including accessories, stage props, etc.?

11. How much do you normally spend on a new performance, including the costume/dress, accessories, stage props, etc.?

12. Have you been enrolled in any further/higher education, including night classes? Please explain.

13. What qualifications did you obtain?

14. How long have you had experience of using your knowledge and skills to create costumes/dresses for drag?

**Questions for interlocutors who appeared in drag at The Embers Avenue but did not perform on stage**

1. How long have you done drag for non-performance (not for the stage)?

2. Currently, how often do you go to The Embers Avenue in drag per week?

3. Please describe the drag that you do.

4. Have you ever impersonated a particular person? Please explain.

5. What kind of costumes/dresses have you worn when you have done drag? Please describe some of them.

6. How often do you appear differently in drag at The Embers Avenue?

7. Have you ever performed drag on stage? Please explain.

8. Do you have intentions to perform drag on stage on a regular basis in the future?

9. Please describe the drag that people do at The Embers Avenue for non-performance.

10. Please describe the drag that people do at The Embers Avenue for performance (for the stage).

11. What do you think patrons expect when they come to see a drag show at The Embers Avenue?

12. Please run me through the processes you go through to do drag, from deciding how you want to do drag to actually turning up at The Embers Avenue in drag.

13. Where do you shop for your costumes/dresses, including accessories?

14. How much do you normally spend on a costume/dress, including accessories?

**Questions for owners/managers, assistant managers, and staff**

1. When did your establishment open to trading?

2. What does your establishment market itself as?

3. Who does your establishment primarily cater to?

4. What is the capacity of your establishment?

5. What is the admission fee to your establishment?

6. Please describe the drag that people do at your establishment for performance (for the stage).

7. Who has been impersonated/performed on stage at your establishment?

8. What songs have been performed on stage at your establishment?

9. What productions have been performed on stage at your establishment? (e.g., musicals)

10. Do drag artists generally perform solo, jointly, or a combination of both?

11. Are the drag artists who regularly perform on stage employees of your establishment? (i.e., those who usually perform at least once a week)

12. Does your establishment provide support for the drag artists who regularly perform on stage? (e.g., costume allowance, facilities for costume changes, rehearsals)

13. Please describe the drag that people do at your establishment for non-performance (not for the stage). [A question for the owner/manager, assistant manager, and staff at The Embers Avenue.]

14. What special events and/or theme nights does your establishment showcase? They can relate to drag or otherwise.

15. Have you been involved in Portland's drag scene in any way, whether at your establishment or elsewhere? Please explain your involvement.

**Questions for general patrons (The Embers Avenue)**

1. When did you start patronising The Embers Avenue?

2. On average, during the past three months, how often did you patronise The Embers Avenue per week?

3. During the past three months, what days of the week did you tend to patronise The Embers Avenue?

4. Do you generally patronise The Embers Avenue by yourself or with friends? Please explain.

5. When you patronise The Embers Avenue, how do you usually spend your time there?

6.On average, during the past three months, how often did you watch the drag acts that are showcased at The Embers Avenue per week?

7. Please describe the drag that people do at The Embers Avenue for performance (for the stage).

8. Please describe the drag that people do at The Embers Avenue for non-performance (not for the stage).

9. Do you 'tip' the drag artists who perform at The Embers Avenue, either with money or drinks? Please explain.

10. Have you patronised or participated in any special events and/or theme nights that The Embers Avenue showcases? They can relate to drag or otherwise. Please explain.

11. Have you been involved in Portland's drag scene in any way, whether at The Embers Avenue or elsewhere? Please explain your involvement.

## Appendix C: Postal Questionnaire Questions

**General Questions**

1. What is your date of birth?

2. What is your sex on your birth certificate?
   Male
   Female

3. What sexuality do you identify with?
   Gay
   Lesbian
   Bisexual
   Transgender
   Pre-operative transsexual
   Post-operative transsexual
   Heterosexual
   Other (please specify)
   I wish not to disclose my sexuality

4. What is your race/ethnicity?
   White
   African-American
   Chicano
   Mixed
   Other (please specify)

5. Which establishment are you mainly associated with?
   The Embers Avenue
   Darcelle XV

6. Which category best describes you?
   Male-to-female drag artist who regularly performs on stage
      (usually at least once a week)
   Female-to-male drag artist who regularly performs on stage
      (usually at least once a week)
   Male-to-female drag artist who performs on stage in 'open-ended' slot
   Female-to-male drag artist who performs on stage in 'open-ended' slot
   Do male-to-female drag on stage in an 'open-ended' slot
   Do female-to-male drag on stage in an 'open-ended' slot
   Owner/manager
   Managerial staff
   Staff
   General patron

**Questions for interlocutors who performed drag on stage**

1. Why do you do drag?

2. How long have you been involved in any way in the Portland drag scene? Please explain your involvement.

3. Have you participated in any special events and/or theme nights that The Embers Avenue/Darcelle XV showcases? They can relate to drag or otherwise. Please explain your participation.

4. What type of drag do you prefer to perform? It can be singing, dancing, magic, or comedy for example. Please explain why.

5. Who/what is your favourite impersonation/performance you have performed? Please explain why.

6. Other than your own, what specific drag acts that have been performed at The Embers Avenue/Darcelle XV have been your favourite? Please explain why.

7. How have your knowledge base and skills set helped you to do drag, which could have been honed through further/higher education or night classes?

8. How long have you been sewing your own dresses/costumes?

9. Do drag artists support each other in any way? Please explain. (e.g., sharing trade secrets or helping to make costumes)

10. What do you think makes good drag?

11. What do you think makes bad drag?

12. What are your five top tips, trade secrets for doing drag? Please explain.

13. Do you socialise with people who perform drag at The Embers Avenue/Darcelle XV in between your performances? Please explain.

14. Do you socialise with people who appear in drag at The Embers Avenue but do not perform? Please explain. [A question for interlocutors who performed drag on stage at The Embers Avenue.]

15. What similarities do you think exist between people who perform drag on stage and people who appear in drag but do not perform on stage?

16. What differences do you think exist between people who perform drag on stage and people who appear in drag but do not perform on stage?

**Questions for interlocutors who appeared in drag at The Embers Avenue but did not perform on stage**

1. Why do you do drag?

2. How long have you been involved in any way in the Portland drag scene? Please explain your involvement.

3. Have you participated in any special events and/or theme nights that The Embers Avenue showcases? They can relate to drag or otherwise. Please explain your participation.

4. What is your favourite drag that you have done? It can be a particular person or a specific costume/dress for example.

5. Other than your own drag, what other drag for non-performance (not for the stage) at The Embers Avenue has been your favourite? Please explain why.

6. What specific drag acts that have been performed on stage at The Embers Avenue have been your favourite? Please explain why.

7. Do people who do drag for non-performance (not for the stage) support each other in any way? Please explain. (e.g., shopping for costumes/dresses or sharing make-up tips)

8. What do you think makes good drag?

9. What do you think makes bad drag?

10. While you are in drag, do you socialise with people who perform drag on stage at The Embers Avenue? Please explain.

11. While you are in drag, do you socialise with people who appear in drag at The Embers Avenue but do not perform? Please explain.

12. What similarities do you think exist between people who perform drag on stage and people who appear in drag but do not perform on stage?

13. What differences do you think exist between people who perform drag on stage and people who appear in drag but do not perform on stage?

**Questions for owners/managers, assistant managers, and staff**

1. Who staffs your establishment? (generic occupations and number of staff per occupation)

2. How many drag artists currently perform on stage on a regular basis (i.e., usually at least once a week) at your establishment? Please exclude 'open-ended' slot performances.

3. Approximately how many people appear in drag at your establishment during the weekend (i.e., Friday, Saturday, and Sunday) but do not perform on stage?

4. Please give rough estimates of the proportion (in %) of drag artists who regularly perform on stage according to their sexual identity, age, and race/ethnicity. Please exclude 'open-ended' slot performances.

| Sexual identity | |
|---|---|
| Gay | % |
| Lesbian | % |
| Bisexual | % |
| Transgender (incl. pre-/post-op transsexuals) | % |
| Heterosexual | % |
| Total | 100% |

| Age | |
|---|---|
| 21-29 | % |
| 30-39 | % |
| 40-49 | % |
| 50-59 | % |
| 60+ | % |
| Total | 100% |

| Race/ethnicity | |
|---|---|
| White | % |
| African-American | % |
| Chicano | % |
| Mixed | % |
| Other (please specify) | % |
| Total | 100% |

5. Please give rough estimates of the proportion (in %) of patrons who patronise your establishment according to their sexual identity, age, and race/ethnicity.

| Sexual identity | |
|---|---|
| Gay, lesbian, or bisexual | % |
| Transgender (incl. pre-/post-op transsexuals) | % |
| Heterosexual | % |
| Total | 100% |

Age
21-29 %
30-39 %
40-49 %
50-59 %
60+ %
Total 100%

Race/ethnicity
White %
African-American %
Chicano %
Mixed %
Other (please specify) %
Total 100%

6. Please give rough estimates of the proportion (in %) of staff according to their sexual identity, age, and race/ethnicity.

Sexual identity
Gay %
Lesbian %
Bisexual %
Transgender (incl. pre-/post-op transsexuals) %
Heterosexual %
Total 100%

Age
21-29 %
30-39 %
40-49 %
50-59 %
60+ %
Total 100%

Race/ethnicity
White %
African-American %
Chicano %
Mixed %
Other (please specify) %
Total 100%

7. What type of drag that is performed on stage at your establishment do you prefer? It can be singing, dancing, magic, or comedy for example. Please explain why.

8. What specific drag acts that are performed on stage at your establishment are your favourite? Please explain why.

9. What do you think makes good drag?

10. What do you think makes bad drag?

11. What similarities do you think exist between people who perform drag on stage and people who appear in drag but do not perform on stage?

12. What differences do you think exist between people who perform drag on stage and people who appear in drag but do not perform on stage?

**Questions for general patrons (The Embers Avenue)**

1. What type of drag that is performed on stage at The Embers Avenue do you prefer? It can be singing, dancing, magic, or comedy for example. Please explain why.

2. What specific drag acts that are performed on stage at The Embers Avenue are you favourite? Please explain why.

3. When you go to see a drag act at The Embers Avenue, what do you expect?

4. While you are patronising The Embers Avenue, do you socialise with people who perform drag on stage? Please explain.

5. While you are patronising The Embers Avenue, do you socialise with people who appear in drag but do not perform on stage? Please explain.

6. What do you think makes good drag?

7. What do you think makes bad drag?

8. What similarities do you think exist between people who perform drag on stage and people who appear in drag but do not perform on stage?

9. What differences do you think exist between people who perform drag on stage and people who appear in drag but do not perform on stage?

10. Have you ever done drag yourself? Please explain your experience.

# Endnotes

## Introduction

1 For example, Diane suggested that I supplement the earlier work of those who had dipped their toes (or feet) in the labeling approach, symbolic interactionist theory, and social-historical constructionism (for example, Altman 1971, 1982; D'Emilio 1983; Duberman *et al.* 1989; Epstein 1987; Gagnon and Simon 1967b, 1970, 1973b, 1986; Murray 1984; Plummer 1975, 1981b; Stein 1992; Weeks 1977) with the work of Judith Butler (1990, 1991, 1993); Ed Cohen (1991); Teresa de Lauretis (1991a, 1991b); Diana Fuss (1989, 1991b, 1991c); and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (1990).

2 Please see Endnote 1 for citations on work by White gay male historiographers and sociologists and queer theorists.

3 The following sources provide a good historical overview of the emergence and development of queer theory and social perspectives on sexuality: Steven Epstein's "A Queer Encounter" (1994), Peter M. Nardi's and Beth E. Schneider's edited anthology *Social Perspectives in Lesbian and Gay Studies* (1998), Kenneth Plummer's introduction to his edited anthology *Modern Homosexualities* (1992), and Steven Seidman's introduction to his edited anthology *Queer Theory/Sociology* (1996a).

4 These titles are borrowed from Butler's essay "For a More Careful Reading" (1995).

## Chapter One

1 I am not suggesting that the conflations that I examine in this chapter and the next one are unique to criticisms of queer theory. It is my

opinion that the conflation of a thinker or a theoretical formulation with a disciplinary location is a general failure of criticism. This has taken place in criticisms of Marxism, feminist theory, psychoanalysis, postmodernism, and poststructuralism. I also believe that such conflations are usually symptomatic of a general (unstated) hostility to the particular disciplinary location that is being critiqued.

[2] Judging by the subject matter of Namaste's essay, 'transgender subjectivity' includes drag artists, pre-/post-operative transsexuals, transgenders, and transvestites.

[3] It is important to note that Butler would disagree with Namaste's characterisation of her argument. As I explain in Chapter Four, Section I, Sub-section i, Butler does not suggest that transgender subjectivity is always transgressive.

[4] For the most part, I do not disagree with Namaste's criticisms of Butler. As it will soon become clear, my issue with her criticisms is the way in which they are understood as representative of queer theory.

[5] Goldman's critique is resonant of criticisms made by Black feminists/feminists of colour of 'White' or 'Imperial' feminism in the early 1980s. They broadly contended that feminist frameworks were generally products of their Western Whiteness and either ignored questions of race and ethnicity or treated them as an afterthought. This had the effect of perpetuating racial bias and ethnocentricity. Please consult the specially-edited issue of the journal *Feminist Review*, "Many Voices, One Chant" (Amos *et al.* 1984), for these criticisms. Further, Goldman's argument that the examination of race should be the responsibility of all queer theorists is resonant of arguments between Michèle Barrett and Mary McIntosh and Kum-Kum Bhavnani and Margaret Coulson in sociological discourse (Littlewood 2004, pp. 83-87). Although Barrett and McIntosh reviewed some of

their work on the family in light of criticisms made by Black feminists/feminists of colour, they understood questions of race and ethnicity to be the predominant responsibility of Black feminists/feminists of colour and not White Western feminists (an 'add women' approach). In addition, their struggles against racism and ethnocentrism were understood largely as external to feminism. On the other hand, Bhavnani and Coulson, in reviewing Barrett's and McIntosh's own review of their work, believed that all feminists were responsible for examining questions of race and ethnicity. This would make race and ethnicity more central to feminism and transform feminism from within.

6 Unfortunately, Butler does not make any particular references.

7 Please see Endnote 6.

8 Please refer to Introduction, page 5 for citations of work by lesbians and gay men of colour. I am not suggesting that they fall under the disciplinary heading of 'queer theory' or that their authors consider(ed) themselves queer theorists. Their perspectives on sexuality in relation to race, ethnicity, and nationality predated and informed the emergence and development of queer theory.

9 Abelove, Barale, and Halperin and Butler make reference to and loosely interchange the terms lesbian and gay studies, queer studies, and queer theory. Since they are queer theory contemporaries, we can construe lesbian and gay studies and queer studies as queer theory.

10 Please see Endnote 6.

11 Please see Endnote 6.

[12] Please see Endnote 6.

[13] As I will discuss in Chapter Three, Sedgwick's analytic separation of gender and sexuality is a departure from her earlier project *Between Men* (1985). *Between Men* (1985) is an integration of gender- and sexuality-centred terms of analysis. Sedgwick later returns to an integrated analysis in *Tendencies* (1993b).

[14] Please see Endnote 6.

## Chapter Two

[1] *Vertretung* refers to proxies who claim to fully know and represent a perceived homogenous constituency. Gayatri Spivak contends that "the choice of and the need for 'heroes,' paternal proxies, agents of power—*Vertretung*" cannot sustain a critical project of representation and interpretation (1988, p. 279). The proxy and his/her authoritative position are undermined and dislodged once there is an absence or incoherence of any stable and/or unified constituency.

[2] This characterisation of queer theory conflates Foucault's use of discourse analysis with text linguistics rooted in the Russian formalist school of linguistics (Lemon and Reis 1965) and its various appropriations within quarters of French structuralism (for example, Barthes 1968; Lévi-Strauss 1966, 1969; Saussure 1959), whereby 'discourse' is generally understood as a grammatical or linguistic system in relation to representation and meaning construction. Foucault, though, distances himself from these understandings of discourse. For Foucault, discourse is constitutive of the material practices of subjects, articulating the possibilities by and through which subjects become intelligible, that is, how subjects come to be. Foucault elaborates on this in his earlier work (1965, 1970, 1972, 1973).

[3] Please refer to Introduction, Endnote 1 for citations of work by White gay male historiographers and sociologists.

[4] Please see Chapter One, Endnote 13.

[5] Feminists within cultural studies, particularly Angela McRobbie and bell hooks, have also critiqued the 'subject' and its relation to identity politics, particularly feminist politics (Littlewood 2004, pp. 142-45). In a similar fashion, they have questioned the necessity of a stable and unified subject serving as a basis for identity politics. They too understand identity as normative and exclusionary and argue that any exclusions that result from the consolidation of identity should be central to identity politics. However, their critiques are further developed than those of queer theory insofar as they give them a material location. Both McRobbie and hooks ask where alternative, provisional identities might be formed, and they both suggest 'popular culture.' As only one example, McRobbie locates them in 'girlie' culture and young women's magazines and hooks locates them in Black rap.

[6] Please refer to Introduction, page 5 for citations of work by lesbians and gay men of colour.

**Chapter Three**

[1] Sedgwick does not explicitly define 'antihomophobic terms of analysis.' She only gestures that they are a set of terms for primarily, if not exclusively, analysing sexuality. However, her simplistic and elusive usage of the broad heading raises more questions than it answers: what differentiates antihomophobic terms of analysis from homophobic ones? cannot homophobic terms circulate within antihomophobic terms of analysis? to what degree must a set of terms for analysing

sexuality be exclusive to sexuality in order for it to be considered antihomophobic? furthermore, who will decide this and how?

[2] Some of the following points that I make are indebted to Judith Butler's "Contingent Foundations" (1992 [1991]), which was outlined in Chapter One.

[3] Edward Stein's edited anthology *Forms of Desire* (1992) is a good cross-section of social-historical constructionism.

[4] The principal preoccupation of *Between Men* (1985) is to examine the contingency between men's same-sex bonds and male-female bonds within nineteenth-century English literature: "*Between Men* [1985] focused on the oppressive effects on women and men of a cultural system in which male-male desire became widely intelligible primarily by being routed through triangular relations involving a woman" (Sedgwick 1990, p. 15). Further, as I previously noted in Chapter One, Endnote 13, Sedgwick later returns to an integrated analysis in *Tendencies* (1993b).

[5] According to Sedgwick, Melville's *Billy Budd, Sailor* (1984) was written the same year that Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1949) was first published, 1891 (1990, p. 49).

[6] Sedgwick does make a fleeting reference to Jeffrey Weeks' text *Sex, Politics, and Society* (1989 [1981]) in a footnote (1990, p. 33, ftn. 31). However, he is simply linked to 'male gay writing and activism' and not to any notion of developed antihomophobic terms of analysis. Furthermore, there is no substantial discussion of his other projects, particularly *Coming Out* (1977). Therefore, this reference can be read in isolation, and it does not signal that she acknowledges the existence of developed sociological terms for analysing sexuality.

7 Please see Endnote 2.

8 I made a gesture about a paradigm shift by social-historical constructionists earlier on in this broad section of the chapter, and I will expand upon it in the following one.

9 Please consult the aforementioned references for a detailed account and discussion of homosexual politics of the 1960s and early '70s in North America and Great Britain.

10 McIntosh's essay cannot be branded as social-historical constructionist in the strictest sense because it preceded the advent of a more formal social-historical constructionist approach. Vance makes this point: "[M]any suggestive insights about the historical construction of homosexuality in England . . . vanished like pebbles in a pond until they were engaged with by mid-1970s writers clearly motivated by the questions of feminism and gay liberation. An identifiably constructionist approach dates from this period, not before" (1998 [1989], p. 163).

11 Unfortunately, R. W. Connell does not specify who some of sex role theory's tenants are.

## Chapter Four

1 Some subjects/objects of study that Butler has examined through a textualist methodological approach include: feminist and queer identity politics; drag and performativity; subject formation and agency; and speech acts and the politics of the performative, specifically in relation to homosexual speech in the United States military. I cite this work later in the paragraph.

[2] Kinship is a recurrent subject that Butler examines in greater detail in Antigone's Claim (2000). The book is a product of three lectures delivered for the Wellek Library Lectures at University of California, Irvine in May 1998. Antigone is central to Butler's examination of kinship. Broadly, it is through Antigone that Butler examines the constraints of normative kinship in relation to patriarchial heterosexuality and reproduction and opens up its terms to social and cultural change. Her examination considers the work of Hegel, Lacan, and Irigaray and challenges psychoanalysis. McRobbie (2003) provides a good summary reading of Butler's project. Her reading also considers how Antigone brings to the surface a 'double entanglement' that feminism needs to address:

> the co-existence of neo-liberal with liberal values in relation to families and sexuality, and the co-existence of feminism as that which is reviled or, as I would put it, 'almost hated,' and feminism as a political force which has achieved the status of Gramscian common sense, something that is now 'taken into account' (McRobbie 2003, p. 130).

This has been played out in family life and popular culture according to McRobbie.

[3] Neither Butler nor I would suggest that the familial units of the Houses are the only examples of 'alternative living arrangements' that challenge the naturalness of Western society's heterosexist nuclear family. There are other examples of alternative living arrangements that use and rearticulate the rhetoric of families and familial relations, although this will take place in different ways and within different cultural, social, and historical contexts. Two examples I have in mind include: the berdache of North American Indian cultures (Roscoe 1993; Williams 1992) and the hijras of South Asia (Nanda 1993).

4 In order to avoid repetition, I will not outline Gagnon's and Simon's formulations here. Please refer to the previous chapter for a detailed outline. A reading of their work illuminates the degree to which Butler's methodology constrains her examination of norms.

5 Although I choose to highlight these texts, they should not be understood as the only queer texts. There are additional ones, which are not exhaustive of what has been circulated under the queer theory sign, for example: Bad Object-Choices (1991); Butler (1990, 1993); Sedgwick (1990, 1993b); and Sedgwick and Parker (1995). Furthermore, 'choice' here is not deliberate in any way. I randomly selected two queer texts out of a list of 15. As for what designates a queer text, I included texts that have been repeatedly highlighted in queer debates or debates about queer theory. Having said this, to a certain degree, perhaps even to a large degree, my demarcation of what constitutes a queer text and setting a cap at 15 will shape the foregoing review.

6 Herein I use the category 'transgenders' in the broad sense, which designates transgenders and pre-/post-operative transsexuals.

7. The following approximations of resident drag artists who performed on stage, people who did drag but did not perform, patrons, and staff were arrived at through general observation, informal conversations, and responses that I received from the owner/manager, assistant manager, and staff of the nightclub in their postal questionnaire.

8. I used the same methodology as in Endnote 7 to approximate Darcelle XV's drag artists, patrons, and staff.

9. I do not disclose the drag artists' personas and their characteristics (for example, race) because this could compromise their anonymity.

10. It becomes clearer in the next sub-section how Ray was my mentor. Aspiring drag artists did not have mentors in the formal sense that I did: resident drag artists who regularly performed on stage did not take them under their wing and show them how to do drag from scratch. Most of them learned drag over time by trial and error, observation, talking to drag artists, and receiving feedback on their impersonations and performances. Resident drag artists usually polished their performances by receiving feedback and sharing trade secrets (for example, different ways to apply make-up or style a wig) through informal conversations with one another. This particularly took place in the rehearsal stage of doing 'good drag, real drag,' which was a more formal means to receive feedback and share trade secrets. I elaborate on this stage later in the chapter.

11. 'Scoping' was a term that Ray used to describe the first stage/process of doing good drag, real drag. It was generally used among the resident drag artists who performed an iconic persona on stage. I elaborate on this in the next paragraph.

12. 'X' (and additionally later 'Y') designates a person or persona who cannot be named because it could compromise the drag artist's anonymity.

13. After a resident drag artist ceased being a particular persona, he/she either kept his/her costume for 'memories' or possible future uses or donated it to an organisation or charity. Some drag artists also gave their costumes to aspiring drag artists.

14. Of course, I am not suggesting that drag is simply the case of miming, embodying, and repeating a gendered norm. Butler would agree. There is definitely a difference between performing gender in general and a particular gendered person. What I am drawing attention to is that a gendered norm was present within my effecting of Madonna, which was also a class norm. I explain further in this section how Butler is using drag as a leverage to pass social commentary on the imitative nature of bodily norms.

**Coda**

1 Please refer to Cook and Fonow 1986, Devault 1996, Reinharz 1992, and Reinharz *et al.* 1983 for an overview of feminist critiques of positivist social science research methods.

2 I am not suggesting here that my experiences or the basis from which my knowledge is generated as a queer researcher are parallel to those of African-American women. The histories behind the locations are quite different, as well as their issues of power and domination. As I previously made clear in the chapter, I generally draw upon Collins' notion of the 'outsider-within perspective' in order to consider my relation to my fieldwork and the relation between queer theory and sociology.

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