

# THINKING SEX/THINKING GENDER

## Introduction

*Annamarie Jagose and Don Kulick*

Many of the key debates and conceptual overhauls that have animated lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) studies over the last ten years or so might be broadly described in terms of their common interest in specifying the proper relations between gender and sexuality. If LGBTQ studies initially insisted on a clear distinction between gender and sexuality, that cleavage was subsequently contested by many who objected to the normalizing capacity of any neat quarantining of the cultural work of sexuality and gender. Ensuing discussions of what was at stake in adjudicating the relative independence or imbrication of gender and sexuality gave critical heft to a range of terms such as gender performativity, butch/femme gender, female masculinity, and transgender subjectivities, whose implications are still shaping the direction of sexuality studies.

In addition, attention paid to the shifting relations between gender and sexuality has enabled a number of projects that seem more prominently organized under other scholarly rubrics. An abbreviated list might include the historicizing of sexual identities and the concomitant untangling of genealogies of identification and desire, the critical engagements with and swearings off of psychoanalytic models of subjectivity, and the increasingly fine-tuned analyses of the articulations of race and ethnicity with local and global productions of sex/gender formations.

Of course, the correct relation between sexuality and gender can never be definitively specified. One of the enduring motivations of LGBTQ and feminist scholarship is precisely its inability to pin down that relation or—to put it otherwise—our ceaseless imagining of it in new ways. It therefore seems productive to ask scholars and activists for their thoughts on the place of gender in current understandings of sexuality. Where does gender fit into the study of sexuality nowadays? How do we conceive of sexuality, and the field of sexuality studies, in

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relation to the category of gender and what it represents? What are the implications of the interrelated histories of gender studies and sexuality studies? Has gender assumed a new salience in LGBTQ studies recently? Is it necessary to preserve a sense of the specificity of sexuality in relation to the study of gender, or a sense of the specificity of gender in relation to the study of sexuality? Addressing a persistent thematic in feminist and queer theorizing across a range of disciplinary and methodological differences, the following responses to our questions elucidate variously the complex and mobile relations between sexuality and gender that energize our everyday teaching and writing, reading and thinking.

### **Transgender Studies: Queer Theory's Evil Twin**

***Susan Stryker***

If queer theory was born of the union of sexuality studies and feminism, transgender studies can be considered queer theory's evil twin: it has the same parentage but willfully disrupts the privileged family narratives that favor sexual identity labels (like *gay*, *lesbian*, *bisexual*, and *heterosexual*) over the gender categories (like *man* and *woman*) that enable desire to take shape and find its aim.

In the first volume of *GLQ* I published my first academic article, "My Words to Victor Frankenstein above the Village of Chamounix: Performing Transgender Rage," an autobiographically inflected performance piece drawn from my experiences of coming out as a transsexual.<sup>1</sup> The article addressed four distinct theoretical moments. The first was Judith Butler's then recent, now paradigmatic linkage of gender with the notion of trouble. Gender's absence renders sexuality largely incoherent, yet gender refuses to be the stable foundation on which a system of sexuality can be theorized.<sup>2</sup> A critical reappraisal of transsexuality, I felt, promised a timely and significant contribution to the analysis of the intersection of gender and sexuality. The second moment was the appearance of Sandy Stone's "The 'Empire' Strikes Back: A Posttranssexual Manifesto," which pointedly criticized Janice G. Raymond's paranoid *Transsexual Empire* and called on transsexual people to articulate new narratives of self that better expressed the authenticity of transgender experience.<sup>3</sup> I considered my article on transgender rage an explicit answer to that call. The third moment was Leslie Feinberg's little pamphlet, *Transgender Liberation*. Feinberg took a preexisting term, *transgender*, and invested it with new meaning, enabling it to become the name for Stone's theorized posttranssexualism.<sup>4</sup> Feinberg linked the drive to inhabit this newly envisioned space to a broader struggle for social justice. I saw myself as a fellow traveler.

Finally, I perceived a tremendous utility, both political and theoretical, in the new concept of an antiessentialist, postidentitarian, strategically fluid “queerness.” It was through participation in *Queer Nation*—particularly its San Francisco–based spin-off, *Transgender Nation*—that I sharpened my theoretical teeth on the practice of transsexuality.

When I came out as transsexual in 1992, I was acutely conscious, both experientially and intellectually, that transsexuals were considered abject creatures in most feminist and gay or lesbian contexts, yet I considered myself both feminist and lesbian. I saw *GLQ* as the leading vehicle for advancing the new queer theory, and I saw in queer theory a potential for attacking the antitranssexual moralism so unthinkingly embedded in most progressive analyses of gender and sexuality without resorting to a reactionary, homophobic, and misogynistic counteroffensive. I sought instead to dissolve and recast the ground that identity genders in the process of staking its tent. By denaturalizing and thus deprivileging nontransgender practices of embodiment and identification, and by simultaneously enacting a new narrative of the wedding of self and flesh, I intended to create new territories, both analytic and material, for a critically refigured transsexual practice. Embracing and identifying with the figure of Frankenstein’s monster, claiming the transformative power of a return from abjection, felt like the right way to go.

Looking back a decade later, I see that in having chosen to speak as a famous literary monster, I not only found a potent voice through which to offer an early formulation of transgender theory but also situated myself (again, like Frankenstein’s monster) in a drama of familial abandonment, a fantasy of revenge against those who had cast me out, and a yearning for personal redemption. I wanted to help define “queer” as a family to which transsexuals belonged. The queer vision that animated my life, and the lives of so many others in the brief historical moment of the early 1990s, held out the dazzling prospect of a compensatory, utopian reconfiguration of community. It seemed an anti-oedipal, ecstatic leap into a postmodern space of possibility in which the foundational containers of desire could be ruptured to release a raw erotic power that could be harnessed to a radical social agenda. That vision still takes my breath away.

A decade later, with another Bush in the White House and another war in the Persian Gulf, it is painfully apparent that the queer revolution of the early 1990s yielded, at best, only fragile and tenuous forms of liberal progress in certain sectors and did not radically transform society—and as in the broader world, so too in the academy. Queer theory has become an entrenched, though generally

progressive, presence in higher education, but it has not realized the (admittedly utopian) potential I (perhaps naively) sensed there for a radical restructuring of our understanding of gender, particularly of minoritized and marginalized manifestations of gender, such as transsexuality. While queer studies remains the most hospitable place to undertake transgender work, all too often *queer* remains a code word for “gay” or “lesbian,” and all too often transgender phenomena are misapprehended through a lens that privileges sexual orientation and sexual identity as the primary means of differing from heteronormativity.

Most disturbingly, “transgender” increasingly functions as the site in which to contain all gender trouble, thereby helping secure both homosexuality and heterosexuality as stable and normative categories of personhood. This has damaging, isolative political correlaries. It is the same developmental logic that transformed an antiassimilationist “queer” politics into a more palatable LGBT civil rights movement, with T reduced to merely another (easily detached) genre of sexual identity rather than perceived, like race or class, as something that cuts across existing sexualities, revealing in often unexpected ways the means through which all identities achieve their specificities.

The field of transgender studies has taken shape over the past decade in the shadow of queer theory. Sometimes it has claimed its place in the queer family and offered an in-house critique, and sometimes it has angrily spurned its lineage and set out to make a home of its own. Either way, transgender studies is following its own trajectory and has the potential to address emerging problems in the critical study of gender and sexuality, identity, embodiment, and desire in ways that gay, lesbian, and queer studies have not always successfully managed. This seems particularly true of the ways that transgender studies resonate with disability studies and intersex studies, two other critical enterprises that investigate atypical forms of embodiment and subjectivity that do not readily reduce to heteronormativity, yet that largely fall outside the analytic framework of sexual identity that so dominates queer theory.

As globalization becomes an ever more inescapable context in which all our lives transpire, it is increasingly important to be sensitive to the ways that identities invested with the power of Euro-American privilege interact with non-Western identities. If the history and anthropology of gender and sexuality teach us anything, it is that human culture has created many ways of putting together bodies, subjectivities, social roles, and kinship structures—that vast apparatus for producing intelligible personhood that we call “gender.” It is appallingly easy to reproduce the power structures of colonialism by subsuming non-Western configurations of personhood into Western constructs of sexuality and gender.

It would be misguided to propose transgender studies as queer theory for the global marketplace—that is, as an intellectual framework that is less inclined to export Western notions of sexual selves, less inclined to expropriate indigenous non-Western configurations of personhood. Transgender studies, too, is marked by its First World point of origin. But the critique it has offered to queer theory is becoming a point of departure for a lively conversation, involving many speakers from many locations, about the mutability and specificity of human lives and loves. There remains in that emerging dialogue a radical queer potential to realize.

## Notes

1. Susan Stryker, “My Words to Victor Frankenstein above the Village of Chamounix: Performing Transgender Rage,” *GLQ* 1 (1994): 237–54.
2. Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of “Sex”* (New York: Routledge, 1993).
3. Janice G. Raymond, *The Transsexual Empire: The Making of the She-Male* (Boston: Beacon, 1979); Sandy Stone, “The ‘Empire’ Strikes Back: A Posttranssexual Manifesto,” in *Body Guards: The Cultural Politics of Gender Ambiguity*, ed. Julia Epstein and Kristina Straub (New York: Routledge, 1991), 280–304.
4. Leslie Feinberg, *Transgender Liberation: A Movement Whose Time Has Come* (New York: World View Forum, 1992).

## The Categories Themselves

### *David Valentine*

This forum seeks to consider the relationship between sexuality and gender. Still, for me, there is a question that needs to be asked before we can explore that relationship: among those human experiences in which we are interested, which count as “gendered” and which as “sexual”? Or, more simply, what exactly do we mean by “sexuality” and “gender”? Putting these terms in quotation marks highlights the fact that “gender” and “sexuality” are themselves categories that hold certain meanings. Like those of other categories, these meanings can shift, are historically produced, and are drawn on in particular social contexts.

In short, to ask about the relationship between “gender” and “sexuality” requires that we conceptualize them as distinct in the first place. In contemporary social theory, “gender” and “sexuality” are (like all categories) heuristics that generally and respectively describe the social meanings by which we figure out who is masculine and who is feminine and what those gendered bodies do with

one another or feel about one another in a realm we call sex. Yet it is clear that these broad understandings are complicated by the ways that “gender” is inflected by our understandings of “sexuality,” and vice versa. Hence this forum.

Asking about the relationship between “gender” and “sexuality,” then, presents us with a dilemma: the question requires us to understand them simultaneously as discrete categories even as we recognize the interpenetration of experiences expressed through them. To return to the concern of my opening questions: how is it that, despite this dilemma, certain meanings have cohered around “gender” and certain ones around “sexuality”?

The separation of “gender” and “sexuality” has several, interrelated roots in recent history. In *How Sex Changed* Joanne Meyerowitz makes a convincing argument for the role of discourses and practices in the development of transsexuality in the United States as sources of the separation of biological sex, gender, and sexuality.<sup>1</sup> Drawing on late-nineteenth-century and early-twentieth-century European sexologists, U.S. doctors and researchers used the concepts of gender and sexuality to mark a difference between same-sex desire in gender-normative people (what we understand as homosexuality) and the desire to transition to another gender because of a deep sense of gender identity at odds with that ascribed at birth (what we understand as transsexuality). Meyerowitz notes that this schema was strengthened at least in part by those who desired new surgical possibilities for transforming their bodies and selves by denying not only homosexual desire (i.e., desire for people with similar embodiments prior to surgery) but sexual desire in general. Asexuality was, indeed, a primary criterion by which transsexual people were allocated a place in university-based gender identity clinics for sex reassignment surgery. The desire of gender-normative homosexual men and women *not* to have surgery, or their insistence that their core gender identity was in accord with their ascribed gender, further elaborated this model.

In feminist scholarship, too, the distinction between “gender” and “sexuality” has had a vital place. In the context of the “sex wars” of the 1980s, the separation of “sexuality” from “gender” was an essential part of a liberalizing move to recognize that oppressions do not apply evenly through the gendered categories of “woman” and “man” and that the separation of gender and sexuality as analytic categories enabled a more nuanced (and potentially liberatory) mode for understanding sexuality as something more than simply a tool of oppression.<sup>2</sup> Likewise, in mainstream gay and lesbian activism, the assertion of homosexual identification without the implication of gender-variant behavior has been essential to the gains of accommodationist groups seeking civil rights protections in the past thirty years.

What I have outlined so far is self-evident to contemporary social analysts, as is the recognition that gender and sexuality are inflected by other kinds of social differences: race, class, national origin, and age, to mention a few. However, what I am after here is a deeper observation: that the intersections of these experiences, as described and laid out in analytic categories, require the corralling of experience into discrete segments. This is, indeed, the basic problem of language: to describe something as seamless as lived experience, one needs categories. Yet a danger arises when those categories come to be seen as valid descriptions of experience rather than as tools used to apprehend that experience.

I am concerned, then, that the recent tendency to claim, as empirical fact, that gender and sexuality are separate and separable experiences results in a substitution of an analytic distinction for actual lived experience. For while this model describes some contemporary Western identities well, it is not the only model available. Indeed, the claim that bodily sex, social gender, and sexual desire are distinct categories stands in contrast to a much broader U.S. folk model of these experiences as a neatly aligned package. Their analytic separation has helped in, among other things, the analysis (and political validation) of queer, nonnormative identities and experiences, but it should be recognized that this is still only a model; it does not describe everyone's experiences.

And I am not necessarily concerned with Western heterosexual, gender-normative identities and experiences. Margaret Jolly and Lenore Manderson's discussion of desire and pleasure in Asia and the Pacific is instructive here. In considering contemporary critiques of Bronislaw Malinowski's collapsing of sexuality into reproductive heterosexuality and kinship, they argue: "The issue extends beyond the separation of sexuality and reproduction to the broader supposition that sexuality has ontological status in all times and places, that it is a thing that can be named and to which a set of behaviors, feelings, and desires can be attached."<sup>3</sup> That is, they propose that "sexuality" is not just about individual desire and that to understand it, we may need to look at things like reproduction, usually gathered into "gender," in those contexts where it is a significant aspect of what "sexuality" might signify for certain social actors. Thus Jolly and Manderson ask us to think about the ontological status of "sexuality" and "gender" in using those categories cross-culturally.

My own data indicate that such a critical question should also be directed at Western subjects who are assumed to be easily explained by the truth of a distinction that is itself culturally constructed. In New York City in the late 1990s, some people who were understood as "transgender" by social service agencies and

activists either rejected that category or, often, did not use it to describe their own identities even though they knew it was used about them. Most of those who did not use it were young, poor, African American or Latina/o self-identified “gay” people, the same community made famous by Jennie Livingstone’s film *Paris Is Burning* (1990). I put “gay” in quotes here because many people who see themselves as gay in this setting are not interpreted as such by the social service agencies under whose aegis I conducted my research. In the constellation of performative categories available at the balls, there are, indeed, strict distinctions between fem queens (male-bodied feminine people), butch queens (male-bodied masculine people), butches (female-bodied masculine people), and women or lesbians (female-bodied feminine persons). But the divisions, strictly enforced as they are, are seen at the balls to be united by the category “gay.” At the ball, in other words, no matter what your embodiment, clothing, or behavior, everyone is considered to fall into a broader category of “gay.”

In terms of more mainstream understandings of identity, though, this unity is rejected in favor of another distinction—between fem queens and butches (“transgender”) and butch queens and lesbians (“gay”). These distinctions have real and institutional effects. Safer-sex outreach programs, social services, and, currently, federally funded AIDS research directed at the ball community are organized around the categories “gay” and “transgender.” The rationale is based on the very distinction I am discussing: “transgender” identities are seen to flow from experiences of “gender” that are different from the “sexual” identity of “gay.” The unity of the ball community as “gay” is not given credence precisely because fem queens and butches are, in theoretical and institutional terms, seen to have sources of identity that are ontologically distinct (residing in their “gender”) from those of their butch queen and lesbian peers (who are seen to be united by their “sexual” identities). At root, this etic distinction relies on the analytic distinction between “gender” and “sexuality,” which overrides local understandings of those experiences we call gender and sexuality. The unity of the ballgoers as “gay” people is, I would argue, defined not by a distinction between “gender” and “sexuality” but by the conjunction of their disenfranchisement in terms of both class and racial memberships and their nonnormative “genders” or “sexualities.”

As in Jolly and Manderson’s discussion, the claim that the “gendered” practices of body transformation, cross-dressing, and the assertion of a nonascribed gendered identity are analytically separate from the “sexual” produces an effect in which the analytic model overrides understandings of self on the part of the young fem queens and butches of the balls. Indeed, such understandings, in which gender-transgressive practices and same-sex sexual desire are inextricable, are

often decried by scholars as a kind of “misreading” or “false consciousness” or as “pre-modern.”<sup>4</sup> Yet such conceptions of personhood exist historically and, I would add, persist in the modern West. To claim that fem queens and butches are “conflating” these experiences, or that they are holdovers of a premodern form of identification, is to make a modernist claim to progress and to the discovery of the truth of the separateness of “gender” and “sexuality.”

The political stakes of this conceptual disjunction should be clear. In professing “gay” identities, the fem queens and butches become unrepresentable both in mainstream LGBT politics and in academic representations because they are claiming identities seen to be inherently false. This interpretation is licensed in turn by an analytic distinction between “gender” and “sexuality” that is seen to have ontological truth.<sup>5</sup>

The question “What is the relationship between gender and sexuality?” is therefore, for me, ultimately ethnographic and historical rather than purely theoretical, because this relationship is itself possible only in historical and cultural contexts where “gender” and “sexuality” have come to be—and are able to be—conceptualized as distinct arenas of human experience. The question requires us to think not simply about how these experiences intersect but about *which* lived experiences these terms might describe for historically and culturally located subjects.

I am certainly not calling for a return to a situation in which “gender” and “sexuality” cannot be conceived of as separate experiences or useful as analytic categories. After all, this distinction is not only relegated to the pages of scholarly journals but operative in (among other arenas) the cultural politics of civil rights activism, media representations, and (at least some) gay-, lesbian-, bisexual-, and transgender-identified people’s self-understandings. But it is vital to recognize that it is also a modern (and modernist) technology of understanding the self that developed in the West in the mid- to late twentieth century. More important, it does not explain everyone’s understanding of self in all times and places. In short, in much of the discussion about “gender” and “sexuality,” the categorial power of these terms has come to be read as experiential fact; or, more succinctly, the experiential is subsumed and reordered by the categories we use to make sense of experience. Where this becomes dangerous is in the reordering of experience through analytic categories seen to be transparent and natural, a reordering that can, for all its progressive impetus, reproduce the invisibility and disenfranchisement of people who have had little voice, historically, in the debates and policies that have shaped their worlds.

We need, then, to think less about a relationship between “gender” and

“sexuality” than about the constitution of those categories themselves as a historically located social practice. As with any relationship, it makes sense to think about the history of the parties involved before assessing what the relationship is.

### Notes

1. Joanne Meyerowitz, *How Sex Changed: A History of Transsexuality in the United States* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2002).
2. See Gayle Rubin, “Thinking Sex: Notes for a Radical Theory of the Politics of Sexuality,” in *Pleasure and Danger: Exploring Female Sexuality*, ed. Carole S. Vance (London: Pandora, 1992), 267–319.
3. Margaret Jolly and Lenore Manderson, introduction to *Sites of Desire, Economies of Pleasure: Sexualities in Asia and the Pacific*, ed. Lenore Manderson and Margaret Jolly (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 24.
4. See, e.g., Ken Plummer, “Speaking Its Name: Inventing a Lesbian and Gay Studies,” in *Modern Homosexualities: Fragments of Lesbian and Gay Experiences*, ed. Ken Plummer (New York: Routledge, 1992), 3–25; and Gert Hekma, “‘A Female Soul in a Male Body’: Sexual Inversion as Gender Inversion in Nineteenth-Century Sexology,” in *Third Sex, Third Gender: Beyond Sexual Dimorphism in Culture and History*, ed. Gilbert Herdt (New York: Zone, 1994), 213–39.
5. For a more developed version of this argument see David Valentine, “‘We’re Not about Gender’: The Uses of ‘Transgender,’” in *Out in Theory: The Emergence of Lesbian and Gay Anthropology*, ed. Ellen Lewin and William L. Leap (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002), 222–45.

## The Politics of LGBTQ Scholarship

### Jacqueline Stevens

In early 2003 I attended a talk at the University of California, Los Angeles, by one of a handful of Israeli academics whose history of Israel’s founding is along the lines of that proffered by Edward W. Said.<sup>1</sup> That afternoon he was speaking about who was where in the Palestinian territories administered by Britain until 1948 and was describing the expulsions by Zionist terrorists and then by the Israeli state.

The audience, numbering about a hundred, was divided and tense; all had flyers in their seats commending Israel for its progressive policies on homosexuality, including the service of gays and lesbians in the military, antidiscrimination laws for employment, and same-sex partner benefits in many sectors. The flyer

also included a list of Arab countries cited by the human rights community for abuses against gays and lesbians.

After the impassioned lecture, which focused on the trials that the speaker himself had suffered for his views advocating a one-state solution for the region, the Jewish American gay man who had distributed the flyers asked the speaker to comment on the friendly legal climate toward lesbians and gays in Israel, in contrast to their harsh treatment in the adjacent Arab countries.

In a patronizing tone dripping with gravitas, the speaker responded: "I am sorry. Maybe I can say this because as a straight man it doesn't affect me, but I am much more concerned about Palestinian children being killed than the right of gays to have sex." The audience exploded in applause, and I felt my face burn in frustration with the two men and with everyone else: the "Most Truly Victimized Pageant" had once again been staged, the apparently obvious winner had been announced, and still neither side clearly understood what was being argued. I raised my hand, but there were others ahead of me to ask questions and the topic was not further addressed.

I mention this encounter because it emblemizes several themes implicit in this *GLQ* forum. For the confrontation between the anti-Zionist and the gay man can be reduced to a question similar to one that we have been asked to address here: is sexuality in itself a significant object of concern? That some will claim—rightly, I think—that there is no such thing as "sexuality in itself" would of course be part of the answer to this question, and this will be explored below, but that the question even needs to be asked calls for further thought. The audience requiring a response to such a question would not be transnational queer feminists, or anyone who has spent more than two seconds in the field of political anthropology, or anyone who has done a bit of comparative work in queer studies, or the numerous scholars influenced by Gayle Rubin's brilliant essay "The Traffic in Women."<sup>2</sup> All their work has proceeded for quite some time on the premise that sexuality and sex are intertwined in what Rubin called the "sex/gender system," and for many of us the point can be pressed further, that sexuality, sex, race, ethnicity, and nationality are interlocking pieces of the same oppressive structure. So one question I wonder about is whether this substantial community of scholars is still regarded as somehow marginal and needs a forum like this to gain recognition. I would not think so, but the fact that this forum is being published suggests that I may be wrong.

The question about the singularity and primacy of sexuality, not directly asked but implicit in the organization of this forum, is one in a chain of many

questions that were asked and that themselves are part of an even longer chain of related questions. It is impossible to provide, much less defend, direct answers to these questions here, but I hope that it is useful to mention them and to discuss in a bit of detail the political and academic contexts of which they are symptomatic.

The queries that flow from the encounter at UCLA and from this forum might include the following: Is the political and research agenda of the LGBTQ community sufficiently engaged with matters of injustice that dominate newspaper headlines? Is the preoccupation with centering sexual politics and sexual aesthetics peculiarly U.S.- or Western-centric? What does the success not only of Israel's LGBTQ communities in some key sectors of the state and civil society but also of LGBTQ social movements in many places worldwide mean for us—that is, for quasi-cosmopolitan elites who nonetheless feel a range of afflictions from having to endure sanctions imposed by heteronormativity? In short, while the overt questions here are about analytic lenses through which to ascertain the truth about sexual and other politics, the underlying query seems to be whether worrying about heteronormativity and its institutions is a privilege, lacking the urgency of, say, analyzing the Israeli occupation of the West Bank.

The consensus answer of the audience at UCLA was yes, a focus on sexuality is a privilege, which reveals a troubling failure among LGBTQ scholars to convey beyond their own community the fact that the national project—crystallized in Zionism but animating the *raison d'être* of every country and political society in the history of the world—maintains itself in complicated ways by regulating kinship, that is, by enforcing rules that reproduce the membership of that society and by establishing zones of legitimate sexual relationships. That the audience members did not realize this was not so surprising. Their ignorance was rooted in a common field of intuitions that the anti-Zionist and the gay man, despite their many differences, share: the conviction that nationalism and sexual politics are separate concerns. Falsely dichotomizing their agendas, they both fail to speak on behalf of everyone in even the narrow constituencies they claim to represent.

Curiously, had each man clung more consistently to his own identitarian cause, of Arabs or gays, respectively, they might have realized the common ground between them. It is perfectly reasonable for someone concerned about Palestinians qua Palestinians to protest that it is wrong for their children to face persecution or death because of their sexuality. And if people worry about what happens to gays and lesbians, why should they not worry about Arab gays and lesbians in Israel who face state-sanctioned hardships far grimmer than those endured by gays and

lesbians in Arab countries? Why not make a case for one's fellow Arab Israeli gays and lesbians, whose civil rights are certain to be violated in Israel, since they are, to name the most obvious penalties, unable to build houses in much of the country, unable to join the army, and therefore unable to receive the educational and many other kinds of benefits that Israel ties to military service.

I discussed the opening of this piece with a straight feminist friend I was visiting in southern Turkey, a well-known fiction author and former political prisoner who has no love of the Turkish military but is even more appalled by aspects of its Muslim civil society. When I reached the part about the gay man asking the anti-Zionist about the abuse of gays in Arab countries, she said, "Hooray!" and clapped for the gay man. She was mystified when I arrived at the punch line and told her that the UCLA audience had applauded for the anti-Zionist.

The problem with identity politics is not simply that they are provincial or that certain groups and causes may be ignored because their concerns and members have been falsely universalized.<sup>3</sup> The problem is that such politics rarely understand the dialectical and ultimately universal logic of any cause in a world inhabited by more than one person. It is not the nature of a cause or a subject position but the human condition itself that makes sorting people out along any single dimension a logical and not just a political impossibility.

After all, if one celebrates Israel's civil rights laws on behalf of gay people in particular, because one self-identifies primarily as gay, then why wouldn't one endorse an agenda that aimed to protect the rights of all gay people, including gays who happened to be Arab, and especially Arab Israelis? Likewise, if one cares about Arabs qua Arabs, then why wouldn't one concede that the gay Israeli has a legitimate point to make about an issue that harmed Arabs? You don't have to be a Kantian cosmopolitan sticking to the categorical imperative to get this far. Why couldn't the historian at UCLA have simply acknowledged that some Arabs are tortured and deprived of their civil rights not just because they are not Jewish but because they are queer, and why couldn't he, because he cares about Arabs, oppose this?

These are not rhetorical questions but pressing political ones. The answer to them is similar to the answer as to why decades of scholarly work on how reinforcing kinship structures of political societies creates all sorts of inequalities and exclusions—including those of nationality, ethnicity, race, and family role—has not resonated in the halls of academe, much less elsewhere.

### The Lens That's Hard to Use

While the programs of black studies, then women's studies, and then gay and lesbian studies were established by activist movements on college campuses, the shift of some of these programs to "women's, gender, and sexuality studies" or just to "gender and sexuality studies" occurred from the top down when those running these programs, largely feminists, were trying to come to terms with their discursive, Foucauldian scholarly sensibilities (and when some straight feminist academics, especially those in the social sciences, grew anxious that "their" programs would be taken over by gay men). Unlike the earlier programs, initiated by students galvanized by specific political causes, for instance, feminism and varieties of LGBTQ advocacy, the curricular shifts in the 1990s took place at the behest of the middle-aged faculty running the university.

Though the program administrators could change the curriculum and reach out to cultivate research on the issues that concern a journal like *GLQ*, effectively making the case that identities do not simply exist and intersect but are structured in ways that draw on overlapping rules and discourses that make all sorts of boundaries, these administrators—we—never could circulate this thought as more than one more interesting idea. Like the confused thinking that holds that sex is anatomical and gender is constructed and that still haunts the classroom (and some academic articles), the structuralist critique of identity politics has not become a lens that students easily know how to use once they step outside the classroom in which they have read people such as M. Jacqui Alexander, Veena Das, Anne McClintock, and Ann Stoler, people who, when it comes to the contemporary Bahamas, to India and Pakistan after the partition, and to colonialism in South Africa and Indonesia, respectively, converge in showing how family and national dramas inflict psychic and legal harm in tandem.<sup>4</sup>

While earlier voices were silenced by their exclusion from the curriculum, something else prevents the beliefs expressed above from resonating as they deserve: there is as yet no social movement on behalf of a thoroughgoing cosmopolitanism that would obliterate the kinship networks underlying the harms named by anyone who criticizes nationalism, ethnocentrism, racism, and homophobia. There are social movements decrying the violence done in the name of a certain nation, or of an exclusionary marriage policy, or of brutal restrictions of sexuality, but there is no movement that holds out, as the Communist Party did in the nineteenth century, even the possibility of another future, another way to organize our relations of interdependence. Marx wrote close to nothing about what communism would look like, but imagine if he had written nothing about it at all, if he had written only

that capitalism was terrible and the most one could do would be to march to shorten the working day.

Those on the left need to get over what might be called the “totalitarian syndrome”: political paralysis resulting from the fear that mobilizing in the name of alternative institutions will cause varying degrees of fascist or totalitarian regimes and that the movements in their name will be likewise repressive.

All the peace marches, antiwar coalitions, and struggles against what Richard Falk calls “predatory globalization” will not make possible the subject position that will create a human being,<sup>5</sup> which is what the postmodernists, in what has become a self-fulfilling prophecy, have been saying for a long time. Sadly, the main organizing rubric among those opposing forces of tyranny has been “antiglobalization.” Although the World Trade Organization’s endorsement of globalization has done much to discredit the concept, something along these lines needs to be reclaimed.

Hannah Arendt, when she wrote “We Refugees” in support of establishing Israel as a Jewish state (a position she later renounced), said that there is no such thing as a human being and that advocates of statelessness are living in a fantasy.<sup>6</sup> But assigning citizenship based primarily on the condition of birth and family membership has also been shown to be unworkable, creating a world of mayhem as well as of dislocation and fear.

Those who wonder why I am writing about this in a journal devoted to the intellectual politics of sexuality do not understand that in the final analysis the social movement that will be the vanguard of a revolution against all forms of state boundaries, that could organize on behalf of the unhindered movement and full-fledged development of capacities regardless of one’s birthplace or parentage, is a movement that will be queer, in the sense developed by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Michael Warner in the early 1990s.<sup>7</sup> But such a sensibility, which critiques the intergenerational structures of identities—be they those of heterosexuality or of the ancestral nation—still needs a home, a primary albeit imaginary place from where it speaks, a “queer planet” serving as an aspirational location where many might one day congregate, and not just a place to be smarter than everyone else right now.

In the meantime, there is nothing better or worse about studying this or that, and there is no inherent limit to the questions scholars should pose in LGBTQ studies, just as there is no limit to the potential aesthetic and substantive complexities posed in any field of study, even inane ones such as alchemy or astrology. Most of what is published in the academy, as Friedrich Nietzsche might have said,

will be boring repetitions in different idioms of the prevailing incoherent ideology, present company included, and to change this calls not for new scholarship but for a new age that we ourselves must author.

### Notes

1. Edward W. Said, *The Question of Palestine* (New York: Vintage, 1979).
2. Gayle Rubin, "The Traffic in Women: Notes on the 'Political Economy' of Sex," in *Toward an Anthropology of Women*, ed. Rayna R. Reiter (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1975), 157–210.
3. See Wendy Brown, *States of Injury: Power and Freedom in Late Modernity* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995); and Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color," *Stanford Law Review* 43 (1991): 1241–99.
4. M. Jacqui Alexander, "Erotic Autonomy as a Politics of Decolonization: An Anatomy of Feminist and State Practice in the Bahamas Tourist Economy," in *Feminist Genealogies, Colonial Legacies, Democratic Futures*, ed. M. Jacqui Alexander and Chandra Talpade Mohanty (New York: Routledge, 1997); Veena Das, "National Honor and Practical Kinship: Unwanted Women and Children," in *Conceiving the New World Order: The Global Politics of Reproduction*, ed. Faye D. Ginsburg and Rayna Rapp (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995); Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Context* (New York: Routledge, 1995); Ann Stoler, "Making Empire Respectable: The Politics of Race and Sexual Morality in Twentieth-Century Colonial Cultures," in *Dangerous Liaisons: Gender, Nation, and Postcolonial Perspectives*, ed. Anne McClintock, Aamir Mufti, and Ella Shohat (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 344–73.
5. Richard Falk, *Predatory Globalization: A Critique* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999).
6. Hannah Arendt, "We Refugees," in *The Jew as Pariah: Jewish Identity and Politics in the Modern Age*, ed. Ron H. Feldman (New York: Grove, 1978).
7. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990); Michael Warner, introduction to *Fear of a Queer Planet: Queer Politics and Social Theory*, ed. Michael Warner (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993).

## Heteronormativity and Immigration Scholarship: A Call for Change

*Eithne Luibhéid*

Heteronormative policies and practices—which subordinate immigrants not just on grounds of sexual orientation but also on grounds of gender, racial, class, and cultural identities that may result in “undesirable” sexual acts or outcomes (such as “too many” poor children)—are deployed by the state to select who may legally enter the United States and to incorporate immigrants into hegemonic nationalist identities and projects. Sexuality more generally also structures every aspect of immigrant experiences. Yet immigration scholarship virtually ignores the connections among heteronormativity, sexuality, and immigration.

This occlusion becomes clear when we turn to the writings on gender and immigration. On the one hand, these writings offer valuable tools for thinking about sexuality and immigration; on the other, they show how gender-centered analyses often reinscribe heteronormativity, thus affirming Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick’s contention 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 terms of the other, are nonetheless not the same question.”<sup>1</sup>

Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo has suggested recently that gender has not been treated seriously in mainstream immigration scholarship. Even after thirty years of feminist research, “gender is scarcely recognized or understood as having anything to do with relations of power. To the extent that gender is understood at all, it is seen within a framework of traditional sex roles.”<sup>2</sup>

Similarly, the study of sexuality and immigration remains marginalized, trivialized, depoliticized, or treated with hostility.<sup>3</sup> Part of the problem is that sexuality continues to be viewed by many immigration scholars as “natural” and “private.” Sexuality scholars, of course, have convincingly established that sexuality is neither an unmediated “natural” drive nor a private matter; on the contrary, the state and powerful social groups intervene into and deploy sexuality in normative ways. Moreover, these interventions “have correlated strongly with other forms of social regulation, especially those related to race, class, and gender.”<sup>4</sup> Consequently, Foucault characterizes sexuality as “an especially dense transfer point for relations of power.”<sup>5</sup> But these understandings have yet to work their way into immigration scholarship. In the instances when sexuality is addressed in immigration scholarship, it is generally conflated with gender, which in turn is often conflated with women—a triple erasure meaning that only women have sexuality, sexuality is gender, and gender or sexuality is normatively heterosexual.

Yet some inroads have been made. In her classic review Silvia Pedraza mentions four main areas in which research on women and immigration (and, ultimately, on gender and immigration) have flourished.<sup>6</sup> These areas address (1) how gender is related to the decision to migrate and organizes migration processes; (2) how gender shapes processes of settlement; (3) how immigrant women and men are incorporated into the labor market; and (4) how migration alters gender relations. These questions can be usefully transferred to the realm of sexuality and immigration to assess what we do and do not know about sexuality and immigration processes and also to show how attention to sexuality requires revision of these questions, which are normed around gender. Like gender and immigration scholarship, which began by considering “women” and then addressed gender more generally, I begin by discussing lesbian and gay experiences and then considering sexuality more generally.<sup>7</sup>

First is the question of how gender and sexuality are related to the decision to migrate and how they organize migration processes. Saskia Sassen has described the hegemonic understanding of immigration: “U.S. policy makers and the general public believe that the causes of immigration are evident: poverty, unemployment, economic stagnation, and overpopulation drive people to leave their countries.”<sup>8</sup> In this implicitly binarized framework, immigrants come because their home countries lack something that the United States can provide.

Sassen’s alternative understanding, which focuses on global-level processes, suggests that immigrants move not primarily because of a cost-benefit differential that can be objectively assessed in advance but because unequal global relations—which involve economic exploitation, imperialism, and military interventionism—create linkages between countries that serve as bridges for migration. The gender version of this analysis suggests that at the global level, current capitalist production systems draw women into wage labor in gendered ways, which contributes to migration (including across borders).<sup>9</sup> This understanding has been usefully incorporated into gender and immigration scholarship.

Where does sexuality fit in? According to Julie Matthaei, Marxist economic theory generally ignored sexuality; when it addressed sexuality, it did so in terms that presumed a reproductive family.<sup>10</sup> John D’Emilio, however, has theorized how shifts in modes of production enabled some people to live outside the boundaries of the reproductive family, with consequent possibilities for changes in sexual identity and community building.<sup>11</sup> His work has been expanded to show how this process was gendered, class specific, and centrally implicated in racialized relations.<sup>12</sup> These shifts in the economy enabled not only the emergence of

forms of gay identity but also heterosexuality as an identity. So one of the questions that we can ask is, How do current structures of global capitalism depend on and make possible relationships and identities that are not just gendered but also variously sexualized? And what might this have to do with migration?

A literature that may help us think through this issue examines how gay and lesbian identities, imagery, and products circulate globally, and are received and reworked in specific locales, in ways that partly disrupt and partly re-create hierarchies.<sup>13</sup> Also helpful is the rich literature on queer diaspora that, as Gayatri Gopinath puts it, conceives diaspora “outside a patrilineal, genealogical economy of organic heterosexuality.”<sup>14</sup> The scholarship on HIV/AIDS and migration has much to offer as well. Lionel Cantú, in his dissertation on Mexican gay immigrants, mapped some of the ways that sexuality shapes immigration processes that are globally structured but locally lived.<sup>15</sup> Martin F. Manalansan IV’s book, *Global Divas*, also illuminates these issues as they are lived by Filipino migrant gay men.<sup>16</sup> More research is needed.

The second question that Pedraza foregrounds is how gender organizes settlement. Settlement is the idea that migrants shift their interpersonal, institutional, and economic ties from their communities of origin to the new community. Such models, however, have been complicated by recent scholarship on transnationalism that articulates how some migrants lead lives that span borders, without settling in the usual sense.

Much gender and migration research has investigated settlement at the level of the family or household. This research has shattered the myth of the unified family or household and has revealed how gender and generational conflicts and power relations shape families’ and households’ settlement processes. It has also taught us a great deal about the agencies, subjectivities, labor, and lives of racial/ethnic immigrant women.

But (where) do gays and lesbians fit, and how does paying attention to sexuality in general complicate these accounts? One solution has been to ignore gays and lesbians (and sexuality). Another has been to construct a family/individual binary and to treat gays and lesbians as individuals. Yet this strategy effectively expels them from their families and communities, whitening and bourgeoisifying them in a manner that constitutes erasure. A third solution is to work with a more expanded and critical notion of family, a notion that acknowledges family as a key locus for state power and domination over immigrants. As Patricia Pessar writes, “The common claim that the immigrant family in the United States is an adaptive social form . . . diverts our attention from the important task of analyzing legisla-

tion and government policies that effectively block or limit the formation, unification, and material well-being of immigrant families.<sup>17</sup> This includes legal and governmental regimes that disallow not only same-sex families but also families that are not based on blood or official legal ties, or that cannot meet income or human capital requirements, or whose women are deemed “breeders.”<sup>18</sup>

Relatively uncritical notions of family are often extended to theorize how immigrants form communities and transmit culture. But again, we have to inquire not only where lesbians and gays fit but also how sexual regimes that are (hetero)sexist and racializing structure community and cultural processes. Oliva M. Espín’s research suggests that immigrants often (re)build communities and challenge dominant cultural racism by particularly policing the bodies and sexualities of women. Consequently, many immigrant women find themselves caught between the gendered racism of dominant society and the patriarchy of their communities.<sup>19</sup> Mark Chiang describes how for “minorities,” including immigrants, variations from hegemonic community sexual norms are often understood not as gendered but as cultural deviance, as signs of corruption by or assimilation into mainstream culture.<sup>20</sup> Espín also pinpoints sexuality as a key site where concerns about family, community, culture, acculturation, and integration are vigorously fought out: “For parents and young women alike, acculturation and sexuality are closely connected. In many immigrant communities, to be ‘Americanized’ is seen as almost synonymous with being sexually promiscuous.”<sup>21</sup> As these examples show, focusing on sexuality—as it articulates gender, race, class, and culture—promises to broaden the scholarship on immigrant family, community, and culture while challenging the implicit heterosexist norm that currently structures much of that work.

Some scholarship has already been done along those lines. George Chauncey’s *Gay New York* documented an early-twentieth-century gay world in New York that was “centered in African American and Irish and Italian immigrant neighborhoods, and along the city’s busy waterfronts.”<sup>22</sup> Horacio Nelson Roque Ramirez’s dissertation used Renato Rosaldo’s concept of cultural citizenship to examine how multiracial, multigenerational, immigrant and nonimmigrant queer Latinos and Latinas claim space, identity, and rights in the San Francisco Bay Area.<sup>23</sup> Susana Peña’s dissertation studied how Cuban and Cuban American gay men negotiate identity and community in Miami, Florida.<sup>24</sup> Gloria Gonzalez Lopez’s dissertation examined how heterosexual immigrant Mexican women renegotiate sexual practices and identities in the context of family, community, and cultural settlement in the United States.<sup>25</sup> These studies make clear that sexuality shapes settlement processes for all immigrants in ways that demand critical attention.

The third issue that Pedraza mentions concerns labor market incorporation. I have already briefly addressed that of immigrant women at a global level. Within national economies, a huge generalization is that immigrant women remain heavily concentrated in certain sectors and earn less than immigrant men, U.S. men, and U.S. women.<sup>26</sup> At the same time, at more localized scales of analysis, immigrant women's occupations are too heterogeneous to be summarized simply. Nonetheless, immigrant women's labor market position is attributable not solely to their "human capital" but also to factors like gender, race, class, and migrant status.

Scholarship on gender and immigration has contributed a significant amount of information about immigrant women and men in the labor force at global, national, and local levels. Nationally and locally, we have learned a lot about what immigrant women and men do; about how their labor under capitalism demands the rethinking of traditional models of economy; about how gender, race, class, and immigrant status shapes their incorporation and prospects in the "mainstream" labor market; about how ethnic economies and businesses provide different opportunities to women than to men; about how women balance work and families; and about how paid labor alters gender relations in families. Can lesbians and gays be similarly studied in terms of occupational concentration and systemic discrimination in the workforce? Many argue that sexuality does not have the same kind of structural relationship to production and employment as gender, race, or class. This point remains contentious. Nonetheless, some studies connect gays and lesbians to a higher risk of poverty, occupational segregation, and wage discrimination.<sup>27</sup> Obviously, though, lesbians and gays are also heterogeneous, and gender, race, class, and immigrant status also affects their occupational possibilities. We clearly need more research on this.

As for the other gender, migration, and labor topics that I have mentioned, it would be interesting to know more about how gays and lesbians fare in ethnic economies, as well as in mainstream economies. Further research could indicate whether economic niches occupied by lesbians, gays, and queers offer employment opportunities to immigrants and, if so, how these immigrants fare. It would also be interesting to know more about how paid employment offers lesbians and gays opportunities to renegotiate their status in their families and communities. For instance, Cantú describes the experiences of Rafael, a twenty-nine-year-old undocumented gay Mexican immigrant, whose family was forced by its dependence on his remittances to come to terms with his sexuality.<sup>28</sup> I would also like to know more about how paid employment bears on one's ability to live "as gay" or "as lesbian," as well as about how earnings shape the production of heterosexual

identity among immigrants. The literature on gender, immigration, and labor could certainly be reread within a framework attentive to the centrality of heterosexuality to all structures of hegemony that immigrants must negotiate.

The final question that Pedraza mentions is, does women's status improve with migration? This persistent question, and the presumed affirmative answer, stems from colonialist, racist, and culturalist assumptions that situate the United States at the apex of a hierarchy of nations. According to the logic of this colonial framework, immigrant women flee backward and repressive countries for liberation in the metropole, and improvement in their status comes about through their exposure to U.S. mainstream culture. Trenchantly refuting this logic, Hondagneu-Sotelo writes: "Changes in Mexican families' gender relations do not result from any 'modernizing' Anglo influence or acculturation process. Many Mexican migrants live their lives in segregated jobs and well-defined immigrant communities."<sup>29</sup> Marta Tienda and Karen Booth, who review multiple studies of how migration alters women's status, "suggest that the modal outcome of how migration influences women's position is one whereby gender asymmetries are maintained largely intact even though specific dimensions of gender inequalities are modified."<sup>30</sup> The research indicates that race, class, and marital status further shape exactly how gender asymmetries are reproduced or altered (though not abolished) and that it is not just women but also men whose gender status is changed by migration.

Like immigrant women, immigrant lesbians and gays are popularly perceived as leaving repressive national contexts for metropolitan freedoms. Like the narrative of gender and migration, this story of fleeing lesbians and gays significantly understates the discrimination endured by lesbians and gays in the United States. Moreover, it lets the United States off the hook for its implication in oppressive regimes and difficult conditions in other countries. As Cantú observes, "To Marcos [a gay informant in Guadalajara, Mexico], the United States represents anything but a space for tolerance, in large part because it is a space that racially marks him as other and without room for negotiation."<sup>31</sup> For lesbians and gays, the outcome of migration is likely to be similar to Tienda and Booth's finding for women: reconstituted asymmetries.

Sexuality is an axis of power that structures all aspects of international migration. It is centrally implicated in—but not reducible to—the gender, racial, class, cultural, and legal inequalities that immigrants continually negotiate. The sodomization of Haitian immigrant Abner Louima by New York City police, the rape of undocumented women by border patrol agents, and the exclusion of immigrant lesbian and gay couples and families deemed liable to have "too many" poor

children also underscore the fact that heteronormative regimes variously and painfully structure immigrants' lives. Yet in most immigration scholarship, sexuality and heteronormativity remain ignored, trivialized, derided, or conflated with gender.

The task facing us is twofold. First, immigration scholars (including those studying gender) must expand the areas of research described by Pedraza to address how sexuality, heteronormativity, and normalizing regimes in general structure all aspects of immigration.<sup>32</sup> Second, sexuality scholars must turn their attention to international immigration's centrality to the making of "modern" gay, lesbian, and queer identities, communities, cultures, and politics in the United States.<sup>33</sup> Only then will we move beyond the perspective that suggests, to paraphrase Gloria T. Hull, Patricia Bell Scott, and Barbara Smith, that all the immigrants are heterosexual, all the queers are U.S. citizens—but some of us are brave.<sup>34</sup>

## Notes

My thanks to Deborah Cohen and Hai Ren for critical comments on an earlier draft.

1. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 30.
2. Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo, "Feminism and Migration," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, no. 571 (2000): 119.
3. See, e.g., Alejandro Portes, "Homosexuality among Mariel Men," *Miami Herald*, September 8, 1991. I want to thank Susana Peña for generously sharing this material.
4. John D'Emilio and Estelle B. Freedman, *Intimate Matters: A History of Sexuality in America* (New York: Harper and Row, 1988), xvii.
5. Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, trans. Robert Hurley, vol. 1 (New York: Vintage, 1980), 103.
6. Silvia Pedraza, "Women and Migration: The Social Consequences of Gender," *Annual Review of Sociology* 17 (1991): 303–25.
7. Of course, categories such as "lesbian" and "gay" are not universal or transhistorical; I employ them here as a shorthand, recognizing that a full account of immigrant sexualities will necessitate questioning and thoroughly refashioning the epistemologies and histories that have underpinned such categories.
8. Saskia Sassen, "Why Migration?" *NACLA Report on the Americas* 26 (1992): 14.
9. See Katie Willis and Brenda Yeoh, introduction to *Gender and Migration*, ed. Katie Willis and Brenda Yeoh (Cheltenham: Elgar, 2000), xi–xxiii.

10. Julie Matthaei, "The Sexual Division of Labor, Sexuality, and Lesbian/Gay Liberation: Toward a Marxist-Feminist Analysis of Sexuality in U.S. Capitalism," in *Homo Economics: Capitalism, Community, and Lesbian and Gay Life*, ed. Amy Gluckman and Betsy Reed (New York: Routledge, 1997), 135–64.
11. John D'Emilio, "Capitalism and Gay Identity," in *The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader*, ed. Henry Abelove, Michèle Aina Barale, and David M. Halperin (New York: Routledge, 1993), 467–76.
12. See, e.g., Ann Pellegrini, "Consuming Lifestyle: Commodity Capitalism and Transformations in Gay Identity," in *Queer Globalizations: Citizenship and the Afterlife of Colonialism*, ed. Arnaldo Cruz-Malavé and Martin F. Manalansan IV (New York: New York University Press, 2002), 134–45.
13. See, e.g., Cruz-Malavé and Manalansan, *Queer Globalizations*; Inderpal Grewal and Caren Kaplan, "Global Identities: Theorizing Transnational Studies of Sexuality," *GLQ* 7 (2001): 663–79; Elizabeth A. Povinelli and George Chauncey, eds., "Thinking Sexuality Transnationally," special issue, *GLQ* 5, no. 4 (1999); and Jasbir Kaur Puar, ed., "Queer Tourism: Geographies of Globalization," special issue, *GLQ* 8, nos. 1–2 (2002).
14. Gayatri Gopinath, "Queer Diasporas: Gender, Sexuality, and Migration in Contemporary South Asian Literary and Cultural Production" (PhD diss., Columbia University, 1998). See also Stefan Helmreich's critique of diaspora as reconstructing a patriarchal model: "Kinship, Nation, and Paul Gilroy's Concept of Diaspora," *Diaspora* 2 (1992): 243–49.
15. Lionel Cantú, "Border Crossings: Mexican Men and the Sexuality of Migration" (PhD diss., University of California, Irvine, 1999).
16. Martin F. Manalansan IV, *Global Divas: Filipino Gay Men in the Diaspora* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003).
17. Patricia Pessar, "Engendering Migration Studies," *American Behavioral Scientist* 42 (1999): 583–84.
18. Grace Chang, *Disposable Domestic: Immigrant Women Workers in the Global Economy* (Cambridge, MA: South End, 2000), 55–92.
19. Oliva M. Espín, *Women Crossing Boundaries: A Psychology of Immigration and Transformations of Sexuality* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 8.
20. Mark Chiang, "Coming Out into the Global System: Postmodern Patriarchies and Transnational Sexualities in *The Wedding Banquet*," in *Q & A: Queer in Asian America*, ed. David L. Eng and Alice Y. Hom (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998), 374–95.
21. Espín, *Women Crossing Boundaries*, 6.
22. George Chauncey, *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890–1940* (New York: Basic, 1994), 10.

23. Horacio Nelson Roque Ramirez, "Communities of Desire: Queer Latina/Latino History and Memory, San Francisco Bay Area, 1960s to 1990s" (PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 2001).
24. Susana Peña, "Visibility and Silence: Cuban American Gay Male Culture in Miami" (PhD diss., University of California, Santa Barbara, 2002).
25. Gloria Gonzalez Lopez, "Beyond the Bed Sheets, beyond the Borders: Mexican Immigrant Women and Their Sex Lives" (PhD diss., University of Southern California, 2000).
26. See, e.g., Georges Vernez, *Immigrant Women in the U.S. Workforce: Who Struggles? Who Succeeds?* (Lanham, MD: Lexington, 1999).
27. See Gay and Lesbian Equality Network and NEXUS Research Cooperative, *Poverty: Lesbians and Gay Men; The Economic and Social Effects of Discrimination* (Dublin: NEXUS, 1995); M. V. Lee Badgett, "Beyond Biased Samples," in Gluckman and Reed, *Homo Economics*, 65–72; and Sylvia A. Allegretto and Michelle M. Arthur, "An Empirical Analysis of Homosexual/Heterosexual Male Earnings Differentials: Unmarried and Unequal?" *Industrial and Labor Relations Review* 54 (2001): 631–46.
28. Lionel Cantú, "Entre Hombres/Between Men: Latino Masculinities and Homosexualities," in *Gay Masculinities*, ed. Peter M. Nardi (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2000), 237. Although earning a wage enabled Rafael to renegotiate his relationship with his family, his undocumented status and his nationality placed tight constraints on his earnings and his ability to live as a gay man.
29. Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo, *Gendered Transitions: Mexican Experiences of Immigration* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 195.
30. Marta Tienda and Karen Booth, "Gender, Migration, and Social Change," *International Sociology* 6 (1991): 69.
31. Lionel Cantú, "De Ambiente: Queer Tourism and the Shifting Boundaries of Mexican Male Sexualities," *GLQ* 8, nos. 1–2 (2002): 156.
32. This work will also have to consider how scholarly writings on immigration may enable or challenge existing regimes of normalization, and governmentality more generally.
33. Ethnic studies, studies of queers of color, and feminist, immigration, and postcolonial scholarship will be central to that task.
34. Gloria T. Hull, Patricia Bell Scott, and Barbara Smith, eds., *All the Women Are White, All the Blacks Are Men, But Some of Us Are Brave: Black Women's Studies* (Old Westbury, NY: Feminist, 1982).

**Geopolitics Alert!****Anjali Arondekar**

What a scribble, these questions on your sheet:

*Do you also spin the threads of nations?*

—Agha Shahid Ali, “A Fate’s Brief Memoir”

For the past two years I have worked with a dynamic group of interdisciplinary and transnational feminist scholars on a collaborative project whose working title is “Feminisms, Geopolitics, and Sexuality.” Central to our critical and political project is the understanding that the intersectionality of gender and sexuality is not only crucial to but a function of geopolitical formations. Through this project my colleagues and I are attempting to thicken current analyses of geopolitics, variously understood through rubrics such as transnational, international, global, and diasporic, to argue for an epistemological and activist conversation that places discourses of sexuality alongside locations of social struggles and state formations. While the project was conceptualized prior to the events of September 11, 2001, its current formulations clearly reflect on and engage with feminist implications of the ongoing war against “terrorism.” Our continued desire has been to foreground feminist analyses of sociohistorical, cultural, and geopolitical conditions to make visible alternative strategies of intervention derived from alternative conceptualizations of problems for which violence is now considered a necessary solution. The participants in this project come from South Asian, Pacific Rim, and Southeast Asian studies, African legal and cultural studies, and Latin American anthropology. The questions we ask include the following: What new knowledges of genders and sexualities are being forged within differing interpretive communities in our contemporary climate? What are the links between colonial models of area-studies scholarship and the new global order, including the patterns of under- and overattention that privilege Arab countries and yet ignore Africa? What epistemological concerns emerge from the production of research practices and policy agendas around the study of gender and sexuality dynamics in Central Asian contexts?<sup>1</sup>

I begin with an invocation of this project because its critical energies and struggles articulate, for me, some of the key debates and lacunae in current theorizations of gender and sexuality. The aim of my brief meditation here is to propose that we vigilantly interrogate the labor of geopolitics in the study of gender and sexuality. Such an exercise will go beyond the familiar rehearsal of dilemmas around incommensurability, cross-cultural comparison, translation, and the impos-

sibilities of understanding and will take seriously the genealogical peculiarities that the recent turn to geopolitics brings. Just as critics such as Rachel Lee and Minoo Moallem have powerfully argued that the project of “women of color” and/or race has emerged as a pedagogical and intellectual corrective to the flawed past of women’s studies, I want to argue that the project of geopolitics in all its avatars has emerged to play a similarly redemptive role in the new formations of queer scholarship.<sup>2</sup> My goal here is not to equate the overinvestment of women’s studies in the project of women of color with queer scholarship’s overinvestment in the discourse of geopolitics, but to foreground patterns of epistemological recuperation and redemption in two related sites of intellectual exploration.<sup>3</sup>

More precisely, what I want to suggest is that the current representational field of geopolitics, its complications notwithstanding, functions as a vexed, theoretical antidote to earlier models of a flawed, colonial geography of perversions. Such models, largely derivative of discourses of colonial anthropology, literature, sexology, and law, have been powerfully debunked and reassessed by scholars of colonialism(s) such as Ann Stoler, Elizabeth Povinelli, and Anne McClintock. We have also seen a concurrent outpouring of rich scholarship on “queer globalization,” cross-cultural ethnographies of sexual cultures in a vast range of non-U.S. sites, all of which have troubled the portability of gender and sexuality as stable analytic registers across geopolitical sites.<sup>4</sup> This new scholarship certainly attempts to avoid the facile additive approach of piling differentiated sexual minorities from different regions onto its analysis as a gesture of its transnational approach. However, even as new versions of relationalities in, between, and among cultures, ethnicities, and nations emerge, we appear to reproduce methodologically what Joan Wallach Scott refers to as analytic echoes—mutable conceptual modes that are not just “distorted repetitions, but movements in space and time-history” that produce violent reverberations even as they suggest polysemic epicenters of knowledge and transformation.<sup>5</sup> One way to trace such analytic echoes would be to reflect on what gets recognized within the grid of geopolitics and what gets disappeared within such formulations. There are other questions worth considering: Which epistemological structures benefit from such shifts to a transnational critical framework? How does the emergent work on sexuality studies translate into models for workable coalitions in non-U.S. contexts? What role (if any) do non-Western theories of racial formations play in the turn to geopolitical rubrics?

To situate my claims more substantially, I want to turn to my own pedagogical experiences as one location in which such vexations around geopolitics repeatedly emerge. For the past two years I have taught a graduate seminar at the Uni-

versity of California, Santa Cruz, on the intersectionality of queer and critical race studies. Taught the first year as “Critical Queer/Race Studies: An Introduction,” the seminar then morphed into a new critical schema, “Queer Globalizations, Racial Formations.” My attempts in both versions of the seminar were directed at producing a syllabus that reflected on and complicated the relationalities between histories of race and sexuality within the shifting critical frameworks of geopolitics, variously defined as globalization, transnationalism, diaspora studies, and so on. It has been a challenge for me to map out a syllabus that foregrounds the particularity of geopolitical terrains and their structures of sexualities alongside a sustained analysis of how the category of “race” emerges in such varied locations. In other words, because there is no other institutional location for an investigation of non-U.S. queer studies than a syllabus on queer and race studies, the onus has lain on the seminar participants to shift the production of categories of “race” as emanating solely from the United States and Europe to thinking of them as emergent and embedded in what we postulate as the non-West or other. That India, Brazil, and Mexico, on the one hand, and the United Kingdom, Canada, and the United States, on the other, are not race-d in the same ways does not mean that they are not race-d in any way.

I myself work on the history of sexuality in colonial India and have thus used the seminar as a venue in which to think through my preoccupations with those patterns and nuances of colonial rule that were at once particular to a time and place (colonial India, for instance) but are also differently resonant with colonial and postcolonial contexts in a wider comparative and global field. The seminar offers a localized, historical genealogy of the emergence of categories of sexual perversions in discourses of colonial and postcolonial rule, but it also critically thinks through contemporary debates on the intersections of race and sexuality in area studies and queer studies. Each section of my syllabus is organized around the formation of one central disciplinary discourse for regulating sexual perversions—namely, literature, anthropology, science, and law—and considers the emergence of categories of sexual perversion under different evidentiary patterns, at different historical moments, in different locales.

The graduate students in my seminars are largely from UCSC’s History of Consciousness Program and thus are almost too eager to think against the grain of disciplines and epistemologies. One stumbling block, however, continually trips up our analytic explorations: the question of race as a grid of intelligibility in non-U.S. sites. An implicit and sometimes invisible U.S. nationalism undergirds most discussions on racial formations, with students struggling even to imagine race,

not simply as a racist practice but as a form of historical analysis as varied and slippery as the multiple geographic locations they are keen to study. The special issue of *GLQ* on transnationalism a few years ago highlighted this point unwittingly, as its table of contents reflects just such multiple stresses in places as varied as China, Puerto Rico, and Brazil.<sup>6</sup> There was much debate in this issue about the cultural implications and translations of queer methodologies and concepts in these different sites, but little about how local discourses of “race” qua “race” intersect with these questions. Hence the challenge for my seminar is how to initiate interrogations of geopolitics and sexuality without disappearing questions of race, or rather, without making geopolitics interchangeable with the category of race.

I have made some rather hazardous generalizations to set up the question of foreign bodies in foreign landscapes as lodged somewhere in the interstices of these formulations on geopolitics and sexuality. One could, for instance, argue that the very category of “race” as understood within U.S. frameworks appears coercive and loses critical purchase when applied to queer movements in locations like India. Take the Campaign for Lesbian Rights in India. Drafted in 1999 following the outrage caused by the shutdown of Deepa Mehta’s film *Fire* in India, this charter goes to great lengths to position itself alongside emergent and existing queer movements globally. It emphasizes issues of oppression, solidarity, and equal rights, conjoining the identity of lesbians, among other groups, with the identity of certain religious minorities in India. Here the lexicon of racial formation is necessarily linked to multiple lexicons of religion, caste, and even literacy, making it a consideration for any geopolitical “reality tour” of the sexual cultures of India. Our goal as queer scholars and teachers is to make sexuality studies vigilantly intimate with precisely such work on race and colonialism, simultaneously disrupting and working within disciplinary and intellectual forces that would confine geopolitics and race to separate spheres.

## Notes

1. I am particularly grateful to Paola Bacchetta, Gina Dent, Geeta Patel, and Neferti Tadiar for many productive conversations on this subject. A more formal version of these conversations took place at an international workshop, “Gendered Bodies, Transnational Politics: Modernities Reconsidered,” in Cairo, December 12–14, 2003.
2. Rachel Lee, “Notes from the (Non)field: Teaching and Theorizing Women of Color,” *Meridians* 1 (2000): 85–109.

3. For a more nuanced discussion of the perils of such disciplinary erasures see Miranda Joseph, "Analogy and Complicity: Women's Studies, Lesbian/Gay Studies, and Capitalism," in *Women's Studies on Its Own: A Next Wave Reader in Institutional Change*, ed. Robyn Wiegman (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), 267–92.
4. For instance, see the excellent collection *Queer Globalizations: Citizenship and the Afterlife of Colonialism*, ed. Arnaldo Cruz-Malavé and Martin F. Manalansan IV (New York: New York University Press, 2002).
5. Joan Wallach Scott, "Feminist Reverberations," *differences* 13, no. 3 (2002): 11.
6. Elizabeth A. Povinelli and George Chauncey, eds., "Thinking Sexuality Transnationally," special issue, *GLQ* 5, no. 4 (1999).

### **Transecting the Academy**

#### ***Dean Spade and Sel Wahng***

The identity politics that underwrite many gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender discourses have proved limiting in regard to potential political alliances and social change. We address this concern by looking at the questions under consideration in this forum through a particular lens: how bodies and identities interact and intersect with modern formations of power. Through this mode of inquiry we seek to relate supposedly disparate elements for the purpose of making new social, political, and scholarly connections and transformations.

### **Modern Formations of Power**

*Dean:* For me, any answer to questions about the interrelation or separation of the study of sex, sexuality, gender, and gender identity has to start with my purpose for engaging in careful analysis about these topics to begin with. That purpose is to enable an understanding of the operation of coercive and violent systems that determine and prescribe sex, sexual practices, and gender identities and expressions for everyone. My motivation for understanding the relation between sexuality and gender, then, is to destroy that coercion, end that violence, and enable all people to determine their own sex, sexual practices, and gender identity and expression. I do not envision self-determination as the ability to express a natural, essential, preexisting or inherent sex, sexual desire, or gender identity or expression. Rather, self-determination is a means of making room for all people to navigate the complex and overlapping constructions of sexual identity, gender identity, sexual behavior, and gender expression with which we all must contend in whatever ways make the most sense to us. It is a way to end the mechanisms of coercion that

incentivize binary gender, cohesive single-gender identification and presentation, heterosexuality, monogamy, and misogyny, whether those mechanisms are intersex genital mutilation, gender-based dress codes, sex designations on birth certificates, rape, marriage promotion policies in the welfare system, gender segregation of prisons, bathroom harassment, or something else.

In combating this coercion, one inevitably stumbles across the fact that it operates in part to consolidate gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, gender, and sex all as one thing. The coercive system sets out for each of us a path that includes a sex designation at birth, matching gendered behavior and characteristics, matching heterosexual desires and behaviors, and a matching, lifelong, unchanging gender identity identical to the sex designated at birth. In this system, if I am labeled “female” at birth, I will understand myself as a woman, buy products marketed to women, walk like a woman, talk like a woman, use women’s bathrooms, and desire and have sex with men. For those of us working to combat the conditions that enforce this sex-sexuality-gender prescription, separating out sex, sexuality, gender, and gender identity is an essential part of articulating the principle that one’s birth-assigned sex should not be a predictor or indicator of one’s sexual desire, behavior, gender identity, or expression. Whether I fight for a trans person to be placed in a homeless shelter according to hir gender identity rather than hir birth gender, advocate for an intersex person who has been sexually assaulted in prison because of a setup by guards, or appeal a name-change rejection because a judge does not think that Bill should be able to change hir name to Mary until s/he has genitals that the judge identifies as “female,” a central element of my strategy is to wrestle apart these ideas of a predetermined relationship between birth sex, sexual behavior and desire, and gender identity or expression. This process of cutting the ties between birth-sex designation and expectations for all other aspects of each of our lives is, I think, the same thing we do when we fight for women to be included in a formerly all-male profession, or when we argue against the testing of low-income mothers of color for drugs in public hospitals, or when we try to decriminalize sex work or queer sex.

It is impossible to imagine studying these categories truly separately, just as it is difficult or impossible for people to examine their own gender, sex, sexual desire or practice, or gender identity and not see them as having mutually constitutive, overlapping, and connecting relations with each other. It is essential, however, that the distinction we draw between these aspects of identity and expression be clear enough for us to create a politics in which these characteristics do not rigidly determine one another as part of a coercive binary gender system.

*Sel:* Yes, gender is different from sexuality, although they are inextricably connected. The fields that study them need to distinguish them more and more precisely in order for us to think about the intersection of gender and sexuality in more complex ways. If the distinction between gender and sexuality is not developed, the intersections between them also cannot be developed.

Transgender/transsexual (tg/tx) identities may be different from gay/lesbian/bisexual (g/l/b) identities because of the particular ways that tg/tx people interact with institutions and modern formations of power.<sup>1</sup> In “Identity and Cultural Studies” Lawrence Grossberg writes that the discourse of identity needs to be relocated and rearticulated within the context of modern formations of power that move beyond reactionary models to oppression. Both the “colonial model” of oppressor and oppressed and the “transgression model” of oppression and resistance operate under a modernist logic. These models are not only inappropriate to contemporary relations of power but unable to create alliances and interpellate various fractions of a population in different relations of power for the purpose of effecting social and political change.<sup>2</sup>

This does not mean that tg/tx identities have more intensive or privileged engagements to modern formations of power than g/l/b identities; it means that the relations of tg/tx identities to specific modern formations of power, such as medical and legal institutions, may be different. For instance, in the academy “drag performance” has often been collapsed with “transgender” identities; the performance of drag has sometimes been viewed as “the transgender identity” par excellence. However, it is useful to consider how various identities intersect and interact with modern formations of power. Drag performers may have a larger investment in zoning ordinances and licensing of nightclubs in which to perform, while tg/tx people may be more invested in legal and medical reform concerning name and birth-sex changes, hormone replacement therapy, or surgery.

Furthermore, gay and lesbian discourse has often fallen into the colonial model and/or the transgression model in addressing the “oppression” of heterosexuality, even invoking such terms as *queer nationalism*. This usage has never been acceptable to me because of the modernist logics of binary opposition within an arborescent schema that inform such “nationalist” approaches within the European/American ideological plane of transcendence.<sup>3</sup> In my own work I have often racialized gay and lesbian discourses. The addition of race has often complicated the oppositional logic that undergirds so many aspects of gay and lesbian discourses and their approaches to sexuality.

## Scholarship

*Dean:* We all face the consequences of living in a capitalist, binary gender-enforcing context, where impossible standards of masculinity, femininity, and wealth keep us consistently punished and punishing for gender variation, consistently exploited, greedy, and vilifying the poor. As I see every day at work and know from my own experiences, however, those of us who transgress gender norms more noticeably, who exist farther from permitted expressions and behaviors, face more dire consequences. Trans people have a murder rate seven to ten times higher than others, and our murders go uninvestigated. We are disproportionately homeless, poor, and incarcerated. I am interested in seeing academic work and radical gender and sexuality analyses relevant to those living at the injurious extremes of the capitalist/binary gender systems. Feminist economic analysis has exposed the misogynist underpinnings of welfare policy, employment practices, and advertising, and I am ready for an extension of this critique to the gender segregation of the institutions and practices that control poor people (shelters, group homes, foster care, mandatory drug treatment, jails, prisons). I am ready for deep interrogation of the utter failure of HIV policy to address the skyrocketing rates of HIV in trans communities and the horrendous lack of treatment for these communities.<sup>4</sup> I am ready for feminist and antiprison scholars to develop real analysis of the widespread use of false arrest against trans people and the use of trans people themselves, in prisons and institutions of juvenile justice, as targets for violence and as examples to other inmates of the consequences of transgressing gender norms. In my day-to-day work and in my life, I crave information about why and how low-income people and people who transgress gender norms continually fall to the lowest levels of our economy, medical care systems, systems of “rehabilitation,” educational systems, and so on. But we are likely to see less and less of that analysis the more our educational systems are privatized, affirmative action programs are dismantled, and financial aid is restricted (particularly for people with drug convictions), and the more prison expansion takes young people out of educational processes.

*Sel:* I want to discuss how scholarship has often reified staid definitions of “women” and “sexuality” and how these definitions have resulted in the erasure or collapse of unique cultural specificities, including racial performativities. According to Chandra T. Mohanty, “women” are constructed through specific social relations. Mohanty also critiques the assumption and imposition of the category of “women” *before* the examination of actual social sites and lived relations.<sup>5</sup> If women are indeed constructed through specific social relations, then it would follow that other

types of gendered identities can also emerge through the examination of actual social sites and lived relations—what George Chauncey Jr. would term the “richly textured evidence” provided through ethnographic research, archival data, personal narratives, and other types of information gathering.<sup>6</sup>

In my own work on Korean sex slaves for the Japanese military during World War II, I have noticed how superficial scholarly analysis often renders them as examples of “colonized women” and victims of “wartime rape.”<sup>7</sup> Closer study, however, reveals that they actually inhabited gendered territory beyond the culturally specific definitions of “women.” Although born female, they were configured as subhuman entities with superhuman strength—as Amazons and “sanitary toilets”—in the Japanese nationalist imaginary.<sup>8</sup> They were also subject to a process of militarized “bastardization” that entailed physical, verbal, and emotional abuse and medical interventions that rendered their bodies barren. In fact, the rape of Korean female bodies was construed as a sexually nonreproductive act, and since most sex slaves were raped from thirty to sixty times a day, every day, often for years, physical strength and endurance became associated with sexual penetrability. A detailed examination of testimonies, narratives, and accounts by former sex slaves reveals additional evidence of their gendered marginalization. This included the defeminized utterances of “man,” “guy,” and “bastard” as terms of denigration by Japanese soldiers during acts of sexual and physical violence on sex slaves; the use of weekly No. 606 injections that transformed once-female bodies into nonreproductive entities construed as “sanitary toilets”;<sup>9</sup> the provision of masculine military clothing as the “uniform” for sex slaves; the defeminized, diseased, and scarred sex slave bodies unable to participate in heterosexual institutions—such as marriage, functional family units, and sexual reproduction—after the war; and the masculinized “homogenderal” alliances between Korean sex slaves and Korean male soldiers and sailors drafted into the Japanese Imperial Army.<sup>10</sup>

In contrast, Japanese women, including Japanese military prostitutes during World War II, were for the most part represented and representable as reproductive, feminine supports for the reification of Japanese masculinity within the field of civility comprised by Japanese nationalism. Because Korean sex slaves were reterritorialized as subhuman, they were factored out of an economy in which representable and recognizable genders circulated within Korean as well as Japanese fields of civility and respectability. In fact, several former sex slaves attest that they do not experience their gender as similar to that of “other women” who have not undergone sex slavery and militarized bastardization.

As Mohanty has stated, Third World feminist testimonials remember against the grain of “public” or hegemonic history, locating silences and asserting knowledge outside the parameters of the dominant. As discursive productions, the testimonials of former military sex slaves suggest a rethinking of sociality itself. Through their discursive production, then, they challenge the most fundamental meanings of race and gender.<sup>11</sup>

I have found the application of transgender/transsexual paradigms particularly useful in my work on Korean military sex slavery and on gendered marginalization and unrepresentability. These paradigms enable a context in which not only the definition of *woman* but also that of *heterosexuality* is challenged. In U.S. gay and lesbian discourses, heterosexuality has often been associated with marriage, nuclear family formation, legal and social recognition, civility, and respectability. How is this definition of heterosexuality, and of sexuality itself, challenged through the examination of repetitive “heterosexual” rapes of adolescent and teenage female bodies that were deliberately rendered sexually nonreproductive in a highly managed institutional framework?

Furthermore, the imposition of “woman” by U.S. feminist paradigms often erases or obscures specific racial performativities. It is only through an interrogation of racial performativities, however, that the gender performativities of Korean sex slaves can fully emerge. The sex slaves, subjected to military bastardization, directly experienced the contested meanings of race, racism, and gender with their bodies.

In examining transgender/transsexual paradigms in relation to Korean military sex slavery, another important consideration is the resonance between the body and intensive engagements with modern formations of power as semiotization through “body-reflexive practice.”<sup>12</sup> There is an “intelligence” to this design whereby the body must engage with specific institutions for a fuller semiotization. For Korean sex slaves, engagement with legal institutions made possible the fuller articulation of their experiences through testimonies and personal narratives.<sup>13</sup> Before 1991 there was no knowledge of their experiences outside a few very specific circles in Korea and Japan. Former sex slaves encountered enormous skepticism regarding their experiences during World War II in both South Korea and Japan; they also encountered denial by the Japanese government. On August 14, 1991, Kim Hak Sun, a former sex slave, announced her willingness to testify publicly about her experiences. On December 6, 1991, Kim was joined by two other former sex slaves, who filed a lawsuit against the Japanese government. This lawsuit, widely reported around the world, inspired Yoshimi Yoshiaki, a Japanese pro-

fessor, to investigate and provide irrefutable evidence that the Japanese military was responsible for the sex slavery system.<sup>14</sup> By January 12, 1992, almost forty-seven years after World War II, the fact of military sex slavery was finally acknowledged internationally.

An engagement with modern formations of power, therefore, allows and expresses fuller semiotization through body-reflexive practice. The previous political negotiations and attempts to resolve World War II filtered through nationalist interests and impulses—such as the Tokyo war trials at the end of the war, the San Francisco Peace Treaty of 1952 between Japan and the Allies, and the Japanese–South Korean Basic Treaty of 1965—did not allow for this semiotization of military sex slave experiences, narratives, and testimonies.

This fuller semiotization through body-reflexive practice also contributes to the rethinking of sociality itself. Kim's preliminary lawsuit was followed by additional lawsuits and acknowledgment, which have opened up further spaces of articulation that enable the expression of other experiences once considered "beyond humanity."

### Personal Investments

*Sel:* Reflecting on semiotization through body-reflexive practice and engagements with modern formations of power allows me to think of my own identity as a trans person. I have benefited from many legal and medical reforms, although there is still a lot of work to do in these areas. I am also aware that many of these benefits arise from my particular class, education, and citizenship statuses.

As someone who legally changed his name in 1999 (for racial reasons) and again in the spring of 2004 (for gender reasons), I understand that distinct resonances accompany such a change. For me, a legal name change is about being entitled to and receiving recognition on personal, social, political, and institutional levels. It is a great comfort to me that I can effect such breadth and depth of gendered recognition. And it is far more comforting to me than the repetition of a "nickname" with no accompanying legal change, no matter how long or how often that repetition occurs.

I also want to discuss briefly what it has been like for me to undergo testosterone supplementation. When I started my transition in 2001, I was lucky to be living in New York City and to be able to go to the Callen-Lorde Community Health Center. After a screening, I was given a prescription for testosterone and for needles. My health care provider also gave me the option of taking testosterone at full or reduced doses (often referred to as "lo-ho," for "lower doses of hormones").

I chose the latter primarily for health reasons. At this lower dose, which I can vary, I am a nonpassing or semipassing transsexual—it depends on how much testosterone I take over a given amount of time.

It was and still is profound for me that my transition was medically sanctioned because the U.S. medical field, in general, has historically been heavily invested in maintaining gender binaries. Yet several medical centers facilitated my transition to an identity and a body that do not fit into a gender binary and are unrecognizable in many heterosexual, homosexual, and even some transgender circles. Furthermore, the Callen-Lorde Community Health Center taught me how to self-inject, which allowed me greater independence in my transition. I was given a limitless prescription for twenty-three-gauge needles, and I have been given multiple six-month prescriptions for testosterone by doctors over the past three years in New York, Texas, and Rhode Island. I derive a certain sense of power and freedom from knowing that my transition as a lo-ho transsexual has been sanctioned by medical institutions in three vastly different states.

I have always been highly skeptical of medical institutions, yet during my transition I have found myself intensively engaged with them in ways that are new to me. My relative success with these institutions indicates to me that there is room for greater reform and partnership with medical institutions, and institutions in general, than I had previously considered.

*Dean:* Your discussion of how the Korean sex slaves were recognized and their stories amplified through legal action, and how that history connects with your narrative about your own transition, brings up some core issues that I face as an advocate and a scholar regarding decisions to use or not use autobiographical information about my transition in my work. One of the most glaring manifestations of transphobia in our culture is the obsessive focus on trans people's bodies and surgical statuses, which supports the principle that it is up to nontrans people, who are afraid of being fooled, to decide whether trans people are "legit." To the extent that trans people appear in mainstream media, it is usually by way of a formulaic reference to a straight man tricked by a beautiful woman who turns out to be "really" a man. Even in purportedly fact-based journalism, trans people are more often than not referred to by pronouns associated with our birth genders, by our birth names, and by our surgical status. In the first five minutes of any interaction with journalists who are aware that I am trans—no matter that what they are calling to ask me is utterly not about me but about the state of the law or a case I am working on or an activist endeavor I am part of—they ask me about my own surgical status and about how long I have been transgender.

I strongly believe in the power of personal narrative and autobiography to ground scholarship and activism, but I am also concerned about the extreme focus on trans bodies and the use of trans bodies (and histories) as evidence of the legitimacy of trans gender identities. As we trans people have been forced to mold our personal narratives to match the conservative and gender-norm-producing institutional medical narratives about us in order to access the medical interventions we seek for our bodies, we have often been accused of constructing those medical narratives and propping up conservative notions of gender. As a community, we have been trapped in the bind that if we do not convince our doctors (often over the course of years of therapy) that we believe in normative binary gender and that we seek to pass as norm-abiding nontrans men and women, we are denied access to the technologies of body modification that we desire. At the same time, when these legitimizing narratives are propped up, trans people are widely accused of defending normative and oppressive constructions of gender.<sup>15</sup>

It is perhaps even more disturbing for me that legal understandings of transgender people have followed medical constructions, so that our quests for legal recognition or equality remain tied to our medical statuses. For us to be recognized in our gender identities for the purposes of identity documents (passports, birth certificates, driver's licenses), marriage (which raises the issues of inheritance, child custody and visitation, immigration, and health benefits), placement in sex-segregated facilities (bathrooms, prisons, jails, homeless shelters, group homes, drug treatment facilities), and so much more, courts and administrative agencies demand detailed evidence about our bodies and our conformity to medical standards of binary gender. While any recognition of our gender identities at all is a welcome improvement, I am deeply concerned about any aspect of or struggle for liberation that involves adopting or affirming legal and medical definitions of binary gender that privilege people whose bodies "match" their identities according to those standards and/or who desire or can afford treatments that would create such uniformity.<sup>16</sup>

The overdetermined relationship between our rights to medical care and legal recognition and our abilities to produce medically sanctioned narratives about our histories and bodies worries me. A central purpose of my work is to achieve a world in which people are recognized for what they say they are and in which the state is stripped of the power to determine or compel a person's gender identity or expression. Thus I am cautious about using information about my own transition or body for fear of participating in an exercise whereby I am more or less "real" depending on how much medical recognition and intervention I have undergone.<sup>17</sup> At the same time, I have used personal narrative in some of my writing,

particularly to expose the operations of norm-producing and coercive medical and legal practices. Overall, though, I think that trans people need to make sure that even during our rare moments of legal and medical recognition we keep our eye on a broader goal, which is the deregulation of gender, and keep our alliance with those people who, because of class-based access issues related to trans medical care, still cannot achieve the most basic recognition of their gender identities. We need to remember that most of us are still living in homeless shelters where we are forbidden to wear clothing associated with our gender identities; are in jails and prisons where we are placed on the basis of birth gender and face terrible violence; are in low-wage jobs or engaged in illegal work because of discrimination in employment; are struggling to get by without a high school education because of severe harassment and illegal expulsions based on gender identity and expression; and are being rejected from hospitals and doctors because we are trans. We need to make sure that those who live under the most serious duress and in the most dangerous circumstances as a consequence of the binary gender system are at the forefront of our struggles for liberation, and that our victories include and centralize their issues. This understanding requires a vision beyond the simple recognition of our gender identities by medical and legal institutions within binary models—a vision of gender self-determination for all people.

## Notes

We thank Lynn Comella for comments on this essay.

1. Although some scholars situate *transgender* as different from, and even oppositional to, *transsexual*, I use *transgender/transsexual* to refer to intersecting and/or mutually informing identities and communities. This term emerges from my own experiences and observations in tg/tx communities and events, including the American Boyz, the annual True Spirit conference, female-to-male (FTM) and tg/tx support groups in New York City; Boston; Austin, Texas; and Providence, Rhode Island; and the symposium “Transecting the Academy.”
2. Lawrence Grossberg, “Identity and Cultural Studies: Is That All There Is?” in *Questions of Cultural Identity*, ed. Stuart Hall and Paul du Gay (London: Sage, 1996), 96.
3. In *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 4–5, 70–71, 270–71, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari discuss multiplicity within arborescent schemas versus rhizomatic schemas. The plane of transcendence, as a plane of organization and development, only allows recognition of certain perceptions, whereas the plane of consistency also allows for perceptions that are not recognizable within the plane of transcendence. For

- a discussion of the European/American gender ideology see R. W. Connell, *Masculinities* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995), 185–203.
4. While transgender people remain understudied in all areas, including HIV/AIDS, some staggering statistics have been gathered about HIV in the male-to-female (MTF) population (FTM people are almost completely ignored by researchers in all areas, including health). One large-scale study in San Francisco put MTF women of color in the highest-risk category, with seroprevalence as high as 63 percent in the subpopulation of African American MTF women (K. Clements-Nolle et al., “HIV Prevalence, Risk Behaviors, Health Care Use, and Mental Health Status of Transgender Persons: Implications for Public Health Intervention,” *American Journal of Public Health* 91 [2001]: 915–21). While no study has been conducted in New York, a needs assessment conducted there suggests similarly high numbers (Kelly McGowan, *Transgender Needs Assessment* [New York: New York City Department of Health, HIV Prevention Planning Unit, 1999], 4). The San Francisco study also found that fewer than half of the trans women who knew that they were HIV positive were receiving medical care.
  5. Chandra T. Mohanty, “Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses,” in *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism*, ed. Chandra T. Mohanty, Ann Russo, and Lourdes Torres (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 51–56.
  6. George Chauncey Jr., “Christian Brotherhood or Sexual Perversion? Homosexual Identities and the Construction of Sexual Boundaries in the World War I Era,” in *Hidden from History: Reclaiming the Gay and Lesbian Past*, ed. Martin Baum Duberman, Martha Vicinus, and George Chauncey Jr. (New York: Penguin, 1990), 312–13.
  7. Approximately two hundred thousand military sex slaves, sometimes referred to as “comfort women,” were conscripted from East and Southeast Asian countries, 80–90 percent of them from Korea. Virginal females were targeted, some as young as eleven. Most came from the lowest class of Koreans, where the poor, uneducated, rural, and female intersected (see David Andrew Schmidt, *Ianfu—the Comfort Women of the Japanese Imperial Army of the Pacific War* [Lewiston, NY: Mellen, 2000]; Chin Sung Chung, “The Origin and Development of the Military Sexual Slavery Problem in Imperial Japan,” *positions* 5 [1997]: 219–54; George Hicks, *The Comfort Women: Japan’s Brutal Regime of Enforced Prostitution in the Second World War* [New York: Norton, 1995]; and John Dower, *War without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War* [New York: Pantheon, 1986]). For discussion of the ambiguity of the euphemistic *comfort women* and the alternative term *military sex slaves*, see Chung, “Origin and Development.” Like Chung, I prefer the latter term because of the experiential, social, and semiotic specificities that a gender-neutral term makes possible and because such a term also avoids the foreclosures that the gendered term *women* may cause. For this piece I had originally used the term *Korean military sex slaves*, in which *Korean* was the adjective and *military sex slave* the noun. However, after a recent visit to South

Korea (Republic of Korea), where I presented some of this research, it became clear that in this highly militarized social field, there is an inextricable link between a nation-state modifier and the term *military*. Since 1950 the U.S. military has been such a dominant presence in the Korean social field that *U.S.* and *military* are inevitably linked. The terms *U.S. military prostitutes* and *American military prostitutes*, therefore, refer not to military prostitutes who are American but to Korean prostitutes who serve the U.S. military. Thus many Korean scholars were confused by my term and thought that *Korean military sex slaves* might be misinterpreted as sex slaves for the Korean military. Some suggestions were offered, such as using *Korean sex slaves for the Japanese military*; however, I find it somewhat unwieldy to use this as a constantly repeated term and have therefore shortened it to *Korean sex slaves* throughout the rest of this piece. I use this latter term reluctantly, because it elides the militarization component, a fundamental aspect of this cultural phenomenon. I am also concerned about the confusion that U.S. readers may experience with *sex slaves*, since this term is often used in the context of sadomasochist practices in certain U.S. social fields, which may include the readership of this journal.

8. In general, Korean sex slaves were raped much more frequently than sex slaves of other races and ethnicities. Because of Japan's colonial history with Korea, a mythology had developed in which both male and female Koreans were viewed as possessing superior physical prowess, which made them ideal for intensive labor needs. Because Japan did not have a mythology in regard to the physical capabilities of other Asian races and ethnicities, the physical stamina of non-Korean sex slaves was seen as an unknown, and thus non-Korean sex slaves were raped less. The only forcibly recruited non-Asian sex slaves were Dutch women living in Indonesia, then a Dutch colony known as the Dutch East Indies. As Europeans, Dutch sex slaves were raped far less frequently than Asian sex slaves and were forced to serve only officers, not the rank and file. This reflected Japan's paradoxical relationship as an Asian nation that had desperately sought to divorce itself from Asia and to be accepted among the Western imperial powers. Because they served only officers, Dutch sex slaves were actually at the top of the military sex slave hierarchy, alongside Japanese military prostitutes, who also served only officers. See Chungmoo Choi, "Introduction," *positions* 5 (1997): ix; Hicks, *Comfort Women*, 41, 71, 113; Schmidt, *Ianfu*, 90; and Dower, *War without Mercy*, 263–90.
9. Korean sex slaves were called such masculine-inflected epithets as *konoyaro*, *bakayaro*, and *kisamayaro* during sexual and physical violence. When translated, these terms have several meanings, including masculine-inflected "bastard," male "rogue," male "rascal," "man," and "guy" (see Dae-il Kim, Yoon-shim Kim, and Pil-gi Moon, quoted in Sangmie Choi Schellstede, ed., *Comfort Women Speak: Testimony by Sex Slaves of the Japanese Military* [New York: Holmes and Meier, 2000], 26–27, 45, 66; Hak Sun Kim, quoted in Schmidt, *Ianfu*, 120; Kaneko [pseud.], quoted in Schmidt,

*Ianfu*, 122; Omok Oh, "I Thought I Was Going to a Textile Factory," in *True Stories of the Korean Comfort Women*, ed. Keith Howard, trans. Young Joo Lee [New York: Cassell, 1995], 66; Yi Yang-su, quoted in Hyun Sook Kim, "History and Memory: The 'Comfort Women' Controversy," *positions* 5 [1997]: 97; Seigo Nakao, *Random House Japanese-English and English-Japanese Dictionary* [New York: Ballantine, 1995], 15, 135, 260; and Richard C. Goris and Yukimi Okubo, *HarperCollins Shubun Pocket English-Japanese Dictionary* [New York: HarperCollins, 1993], 224, 434). No. 606 was a mercury-based antibiotic, probably Salvarsan (Chung, "Origin and Development," 229, 250; Schmidt, *Ianfu*, 90), that was believed to prevent pregnancy by rendering female bodies barren. It was also believed to cure venereal disease and to induce abortions.

10. *Homogenderal* refers to same or similar gender identities, presentations, and/or performativities in a given social or couple formation. See Lillian Faderman, *Odd Girls and Twilight Lovers: A History of Lesbian Life in Twentieth-Century America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 173–74.
11. Chandra T. Mohanty, introduction to Mohanty, Russo, and Torres, *Third World Women*, 32–39.
12. Connell proposes "body-reflexive practice" as a framework for understanding masculinities that can be applied to all genders. In body-reflexive practice, bodies are seen as sharing in social agency, in generating and shaping courses of social conduct. Bodies are both objects and agents of practice, and the practice itself forms structures in which bodies are appropriated and defined. Body-reflexive practices are not internal to the individual but involve social relations, symbolism, and large-scale social institutions. Yet the materiality of bodies continues to matter. Through body-reflexive practice, a social world is formed that has a bodily dimension but is not biologically determined (*Masculinities*, 59–65).
13. In 1948 thirteen Japanese soldiers were punished, and three of them executed, by the Dutch Batavia Court for forcing Dutch women in Indonesia to serve as sex slaves. Between fifty-two and one hundred Dutch women had been forced into sex slavery. However, no charges were brought before the Tokyo war crimes tribunal, led by the United States, concerning the sexual enslavement of some two hundred thousand Asian females. The U.S. Army had known about the sex slavery at this time; indeed, some Allied soldiers had raped Asian sex slaves at the end of the war. But Western humanism, the philosophical basis of the Nuremberg and Batavia trials, assumed that Asians did not belong to the category of humanity and thus did not merit justice or reparation (Choi, "Introduction," vi; see also Hicks, *Comfort Women*, 168–69).
14. It is important to consider how this fuller semiotization through body-reflexive practice also allows for new political alliances. Yoshimi's contributions cut across the segregated nationalist and identificatory interests of Japan and South Korea. I do not want to set up another simplistic "colonial model" relationship between oppressor and

- oppressed in my examination of Korean sex slaves. The complicity of Koreans themselves needs to be addressed, alongside alliances—what Deleuze and Guattari term “line-blocks of becoming” in *A Thousand Plateaus*—that deterritorialize nationalist stratifications. I address both concerns in a more extensive elaboration of my analysis.
15. See Dean Spade, “Resisting Medicine, Re/modeling Gender,” *Berkeley Women’s Law Journal* 18 (2003): 15–37; and Spade, “Mutilating Gender,” *Makezine*, Spring 2000, [www.makezine.org/mutilate.html](http://www.makezine.org/mutilate.html).
  16. Sex-reassignment-related medical care remains excluded from Medicaid coverage in most states and excluded from most private insurance plans, and trans-friendly or even trans-accessible medical care is rare or impossible to find in most communities. For those who cannot afford medical transition or find appropriate care—arguably the majority of trans people, considering how disproportionately low-income our communities are due to widespread discrimination—the few avenues of legal recognition are not accessible.
  17. One misuse of my personal narrative occurred in the May 2, 2003, *Guardian* article “I’m a Girl—Just Call Me ‘He’: Hip New York Lesbians are Calling Themselves Boys. So Could It Happen Here? Asks Stephanie Theobald.” In this disrespectful, factually incorrect article, Theobald continually uses female pronouns to refer to the trans men she describes, but she uses male pronouns (once with scare quotes) to describe me after noting that I have undergone chest surgery. Her choice to distinguish me in that way, and to recognize my gender identity selectively while mocking the fact that the other trans men she describes prefer male pronouns, tracks the typical transphobic journalistic strategy of respecting trans people’s gender identities only when they are legitimized by medical evidence. I am not interested in participating in the production of hierarchies of realness among trans people or in the notion that gender identity is tied to anatomical structures. Given the state of journalism about trans issues, the use of autobiographical facts about me to support oppressive understandings of gender is both inevitable and regrettable.

## **From Gender to Sexuality and Back Again: Notes on the Politics of Sexual Knowledge**

**Arlene Stein**

For the past fifteen years I have taught the sociology of sexuality at different universities on the West Coast, in Britain, and now on the eastern seaboard. Spurred by this invitation from *GLQ*, I sat down with a bunch of my old syllabi and began to reflect on how my own conceptualization of the field has shifted. A syllabus is, after all, a snapshot of a field, an attempt to organize disciplinary knowledge for oneself and for others. I wanted to subject my own biases, interests, and predilections to self-examination. How had I understood the terrain of the sociology of sexuality? How had my understanding changed over time? What political, intellectual, and personal trends had informed my views? What did it all mean?

With the syllabi laid out before me, I could not help but note some striking patterns that had to do with how the courses I taught conceptualized gender, sexuality, and the relationship between them. Sometimes I had lumped gender and sexuality together, emphasizing their similarities and points of overlap. At other times I had split them apart, emphasizing their differences. This should not be all that surprising. Sociologists tell us that as humans we are always engaged in classifying things—deciding what ought to go together and what ought to be separate. We are always drawing conceptual distinctions between things we perceive as different (such as the Danish and Norwegian languages) and grouping together things we consider similar (such as grapefruit juice and orange juice). Since the world we live in is “essentially continuous,” these cognitive distinctions are always somewhat arbitrary. Nonetheless, we are participants in “thought communities” that prompt us to carve up reality in this fashion.<sup>1</sup>

For example, today we see homosexuality and transgenderism as conceptually distinct: homosexuality is a matter of sexuality, transgenderism one of gender. But in the not-too-distant past, thanks to the efforts of sexologists and psychoanalysts, homosexuality and transgenderism were generally lumped under the rubric of gender inversion—men trapped in women’s bodies, women trapped in men’s bodies—which led to the popular association of male homosexuality with effeminacy and so forth. So lumping and splitting has a long history in relation to our understandings of gender and sexuality.

In the early 1980s, when I was a young graduate student at Berkeley, my studies in sexuality were heavily influenced by “difference feminism.” Adrienne Rich’s notion that a “lesbian continuum” connected all women was pivotal, as was Gayle Rubin’s notion of a “sex-gender system,” roughly defined as a set of arrange-

ments by which a society transforms biological sexuality into products of human activity.<sup>2</sup> Cultural feminism came to dominate much of the women's movement, along with its tendency to lump together gender and sexuality, subsume the latter under the former, and view the "problem" of sexuality—compulsory heterosexuality, violence against women, and pornography, among other issues—as mainly a woman's problem, or at least one that could best be understood from a woman's standpoint.

I myself was never comfortable with this formulation—and, as it turned out, I was not alone. Sex radicals were mounting spirited assaults on feminists' sexual politics, the AIDS crisis was leading many women to reassess their feelings about gay men, and lesbian feminists were discovering that there were as many divisions among them as similarities. So when Rubin called in 1984 for a conceptual "splitting" of gender and sexuality, her words spoke to many of us. "Gender," she wrote, "affects the operation of the sexual system . . . but although sex and gender are related, they are not the same thing, and they form the basis of two distinct areas of social practice." Lesbian feminist ideology had seen "the oppression of lesbians in terms of the oppression of women," she argued. However, "lesbians are also oppressed as queers and perverts by the operation of sexual, not gender stratifications."<sup>3</sup>

Rubin's article (along with Michel Foucault's *History of Sexuality* and George Chauncey Jr.'s "From Sexual Inversion to Homosexuality") struck a chord, unsettling orthodoxies and leading many of us to begin to think of sexual identities as related to, but analytically separate from, gender identities.<sup>4</sup> It helped us theorize lesbian desire and moved many lesbians to align themselves with gay men and other sexual "minorities." At the University of Essex and the University of Oregon, I began to teach "Sociology of Homosexuality," a course that examined the social construction of lesbian and gay identities and communities and looked at the origins of the concept of "the homosexual" and the development of a culture and community around that concept.

I liked the fact that I had more men in my classes—after all, they needed to learn this stuff as much as (or more than) women—and that I was providing lesbians and gay men with a safe space for discussing issues of importance to their lives. Yet these courses always seemed to get mired in identity politics: straight students and students with ambiguous sexual identities often felt less empowered to speak, and students without a particular investment in gay and lesbian issues shied away from the courses. In focusing on homosexuality, these courses inadvertently reproduced heteronormativity.

My doubts were reinforced outside the classroom. In the 1990s I lived in a state bitterly divided on the issue of gay rights. As the Christian Right mounted a series of ballot initiatives opposing “abnormal and perverse behaviors,” many well-intentioned liberals embraced highly essentialist understandings of homosexuality that failed, ultimately, to pose a viable challenge to their homophobic politic. In one small Oregon community where I spent two years speaking to people on both sides of the conflict, heterosexuals defended the civil rights of their gay neighbors by suggesting that “they just couldn’t help it.” Yet this argument, which claimed that the boundaries separating the homo and hetero worlds were fixed and impermeable, did not move those who had been convinced by Christian conservative moralism. In many respects, the religious traditionalists, however reprehensible their politics, had a more nuanced understanding of desire as shifting and unwieldy. I began to rethink my conviction that lesbians and gay men could—or should—be seen as a kind of loosely bounded ethnic group.<sup>5</sup>

I also had some lingering misgivings about how gay and lesbian studies often split gender from sexuality and focused on the latter—partly in response to feminists’ earlier tendency to lump the two. I began to rethink my own analytic splitting of gender and sexuality. At the end of my courses I typically discussed the challenges posed by butch-femme activists, transgendered people, and queer theorists to our understanding of sexuality—until I could no longer relegate those challenges to the end. R. W. Connell, Nancy J. Chodorow, and others were theorizing multiple masculinities and femininities, and queer theorists were problematizing all kinds of sexual and gender categories.<sup>6</sup> Everything seemed up for grabs. By 2000 I was back to lumping, or at least doing a kind of self-reflexive lumping.

While I certainly support the continued growth and development of lesbian and gay studies in all its myriad forms, for now my preference is to teach courses titled “Sociology of Sexuality and Gender,” which conceptualize gender and sexuality as separate *and* related categories. In mixing the sociology of heterosexuality and homosexuality with feminist debates about sexuality and queer theories, such courses take seriously the challenges that transgendered scholars and activists pose to binary understandings of sex and gender and to the ways that they point to different ways of living in our bodies.

In my courses at Rutgers University, I try to gender sexuality and sexualize gender while being self-conscious about when I am lumping and when I am splitting them. To get students to do the same, during the first session I introduce concepts of sex, gender, and sexuality and explain that they are linked but analytically distinct. The course simultaneously tells two stories: the first, more empirical in emphasis, examines social scientific studies of gender and sexuality; the

second, more theoretical and historical, provides a genealogy of gender and sexual categories. It is a lot to cover in one semester, but I find that this approach better suits the subject matter, avoids many of the pitfalls of identity politics in the classroom, and attracts straight as well as gay students, along with students who situate themselves somewhere along the continuum.

Gender and sexuality are arbitrary but necessary cognitive categories that have the power to define, organize, and shape the way we see and experience the world—as Jeffrey Weeks puts it, they are “necessary fictions.”<sup>7</sup> As categories, they are fundamentally limiting, but we cannot live without them. As queer educators, who have been marginalized on the basis of these categories, we have a particular investment in challenging hegemonic conceptions. Yet our perspectives, much like the ones we imagine ourselves opposed to, are always partial and incomplete, embedded in our own time, place, and biographies. Our challenge is to recognize how these categories shape our understandings of the world, while doing our utmost to seize control of their means of reproduction.

## Notes

1. Eviatar Zerubavel, “Lumping and Splitting: Notes on Social Classification,” *Sociological Forum* 11 (1996): 421, 427. See also Geoffrey C. Bowker and Susan Leigh Star, *Sorting Things Out: Classification and Its Consequences* (Cambridge, MA: MIT, 1999).
2. Adrienne Rich, “Compulsory Heterosexuality and the Lesbian Continuum,” in *Blood, Bread, and Poetry: Selected Prose, 1979–1985* (New York: Norton, 1986), 23–75; Gayle Rubin, “The Traffic in Women: Notes on the ‘Political Economy’ of Sex,” in *Toward an Anthropology of Women*, ed. Rayna R. Reiter (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1975), 157–210.
3. Gayle Rubin, “Thinking Sex: Notes for a Radical Theory of the Politics of Sexuality,” in *Pleasure and Danger: Exploring Female Sexuality*, ed. Carole S. Vance (Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984), 132.
4. Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, trans. Robert Hurley, 3 vols. (New York: Pantheon, 1978–86); George Chauncey Jr., “From Sexual Inversion to Homosexuality: Medicine and the Changing Conceptualization of Female Deviance,” *Salmagundi*, nos. 58–59 (1982–83): 114–46.
5. Arlene Stein, *The Stranger Next Door: The Story of a Small Community’s Battle over Sex, Faith, and Civil Rights* (Boston: Beacon, 2001).
6. R. W. Connell, *Masculinities* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995); Nancy J. Chodorow, *Femininities, Masculinities, Sexualities: Freud and Beyond* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1994).
7. Jeffrey Weeks, *Invented Moralities: Sexual Values in an Age of Uncertainty* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995).

**"Oh, the fun we'll have":**

**Remembering the Prospects for Sexuality Studies**

**Heather K. Love**

Perhaps the most insidious aspect of academic life is the constant pressure to be interesting. Seen a movie you like? Why not write an article about it? Read something exciting in the paper? Maybe you could post it on the class Web site. Alongside the track of idle musings that has played in my head forever, a hideous second track now demands, "Couldn't you use that somehow?" The deliciously dull thoughts that used to hang around the back lots of my mind now spend a lot of time in front of the mirror, tricking themselves up as "points." Once they all emerge fully into the light of day, I think I will be boring in earnest.

The need to transform musing into "material" threatens to drain all the pleasure from life. However, the fact that we find ourselves in this situation cannot simply be blamed on the forces of professionalization. Rather, we let ourselves in for trouble by our marked preference for the life of the mind, notorious for its stranglehold on the life of the body. The tendency to displace upward is particularly loaded for those of us in queer studies. It is bad enough when people say, "Those who can, do; those who can't, teach." For those of us "working on sexuality," it can be downright embarrassing. What, we can't even have fun doing that?

Unfortunately, I know this trouble more intimately than I would like. In thinking over my own sexual history, for example, I have to admit that I remember the moment of discovering "sexuality" as an object of knowledge more vividly and with more enthusiasm than I remember the moment of discovering "my sexuality." At that time, I had sex, but I did not yet have sexuality—that is, sexuality was not available to me as an axis of intellectual inquiry. What I did have was gender. Feminism went a certain way toward helping me understand lesbianism as a cultural phenomenon and as a mode of desire, but I kept running up against questions I could not answer, problems I could not explain. I had languished in my failure to make sense of these questions for several years when sexuality came into my life. Early work in gay, lesbian, and queer studies showed me, and many others, that it was not just women's literature I was interested in; this work gave me license to pursue my specific interest in desire between women and in the history of lesbian representation without apology.

What made this moment especially thrilling was that this early work was so fun to read. I had glimpsed the potential of critical writing about sex in the work of people like Roland Barthes, Cherríe Moraga, and Jane Gallop, but the birth of queer studies as a discipline in its own right promised an infinite expansion of

pleasure and knowledge. I remember picking up Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's *Epistemology of the Closet* for the first time and thinking, "This is going to be great."

In drawing attention to the "potential for rearrangement, ambiguity, and representational doubleness" of sexuality, Sedgwick glamorized a new object of knowledge for a generation of scholars. Like many others, she argued for the necessity of seeing sexuality as distinct from gender, but she did so by insisting on the weird specificity of sexuality, its charming distance from the "coarser stigmata of gender difference."<sup>1</sup> Sedgwick made sexuality nearly irresistible as a topic. Fueled by the rampant energies of desire, Sedgwick's expansive and unpredictable prose reflected the unpredictability of her object. Many of us were drawn to the spectacle of sex shifting blushing under this new critical gaze.

Nowadays people often say that queer theory is going downhill. They say that the surprise has worn off, that the bold early insights and stylistic innovations have disappeared, that recent work is less iconoclastic and more dogmatic. However, I do not think that queer theory is getting more boring, only that it has achieved many of its early objectives. Its early playfulness has not gone away; it is simply more widely available these days. It is not that recent criticism is never surprising, only that we have come to take a certain element of surprise for granted. This strikes me as a good thing.

For me, the thrill is definitely not gone, and I can still whip it to a jelly on the first day of queer theory class. The students are still excited by what excited me: the idea that sexuality is not simply a private, wordless, embarrassing fact of life but a meaningful aspect of culture. I tell the students that we will spend the semester thinking about sexuality because thinking about sexuality will make them smarter. They are ready to take up the idea that the weirdness of sexuality as an object of study is not a disadvantage but a collateral benefit.

As turned on as students still are by sexuality, however, what moves them most at this point is not the complexity of sexuality but the difficulties of gender. In particular, they want to think about the role of gender in the constitution and experience of sexual minorities. I see their interest as part of a shift in queer studies, which has seen an explosion of fascinating new work by transgendered and transsexual critics.<sup>2</sup>

If for a long time queer studies moved in the direction of ever-greater flexibility of its defining terms, it seems to have reached an internal limit as it has confronted the new field of trans studies. Sexuality's resistance to essentialism, which once seemed so promising, has begun to seem less interesting in relation to the stubborn materiality of gendered embodiment. Jay Prosser's book *Second Skins* has been central to the articulation of a transsexual politics that emphasizes the

importance of the body and the need for a sense of gender stability. Stressing the importance of sexology and offering a robust critique of gender fluidity, Prosser's book directly contradicts many of the central tenets of queer studies.<sup>3</sup>

Given the prominence of trans issues these days, students tend to learn and unlearn the critique of essentialism at the same time. Debates about medical intervention and transsexuals' accounts of the experience of gender essence are fascinating to them. While they argue vigorously against an uncritical embrace of gender essentialism, students are compelled by the challenges leveled at antiessentialism by transsexual and transgender critics insisting on the real force of gender.

In addition, my students find transgender embodiment a compelling site for thinking through the forces of normalization and resistance. We spend a lot of time discussing the visibility of trans subjects, and the students are aware that for many trans people, conforming to gender norms is a matter of survival. Quite often, my students are engaged in activist projects that make the difficulties faced by transgendered subjects very real for them. They are particularly moved by work in trans studies that challenges the definition of the human, such as Susan Stryker's claiming of Frankenstein's monster in her writing on trans embodiment.<sup>4</sup>

Although sexuality studies remains as interesting and important as it used to be, it does seem to me that transgender criticism is now addressing questions that were not and could not be addressed at one time. I sometimes find it ironic that queer studies has come back to a central focus on gender, since the founding of the field seemed to entail the liberation of sexuality from gender. The recent work is sometimes heavier than the early work in queer studies, but this is perhaps inevitable, given that the newer critics have once again taken up "the coarser stigmata of gender."

## Notes

1. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 34, 32.
2. See academic and nonacademic work of interest by Kate Bornstein, Patrick Califia, Leslie Feinberg, Judith Halberstam, C. Jacob Hale, Jay Prosser, Sandy Stone, Susan Stryker, and Riki Wilchins. Hale's useful bibliography "Introducing Transgender Studies into the Undergraduate Philosophy Curriculum," *APA Newsletters*, Spring 1999, is available at [www.apa.udel.edu/apa/archive/newsletters/v98n2/lgbt/hale.asp](http://www.apa.udel.edu/apa/archive/newsletters/v98n2/lgbt/hale.asp). The collection *Reclaiming Genders: Transsexual Grammars at the Fin de Siècle*, ed. Kate More and Stephen Whittle (London: Cassell, 1999), is also a helpful resource.

3. Jay Prosser, *Second Skins: The Body Narratives of Transsexuality* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998).
4. Susan Stryker, "My Words to Victor Frankenstein above the Village of Chamounix: Performing Transgender Rage," *GLQ* 1 (1994): 237–54.

## **Sex to Gender, Past to Present, Race to Class, Now to Future**

***Amber Hollibaugh***

Many times over the last few years, I have asked the questions raised by this forum about the place of sexuality and gender at this historical moment, about the complex relationship each has to the other, and about their complicated relationship to the future of queer, sexuality, and feminist studies. I have asked these questions not as an academic but as a public intellectual and an organizer around sexuality and gender, and it is from this perspective that I write.

Since I do so much public work focused on sexuality and gender, I am in a turbulent but intriguing relation to these issues. Having cross-examined issues of sexuality and gender as a biracial, poor white trash, high femme ex-hooker, I am known through my intellectual work and my writings about class and race, gender and erotic desires, as a working-class lesbian, both queer and intellectual.

When people come to hear me speak or to work with me, they often want to do two things: to speak about their intellectual understandings and the questions they bring to these issues in the academy, but also to reveal and examine their own personal lives—lives coiled around these identities and questions in dramatic, wrenching, exquisite ways. They are often struggling to understand how their thinking is enhanced by or runs counter to the ways in which they live out these issues in their gendered bodies and queerly illuminated fantasies and desires.

They come fiercely involved in the scholarly world of ideas, framed by concepts of gender and sexuality. But, if I am lucky, they also come eager or raw or defiant in some elemental way, asking how these ideas apply to their own survival as they move through the day-to-day material world. They always find me, these tired and stretched people, full of messy identities that refuse to fit neatly into existing frameworks, categories, scholarly programs, or activist movements. That is what intrigues and compels me, and what seems the most fragile and consequential to me, as I ask where we find ourselves now and where we are going with sexuality and gender studies and activism in the coming years.

Over the last three decades we have built an intellectual universe that never existed before, a new way of thinking about sexuality and gender as the foundational construct through which to understand and examine the world. It is

an amazing but unfinished accomplishment. The women's movement and feminism first used these categories to try to unravel an unseen, ostensibly "natural" world that structured gender and sex oppression. That was the first moment I heard gender questioned and sexuality intellectualized, and it was at that moment that the political power of sexuality and gender initially exploded, birthing new intellectual arenas and activisms. Then sex and gender were taken up in fresh ways by queering and sexing the questions and reframing many of the directions to be examined. In that early world, ethnic and race studies also asked questions about gender and sexuality that reframed many of the issues we now address. I will not retrace more of that history.

But these questions are directly related to that history, to the mistakes, absences, and misdirections as well as to what was done brilliantly. Our future is tied as much to what we have not done (or done suitably) as to the mere existence of gender, feminist, and sexuality studies. And it is here, at this point in time, that I am trying to understand how the current issues and agendas bode for our future. What, for example, will be the impact and meaning of the trans and intersex movements for the ongoing development of sex and gender studies? Why have queer, feminist, and sexuality studies generally stayed so white and middle class, when almost everyone decries the crippling impact and limitations of this status quo on scholarly work and on our ability to build a radical, activist, queer movement for the future? How can we think about feminisms, sexualities, and genders when they are globally framed, articulated, and focused, removed from a Western, imperial placement? Where do these changes move or challenge us intellectually, and where do they stir or disrupt activism?

Sadly, many elements of feminist, sexuality, and queer studies live in conflict with their own histories. I often find myself in conversation with two oppositional groups at the same university or activist event: on the one hand, the early intellectuals and activists of sex, gender, and feminist studies, who are disaffected and angry at the theories and movements they helped create but no longer recognize; on the other, the new generation of intellectuals and activists, who often feel disparaged and incriminated by those earlier people, as though their fresh, sometimes awkward inquiries and directions were betraying the worldviews that birthed them.

One of the ironies of any movement or intellectual pursuit is that you can open a door but you have no way of knowing (or controlling) where it will lead. Those earlier contributions represented just a moment in time, a set of possibilities, a range of intellectual and materialist opportunities. Each laid down some knowledge and unearthed areas of inquiry, unlocking new possibilities for how to

think about the human world of desire, sexuality, and gender. But no one owned those movements or intellectual ideas; no one group could or can control them. Amazing ideas have emerged in the last thirty years, passionate, consequential, unlikely, resolute, quirky. That's the point. Our job is to continue to generate new ways of trying to understand the world around us, to peel it back in new ways to reveal how and why it works the way it does, so that entirely new ideas can flower—and maybe, if we are lucky, new movements will be activated by these fresh ways of generating knowledge.

There is much to be said for the purely intellectual work of queer and sexuality studies and of feminism. Yet my deeper agenda has never changed. I want the intellectual world of sexuality and gender studies, but I need much more than that. I do that work because it engages me thoroughly, but I need, as I always have needed, something more difficult to name—a revolution really, global and alive: one profound enough, ferocious enough, generous and smart enough to change the very terrains of sexuality and gender forever. I love the intellectual work I am a part of, but my purpose is not simply intellectual. I think and act to change the world fundamentally, irreducibly. It is for this reason that how we address race and class, gender and desire, the global and the local, seems so critical to all of our future possibilities. The movements that gave birth to the intellectual work of today will be successful only to the degree that they can generate new, now-inconceivable ideas. The legacy of that work is proved not by repeating the histories already lived out but by using them as a foundation for new work.

The conflicts that we face, however, are more than theoretical matters. All of us with radical visions and impulses are beleaguered, wherever we find ourselves. Public universities have been stripped of state and federal resources, while private universities curry favor even more overtly with the rich in order to prosper and dominate. The corporate world blatantly defines the boundaries of the intellectual ideas considered worthy in the United States. Racism and class oppression are played out explicitly and with little opposition, eroding the few remaining social supports for the poor and working poor in this country—primarily poor whites and white trash, people of color, women, queers, old and young people, the exploding numbers of incarcerated, and immigrants, people who come from countries we now name our enemies. Our singular nation-state powers are flagrantly wielded and are racing out of control. This is what we face as we ask these questions and try to do our work.

In this context, sex, gender, feminist, race, and ethnic studies are struggling merely to survive. But strangely, the harsh realities facing us can also make our responses more critical, pivotal, necessary, vital. The worth of our work now

depends on what we prize and investigate, what we dare to question and to name at this critical moment. Attempts to silence, shame, discredit, buy out, disconnect, or destroy us are escalating. The communities and worlds we have built are being taken apart. Our work is being attacked and trivialized.

It is in this context that we need to structure our labor. In this moment it is fundamental to risk bringing the beauty and power we have understood in the importance of *difference* directly to the front. This is exactly the time to ask the most problematic questions about constructions of gendered bodies, racialized worldviews, erotic desires; to question sexuality and gender as they are lived through class and power and control; to ask who has voice and who has none; and to say how we do or do not know what we know. Now is the time to risk the worlds we know for the worlds we have imagined, the worlds we are trying to build with our intellectual and activist inquiries, the worlds we value deeply and are willing to fight for. Ironically, one of our most useful tools may well be a legacy from the histories that shaped and created us. In those histories, we come from nothing “legitimate,” “real,” “natural,” “credible,” “consequential,” or “useful.” The belittling assessments of our intellectual questions when we first began to do this work remains the source of our strength and our potential as we dare to go where we were never meant to travel.

I say this coming from trash—from a world with nothing that the ruling powers valued or cherished. But the world of our work and our ideas is *ours*, to create and use on our own terms, without fear or shame. It is not a commodity or a fashion or a lifestyle. This fight is *our* fight—to say who has the right to determine the intellectual terrain of sex and gender; to decide for ourselves how to look at how sex and gender revolve and evolve; to analyze how they are constructed and why; to understand how they are used or betrayed and by whom; to name and analyze this complicated, messy, sexed, and gendered world and to give our scholarly and activist work genuine life and significance; to give it necessity and power at this moment in time; *to give it use*.

That is where I think we find ourselves at this moment in time. The intellectual questions we face are both challenge and choice. Can we take on class and race through sex and gender, move from the West to the world, transpose ridiculed, gendered lives and bodies into arenas of unimagined agency and option?

This is what I know. When the civil rights movement began, it was a national threat. When the women’s movement began, it was a joke. When the anti-war and anti-imperialist movements began, they were a communist conspiracy. When the queer movement began, it was a sickness and a deviation. Yet from these movements came race and ethnic studies, women’s studies, gender studies,

sexuality studies. These are our histories, our memories, our intellectual foundations. From these dreams and these bodies of real work we have forged a vibrant intellectual and activist world. If we dare, this is also how we will continue to challenge and change the world.

## Time for Gender Rights

*Riki Wilchins*

In January 2003 I was speaking with a power couple from Los Angeles who I hoped would donate to GenderPAC. Neither was saying very much. I finished with the distinct impression that I had not connected with either one of them, which was a shame. These are two men whose work I very much respect. They are active in gay, AIDS, women's, and progressive Democratic causes.

However, I know from experience that gender rights is such a new idea that sometimes it takes people a while to get it. At the same time, I like to think that our mission of ending discrimination and violence caused by gender stereotypes is so basic that almost anyone can connect with it, if only I explain it properly.

We sat together in awkward silence, and then the most interesting thing happened. One of them turned to the other and said, "Well, this explains why I used to feel *so* humiliated when my mother used to make me hold her purse at the register while she searched for change." The other replied, "That's nothing. I used to cut class every time I knew we were going to play baseball in gym because I always got teased for 'throwing like a girl.'"

And they had this great conversation with each other, as if I weren't there. Here were two caring, sophisticated guys who support all kinds of causes, who had been with each other for years, but they had never had this particular conversation. They had never had a discussion about gender with each other.

The same is true for so many of us. We've finally learned that it's okay to *be* gay, but we're still not sure that it's okay to *look* and *act* gay. The sexual orientation thing is fine with us; it's *that gender thing* that still makes us uncomfortable.

A few months later I made a similar presentation to a group of hip thirty-something guys in New York City. Most of them looked like they worked out a lot, and all of them were ready, willing, and able to discuss *my* gender issues at length. What they weren't ready to discuss was *their* gender issues, and when I asked about them, all I got back were blank stares.

"So," I asked them, "how many men in this room are gay?" Every hand in the room went up.

"And how many men in this room are bottoms?" I asked. Every hand in the

room went down. Very, very quickly. Then they all looked around at one another and broke out laughing.

“So we *do* share some gender issues,” I said. “Either that, or none of you is going to get another date until at least one self-identified fairy moves back to Greenwich Village.”

We went on to have this great discussion about the challenges many gay men have conforming to masculine gender stereotypes. It turned out that even the buffest guys had been teased at school or had to butch it up at work, and all of them were embarrassed to admit publicly that sometimes they played catcher instead of pitcher in the boudoir.

Gender was like a second closet that they hadn't come out of.

We have to come out of this closet, because gender is where people learn to hate us. Boys learn early on that if they don't grit their teeth like Clint Eastwood and hulk around like Vin Diesel, they'll be attacked or humiliated. They learn to hate anything in themselves that might be considered the slightest bit feminine. When they finally do meet someone who looks like less than a complete stud, they're ready to exterminate them. No wonder hate crimes against effeminate gay men and transgendered women are among the most violent and personal. As a national gay leader once told me, “We love your message; our parents are just getting used to the idea that their sons are homosexual. They just don't want them to be fairies.” And I thought, *There it is*. No father wants a sissy for a son; no mother wants a dyke for a daughter.

If we're ever going to stop antigay violence, we're going to have to start talking about gender. Because if you scratch homophobia, that is what you get—the prejudice that gay men are necessarily unmanly and lesbian women are inadequately feminine. In fact, sleeping with the same sex is the most profound transgression of gender roles possible.

And if you scratch sexism, you also get gender. Not only does our society show astonishing fear and loathing around issues of vulnerability and femininity, but in a male-centered culture, woman as other will always be the “genderqueer.”

Yet as *gender* becomes the new theoretical buzzword, in application it is confined to *transgender*. And the same thing can be seen in queer politics.

Ten years ago we couldn't get activists and academics to “say the T word”; now we can't get them to say anything else. We're finally free to talk about gender, so long as we act as if the only people affected by it were this one, small, very embattled minority.

Yet just the opposite is the case, because at one time or another almost all of us have been harassed, attacked, isolated, or shamed because we didn't fit

someone's ideal of a "real man" or a "real woman." Transgender is just the tip of a much bigger iceberg. The trick is to turn all this theoretical and political awareness into real-world activism. And that is going to be a challenge, for two reasons.

First, while I'm as proud as you are to be a member of our lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer, questioning, straight-sympathetic, allies, youth movement, I'm not sure that this balkanization reflects anything other than our endless affection for identity politics. We must look beyond the simplistic political syllogism that *gay* is to *sexual orientation* as *trans* is to *gender* and start understanding gender stereotypes as an issue for *everyone*, whether they identify as gay, straight, transgendered, minority, youth, or feminist. Because gender is one of those rare issues that brings us together, that we can work on as equals on common ground.

Second, although we all enjoy contemplating the *hegemonic signifying practices of the prevailing phallogocentric economy, with its inevitable tropes and metaphors of heteronormativity*, it's time we pulled gender theory out of its long retreat from real life and demanded that it function as an applied science, instead settling for theory as a pure, abstract one.

Feminist theory gave birth to women's rights, gay theory to gay rights. It's time to stop deconstructing endlessly and *construct* something. It's time for gender theory to give rise to gender rights. Gender rights are human rights, and they are for all of us.

## Note

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## **The Challenge of Transgender, the Moment of Stonewall, and Neil Bartlett *Alan Sinfield***

The most disputed question in our historiography is whether there have always been lesbians and gay men, or whether we are a recent development—since the nineteenth century, according to Michel Foucault, or, in some versions, since the Stonewall riot of 1969. But who are we? Are we distinguished by sexual object choice or by gender identity? Judith Halberstam is surely right: Anne Lister was preoccupied with gender identity rather than sexual orientation (or object choice).<sup>1</sup> There have always been such people: the mollies in the early eighteenth century,

George Chauncey's fairies in the mid-twentieth century. Conversely, there have always been people who make a same-sex object choice without feeling that their gender identity is at stake: Lillian Faderman's romantic friends, the group associated with the German journal *Der Eigene* in the first quarter of the twentieth century, U.S. clones in the 1980s.<sup>2</sup>

These diverse formations can be comprehended only through a principled distinction between gender identity (desire-to-be) and sexual orientation (desire-for). The topic is obscure because in most cultures one of these terms serves as the primary interpretive instrument; the other is incorporated as a subordinate, and consequently incoherent, subcategory. For instance, accounts of the mollies are so concerned with dissident gender identity that they scarcely consider who the mollies' partners might be. Again, in a 1951 book Donald Webster Cory cites the report of a U.S. sailor who believed that "the stranger who performed fellatio" was "homosexual," but not the man on whom it was performed. "The performer was a 'fairy.' The compliant sailor, not."<sup>3</sup> Gender identity was still the crucial marker.

This analysis has consequences for the mythology of Stonewall. Who, when we liberated ourselves, came out? (I write "we" as a gay male.) Not the man who presented an effeminate identity. He was always visible. Quentin Crisp, for instance, says in *The Naked Civil Servant* that people such as he "must, with every breath they draw, with every step they take, demonstrate that they are feminine."<sup>4</sup> Crisp is never not out: continually he is propositioned, harassed, and beaten, on sight, by total strangers; employers and the army reject him out of hand. In Mart Crowley's play *The Boys in the Band*, Alan, who is straight identified, cannot tell, from the closeted, straight-acting types, that he has crashed a gay party. But he knows about Emory: "Faggot, Fairy, pansy . . . queer, cocksucker! I'll kill you, you goddam little mincing, swish! You goddam freak! FREAK! FREAK!" Emory admits, "I've known what I was since I was four years old." "Everybody's always known it about you, Emory," Michael quips.<sup>5</sup> It is the straight-acting types that had a new opportunity, to come out.

We often date the modern gay man from Stonewall. What actually happened is that "homosexual," "lesbian," and "gay" came to be defined in terms of sexual orientation, and gender identity was subsumed, more or less uneasily, into that. Since then, we have pointed out that drag artistes are not necessarily gay, but in practice have tended to assume that they are; repeated endlessly the story of the hard-hatted clone who turned out to be "passive" when we got him home to bed; distanced ourselves anxiously from *Are You Being Served?* and *Liberace*; and apologized for any sensitivity we might possess. For many people, this approach

made good sense, personally and politically. By the same token, people whose primary sense of themselves was firmly grounded in gender dissidence were marginalized: effeminate men, butch women, transvestites, transsexuals, and transgendered people. They were anomalous even among gays; they hardly figured, or figured only as incidental, unintelligible, out-of-date, embarrassing. The recent assertion of transgendered people aims to challenge this.<sup>6</sup>

To take this topic forward, we may glance back at a key phase in this history: the contradictory juncture in the 1980s when the nineteenth century was reinspected in the wake of Michel Foucault's *History of Sexuality*, volume 1, and contemporary gay practice was directed into a vigorous assertion of gay masculinity through the clone image. Alan Bray expounded the Foucauldian thesis about the distinctiveness of the modern homosexual, but he invited readers to appreciate also the continuities between the mollies and twentieth-century gays: "There was now a continuing culture to be fixed on and an extension of the area in which homosexuality could be expressed and therefore recognised; clothes, gestures, language, particular buildings and particular public places—all could be identified as having specifically homosexual connotations."<sup>7</sup> Rictor Norton argued more bluntly for historical continuity: "'Molly' is the word most gay men used to refer to one another."<sup>8</sup> Yet Bray's evidence suggests instead that the mollies were principally defined and identified in terms of gender identity. What "most scandalised contemporary journalists writing about the molly houses," he wrote, "was the extravagant effeminacy and transvestism they could involve."<sup>9</sup>

At the same time, commentators noted among gay men a seemingly decisive repudiation of effeminacy. Gregg Blachford could write, almost without reservation, of "the masculinization of the gay world that began in the 1970s in America and Britain."<sup>10</sup> In John Rechy's *City of Night*, one of the narrator's clients rejects him when he leafs through a book: "'Really masculine men don't read!'"<sup>11</sup> In the United States the appeal was often to Walt Whitman, who had celebrated the manly democracy of Americans. So one group of commentators took effeminacy as the key marker of gayness, while another asserted that true gayness was masculine. The reason for this confusion was that clones insisted that their object choice did not place their masculinity in jeopardy, whereas the effeminate tradition was more concerned with gender identity. These were not simple alternatives. One party was thinking about desire-for, the other about desire-to-be.

The anxieties and exhilarations of this formative but still relevant moment are captured in Neil Bartlett's writings from the late 1980s. In *Who Was That Man? A Present for Mr Oscar Wilde* Bartlett says that he once experienced his gayness

“in complete isolation” but is now “connected with other men’s lives, men living in London with me. *Or with other dead Londoners.*”<sup>12</sup> To establish this fact, he ransacks nineteenth-century documents, particularly those concerning Oscar Wilde. Insofar as he unearths instances of manly nineteenth-century gay men, the connection works. Most of the documents, however, record the lives of apparently effeminate men. There is therefore a discontinuity between them and contemporary gay subculture, whose achievement, at least before the AIDS crisis, was to make us “handsome, *masculine*, demanding and unafraid of our pleasures” (219; my emphasis).

In fact, by no means all of Bartlett’s contemporary Londoners were macho, but he accepts the image. He himself, he says, wears Doctor Martins, 501s, a check shirt, and a mustache: “I look like, or rather hope that I look like, a lot of other gay men.”<sup>13</sup> This is how he appeared on the BBC2 television program *The Late Show* in 1993. There he recommended eclectic subcultural appropriation: the system scarcely recognized gay men, but we were cobbling together our own lives. He offered his own outfit as an instance. Some might say that he was not entitled to wear it—he was not one of those “regular guys.” But he had “earned the right,” he said, through the (manly) confidence with which he carried it off.

*Who Was That Man?* makes much of the famous transvestites Fanny Park and Stella Boulton, who often passed as women until they were arrested in 1870. Although the court professed incomprehension, Bartlett sees them as demonstrating “the existence of our culture in London.”<sup>14</sup> Yet he stops short of actually identifying with them: “I would applaud the men who wore them in their determined efforts to use their frocks to create public space for themselves” (137–38). This combination of affiliation and distance recurs when Bartlett remarks: “I always enjoy asking a friend, in all drunken seriousness, *how’s the wife?* We both know that there is no useful comparison between heterosexual marriage and the relationship being referred to.” There is a point, though: “In using the word, I recall the house at 46 Fitzroy Street” where the police arrested a group of transvestites on August 12, 1894 (85). The connection is a bit awkward, but Bartlett believes it worth making.

Such strategic effeminacy partly informs Bartlett’s extravagant deployment of camp and drag in the theater, particularly in his plays from that time, *A Vision of Love Revealed in Sleep* and *Sarrasine*. Traditional practices such as drag should be maintained because “they represent gay space,” he says in one interview. The value lies in “seeing a gay entertainer in a room full of gay people, speaking a language that no one else could understand.”<sup>15</sup> In another interview Bartlett repre-

sents this experience as a closing of ranks in the face of the hostility aroused by the AIDS epidemic.<sup>16</sup> This explanation may seem insufficient; evidently, Bartlett is, or was, intrigued by the theatrical potential of camp and drag.

Bartlett's novel *Ready to Catch Him Should He Fall*, written during the same period and published in 1990, replays these issues. The subculture of the Bar is insistently feminine and centered on gender identity. Boy, however, is introduced as conspicuously masculine: "Keep him strong, keep him young, and, whatever his colouring, keep him gorgeous." The narrator invokes an allegorical figure of "Strength."<sup>17</sup> When he is being prepared to celebrate his union with O, Boy is dressed in drag as a small-town queen and as a woman by Madame and Stella. However, he is also attired as a schoolboy, a soldier, and a black man. For the wedding Boy is not in drag; there is "no priest and no frock, this being an actual ceremony and not some party or parody" (207).

The Bar regulars have girls' names, camp talk, and a penchant for cross-dressing. Boy is not like them. At one point he is said to imagine leaving the Bar with a husband, but the narrator checks himself: "(Of course, Boy would never have used that word, *Husband*, that's my word. But then, I'm old-fashioned, I mean, we used to talk like that all the time. What word do you use, then?)"<sup>18</sup> Bartlett is appealing to two distinct, though related, traditions: one founded in gender and desire-to-be, the other in sexuality and desire-for.

Yet in practice few of us want to be *all that* macho. "I too often require of myself and my partners," Bartlett remarks, "a female nature—sexually available, domestic, a surprisingly good cook and at all times attractively dressed—inhabiting a male exterior—sexually aggressive, potent, financially successful, socially acceptable."<sup>19</sup> In his attempt to reconcile the contradictory concurrence of (what he takes as) masculine and feminine norms, Bartlett comes close to the idea of Karl Heinrich Ulrichs and the sexologists: our souls may be partly female, but the male body is crucial.

Of course, not all gay men became clones. Camp and drag continued to thrive; clone got described as a kind of drag. The position was not coherent, but it seemed to suffice until transgendered people, by asserting themselves, made the illegality blatant. Lately, under the regime of queer (regarded either as a political intervention or as a capitulation to capitalism), almost all styles are welcome. Augmenting the standard menu to LGBTTT prompts the recognition that we still have not sorted out the relations between sexual orientation and gender identity.

## Notes

Special thanks to Linda Logie; see her thesis “Neil Bartlett and the Politics of Form” (DPhil, University of Sussex, 2002).

1. Judith Halberstam, *Female Masculinity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998), 65–73.
2. See Harry Oosterhuis and Hubert Kennedy, eds., *Homosexuality and Male Bonding in Pre-Nazi Germany* (New York: Haworth, 1991).
3. Donald Webster Cory, *The Homosexual in America: A Subjective Approach* (New York: Arno, 1975), 188.
4. Quentin Crisp, *The Naked Civil Servant* (New York: Plume, 1983), 21.
5. Mart Crowley, *The Boys in the Band* (New York: French, 1968), 45, 87.
6. I pursue aspects of this thought in Alan Sinfield, “Transgender and Les/Bi/Gay Identities,” in *Territories of Desire in Queer Culture: Refiguring Contemporary Boundaries*, ed. David Alderson and Linda Anderson (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 150–65; and in Sinfield, “Lesbian and Gay Taxonomies,” *Critical Inquiry* 29 (2002): 120–38.
7. Alan Bray, *Homosexuality in Renaissance England*, 2nd ed. (London: Gay Men’s Press, 1988), 92.
8. Rictor Norton, *Mother Clap’s Molly House: The Gay Subculture in England, 1700–1830* (London: Gay Men’s Press, 1992), 9.
9. Bray, *Homosexuality in Renaissance England*, 86.
10. Gregg Blachford, “Male Dominance and the Gay World,” in *The Making of the Modern Homosexual*, ed. Kenneth Plummer (London: Hutchinson, 1981), 187.
11. John Rechy, *City of Night* (London: MacGibbon and Kee, 1964), 34.
12. Neil Bartlett, *Who Was That Man? A Present for Mr Oscar Wilde* (London: Serpent’s Tail, 1988), xx.
13. *Ibid.*, 205.
14. *Ibid.*, 143.
15. Simon Fraser, “‘Visions of Love’: Interview with Neil Bartlett,” *Rouge*, October–December 1991, 21.
16. Alan Sinfield, “‘The Moment of Submission’: Neil Bartlett in Conversation,” *Modern Drama* 39 (1996): 212–13.
17. Neil Bartlett, *Ready to Catch Him Should He Fall* (London: Serpent’s Tail, 1990), 14–15.
18. *Ibid.*, 49.
19. Bartlett, *Who Was That Man?* 63–64.

## Gender, Power, and Sexuality: Crossroads in Sweden

*Jens Rydström*

Ever since the boldly functionalist Stockholm Exhibition in 1930, Sweden has taken pride in being *modern*. In interior decorating, in welfare, in women's or lesbian and gay rights, Sweden has always opted for the modern solution, and Swedes tend to regard their country as "modern," while they think of other countries as "backward." But what does this imagined modernity mean for issues of gender and sexuality? On the one hand, women are now represented in local and central government in unprecedented numbers. But on the other, there are hardly any women in executive positions in corporations, big or small, and when salaries go up, the gap between female and male wages increases. On the one hand, lesbians and gay men enjoy visibility, popularity, and legal protection. But on the other, gay sauna clubs are prohibited throughout the country, and the Contagious Disease Act allows for the forcible isolation of individuals who are HIV positive. On the one hand, sex education is compulsory in schools. But on the other, the display of pornography is regulated, and buying sexual services is a crime punishable by up to six months in prison.

Sexuality is firmly regulated by the Swedish state, and so is gender. Government agencies are legally bound to work for the equality of men and women, and to focus on gender issues in one's application is generally seen as facilitating access to government research funding. The Swedish Federation for Gay and Lesbian Rights (RFSL) is a partner in dialogue with the government and an important lobbying group.

Highest on the RFSL's agenda in recent decades has been the law on registered partnership, now a reality in Sweden as well as in the other Scandinavian countries and elsewhere.<sup>1</sup> This raises interesting questions: Are the partnership laws merely minor readjustments of the limits of acceptable sexual behavior, without consequences for the sexual order but possibly leading to increased marginalization for those outside the area of legitimacy? Or are they the most important redefinition of family and kinship since late antiquity? Will the inclusion of non-heterosexual couples in state-sanctioned matrimony affect the way we think about marriage, sexuality, child rearing, and households? To answer that, we might consider which alternatives have emerged.

When gay marriage was discussed in the Swedish parliament, the Christian Democratic Party, vehemently opposed to the idea, launched the concept of "household community" (*hushållsgemenskap*). A gay marriage law, they said,

would privilege homosexual couples at the expense of other possible households, such as adult children living with their parents or siblings living together. In some ways the household community proposal was more radical than the form of gay partnership advocated by the lesbian and gay lobby, but it was set aside for being hopelessly homophobic (which was certainly its intention). The RFSL's arguments against this proposal highlight that what gays and lesbians—or at least their organizations—want is not to deconstruct marriage or to merge in an amorphous blend of relations but to achieve a respected, highly exclusive separate status. What they want is a marital status, the registered partnership, with the same rights as heterosexual matrimony, including the right to church weddings, joint custody of children, and adoption.

Partnership laws have moved the debate toward the family, and the gay and lesbian movement is now fighting in the same arena as the feminist movement. While the RFSL's chief goals in the past mainly concerned gay men, like the fight against antigay violence and AIDS, its focus is now on family issues, concerning both women and men. Since February 1, 2003, lesbian and gay couples have had the right to be considered as adoptive parents. Yet only heterosexual married women are eligible to receive reproductive assistance. It is hard to see this kind of discrimination as anything but a result of a male-dominated discourse. When men and women join forces, much can be achieved, but when women stand alone, their demands are buried under new commissions and inquiries. Nevertheless, in the 1990s the dialogue between queer thinking and feminism was lively, most importantly because the feminist and queer movements began to address the same questions, even if they sometimes came up with radically different answers.

It has long been clear that differences in the analysis of power lie at the heart of the conflict. Some theorists highlight the restrictions that societies have imposed on sexual behavior. They often implicitly argue that there is (or should be) a zone of sexuality that offers freedom and the fulfillment of basic human needs. But another tradition claims that the individual and the society are intertwined in ways that preclude the existence of a sexual zone free from power. This tradition views sexuality as a sphere of power par excellence; sexuality itself is held to be a product of power, a concentration of power.

In an admittedly oversimplified manner, one could argue that the former standpoint typifies the liberal and/or radical tradition, which brought about the liberalization of pornography and sex laws in Sweden in the 1960s, and that the latter typifies the classical feminism and socialism that have shaped the Scandinavian welfare state. These traditions are well articulated in the international debate on sexuality and gender. Consider, for instance, Michael Warner's ground

rule: “Shouldn’t it be possible to allow everyone sexual autonomy, in a way consistent with everyone else’s sexual autonomy?” Then compare it to Joan Wallach Scott’s: “Within these processes and structures [which, according to Foucault, constitute power], there is room for a concept of human agency as the attempt . . . to construct an identity, a life, a set of relationships, a society within certain limits.”<sup>2</sup> The two propositions are not mutually exclusive, but they have different emphases. Whereas Warner demonstrates a classical liberal ethos, Scott stresses the importance of social structures, thus limiting the free will of the individual. In a Foucauldian universe there is a free will, but it is constantly limited by the walls of discursive power.

Those who enter the sexuality field through the gender door first set their eyes on centuries of gender subordination, of oppression and sexual exploitation of women, whereas those who enter it through the queer door first set their eyes on centuries of violent coercion by religious and worldly authorities, from witch trials to chemical castrations. Undoubtedly, lesbian perspectives have a crucial part to play in the dialogue between the two views, and it is no coincidence that so many influential queer theorists are women and lesbians. The theories of structured gender dichotomies, the lesbian continuum, and the place of women in modern society are necessary grounds for queer thinking.

I do not believe that the two traditions can be reconciled, since they address different issues, but the dialogue between them is important. Feminism has enriched the sexual field in different ways, and even Scandinavian state feminism has contributed to the sexual freedom of women. If the validity of the two perspectives is respectfully considered, the dialogue can perhaps lead to new levels of understanding.

## Notes

1. Denmark was the first country to pass such a law, in 1989. Norway followed suit in 1993, Sweden in 1995, Iceland and Greenland in 1996, and Finland in 2002. Of the five sovereign states and three autonomous areas in the Nordic Council, only the Faroe Islands remain without a law on registered partnership. Similar laws have been passed in Germany and France, whereas the Netherlands and Belgium have opened civil marriage to same-sex couples.
2. Michael Warner, *The Trouble with Normal: Sex, Politics, and the Ethics of Queer Life* (New York: Free, 1999), 1; Joan Wallach Scott, “Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis,” in *Feminism and History*, ed. Joan Wallach Scott (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 167.

## Queer: The Dutch Case

*Gert Hekma*

There is no doubt that gender and sexuality are separate but mutually dependent issues. That is clear from most transgender and polysexual theorizing, from the Marquis de Sade to Magnus Hirschfeld and Michel Foucault. Queer ideas on sexuality and gender began to acquire currency in the Netherlands in the late 1960s among groups that desired sociosexual change. Notwithstanding a tradition of gender and sexual radicalism, the political agenda became reform, not radical change. As in most revolutions, the exciting ideas and energy lost out against tradition and compromise. Nowadays not much of a Dutch queer movement or queer theorizing is left, while gender and sexual issues have remained separate.

In the late 1960s the Dutch Society for Sexual Reform (NVSH) endorsed a strategy aimed at the decriminalization of homosexuality, pornography, prostitution, and abortion and the legalization of divorce and homosexual visibility. The Society for Integration of Homophiles (COC) began to support similar goals. These organizations also suggested more radical objectives, such as the abolition of marriage, coupledness, and gender and sexual dichotomies. In the language of those times, they said that “homosexuality does not exist,” meaning that there was neither a homosexual identity nor a heterosexual one. Androgyny was an alluring option. Both organizations supported diverse sexual practices, including pedophilia, sadomasochism, and exhibitionism. Heterosexual relations were attacked as oppressive, especially with regard to women. Only in the 1970s did rape in marriage become a crime. The COC combined its laudable goals with a strong suspicion of gay subculture and the queeny habits of “faggots” who frequented its bars, discos, and public cruising areas. The radical feminist groups of those times, Dolle Mina (Mad Dorothy) and MVM (Man-Woman-Society), struggled not only for women’s rights but against repressive structures such as marriage.

The new militant groups of the 1970s, such as Purple September, Lesbian Nation, and Red Faggots, elaborated these issues but added the goal of lesbian and gay visibility to prevent homosexuality from vanishing into a “general” (straight) sexuality, as it would if the COC achieved the integration for which it strove. Against the rigidity of traditional sex dichotomies, the faggots experimented publicly with gender fuck (i.e., gender blending) and with a Deleuzian promotion of gay desires and cultures that was designed to make straight domination waver and to expand the fairies’ queer world. The lesbian groups, moreover, criticized gay sexism and feminist homophobia, while racism became still another issue. Despite the resistant energies of these interventions, macho clones took prece-

dence over sissies, while lesbian separatism lost out against straight feminism. The failure of these radical groups emphasized that, however closely linked, issues of gender and sexuality often came unstuck.

In terms of original programs of sexual reform, the gay, lesbian, and feminist movements had a queer agenda that closely connected gender and sexual change. This radicalism, however, evaporated in daily political practices and in compromises reached with other political partners, such as the national government. Most legal prohibitions were abolished, and subsequently the radicalism dissipated. The government's concessions led to a diminishing interest in gender and sexual politics. Feminists entered positions of political influence and developed strategies that improved women's positions, but they maintained the gender dichotomy as the radical groups vanished. The political influence of the NVSH and the COC sharply decreased because the Dutch had come to think that their demands had been fulfilled. Indeed, most people now feel that sexual and women's movements are no longer needed. The membership of the NVSH, which had peaked at two hundred thousand, plummeted to several hundred after achieving its successes. The Netherlands, unlike other places, witnessed no resurgence of queer or gender radicalism in the 1990s.

Gay and lesbian rights were secured in an equal rights law (1993) and in the eligibility of same-sex couples for marriage (2001). In line with lesbian and gay initiatives, the government has extended support to gay and lesbian organizations in countries such as Romania, Nicaragua, Zimbabwe, and Moldova, where they face a hostile climate. The government has also addressed homophobia in Muslim communities in the Netherlands, as there were concerns about school climate, sexual education, and the safety of gay and lesbian teachers and students. In the meantime, the COC and gay politicians have largely given up defending pedophilia or public gay sex, as they did in the recent past. Homopolitical aims currently look very much like assimilation.

Reform politics have led to some commendable normalization of homosexuality but have not opened up spaces for queer cultures and gender variations. Marriage has been extended to same-sex couples, but public life has not embraced alternative relationships and sexual desires. Most gays and lesbians have little difficulty identifying as such, but they often have difficulty acting on their passions outside the bedroom or the computer. The exciting gay secret has become a boring story most people do not want to hear anymore. Issues of sexual citizenship and queer space are largely neglected. The Dutch gay and lesbian paradise is turning into the boredom of straight commercialism and gay coupledness, with little place

and understanding for the queer desires of kids, kinky people, cruisy gays, or drag kings.

The tolerance of the Dutch has other limits in the gender field. Transsexuals have the legal right to and access to the medical aid necessary to change sex, but the gender dichotomy remains as strong as ever. Conventional understandings of masculinity and femininity remain the norm, leaving little room for unmasculine men or unfeminine women, intersexuals, transgenders of all kinds, and their lovers. This dichotomy is firmly in place, and the Dutch think that it is founded in biology. Most people, including many gay men, also believe that homosexuality has a genetic, hormonal, and psychological basis. Lesbianism is almost entirely ignored. The theory that “homosexuality does not exist” has no supporters anymore. Instead of the cultivation of erotic pleasure and gender diversity, the naturalization of sexual orientation and gender identity is the main concern. Self-evidently, the large majority is born straight, which equates with normality. Little need is felt to discuss sexual or gender variation in high schools, universities, or the media.

The strict gender and sexual dichotomy is accompanied by a heterosexual public culture. Gays and lesbians may have come out of their closets, but most people find that sexual orientation has little relevance in public life. The Dutch may be beyond the closet, but they have created a new one. Coming out of the closet into the streets was an important strategy for creating a queer presence. However, the closet is returning in another way. The public visibility of gays and lesbians once had a political significance that has faded. In 2000, when a member of parliament who openly declared herself lesbian was asked about her homopolitical agenda, she was at a total loss. The new closet means that whether one is gay or lesbian matters only in the bedroom. In the past, silencing was directed at public homosexuality and private homosexuals; now it is directed at anything queer beyond personal identities. The split between private queer and public nonsexual never worked, which means that the public culture remains straight. This belief is uncontested among most gays and lesbians who have earned a place at the table.

Because of the normalization, naturalization, and privatization of sexual and gender issues in the Netherlands, the public has lost its interest in queer and feminist topics. Transgenders and queers feel lost in this climate. Gay and lesbian studies are nowadays at their lowest point since their inception in 1980. Some media continue to attract queer interests of homo and hetero, but they generally remain without consequence in daily life. In the wake of child “abuse” scandals, a new puritanism is growing that accepts private homosexuality but opposes the “filthification” of society by such public expressions of sexuality as gay parades

and prostitution. The age of sexual consent, lowered to twelve in 1989, was raised again to sixteen in 2002 by a very rare unanimous vote in the Dutch parliament. The impossible question for queer students and activists now is how to get back on the streets and into the hearts of the people. The idea held by many that Holland is a queer paradise says much about the miserable state of global sexual emancipation.

The various forms of gay and lesbian, gender, transgender, and queer studies have criticized the normalization of homosexuality; the naturalization of gender performances, sexual preferences, and gender and sexual dichotomies; and the privatization of desires. On the positive side, these academic fields have demonstrated the queerness of straight culture; on the negative side, they have not fundamentally changed traditional, not-so-queer ideas and practices. The Netherlands has seen many important reforms, but the question is how to secure the public cultivation of multisexual, polyamorous, and transgender pleasures. How is it possible to get past the idea that there are only two sexes and genders; that marriage, love, and sex belong together; that children are innocent beings; that erotic pleasure is something dark and dangerous? Queer studies may have provoked much brainwork in academe, but its results in the everyday lives of queer people are too invisible.

The projects of gender and queer studies are critical. They began as political interventions in academe and society. Although they have seen successes, in general they have faced more resistance than support, more neglect than recognition. In the Dutch case, the radical energy dissipated, while a program of gender and sexual reform was put in place that did not break down straight white male domination and did not produce a culture open to gender and sexual differences. Addressing the concrete situations and utopias of gender plurality, sexual space, and kinky pleasure is an essential part of remaining relevant. Cooperation beyond narrowly construed minority interests is difficult because feminists, for example, have no interest in the public sexual culture that queers defend, while gays continue to think that transgendered people are really transsexuals. The marginal projects of queer and women's studies that try to work together in programs of "gender and sexuality studies" still have difficulty finding common ground.

A different problem has developed in the United States, where the influence of queer and transgender studies is limited to campuses and urban centers. Movement and academe have gone separate ways, while they have stayed closer together in most other countries, where queer scholars often are queer activists. The laborious style of postmodernist work may be fun for clever students, but it is difficult to understand. Queer and gender studies have become detached from con-

crete political struggles in a situation where discrimination is still the legal and social norm. They should invite curiosity and incite action, but they often do the opposite. While anger about discrimination in the United States may still energize sexual and gender studies, in the Netherlands complacency is sucking the blood from them.

One way to invigorate the field internationally is to spark the interest of the curious who float beyond gender and sexual double binds, that is, to create transversal connections between the excluded and marginalized and to bypass centers and norms. Gender and sexuality issues became more intertwined and complicated with the rise of multiple gender positions. Civil society in the Netherlands does not take note of such developments. A major task for Anglo-Saxon academe seems to be to bring abstract theories and concrete practices together.

The stakes are too high to remain enclosed in the philosophies of the ivory tower or the concrete struggles of the streets. Queer studies need activism, just as queer movements need theorizing turned to practical applications. It is nice to link queer and gender on campus, but they should also intermingle beyond novels and movies, in streets and dark rooms.

### **The Biology of Gender and the Construction of Sex?**

**Vernon A. Rosario**

Biomedicine has long had a contentious place in homosexual politics and queer studies. Paeans to the liberating role of science go back to the Victorian origins of the term *homosexuality* itself, when “sexual inverts” such as Karl Heinrich Ulrichs and Magnus Hirschfeld argued for biological models of the hereditary and hormonal basis of “innate” homosexuality.<sup>1</sup> Homophile groups of the 1950s and 1960s were also accommodating to doctors in the hope that these figures of authority could liberalize public opinion. The argument that science was irrelevant to homosexual emancipation was made most astutely in the mid-1950s by Franklin Kameny, a leader of gay liberation.<sup>2</sup> He pointed out how societal homophobia repeatedly tainted researchers’ methodology. His critique helped instigate the assault that forced the American Psychiatric Association in 1973 to remove the diagnosis of homosexuality from the psychiatric nosology.<sup>3</sup>

Nevertheless, interest in the biological determinants of sexual orientation continued to be central to the essentialism-versus-constructionism wars that riled us all in gay and lesbian studies in the 1980s. By the early 1990s the debate had grown tiresome and was ably dissected and put in formaldehyde by Edward Stein’s anthology on the topic.<sup>4</sup> The debate built on the feminist legacy of suspicion (if not

hostility) toward sexual science, which often reified male chauvinist constructions of biologically essential female inferiority.<sup>5</sup> Similar critiques of biological essentialism have been waged around issues of race and a long history of scientific “proof” of the inferiority of non-European races.<sup>6</sup>

Yet biology soon came back to haunt us. The gay twin studies, the “gay hypothalamus,” and the “gay gene” study of the early 1990s were front-page news and were fairly uncritically accepted by the gay press as well.<sup>7</sup> Genetic explanations of homosexuality have been enthusiastically embraced by many gays and lesbians.<sup>8</sup> In my psychiatric practice I regularly hear these explanations from gay and lesbian clients of all ages.<sup>9</sup> Elsewhere I have analyzed why the American gay community (middle-class men in particular) have embraced the notion of a gay gene, and I have argued that molecular genetics is itself a social construct.<sup>10</sup> Meanwhile, transgendered and intersexed people were forging new political movements that forced me to reconsider the place of the body and biology.

Sandy Stone’s 1991 essay, “The ‘Empire’ Strikes Back: A Posttranssexual Manifesto,” was a rallying cry for a new generation of transgender activists and theorists. She called on transgenders to tell their full stories and not the stereotyped clinical narrative required by the gender reassignment gatekeepers in the medical profession.<sup>11</sup> This meant proclaiming an identity as transgendered rather than following the medical expectation to discard a past gendered history and pass as either male or female. A new generation of transgendered theorists deployed antiessentialist, feminist, and queer theory to further flesh out the “post” in fin de siècle transgender ontology. Susan Stryker, in the introduction to the groundbreaking transgender issue of *GLQ*, fully embraced a performative/discursive model of queer, transgender identity. For Stryker, queer transgenderism was a radical, antiheteronormative praxis of self-transformation through performance—not only of gender but of sexuality and anatomy.<sup>12</sup>

Other theorists have been critical of the aleatory quality of transgender identity in these performative models and have returned to a certain ineluctable materiality of the body and sex, as well as an irreducibility of gender. Even at the risk of falling into a somatic determinism and gender essentialism, Jay Prosser examines the gender experience of transsexuals and the real, poignant ways in which gender identity maps onto anatomy. Prosser aggressively wrestles with the discursive theory of Judith Butler and, more broadly, with the queer theory appropriations of trans identity. Prosser is particularly critical of Butler’s reluctance to grapple with the materiality of the body and with her repeated “deliteralization of sex.” Prosser points out that transgenderism is exploited in this queer analysis of sex/gender as a subversive denaturalization of sex; however, the actual embodied

gender experience of many transsexuals is delegitimized if we collapse sex into gender. As Prosser succinctly puts it, "*Gender Trouble* uses transsexuality to exemplify not the constitutive significance of somatic feeling but the reverse, the phantasmatic status of sex."<sup>13</sup>

The transgendered sociologist Henry Rubin is similarly critical of many queer theorists' appropriations of transgender identity. Rubin tries to find a new avenue for understanding the transgender experience that takes account of his informants' sense of their essential and embodied gender identity rather than discount it as false consciousness or sex/gender reactionism.<sup>14</sup> Many of his informants experience gender as deeply and permanently embedded in their bodies, and they demand that it be further materialized through hormonal and surgical interventions. Their struggle is not an arbitrary, ludic performance of gender masquerade but a hard-fought pursuit of an essential identity experienced as grounded in matter and constructed through biology.

Joanne Meyerowitz's sociomedical history of transsexualism points out the long-standing popularity of biological models of transsexualism among transsexuals. Christine Jorgensen, who brought transsexualism to worldwide attention in 1952, explained her condition as the result of a "glandular imbalance" that was "deep-rooted in all the cells of [her] body."<sup>15</sup> Mid-1990s Dutch findings of neuroanatomical differences between transsexuals and nontranssexuals received much coverage in the transgendered press. The transsexual gynecologist Sheila Kirk argued that this research pointed to the role of intrauterine hormones in shaping the developing brain and determining gender identity.<sup>16</sup> This hormonal model is similar to the one suggested by Victorian sexologists such as Hirschfeld and repopularized in the early 1990s by Simon LeVay.<sup>17</sup> A genetic model for transgenderism helped the endearing boy in the Belgian film *Ma vie en rose* (dir. Alain Berliner; 1998) justify his female identity and cross-dressing.

The place of biology in shaping somatic sex, gender identity, and sexuality has most forcefully come to popular and academic attention with the emergence of a newly politicized intersex movement. *Intersex* is the umbrella medical term to describe the presence of ambiguous or unusual genitalia at birth (conditions also classified as hermaphroditism and pseudohermaphroditism). In 1993 Cheryl Chase launched the Intersex Society of North America (ISNA) to challenge the surgical "normalization" of intersex genitalia.<sup>18</sup> While several support groups for specific intersex syndromes (such as Turner's, androgen insensitivity, and Klinefelter's) had formed in the late 1980s and early 1990s, they had sought to collaborate with doctors to improve medical diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of the diverse intersex conditions. By contrast, the ISNA questioned the ethics of

nonessential surgery and the medical enforcement of a two-sex system that such intervention implies.<sup>19</sup>

The “John/Joan” scandal, followed by John Colapinto’s book-length exposé of it, catapulted intersex issues to popular consciousness in 1997.<sup>20</sup> Ironically, David Reimer—the person involved—was not intersexed but was subjected to sex reassignment after accidental penile ablation during circumcision at the age of eight months. Nevertheless, the case was exploited for opposing arguments. On the one hand, Reimer’s history was used to show that gender was innate and could not be molded arbitrarily through surgery and rearing, as the psychologist John Money had claimed since the 1950s.<sup>21</sup> Thus the media used the case to discredit Money’s distinction between sex and gender, as well as feminism and social constructionism in general.<sup>22</sup> On the other hand, feminist and queer academics turned intersex into the next great hope for deconstructing sex/gender.<sup>23</sup> Butler has used the case to undermine any anatomical or chromosomal determinism of gender and to demonstrate “the arbitrariness and falsity of gender dimorphism.”<sup>24</sup>

The distinction that Money had drawn was an a priori, theoretical one.<sup>25</sup> Though battered over time, it was a building block of feminist theory from the 1960s on.<sup>26</sup> Even if the biological, historical, and social qualities of the sexes could not be neatly divided into material and sociocultural aspects—that is, sex and gender—the dichotomy was productive and politically expedient. Indeed, the trend in gender and queer studies in the 1990s, following Butler’s lead in *Gender Trouble*, was to give precedence to gender by interpreting sex as just another incarnation of gender.

On the contrary, transsexual and intersex activists have increasingly wanted to reverse the polarities of the sex/gender distinction, arguing that the material forces that shape sex also determine gender. For example, Lynn Conway, an engineering professor who transitioned in 1968, relies on recent intersex data to conclude that gender is not socially constructed but determined by the effects of hormones on the embryonic brain.<sup>27</sup>

The ISNA has criticized feminist appropriations of intersex to deconstruct sex/gender, often to the exclusion of the real-world challenges faced by intersexed people.<sup>28</sup> Intersexuality epitomizes the distinctness yet imbrication of biology and identity. Neonatal intersex conditions are characterized by fairly rare anatomical and hormonal conditions (present in one to two live births per thousand) that lead to unusual genital and gonadal anatomy. The more common intersex conditions are congenital adrenal hyperplasia, androgen insensitivity syndrome, Turner’s syndrome, Klinefelter’s syndrome, and severe forms of hypospadias. As the ISNA insists, these are objective, material conditions, not indications of an elective gen-

der identity: “[Intersex] is different from, for example, having a feeling that your identity is different from [that of] most women (or men). People with intersex conditions generally don’t have to search for evidence that they are intersexed; the evidence is in their own bodies.”<sup>29</sup>

Intersex, however, *is* an elective identity for this diverse subset of people. Indeed, it is a controversial one that many affected individuals repudiate. Despite discordant sex chromosomes, genitals, and/or gonads, the vast majority of intersexed people have a definite gender identity as male or female; they are not intergendered. Therefore they dislike the “intersex” label, which they perceive as inaccurate, stigmatizing, and too political. In fact, the politically radical and catchy claim that everyone is intersexed trivializes the unique medical and psychological challenges faced by people with intersex conditions. The ISNA insists that its current mission is not to end the sexing of intersexed children or to eliminate the sex/gender system but to advocate for patient agency in medical interventions.<sup>30</sup>

Finally, research in the molecular genetics of sex determination is doing more to deconstruct our understanding of the biology of sex than the work of Money or gender studies.<sup>31</sup> The notion that the Y chromosome determines male sex now appears to be grossly simplistic. The identification of the SRY gene (i.e., the sex-determining region of Y) in the 1990s was quickly followed by the discovery of six other genes critical to male sex determination that are on the X chromosome as well as the autosomes (nonsex chromosomes).<sup>32</sup> The genetic and molecular triggers for the complex steps in the embryonic development and differentiation of the reproductive system are emerging as multifactorial and highly interdependent. At multiple critical moments, various genes trigger other genes with an array of nonsexual functions in a dynamic play of shifting molecular signifiers.

While intersex suggests the biology and fixity of gender, transsexualism suggests the material (re)construction of sex. Yet both states demonstrate that sex and gender are not distinct entities but are intimately intertwined, even when they appear to be at odds. Anatomy is not destiny, yet it cannot be simply reimaged by a discursive mantra. Anatomy and physiology impose certain limits to discursive or hermeneutic possibilities quite beyond the forces of culture and society. However, the molecular genetics of sex highlights the complexity and fragility of the biological elements of sex, to say nothing of gender or sexuality. Transgendered and intersexed individuals poignantly remind us that confronting, understanding, and managing these material limits of the body are tremendous challenges. It is perhaps our great fortune that, despite the numerous biological and psychological determinants of human sex/gender/sexuality, they are still largely *underdeter-*

mined; hence our enormous diversity. This complex irreducibility allows for the myriad personal and cultural narratives of sex/gender/sexuality that permit such varied pleasures and such endless scholarship.

## Notes

1. Karl Heinrich Ulrichs, *Forschungen über das Räthsel der mann männlichen Liebe*, ed. Hubert Kennedy, 4 vols. (Berlin: Winkel, 1994); Magnus Hirschfeld, *Die Homosexualität des Mannes und des Weibes* (Berlin: Marcus, 1914).
2. Franklin Kameny, "Does Research into Homosexuality Matter?" *Ladder*, May 1965, 14–20.
3. See Ronald Bayer, *Homosexuality and American Psychiatry: The Politics of Diagnosis* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987).
4. Edward Stein, ed., *Forms of Desire: Sexual Orientation and the Social Constructionist Controversy* (New York: Routledge, 1992).
5. See, e.g., Londa Schiebinger, *The Mind Has No Sex? Women in the Origins of Modern Science* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989); Ruth Hubbard, *The Politics of Women's Biology* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1990); and Anne Fausto-Sterling, *Myths of Gender: Biological Theories about Women and Men* (New York: Basic, 1985). Some feminist scholars could also deconstruct science and envision new methodologies that embraced feminist and progressive politics, e.g., Donna J. Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (New York: Routledge, 1991); and Sandra Harding, *The Science Question in Feminism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986).
6. One recent controversy in this area was instigated by Richard J. Herrnstein and Charles Murray, *The Bell Curve: Intelligence and Class Structure in American Life* (New York: Free, 1994), which provoked vocal criticism, e.g., Steven Fraser, ed., *The Bell Curve Wars: Race, Intelligence, and the Future of America* (New York: Basic, 1995).
7. J. Michael Bailey and Richard C. Pillard, "A Genetic Study of Male Sexual Orientation," *Archives of General Psychiatry* 48 (1991): 1089–96; Simon LeVay, "A Difference in Hypothalamic Structure between Heterosexual and Homosexual Men," *Science*, no. 253 (1991): 1034–37; Dean Hamer et al., "A Linkage between DNA Markers on the X Chromosome and Male Sexual Orientation," *Science*, no. 261 (1993): 321–27. Mark Schoofs indicted the media's uncritical reception of these studies in "Geneocide: Can Scientists 'Cure' Homosexuality by Altering DNA?" *Village Voice*, 1997.
8. Chandler Burr, *A Separate Creation: The Search for the Biological Origins of Sexual Orientation* (New York: Hyperion, 1996); Vera Whisman, *Queer by Choice: Lesbians, Gay Men, and the Politics of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1996).

9. On the psychodynamic function of biological explanations of homosexuality see Jack Drescher, *Psychoanalytic Therapy and the Gay Man* (Hillsdale, NJ: Analytic, 1998).
10. Vernon A. Rosario, "Homosexual Bio-Histories: Genetic Nostalgias and the Quest for Paternity," in *Science and Homosexualities*, ed. Vernon A. Rosario (New York: Routledge, 1997), 1–25.
11. Sandy Stone, "The 'Empire' Strikes Back: A Posttranssexual Manifesto," in *Body Guards: The Cultural Politics of Gender Ambiguity*, ed. Julia Epstein and Kristina Straub (New York: Routledge, 1991), 280–304.
12. Susan Stryker, "The Transgender Issue: An Introduction," *GLQ* 4 (1998): 145–58.
13. Jay Prosser, *Second Skins: The Body Narratives of Transsexuality* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 44, 43. See Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990).
14. Henry Rubin, *Self-Made Men: Identity and Embodiment among Transsexual Men* (Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press, 2003).
15. Quoted in Joanne Meyerowitz, *How Sex Changed: A History of Transsexuality in the United States* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 66.
16. J.-N. Zhou et al., "A Sex Difference in the Human Brain and Its Relation to Transsexuality," *Nature*, no. 378 (1995): 68–70; Sheila Kirk, "The Brain: A Brief Look at Our Nervous System," *Transgender Community News*, September 1999, 16–17.
17. Magnus Hirschfeld [T. Ramien, pseud.], *Sappho und Sokrates, oder Wie erklärt sich die Liebe der Männer und Frauen zu Personen des eigenen Geschlechts?* (Leipzig: Spohr, 1896); Simon LeVay, *The Sexual Brain* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1993).
18. See Cheryl Chase, "Hermaphrodites with Attitude: Mapping the Emergence of Intersex Political Activism," *GLQ* 4 (1998): 189–211.
19. On the medical enforcement of a binary sex system see Suzanne J. Kessler, *Lessons from the Intersexed* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1998).
20. Natalie Angier, "Sexual Identity Not Pliable after All, Report Says," *New York Times*, March 14, 1997; John Colapinto, *As Nature Made Him: The Boy Who Was Raised as a Girl* (New York: HarperCollins, 2000).
21. See Colapinto, *As Nature Made Him*; and Milton Diamond, "Prenatal Predisposition and the Clinical Management of Some Pediatric Conditions," *Journal of Sex and Marital Therapy* 22 (1996): 139–47.
22. "Anatomy Is Destiny," *New York Post*, March 17, 1997.
23. See Kessler, *Lessons*.
24. Judith Butler, "Doing Justice to Someone: Sex Reassignment and Allegories of Transsexuality," *GLQ* 7 (2001): 627.
25. John Money, John G. Hampson, and Joan L. Hampson, "Imprinting and the Establishment of Gender Role," *Archives of Neurology and Psychiatry* 77 (1957): 333–36.
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29. Intersex Society of North America, "Medical Questions about Intersexuality," [www.isna.org/faq/faq-medical.html](http://www.isna.org/faq/faq-medical.html) (accessed November 10, 2003).
30. The ISNA's home page notes: "Intersexuality is basically a problem of stigma and trauma, not gender. . . . All children should be assigned as boy or girl, without early surgery" ("What Is ISNA?" [www.isna.org/index.html](http://www.isna.org/index.html) [accessed November 10, 2003]).
31. Vernon A. Rosario, "Intersexes: The Molecular Deconstruction of Sex" (paper presented at the Feminist Research Seminar, Center for the Study of Women, University of California, Los Angeles, October 15, 2002).
32. Eric Vilain, "The Genetics of Intersexuality," *Journal of Gay and Lesbian Psychotherapy* (in press).

## Evolution and the Embodiment of Gender

### Joan Roughgarden

As transgendered people come out of the closet and cease living in stealth, a new voice in queer scholarship may emerge. Transgendered people speak of the centrality of body morphing, not merely as decoration but as definitional: the Cybelean scythe, the *hijra nirvan*, and the Western sex reassignment surgery. Extending queer theory to encompass transgender experience will probably draw attention to the materiality of gender and away from gender solely as performance.

Moreover, transgendered people bring new disciplines to the table of queer theory. Transgendered women, having been raised as boys and men, are likely to enter the male-typical careers of science and engineering, and transgendered men are likely to seek employment in such spheres. These technically educated people then wish to contribute to queer and gender theory, but they arrive on strange shores, ignorant of local customs and language, striving to be good citizens, and hoping not to tread on the bones of long-dead elders.

Here, then, is what I make of the distinction between sexuality and gender as seen from my position as a scientist specializing in ecology and evolutionary biology and as a transgendered woman.

Biologists distinguish themselves from MDs. Biologists, of course, think of themselves as enlightened, whereas MDs are ignorant troglodytes. Biologists teach MDs when the latter are still premeds, not yet community leaders, when they seem to be grade-grubbing memorizers incapable of independent thought. Biologists are

annoyed when humanists lump biology with medicine, just as humanists might object to lumping literature with television reporting.

In biology, sex means producing offspring by mixing the genes from two parents—a cooperative act. Many species reproduce without sex: by budding, by fragmentation, or with eggs that do not need fertilization. So, in biology, the existence of sexual reproduction is a contingent fact needing explanation. The advantage of sexual reproduction over asexual reproduction is still debated in biology today. In any case, sex is not synonymous with reproduction but is one means of reproduction.

In biology, male function and female function are unproblematically defined in terms of gamete size. Nearly all sexually reproducing species have gametes of two sizes, one big, the other tiny. By definition, male function means making small gametes, and female function large gametes. By definition, the small gamete is a “sperm,” and the large gamete is an “egg.” That’s it.

Now, most bodies do not easily classify into male or female, because most bodies make both eggs and sperm at the same time or at different times during their lives. The gametic binary does not define a corresponding binary in body morphology or behavior. It is a mistake to classify organisms as either male or female, as though whole individuals were unproblematically binary, just as the gametes are. Vertebrate species vary greatly in the existence and/or clarity of a sex binary between whole organisms. Indeed, even in species where whole bodies can be unambiguously classified as male or female because they make only one type of gamete during life, multiple forms of males and females may occur—say, two or three types of males that differ by a factor of two or more in body size, maturation rate, and life span and that possess conspicuously different color patterns.

I have suggested widening the word *gender* to refer to the morphology, behavior, and life history of a sexed body. A body is “sexed” when classified with respect to the size of gamete it produces. Hence a species with two types of sexed bodies may have more than two genders. Furthermore, more than two types of sexed bodies may occur: some may make only small gametes, others only large gametes, and still others various mixtures of the two gametes. Humanists often criticize biology as an ideological purveyor of the gender binary. The shoe doesn’t fit. We biologists have definitions of male and female that work for seaweed, redwood trees, whales, worms, and oh yes, dogs, cats, and people. Our definitions have nothing to do with Mars, Venus, and the mismeasure of women. Blame that on MDs and MD-wannabes.

If we go beyond the definition of male and female to gender norms, then the stance of biologists becomes more problematic. Darwin’s theory of sexual selection

makes universalist claims about male and female behavior—ardent, showy males paired with passive, coy females. These claims have been leveraged into a repressive theory of human nature by evolutionary psychologists. Nonetheless, many, perhaps most, evolutionary biologists today acknowledge that Darwin's theory of sexual selection is in trouble, but they differ on what to do about it. Many would prefer that Darwin's theory somehow be invested with new meaning so as not to do violence to his tradition. In contrast, I feel that Darwin's theory of sexual selection should be regarded as falsified because it is on the wrong track, and it should be replaced by an entirely new theory. Not all agree that sexual selection theory is false, but I believe consensus holds that something must be done about sexual selection theory in view of gender role reversal, gender multiplicity, and widespread same-sex sexuality in animals.

As to sexuality, the closest biological counterpart I can think of pertains to an animal's "time-energy budget." In a day, or a year, how much time do animals spend mating, or even looking for mates? Many species, like some chipmunks, might be said to have almost no sexuality, because they are fertile for only a few minutes a year, or maybe every other year. Other species are continuously fertile for half the year or even more. In any species, too, the animals vary in their allocation of effort to sexuality. Biology offers no norm for how much interest organisms should have in sex, how often they should make love, and so forth.

I have also suggested that the function of mating is only sometimes to transfer sperm. In many species, including humans, as well as our closest relatives, the bonobos, plus lots of birds, porpoises, and so on, mating seems too common relative to conception. The ratio of one hundred or more matings per conception argues for remarkable inefficiency in otherwise very well adapted animals if the sole purpose of mating is to exchange sperm. Instead, mating fosters relationships. While this realization is comforting to readers of teenage romance novels, it also empowers same-sex mating. If the purpose of mating often is solely to build relationships, and not to transfer sperm, then mating with genital-genital contact can take place between any two animals who need to build a relationship. Like sharing food and sharing grooming, sharing the pleasure of genital contact is a reciprocating behavior with social function.

So, sexuality is a component of an animal's social life. What about sexual orientation? The important book by Bruce Bagemihl, a scholar with a PhD in linguistics, has opened new vistas in zoology. Bagemihl assembled citations of more than three hundred instances of same-sex sexuality among vertebrates that have been reported in the primary biological literature.<sup>1</sup> Prior to his book, I had assembled only about fifty cases. Three hundred is a big number, but it is almost surely

an underestimate, given the difficulty of ascertaining that a same-sex mating is taking place. Homosexuality has been studied in detail in a dozen or so species. Although gay and lesbian scholars are generally aware of some homosexuality in animals, the biological sciences community is not; it has blissfully assumed the naturalness and normality of exclusive heterosexuality.

Meanwhile, the evolutionary question concerning homosexuality is not, I feel, whether homosexuality is natural and adaptive (yes) but what determines the ratio between homosexual and heterosexual orientations—what biologists call a polymorphism—and how homophobia can be seen as a natural and evolved component of the homosexual-heterosexual dynamic.

As for transgendered animals, the term *transgender* does not readily apply. Even among people, I am not confident that the terms *transgender* and *transsexual* will last very long. Although women-identifying male-bodied people and men-identifying female-bodied people have existed cross-culturally throughout history, each culture has its own institutional means of housing them, some egalitarian, others repressive. The present-day “trans” category may, nonetheless, prove a longer-lasting identity than gay and lesbian identities, because gender-variant categories seem to persist longer in history than sexual orientation categories. Among animals, too, there is no shortage of masculine females—female birds and mammals with male “ornaments”—and no shortage of feminine males with female coloration and courtship moves. Many animal social systems support transgender expressions in this sense. Moreover, membership in an animal “gender” is not necessarily static, and transitions occur by, say, males of one gender changing to another gender as they grow older.

From this perspective, gender consists as much of material as of performance. They go together. A play depends both on the acting and on the stage props. Minimalist theater productions reduce almost entirely to performance, whereas lavish productions may call for props and costumes that overshadow the acting, but such productions are communicative nonetheless. Animal bodies speak body language. To a biologist, bodies are not static; they are molded by natural selection, which itself reflects pressures that reside in an animal society. Over evolutionary time, animals come to have the bodies that enable their performance, in a slow, reciprocal back-and-forth between props and acting, as though the actors were assembling the set during the play. Moreover, an animal may mold its body by accumulating colors from the environment, as well as by scraping its bill and claws. Animals feather their nests with materials gathered from the environment and morph their surroundings and their self-presentation with their equivalent of technology. So, the body morphing of transgendered people in cultures such as

ancient Rome, India, and the West is but a natural way for humans in those cultures to have realized their gender identities.

The interesting issue, to me, is not why people should do something like genital body morphing. The issue is why this should seem so sensational. The transgender cultures of two-spirits in Native America and of mahu in Polynesia do not feature body morphing of genitals. There, gender seems to reside in occupation, not body. To be a woman means doing certain things, not having a certain body. In contrast, the Indo-European cultures connect gender with body, and to be a woman means acquiring a certain body. In any culture, people do what they must to realize their identity. The realization of identity goes far beyond gender; after all, many volunteer to die for their country, their religion, or some other cause that gives them their identity. Do we list patriotic heroes who give their lives for their country in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM)* as people afflicted with a life-threatening mental disease? Perhaps we should, and at the same time remove transgendered people from the *DSM*, because soldiers are dangerous, whereas transgendered people are not.

### Note

1. Bruce Bagemihl, *Biological Exuberance: Animal Homosexuality and Natural Diversity* (New York: St. Martin's, 1999).

## Uneasy Alignments, Resourcing Respectable Subjectivity

### *Beverley Skeggs*

The case has been well made for a recent shift to what Jon Dovey identifies as “extraordinary subjectivity,” that is, a shift from grand narratives as the bases of truth claims to statements that the world no longer has meaning unless grounded in the personal, the subjective, and the particular. Lauren Berlant calls this grounding process “intimate citizenship,” and Nick Rose writes about “governing the soul.”<sup>1</sup> The impetus for this imperative to subjectivity has been variously linked to the rise in the “psy” sciences, the extension of “expertise” into work practices and the everyday vocabulary of popular culture, and the unrelenting capitalist desire for profit from new consumer practices—a desire that generates new forms of marketing, such as “emotional branding” and the search for “the soul of the new consumer.”<sup>2</sup> The imperative to display subjectivity can also be seen in new forms of neoliberal governance, which embody the contradiction that collective-minded citizens are simultaneously self-interested consumers and which thus produce what

Toby Miller describes as “ethical incompleteness,” a condition partly (and only ever partly) resolvable through imperatives to subjectivity.<sup>3</sup> I would argue that these general political factors shape how we both know and evaluate gender and sexuality and help determine what it means to be a worthy person, a subject with value.

I therefore think that we need to approach matters of gender and sexuality from a new angle, not by making gender or sexuality an object or property of identity or of the person but instead by regarding gender and sexuality as resources to which one does or does not have access, which can or cannot be deployed in various ways to realize value in the “self.” This is about the practice of gender and sexuality in which using (or not using) the resources of gender and sexuality continually produces both. It is about process, production, and doing in ways that do or do not create value. It is about what can be used and about how to use it. The “self” then becomes a metaphoric space in which to store and display resources. It is the symbolic system of exchange that ascribes value to particular practices and positions and enables us to know how to (or how not to) use gender and sexuality. This symbolic system is ubiquitous across sites of inscription and representation, but it is also contested (e.g., via queer resignification). Moreover, it has been well documented that straight men use their positioning by gender to gain an advantage in the sexual division of labor, a division structured through class as well as through gender and sexuality. Recently, straight men have been able to deploy aspects of femininity to resource themselves as “new managers” at work in an effort to appear more caring and friendly. Yet the use of femininity by women does not give them the same rewards. Women are expected to *be* feminine; for them, femininity is normative, and they cannot be “enterprised up” in the supposed remaking of gender. Sometimes, as Lisa Adkins and Celia Lury have shown in studies of the workplace, gender and sexuality are used as resources, while at other times individuals are forced to perform a sexual identity to increase the company’s “diversity dividend.”<sup>4</sup> The embodiment of gender or sexuality can be a forced visible display or an inevitable essentializing.

Similarly, drawing on the example of the film *Pulp Fiction*, Manthia Diawara reveals how black working-class masculinity operates as a mobile cultural style, available to different film characters whether black or white.<sup>5</sup> The inscription of “cool” becomes detachable and as such can be “transported through white bodies.” For instance, David Beckham, the soccer player, performs blackness while remaining resolutely white. Blackness is a resource that he attaches and detaches with ease. When black males play “cool,” that quality becomes fixed

on their body. But black males cannot perform “whiteness” in a similar way, because they are always inscribed and read as black in the Western color-coded visual symbolic economy. A particular version of racial inscription becomes a mobile resource for some, while it is fixed and read onto other bodies as a limitation. In *Pulp Fiction* Samuel Jackson appears not to be acting; he just *is*. Hence black dispositions are culturally essentialized and made visibly authentic.

My ethnographic study, *Formations of Class and Gender*, shows how white working-class women are similarly symbolically positioned. Their ability to move through metaphoric and physical social space is limited, because their cultural dispositions are inscribed and read on their body as symptoms of pathology.<sup>6</sup> This marking and value attribution restricts their ability to convert their cultural resources, which of course have been acquired through classification (by such dimensions as sexuality, race, class, and gender) and have been read and valued as worthless by those who institutionalize the dominant systems of exchange. The women I worked with had no cultural dispositions for others to mobilize as resources (although their dispositions had use value to themselves). Their white male counterparts, however, could be drawn on as sources of criminalized glamour, for example, in the films of Mr. Madonna, Guy Ritchie, such as *Lock, Stock, and Two Smoking Barrels* and *Snatch*.

These systems of inscription and interpretation operate both in simultaneity and in contradiction, enabling us to explore how some people use the classifications and characteristics of race, sexuality, class, and gender as resources even as others are denied their use because they are positioned *as* those classifications and are fixed by them.

This is why positioning by classifications is central to our understanding of any formation of gender or sexuality. Classifications do not just amalgamate; they are not straightforwardly embodied. Instead, they constitute and disrupt each other. This is why I would argue that Pierre Bourdieu’s analysis of class is an interesting starting point, but only a starting point. Using economic metaphors, Bourdieu maintains that the types of capital (cultural, social, economic, and symbolic) to which we have access as we grow up congeal in the body, generating dispositions, which he calls “habitus.” The ability to accumulate different types of capital over time enables bodies to move in social space with ease and a sense of value, or to become fixed in positions and ascribed symptoms of pathology. Bourdieu would make a structural homology between people’s positions and their dispositions on the basis of class. Yet when we add gender, sexuality, race, and nationality to the composition, we find a series of disruptions, rather than repetitions and habits.<sup>7</sup>

There is no neat sequencing between the positions into which we are born and which we continually reconstitute through our experience of them and their uneasy alignments.

But we can see how different positioning and the ability to move across social space to accrue types of capital provide access to the resources that can enhance some classifications. It does not take a sociologist to point out that being black and working class is unlikely by itself to give one access to resources; it is also the ability to put resources to use symbolically that is key to uneasy position alignments. Access, use, and display become central features in the making of public subjectivity, but they appear as personal dispositions rather than as the results of differentiation, classification, and inscription.

Even the methods and techniques for enacting the telling of or imperative to subjectivity are not equally available to all.<sup>8</sup> New theories of middle-class formation show that it is not just resources but the uses to which they are put that are central in displaying one's social value. For instance, prosthetic selves display their value through play, experimentation, attachment, and detachment of cultural resources, while cultural omnivores accrue material goods and knowledge for themselves.<sup>9</sup>

The processes of resourcing subjectivity are particularly significant in the current political climate, when the display of the self is read as a display of value and when the politics of recognition, identified by Nancy Fraser and Charles Taylor, shape who is seen as a valuable citizen and who can make a claim on the state (especially in the United States). Even after the exhaustive trashing of identity politics, identity is still often the method by which many groups establish their public credibility. This process is nearly always informed by the possibilities for visibility; that is, one has to have an identity that is visibly recognizable as having value and respectability. Those who cannot use identity as a resource, because they are misrecognized as pathological (like the women of my ethnographic research), cannot make the same public subjective displays of worth, for even if they did, they would not be recognized.<sup>10</sup>

Those who are marginalized by one social classification may be able to deploy other forms of visible identity as resources, such as middle-class or masculine-gendered cultural dispositions, to offset this marginalization and make their claims known. For instance, Peter Cohen's research on AIDS activism shows brilliantly how effective campaigning relied on a particular combination of embodied types of capital, of well-connected, entitled, mobile, white, upper-middle-class masculinity, that fractured collective campaigning across gender and class lines. Other studies demonstrate how respectability becomes a necessary resource in

producing gay identity, often generating class differences euphemistically spoken of through matters of taste.<sup>11</sup> An ESRC-funded research project I undertook with Les Moran, Paul Tyrer, and Karen Corteen on “violence, sexuality, and space” reveals how property and propriety are inseparable; one is a necessary condition of another. This inseparability, in turn, informs the claims and struggles that take place in gay space. Moreover, this research reveals how violence against lesbians and gay men can be put to use as a resource in political claims-making against the state, turning the state against itself, and in self and identity formation.<sup>12</sup>

Of course, queer politics has attempted to disrupt this respectable formation, but as queer becomes institutionalized, only those who can access and deploy the right resources in the right way can positively increase their presence on a public agenda. Queer politics is the constitutive limit not of gay and lesbian politics any longer (if it ever was) but of respectable marginalization. As Laura Kipnis, Matt Wray and Annalee Newitz, and John Hartigan Jr. have shown in the United States, and as Yvonne Tasker, Sally R. Munt, David Bell and Jon Binnie, and Chris Haylett have traced in the United Kingdom, it is the white working class that is now abject, the visceral site of psychic and political, hence physical and metaphoric, disgust, often nonhuman and beyond recuperation.<sup>13</sup> This abject white working class is divided by gender and sexuality and functions to mark the limits of proper personhood.

Moreover, heterosexual practices, once identified as immoral, associated with the working class, and sent to the boundaries of moral propriety, thus making the identification of the respectable and the redeemable possible, are now being brought back into the mainstream in order to open new markets for new audiences and products. For instance, the TV program *Sex in the City* detaches excessive heterosexual interest from its historical location with immoral working-class women and reattaches it to middle-class women, generating a reevaluation of morality through obsessive telling and self-analysis. This process also conveniently provides new audiences for advertisers who place their products and advertisements with this program, which is marketed as radical and breaking boundaries.

The damage wreaked by the eclipsing of structural issues of inequality through imperatives to subjectivity and identity, reinforced by forms of governance and marketing, and by the almost complete absence of issues of class in the contemporary debates on gender and sexuality, establishes a political agenda based on resourcing and the knowledge of how to put resources to use. This resourcing relies on knowing how to use and display these resources properly, with propriety. Groups that are denied access and knowledge to self-resourcing through their

structural classification, inscription, and positioning are unable to accrue exchange value to themselves and become instead resources for others (often mobilized for user-friendly branding in the opening out of new markets) or function as abject or nonhuman boundary markers of propriety. Gender and sexuality are classifications that provide resources via knowledge, practice, dispositions, and display. Entitlement to the cultural properties of others becomes one way in which new class relations and new forms of exploitation are entwined and intimately produced: gayness can be branded as user friendly and marketed; femininity can be put to use by male managers to resource themselves; blackness as “cool” has long been used as a mobile resource; and the glamorous aspects of white working-class masculinity can be detached from the embodied producer and reattached to the powerful (to increase their symbolic value). What operates as a resource for one person may fix, essentialize, and pathologize another, meaning that access and the relations of entitlement structure present relations of gender and sexuality. This process reveals how the cultural is put to use as an exchange value, as property, accrued and embodied. Structural inequality is moralized as a pathological effect of the inability to display the correct subjectivity, to resource oneself effectively in a moral-scopic economy of recognizable visible difference. The responsibility of resourcing one’s gender, sexuality, class, and race “in the right way” is a responsibility of the neoliberal individual. This responsibility relies on access to the “right” cultural resources and is read on the body as a sign of value and/or pathology. It is how gender and sexuality are made and seen in the present.

## Notes

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1. See Jon Dovey, *Freakshow: First Person Media and Factual Television* (London: Pluto, 2000); Lauren Berlant, “The Subject of True Feeling: Pain, Privacy, Politics,” in *Transformations: Thinking through Feminism*, ed. Sara Ahmed et al. (London: Routledge, 2000), 33–48; and Nikolas Rose, *Governing the Soul: The Shaping of the Private Self* (London: Routledge, 1989).
2. Marc Gobé, *Emotional Branding: The New Paradigm for Connecting Brands to People* (New York: Allworth, 2001); David Lewis, *The Soul of the New Consumer: Authenticity—What We Buy and Why in the New Economy* (London: Brealey, 2000).

3. Toby Miller, *The Well-Tempered Self: Citizenship, Culture, and the Postmodern Subject* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993).
4. Lisa Adkins and Celia Lury, "The Labour of Identity: Performing Identities, Performing Economies," *Economy and Society* 28 (1999): 598–614; Lisa Adkins, "Mobile Desire: Aesthetics, Sexuality, and the 'Lesbian' at Work," *Sexualities* 3 (2000): 201–18.
5. "Homeboy Cosmopolitan: Manthia Diawara Interviewed by Silvia Kolbowski," *October*, no. 83 (1998): 51–70.
6. Beverley Skeggs, *Formations of Class and Gender: Becoming Respectable* (London: Sage, 1997).
7. Pierre Bourdieu, "What Makes a Social Class? On the Theoretical and Practical Existence of Groups," *Berkeley Journal of Sociology* (1987): 1–17. On habitus see Marcel Mauss, "Body Techniques," in *Sociology and Psychology: Essays*, trans. Ben Brewster (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979), 54–67; and Jacques Merleau-Ponty, *The Structure of Behavior*, trans. Alden L. Fisher (London: Methuen, 1965). See also feminist work on Bourdieu by Terry Lovell, "Thinking Feminism with and against Bourdieu," *Feminist Theory* 1 (2000): 11–32; Toril Moi, "Appropriating Bourdieu: Feminist Thought and Pierre Bourdieu's Sociology of Culture," *New Literary History* 22 (1991): 1017–49; and papers presented at "Feminists Evaluate Bourdieu: International Perspectives Conference," Manchester University, October 11, 2002, [www.les1.man.ac.uk/sociology/conferences](http://www.les1.man.ac.uk/sociology/conferences).
8. See debates by Lisa Adkins, "Reflexivity and the Politics of Qualitative Research: Who Speaks for Whom, Why, How, and When?" in *Qualitative Research in Action*, ed. Tim May (London: Sage, 2002), 332–48; Beverley Skeggs, "Who Can Tell? Reflexivity in Feminist Research," in May, *Qualitative Research in Action*, 349–75; Tony Bennett, "The Invention of the Modern Cultural Fact: Toward a Critique of the Critique of Everyday Life," in *Contemporary Culture and Everyday Life*, ed. Tony Bennett (Durham, U.K.: Sociology, forthcoming); Mary Poovey, *A History of the Modern Fact: Problems of Knowledge in the Sciences of Wealth and Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998); and Carolyn Steedman, "Enforced Narratives: Stories of Another Self," in *Feminism and Autobiography: Texts, Theories, Methods*, ed. Tess Cosslett, Celia Lury, and Penny Summerfield (London: Routledge, 2000), 25–40.
9. Studies of the new middle class propose various subject positions: prosthetic, reflexive, rational, individualized, and risk-taking, all of which have different relationships to knowledge and culture. Yet what they all have in common is access to the resources necessary for producing a self that can be displayed with worth and can be used to accrue value. This process enables the middle class to use its own culture to increase its volume and varieties of capital in the name of subjectivity. For aesthetic selves see Mike Featherstone, *Consumer Culture and Postmodernism* (London: Sage, 1991); and Mike Savage et al., *Property, Bureaucracy, and Culture: Middle Class Formation in*

- Contemporary Britain* (London: Routledge, 1992). For prosthetic selves see Celia Lury, *Prosthetic Culture: Photography, Memory, and Identity* (London: Routledge, 1998); Marilyn Strathern, *Property, Substance, and Effect: Anthropological Essays on Persons and Things* (New Brunswick, NJ: Athlone, 1999); and Rolland Munro, "The Consumption View of Self: Extension, Exchange, and Identity," in *Consumption Matters: The Production and Experience of Consumption*, ed. Stephen Edgell, Kevin Hetherington, and Alan Warde (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1996), 248–73. For cultural omnivore debates see Bonnie Erickson, "Culture, Class, and Connections," *American Journal of Sociology* 102 (1996): 217–51; and Richard Peterson and Richard Kern, "Changing Highbrow Taste: From Snob to Omnivore," *American Sociological Review* 61 (1996): 900–907. For a critique of cultural omnivore debates see Alan Warde, Mark Tomlinson, and Andrew McMeekin, *Expanding Tastes? Cultural Omnivorousness and Social Change in the U.K.* (Manchester: Centre for Research on Innovation and Competition, University of Manchester, 2000). I trace the tri-process of making the working class a cultural resource for use by others, of making abject, and of making nonhuman in Beverley Skeggs, *Class, Self, Culture* (London: Routledge, 2004).
10. See Nancy Fraser, "From Redistribution to Recognition? Dilemmas of Justice in a 'Post-Socialist' Age," *New Left Review*, no. 212 (1995): 68–94; and Charles Taylor, "The Politics of Recognition," in *Multiculturalism: A Critical Reader*, ed. David Theo Goldberg (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), 75–106. For a critique see Mariam Fraser, "Classing Queer: Politics in Competition," *Theory, Culture, and Society* 16 (1999): 107–31.
  11. Peter Cohen, "'All they needed': AIDS, Consumption, and the Politics of Class," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 8 (1997): 86–115. See also Steve Valocchi, "The Class-Inflected Nature of Gay Identity," *Social Problems* 46 (1999): 207–24.
  12. See Manchester University, Department of Sociology, [www.les1.man.ac.uk/sociology/vssrp](http://www.les1.man.ac.uk/sociology/vssrp); Les Moran and Beverley Skeggs, "The Property of Safety," *Journal of Social Welfare and Family Law* 23, no. 4 (2001): 1–15; and Les Moran and Beverley Skeggs, *Sexuality and the Politics of Violence and Safety* (London: Routledge, 2004).
  13. Laura Kipnis, *Ecstasy Unlimited: On Sex, Capital, Gender, and Aesthetics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993); Matt Wray and Annalee Newitz, eds., *White Trash: Race and Class in America* (London: Routledge, 1997); John Hartigan Jr., "Unpopular Culture: The Case of White Trash," *Cultural Studies* 11 (1997): 316–43; Yvonne Tasker, *Working Girls: Gender and Sexuality in Popular Cinema* (London: Routledge, 1998); Sally R. Munt, ed., *Cultural Studies and the Working Class: Subject to Change* (London: Cassell, 2000); David Bell and Jon Binnie, *The Sexual Citizen: Queer Politics and Beyond* (Cambridge: Polity, 2000); Chris Haylett, "Illegitimate Subjects? Abject Whites, Neoliberal Modernisation, and Middle-Class Multiculturalism," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 19 (2001): 351–70.

## Sexual Things

Mark Graham

I would like for us to think about sexuality together with things, the vast array of objects that make up the material culture in which we live and from which we cannot escape. We are so reliant on things that we are often inseparable from them. Indeed, throughout this essay I shall simply assume that a clear boundary between objects and persons must be abandoned and that persons do not finish at their skins. Instead, they must be seen as part of assemblages that include bodies *and* things.<sup>1</sup> Once persons are understood in this way, the question of how to sex them, gender them, and attribute sexuality to them emerges with particular force. How do we describe a sexuality that is manifested in and with things, that is not solely reliant on a “correct” combination of sexed bodies—that is to say, a heteronormative model of sexuality?

Finding ways to discuss sexuality that are not compromised by oedipal imperatives and heterosexist assumptions about the gendered nature of sexuality remains an important task for GLBTQ scholars.<sup>2</sup> Actually existing sexuality is, however, saturated with gendered meanings that cannot be dispensed with. It is also implicated in class, “race,” ethnicity, nationality, and so forth. In what follows I shall make some brief suggestions for ways of thinking about sexuality with the help of things that opens a space for the other factors that structure it.

My reasons for bringing in things stem from my anthropological research into material culture, consumption, and GLBTQ sexuality based on fieldwork in Sydney. For anthropology, the material world is social, and things lead social lives beyond a specific time and place. It is therefore important not to take things at face value but to follow them to see where they take us.<sup>3</sup> If we were more artifactually literate, we would routinely take into account more than we normally do of the formidable complexity of even the humblest thing. Things have forced me to situate sexuality in a material context. This context includes objects that open up sexuality, gender, and sex to things that can trouble their meaning. When considering the meaning of the terms *sexuality*, *sex*, and *gender*, context is all. Without it, abstract and reductive statements abound: witness the oedipal conceits of psychoanalysis.

The word *thing* derives from the Germanic *thingan* and is related to the Gothic *theihs*, “time.” The thing was the appointed time for deliberation, accusation, judicial process, and decisions. It came to stand for the place where these proceedings occurred, such as the Icelandic parliament, the *Althing*. In English, a thing was the subject of discussion, and it finally came to refer to an object. The word *thing* is thus a reification of time, process, deliberation, and dispute.

But things and the assemblages of which they are part are not only reifications; they are also “sexed.” In making this claim, I do not mean that they are assigned a masculine or feminine gender, although many objects obviously are. Rather, I am playing on the possible origin of the word *sex* in the Latin *secare*, “to cut.” More precisely, I am referring to the cutting and division involved in amputating things from the relations between people, places, materials, and history that have produced them in order to create discrete objects.

Sexuality is in danger of becoming a thing, if it has not already become one. Under its umbrella have been assembled a host of bodily practices, tastes, pleasures, desires, moral judgments, and much more. These disparate phenomena have imploded into the term, providing sexuality with a remarkable range of application and an exaggerated explanatory power, as Michel Foucault so clearly showed.

Things help materialize the composite we refer to as sexuality. To dereify things is to open them and the sexuality they help maintain to the world. This is one way to think about sexuality, as an opening outward, a connecting and reconnecting, and it has proved useful when I have tried to make sense of the compelling nature of objects. As Georg Simmel pointed out a century ago, cultural beings are those who “separate the connected or connect the separate.” To separate is also to relate; to relate presupposes a prior separation.<sup>4</sup> Sex effects a separation; it cuts up people into sexes. Gender both divides and relates them on the basis of sex, which it also helps create. Sexuality, as a connecting, presupposes forms of sexing and gendering, but the copulatory work of sexuality together with things exceeds the categories that sex and gender create and should not therefore be subsumed under either.

We can start the work of copulation in a guest bathroom in Sydney.

The bathroom in question belongs to Grant, a business executive in his late thirties who works in a large Australian multinational company. I was carrying out an inventory of his possessions as part of the project mentioned earlier when I discovered a small, old can of Crisco vegetable oil in a cupboard in his guest bathroom. Grant was as surprised as I was to find it there. It was rusty and had leaked, leaving a stain on the shelf. Needless to say, the oil had never been used for cooking, and the obvious place where one would have expected to find it was not in his kitchen or guest bathroom but in the bottom drawer of his bedroom dresser, where he kept his pornography, his impressive collection of very large dildos, lubricants, poppers, handcuffs, and all his other sexual paraphernalia. He was a little concerned that his parents might have spotted the Crisco on one of their visits. But on

reflection he realized that they would have seen only a can of vegetable oil, whereas he saw a lubricant for hard-core sex. Since 1911 Crisco has been advertised as an element of traditional heterosexual family life, with Mom cooking in the kitchen, sometimes aided by her young daughter.<sup>5</sup> Among gay men, the brand is so well known that bars have been named after it in, among other places, Berlin, Florence, and Stockholm. Baking or fist fucking? Heteronormative gender or hard-core gay male sexuality? The can can open in either direction, depending on what is known about the thing and which of its uses eclipses the others.

The sexuality of things can be complex. What is the sexuality (or gender or sex) of the assemblage of designer suit and woman? The suit I have in mind is worn by Sarah, a lesbian banker I know in Sydney. The power-dressing garment projects status, wealth, and success. Sarah always wears it at meetings where she needs to intimidate. It was designed by a gay man and paraded down a catwalk by a heterosexual woman. The wool was shorn by men notorious for regularly announcing their heterosexuality and cursing women and queers. The cloth was woven on massive industrial looms by men about whose sexuality I know nothing. It was sewn together by underpaid female workers somewhere in Southeast Asia. The finished suit was advertised in women's magazines as the key to one's sex appeal and professional success. The suit is the result of an assemblage of sexualities, sexes, genders, social relations, raw materials, and exploitative relations of production that are particularly disadvantageous for women. The finished assemblage does not advertise them. How we attribute a sexuality to a woman-suit depends on how we cut it. There is no simple sexuality here, any more than there is an obvious gender or nationality, once we look beyond the body wearing the suit and take into account the relations and materials condensed into the assemblage.

Andrew, a man in his early fifties, lives in Sydney and works in a large public services company. Among his possessions are numerous religious items, including rosary beads, crucifixes, Bibles, and a book about the Roman Catholic school where he once taught. He also owns several ceremonial swords. He acquired some in the armed forces, but one of them comes from an uncle who obtained it under suspicious circumstances in Japan at the end of World War II. Military diplomas and Rotary Club testimonials hang on his walls, and a dress uniform he occasionally wears hangs in his closet, along with a nun's habit. He has dozens of gay porn videos and a bone-china tea service decorated in hysterical pansies that he inherited from his grandmother. He also owns a sizable collection of Hollywood musicals on video, including many that feature Judy Garland.

This fragment of his total material assemblage does not provide us with an

unambiguous picture of Andrew's sexuality. Gay porn sits uneasily alongside rosaries, the Rotary Club, and things military. The military did, however, provide Andrew with his swords, and he eagerly displays how to handle them as part of his seduction technique. They do not simply signify his sexuality; they make him *feel* sexy, and there is something erotic about the precision with which he wields them. The nun's habit appears at parties and is a good conversation starter. It too plays a part in his seduction technique. For Andrew, martial arts and mother superior are two very different genderings in pursuit of the same thing, sex, preferably with younger men. He uses things to make social and sexual contacts, but some of these very things connect him with institutions that publicly condemn his sexuality.

Things link the sexualities of the assemblages in which they figure to processes that are supportive but also sometimes subversive of hierarchies of sex, sexuality, gendered meanings, class, "race," ethnicity, global capitalism, nationalism, and so forth. Thinking of sexuality along these lines is not common in the Euro-American West, where, amid an abundance of commodities, we often do not take things seriously enough.<sup>6</sup> Identities and practices, including sexuality and gender, massively involve their objectification in things. If we think of gender as an effect and not a cause,<sup>7</sup> we ought to remember that the effect is often inseparable from the things through which it emerges and is expressed. But things are the products of a cut, a sexing, that differentiates them and conceals at least part of their history. The things involved in sexuality and gendering, I want to suggest, exceed their performative context as a matter of routine rather than as an isolated exception. Anything done with things is always open to a potential *objection* that calls into question the sexuality, sex, gender, class, "race," and other characteristics that the thing has helped constitute. The gendering of a can of vegetable oil occludes its sexuality. The sexuality of a suit is largely closeted and is complicit in racial and gender hierarchies. The seductive use of ceremonial swords does not reveal that they are the spoils of war. Moreover, things display a resistant, even insolent, materiality. The law of the father is one thing, but the car that "refuses" to start for him on a cold morning shows little respect for his authority. Things thumb their noses at oedipal conceits. These challenges and objections echo the origins of the thing in litigation and dispute.

If to create things is to sex them, and often to gender them, then the act of creation also generates the potential for a sexuality, for connections, and for reconstructions that are difficult to contain within sexual and gender binarisms. To exploit this potential requires an artifactual literacy that enables us to read the sexuality of things or, rather, of the assemblages of which they are part. This is a demanding

task, for the connections are potentially never-ending, and a sexing of assemblages is unavoidable and necessary at some point. The payoff for our labors is that sexuality remains with us, not as a reified thing but as a connection, an opening onto and an invitation to explore the material worlds in which we live.

## Notes

I wish to thank the Bank of Sweden's Tricentennial Fund (Riksbankens jubileumsfond) for financing the research on which this article is based.

1. Such an assumption is already in evidence in, for example, the work of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (London: Continuum, 1992), and John Law and John Hassard, eds., *Actor Network Theory and After* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), which assumes a greater egalitarianism between humans and things. Writings on the cyborg are also related to this trend. See Donna J. Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century," in *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*, ed. Donna J. Haraway (New York: Routledge, 1991), 149–81.
2. Gayle Rubin, "Thinking Sex: Notes for a Radical Theory of the Politics of Sexuality," in *Pleasure and Danger: Exploring Female Sexuality*, ed. Carole S. Vance (Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984), 267–319; Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1994), 31–32.
3. Arjun Appadurai, "Introduction: Commodities and the Politics of Value," in *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, ed. Arjun Appadurai (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 3–63; Igor Kopytoff, "The Cultural Biography of Things: Commoditization as Process," in Appadurai, *Social Life of Things*, 64–94.
4. Georg Simmel, "Bridge and Door," in *Simmel on Culture*, ed. David Frisby and Mike Featherstone (London: Sage, 1997), 171.
5. See "About Crisco," [www.crisco.com/about.htm](http://www.crisco.com/about.htm).
6. Other cultural traditions display considerably more artifactual literacy and awareness of the relations "eclipsed" in objects. For Melanesian examples see Marilyn Strathern, *The Gender of the Gift: Problems with Women and Problems with Society in Melanesia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988).
7. Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (London: Routledge, 1990).

**Movement and Desire:****On the Need to Fluidify Academic Discourse on Sexuality***Sasho Alexander Lambevski*

Hundreds of unusual events and the narratives that frame them, incorporating feelings, memories, and observations of (mostly) male bodies—friends, lovers, strangers, research interviewees, fellow travelers in pleasure and pain—have pestered me for a while now. Here I am with a myriad of microscopic sexual effects thrown at me like a challenge to go and figure them out, a punishment for my insolent insistence on some explanation within the categories of knowledge given to me by contemporary cultural theories of sexuality. In what follows I give two admittedly sketchy examples of what I mean by these unpredictable microsocial sexual rearrangements.

Once I saw a beautiful, muscular, exclusively gay man throw himself passionately into an erotic act with a plain-looking, overweight woman at a big dance party. This freaked out both his ex-boyfriend and his other gay male friends. Another time I saw a beautiful, twenty-something, middle-class, lean, athletic, blond, WASP gay boy—a boy well known in Sydney's gay sex subculture for his vanity, his nonnegotiable sexual interest in guys who were almost spitting images of himself, and his cruising attitude—furiously plugging his ass and mouth with the white, Asian, black, working-class, and middle-class dicks of ugly, older men with grotesque bodies in front of the stunned and disgusted gazes of the body beautifuls of his class and ethnicity at a Sydney gay cruise club.

In both scenarios I saw years of corporeal training vanish in a movement from a body solidly placed on the sociocultural map to a febrile flesh full of surprises. The conceptualizations of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari offer me a framework for interpreting such transformations.<sup>1</sup> The apparatuses of social actualization and implantation—the capitalist economy, the family, the school system, the media, the state, various systems of knowledge, and so on—insert human bodies in various social fields, discourses, and practices and induce them to exist as either men or women, workers or capitalists, gay or straight, law enforcers or criminals, white or black, lean or flabby, beautiful or ugly, desirable or repulsive. In a state of freakish desiring, however, a subject node implanted by these apparatuses reaches a level of criticality at which it temporarily experiences a phase shift to another mode of existence, in the same way that frozen water becomes liquid or even gas under the right atmospheric conditions. Suddenly, there is an “impulse of virtuality,” a “transmission of a force of potential that cannot but be felt, simultaneously doubling, enabling, and ultimately counteracting the limita-

tive selections of apparatuses of actualization and implantation.”<sup>2</sup> The proper name for this transmission of potential is transduction.

That is exactly what happened in these two scenarios. A transducing sensation, an expression event, an attractor (to borrow a term from chaos theory) made these gay bodies behave in unusual and unpredictable ways. To a stale social brew in which a habituated human body depressingly existed, a surprising element—a catalyst—was suddenly added, forcefully synthesizing many of the foundational exclusive disjunctions of society and culture into a powerful desire temporarily deterritorialized both from the social structures of identity, differentiation, hierarchy, and exclusion and from myths that supported them.

These examples hint at the existence of an erogenous composite body that is an unpredictable collection “of passive syntheses that engineer partial objects [limbs, dicks, butts, skins, muscles, fat tissues, viscera, sound machines, light machines, built spaces and interiors, props of all sorts and descriptions, foods, chemicals], flows [of affect] and [monstrous, composite] bodies, and that function as units of production [not meaning].”<sup>3</sup> This body works according to regimes of synthesis that have little to do with how the relations between the large aggregates—genders, sexes, sexualities, races, classes, nations, age groups—are organized on a molar level.

The existence of this body poses serious epistemological challenges to how contemporary cultural theory continues to think about human corporeality, gender, sexuality, desire, and pleasure. Contemporary academic discourse needs to move away from the idea of sexuality as a subject position, nicely and relatively stably wrapped under the epidermal cover of an individual human body, and develop instead a vocabulary about affective intensity, flux, and the sensual assembling of human and nonhuman elements into a pleasure machine. A concerted move in this direction would precipitate a collapse of the paradigmatic obsession, deconstructive or otherwise, of current cultural theory of sexuality with the subject positionings articulated by regulatory discourses like psychology, sexology, and psychoanalysis.

The idea that the body simply expresses a particular subject position dominates the contemporary cultural theory of gender and sexuality. Gender, class, ethnicity, and sexuality are, in this view, prefabricated social discourses that inscribe themselves on sexed human bodies in the form of body-reflexive practices—postures, acts, habits, affects, and desires. Gender has been predominantly theorized as a relatively stable position in a discursive field, which produces particular representations and practices that are used to legitimize the domination of a particular type of (hetero, upper-class, white) man over women

and other types of men. As such, it forms the basic script from which everyone draws his or her sexual desires, practices, and pleasures (sexuality). The main problem with macrosocial gendering—a statistical operation that positions people in distinct gendered groups—is that it does not contain the specificity necessary for actual people to understand the concrete daily microsocial negotiations of discourses and institutions of gender and sexuality.

It is, perhaps, in our very approach to studying sexuality that we see the most persistent positioning effects of such regulatory discourses as sexology, psychology, and psychoanalysis on sexuality. These discourses classify sexual desires according to a very limited number of formulaic syntheses of genders and sexes: there is the norm (heterosexuality), then an inversion of the norm turned into an exclusive disjunction from the norm (homosexuality), then a perversion of the norm in a whole range of in-betweens (bisexuality and, to a much lesser degree, transsexuality), that is, in a relation of inclusive disjunction from the norm.

Contemporary cultural theory of sexuality has gone some way toward releasing sexuality from the oedipal prison of Mommy/Daddy/me by showing that people sexually desire many things outside the constant erotic replication of the gendered objects and power relations that stand in for the parents of the bourgeois family. In part, theory has achieved this by adding class and race or ethnicity as subject positions that interface with sexuality. While this achievement has undoubtedly contributed to a far more nuanced understanding of sexuality than we once had, the fact remains that this approach touches only on those cultural laws that tend to freeze the erotogenicity of the human body. The body thus confined is sentenced to a constant replay of a “selection from a repertoire of possible permutations on a limited set of predetermined terms” (gender, sexual orientation, class, ethnicity, age, etc.).<sup>4</sup> The body never escapes the orbit plotted by the normative gravity of the texts, discourses, and institutions that support hierarchies based on gender, class, sexual orientation, race, age, and so on. Sexuality, in this framework, remains firmly wedded to identity. One might as well say, “Tell me your class, race, gender, sex, nation, age, and sexual orientation and I will tell you your sexual desire.”

Using these basic sexual coordinates, queer theory has attempted to contribute to the explanation and creation of new sexual realities. Even with an increased set of sexual identity permutations and the queer attempts to combine them, contemporary cultural theory is reaching the limit of its interpretive power in the face of the experiences and desires I have touched on.

Flux, process, movement, and change precede stasis, signification, coding, representation, solidification, aggregation, and massification. The idea of position-

ality fails to acknowledge movement and the body's inherent potential for variation and change. Change is something that "includes rupture but is nevertheless continuous (but only with itself, without complement)."<sup>5</sup> Anything that endures varies. If one persists in one's sexual being as homosexual, heterosexual, bisexual, or transsexual, or in one's habituated sexual desire for a body signified in a particular way, it is only because something has been arrested from a field of potentials that have surfaced from empirical conditions of modulation, as when a complex system, like a human body inextricably linked to other human bodies, "enters a peculiar state of indecision, where what its next state will be turns entirely unpredictable."<sup>6</sup> Chaos theory calls this state a bifurcation or singular point.

For example, the bodies involved in the experiences described above are in constant motion. They do not coincide with the social parameters used to identify them on the social grid (e.g., gay, young, muscular, beautiful, middle-class, WASP). They coincide with their own transition to elsewhere. While certain variations related to the body's capacity to be positively affected by something new unfolded in those two scenarios, these variations do not at all cover the whole range of possibilities.

After all, one can be sexually aroused by anything under the sun, given certain conditions. Sexuality as transduction and modulation of the stimuli coming from the world into bodily affect escapes the stranglehold of identity, personality, and subjectivity. To describe the eroticism of the attractive gay man in the first scenario as a surfacing of potential, as a movement from exclusive homosexuality to some dormant bisexuality, is to miss the point. The woman he erotically embraced might have been a "beneficiary" of the movement in the man's body, but that did not even for a moment turn him into a bisexual. Rather, there was a singular coming together of many elements (music, lights, probable chemicals, the intersubjective play of affects among people around the man, his own delirious imagination, and many other things). The woman and her attractions were a small, perhaps accidental element in the pleasure/desire machine assembled here. Indeed, this man may not have even perceived this woman *as* a woman, just as he may have seen himself at that moment as something else than a man. To describe this complex, singular coming together of many elements as an always already preprogrammed movement between some basic, very limited number of sexual coordinates would be an academic exercise in the capture and containment of an abstract potential. The singular intermixing of bodies, objects, and signs would thus be standardized and regulated by the rules of the predominant academic discourse on sexuality. The same is true of the second scenario.

The (freakish) sexuality I witnessed in each scenario did not emerge from

a simple inversion of the eroticized plays of power between genders, classes, races, ages, and hierarchies of ugliness and beauty. It was a transsensuous, transsignified, synesthetic, mesoperceptive sexuality in which stimuli gathered by all five senses met well below ideology as a script for subjecting oneself to the usual erotic power games we tend to call sexuality. This sexuality belongs neither to the subject nor to the world exclusively. As such, it is not ownable, qualifiable, recognizable, or amenable to critique. It is a flow attached to a nomadic desire that “does not take as its object persons or things, but the entire surroundings that it traverses, the vibrations and flows of every sort to which it is joined, introducing therein breaks” from subjectivity and new syntheses of bits and pieces from the world.<sup>7</sup>

### Notes

1. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen R. Lane (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983).
2. Brian Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), 42–43.
3. Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 26.
4. Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual*, 3.
5. *Ibid.*, 51.
6. *Ibid.*, 109.
7. Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 293.

### Dude, Where's My Gender? or, Is There Life on Uranus?

*Judith Halberstam*

In a key moment in the “witless white males” classic *Dude, Where's My Car?* (2000), Jesse and Chester, having been threatened by a male-to-female transsexual and her drag-king boyfriend, chased by a troupe of large-breasted hot female aliens, and kidnapped by members of a bubble-suit-wearing religious cult, stand before a pair of space travelers and request information about the universe. “What do you want to know?” ask the space aliens, disguised as Swedish gay men. Jesse and Chester smirk and say, “Have you been to Uranus?” We have not heard such a preponderance of anus jokes since *Wayne's World* (or, for those who missed *Wayne's World* and its sequel, grade school), but in a comedy where the bumbling male buddies share many a nude moment, and even engage each other in a little open-mouth kissing, the Uranus jokes register a new casualness about the homosocial-

homoerotic divide. At a time of deep and continuing crisis, when George W. Bush can rally new support with every shit-eating grin, let us take comfort where we can find it, and *Dude, Where's My Car?* (hereafter referred to as *Dude*) is as good a place as any to start.

What can a film about two idiot stoners who lose their car and then have to reconstruct the events of the previous night to find it, repay money they owe, and win back the love of the twins they are dating while saving the universe from certain destruction and in the process kicking the ass of moronic jocks, pissing off male supermodel Fabio, escaping from a fifty-foot hot space alien woman, receiving as presents from the other space aliens some necklaces that make their girlfriends develop huge hoo-hoos (to use the film's own vernacular), and receiving in return not sex but only some dumb berets with their names embroidered on them—what can such a film tell us about the relationships among sexuality, gender, nation, and race today? More precisely, is this going to be another ridiculous essay about queering a fourth-rate adolescent comedy with a few laugh lines, lots of butt jokes, a weak heterosexual resolution, and no political consciousness whatsoever? The answer to the first question will engage us for the rest of the essay. The answer to the second question is, perhaps.

Why is *Dude* a queer narrative, and why should we care? Before the space aliens disguised as Swedish gay men leave planet Hollywood for a quick tour around Uranus, they force Jesse and Chester to forget everything that has happened to them and leave them to return to the state of oblivion from whence they came. Jesse and Chester return home, only to awake the next morning as befuddled as they were, wondering why they remember nothing of the night before and why their fridge is packed with chocolate pudding. The exchange that began their picaresque journey across the landscape of mini malls and miniature golf courses—"Dude, where's my car?" "I don't know, dude, where's your car?" "I don't know, dude, where's my car?"—begins again, and the lessons that the pair learned the night before are lost and remain to be relearned. This Nietzschean act or nonact of forgetting on which the loopy narrative depends arrests the developmental and progress narratives of heteronormativity and strands our feckless heroes in the no man's land of lost knowledge and scatological humor. While the deliberate forgetting of the George W. Bush kind *can* threaten the very survival of the universe, the benign forgetting of the dude variety allows for a free space of reinvention, a new narrative of self and other, and, possibly, the chance to revisit the hot chicks from the night before as if meeting them for the very first time.

While each dude lacks self-knowledge, each finds himself reflected in and completed by the other. Jesse and Chester face threatening obstacles—castration

and humiliation at the hands (and beaks) of some mean ostriches, for instance— as a team, a unit, a collective, and each functions as the other's phallus or weenie. Their doubleness is mirrored all around them in the twins they date, the gay Swedish aliens, and the tranny couple, and in the first two cases, at least, the doubling is homo- rather than heteroerotic. When Jesse and Chester pull up in their new car alongside the coiffed and buffed Fabio and his girl, they enact a queer mirror scene that could have been scripted by Jacques Lacan and edited by Judith Butler. In a Toronto weekly, the *Eye*, the gay alternative filmmaker and reviewer Bruce LaBruce describes this infamous scene by way of explaining *Dude's* appearance on his top-ten movie list:

Fabio looks over contemptuously and revs his engine; [Ashton] Kutcher [i.e., Jesse], behind the wheel, does the same. Fabio responds by putting his arm around his vixen; Kutcher rises to the challenge by placing his arm emphatically around [Seann William] Scott [i.e., Chester]. Fabio then leans over and gives his girl a long, deep tongue kiss.

The movie could have gone in infinite directions at this point, but amazingly Kutcher leans over and, gently yet convincingly, delivers the lingering tongue to Scott. The actors neither overplay nor underplay the moment and show no visible trace of disgust or regret afterward. I was almost in tears. This one scene does more to advance the cause of homosexuality than 25 years of gay activism.<sup>1</sup>

How does this scene “advance the cause of homosexuality”? Doesn't it represent homosexuality as an inauthentic representation of heterosexuality? Doesn't it reveal the resilience and mastery of white male heterosexuality, which can prevail over even overtly gay encounters? Or does it show competitive male heterosexuality to be the result of homoerotic mimicry? Who leads, who follows, who sucks, who blows, who catches, who pitches, who watches, who learns, who cares? LaBruce's exuberant response to the kiss, of course, is a way of resisting the earnestness of so many gay and lesbian texts. Armed with a startlingly queer and sexy encounter between two resolutely straight dudes, LaBruce can rejoice, cry almost, at their nonchalance, their heady indifference to the sexual codes of dudedom, their idiotic plunge into manly gay sex, their knowing mimicry not of Fabio's performed hetero make-out session but of the barely submerged homosexuality of, to quote *Zoolander* (2001), “really, really, really good-looking male models.”

While Jesse and Chester find themselves mirroring white queerness, otherness, in this film, is reserved for people of color: the black pizza shop owner who

berates the dudes for their shoddy work ethic; the Chinese take-out lady who responds to each order by saying, “And then . . . and then . . . and then . . .”; the Asian American tailor who sews the boys some Adidas suits; the racially ambiguous group of jocks. Yet, as it turns out, in the land of bland blonds and dumb jocks, otherness is not such a bad place to be. In fact, the Chinese take-out lady’s “And then . . . and then . . . and then . . .” becomes the defining principle for the narrative form of *Dude*, a long shaggy-dog tale with a supplemental, or simply mental, rather than developmental logic. The Asian American tailor provides the way out of one of the film’s most enduring and maddening loops. When changing into the Adidas suits that they no longer remember purchasing the night before, Jesse and Chester each discover that the other has a new tattoo on his upper back. Chester’s tattoo reads “sweet,” while Jesse’s tattoo reads “dude.”

*Jesse:* Dude, you have a tattoo.

*Chester:* You do too.

*Jesse:* What does mine say?

*Chester:* “Dude.” What does mine say?

*Jesse:* “Sweet.” What does mine say?

*Chester:* “Dude.” What does mine say?

*Jesse:* “Sweet.” What does mine say?

Each dude becomes more and more infuriated at the speech loop as they turn their backs to each other, repeating, “What does mine say?” When they come to blows, the tailor finally intervenes and explains reasonably: “His says ‘sweet,’ and yours says ‘dude.’” The tailor sees the whole picture, while each dude can see only his buddy’s back. Suture, we could say, is in the position of the tailor, literally; he sews meaning into the narrative and stands in for the patriarchal voice of reason and sense that the film seems to resist and that the stupid white man is unable to supply. For a moment, everything makes sense, the dudes embrace, the tailor smiles knowingly, the dudes are marked by their gender, their whiteness, their stupidity, but as quickly as knowledge comes, it disappears, like the car (dude, where’s my car?), like a Freudian lost object (dude, where’s my mother’s breast?), like the thread of this argument (dude, what’s my point?).

Unlike *Jackass*, its uncanny double, *Dude* manages to rise above its generic limitations (ridiculous premise; stupid-white-male protagonists; rampant racism, sexism, and homophobia) and exploit the potential of its mise-en-scène (lots of transgendered characters and quite a few hot chicks with big hoo-hoos). In so doing, *Dude* offers a potent allegory of memory, forgetting, remembering, and forgetting again. We can use this allegory to invent and describe the present

moment in queer studies, poised as it is and as we are between offering a distinct “negative” strand of critical consciousness to a public that would rather not know and using more common idioms to engage those who do not know why they should care. I hope that this brief commentary nudges us to think about the state of queer studies today, the place of queer and gender studies in the urgent project of revitalizing left critique, the role of gender in sexuality studies, the role of sexuality in gender studies, and the role of the queer intellectual in what Lisa Duggan calls “the incredible shrinking public sphere.”<sup>2</sup> *Dude* tells us that only a special kind of unknowing can save us from the dangers of white hetero manhood (dude, where are Saddam Hussein’s weapons of mass destruction?) and all of its specialized knowledge, expertise, security plans, high alerts, and hawkish propaganda.

But dude, seriously: forgetting, unknowing, losing, lacking, bumbling, stumbling—these all seem like hopeful developments in the location of the white male. In his book *Stupid White Men* Michael Moore describes *Dude* as a film that tells you all you need to know about the United States today.<sup>3</sup> (Reportedly, Moore is naming his next book *Dude, Where’s My Country?* My next book will be called *Dude, Where’s My Theory?* in the hope that it gets confused for his and ends up on the *New York Times*’s Bestseller List.) As we watch Bush the Sequel play out its sad, scary, humorless scenarios, its Wild West fantasies and *Top Gun* realities, we might well hope for a little humor, a little irony, a little ray of self-consciousness to illuminate the path from dumb to dumber; then again, if, like Jesse and Chester, we manage, in the process of searching for a ray of hope in a landscape of eternal sunshine and cheerleaders, to grab the space aliens’ “continuum transfunctioner,” make friends with a fabulous MTF and her FTM boyfriend, kick some jock ass, get a look up the skirt of the fifty-foot hot space alien, end up with a fridge full of chocolate pudding, and save the universe from the kind of earnestness that allows a moronic president to use taped conversations of supposed foreign agents saying “nerve gas” to justify the invasion of Iraq, then all this will have been worthwhile.

## Notes

1. Bruce LaBruce, “Dudes’ Smooch Leads the Way,” in *Eye Weekly*, February 1, 2001, [www.eyenet.net/eye/issue/issue\\_02.01.01/columns/feelings.html](http://www.eyenet.net/eye/issue/issue_02.01.01/columns/feelings.html).
2. Lisa Duggan, *The Twilight of Equality: Neoliberalism, Cultural Politics, and the Attack on Democracy* (Boston: Beacon, 2003).
3. Michael Moore, *Stupid White Men and Other Sorry Excuses for the State of the Nation!* (New York: ReganBooks, 2001), 193.