

**Department of Communication and Cultural Studies**

**To All the Bodies I Have Loved Before:  
The Marginalisation of Non-Homosexual Male-Male  
Corporeal Pleasures in the Discourse of Gay Liberation**

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## **Declaration**

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university.

To the best of my knowledge and belief this thesis contains no material previously published by any other person except where due acknowledgment has been made.

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## **Abstract**

In the post-gay liberation era, the body desirous of same-sex sex is presented with the possibility of existing without punishment. Indeed, gay liberation has demanded freedom for this body, insisting that the journey towards enlightened liberation must include a willingness on the part of the body to publicise all of its same-sex sexual desires and pleasures through proud articulation of “I am gay.” This thesis attacks the assumption of freedom assigned within the discourse of gay liberation to both the act of sex and the act of speech. Specifically, I argue against the belief that the body is liberated when it and its pleasures are contained within an identified and identifiable (homo)sexual form.

Within the poststructuralist and postmodern contexts, silence has been exposed as a means of repressing the truth. It seeks to deny marginalised bodies the freedom they crave and deserve. Such an interpretation of silence, however, is only one reading among many. I advocate a (re)turn to silence, a (re)casting of it as a mode of resistance to the discipline of the sex-truths established in the culture. In challenging the truths of “man” and “sex” through the construction of a Body without Sex (BwS), I dispute the reality of the homosexual type. The premise of this thesis is that the silence of a BwS offers a space in which the male-d body that engages in same-sex sexualised contact is able to resist the culture’s dictate to be a homosexual. A silencing of anatomical sex and the act of sex disrupts compulsory homosexualisation.

This thesis concludes with an application of the concept of a BwS to three male-male relationships in which the participants might experience mutual desires and/or corporeal pleasures. Here, with anticipated controversy, intimate unions between men and boys, “mates” and brothers are removed from the framework of compulsory sexualisation through which the culture demands they must be read. The intensity of the culture’s focus on anatomical sex and the act of sex contain such relationships and the bodies involved within the discipline of the sexual. A BwS aims to resist such discipline through its desire to encourage the body and its pleasures to become other than signifiers of sexual truths.

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This project could not have been undertaken and completed without the many friends who have let me go into spaces both they and I have feared; without those who have stood back watching and waiting patiently, sometimes in despair, sometimes with silenced titillation I am sure. To some, I have never returned. I have pursued this research—and (the topic of) sex—with such intense anger and passion. I have been insistent, persistent, demanding. At times, I have been destructive in my approach. It costs me nothing now to say I am sorry, although, for some, I fear this apology comes too late.

I have talked too much, and these friends have been forced to listen too much. Me and sex, sex and me, every sexualised component of my body going anywhere, doing anything it goddamn chooses. Such compulsive choices too often have been more dangerous than I care to remember. Throughout, I have desired for the body a silence completely at odds with the way I relentlessly rant and rave, but the disjuncture between the body's acts and the desire for silence is what has made the search so compelling. I desire always-queerer contradictions, forever-queerer confusion. I am innately, joyously schizophrenic.

More importantly, surely these friends too have desired silence from me. Indeed, they deserve it more than I. Only now, do I grant them silence. In compliance with the current spirit of this “lucky” land of Oz (Australia), where no courage, no brains and no heart can be found, I give these friends no names, no faces of identification. Like the mouths and voices of refugees in this nation, my lips are sewn, purposely self-sewn. Who seeks the names of these others? For what reason must you have knowledge of these bodies? I celebrate their becoming without name, without face. May they find pleasures in silence.

My involvement in this research has scared the life out of me. Indeed, at times, the intensity of my approach has threatened to take my life away. But it is all over now. I can breathe again. Until the next time. Until this queered body desires yet more dangerously disrupting disorganisation...

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## **Chapter 1    Introducing the Anti-“I”**

### 1.1 Anti-Knowledge and “I”

There is no truth to be found in this thesis; no knowledge contained within: “The claim to truth, as Foucault has proposed, is inextricably an act of power” (Seidman, *Difference* 48). What right do I have to insist on the truths of what I write? And knowledge? It is but an accumulation of constructed idea(l)s contained within the illusory reality of a knowing and knowledgeable mind. The knowing “I” assumes too readily an ability to form linear connections between this point and that point, connections and points stored in memory, where such memorisation relies on a horizontal flow of time from past to present and the vertical organisation of this time from a present to a past (Deleuze and Guattari, *Thousand* 294-95). “I” rely too much on being knowledgeable about this present and this past. Without knowledge, without the belief in its attainability and storage, “I” cannot be. Who am I, therefore, to suggest that what I write here could be anything but a collection of disjointed but well-rehearsed lies? Indeed, who am I to write at all?

It is not my aim in this thesis to contribute to the establishment or solidification of a queer studies discipline either in the specific university institution in which I have undertaken this research or in the wider academic community. I do not share the opinion that the existence of such a discipline is necessary if we—the so-called minoritised few—are to escape from isolation, prove our existence and “advance *intellectually*” (Plummer, “Speaking” 12; emphasis in the original). I agree with the claim that “Once conjoined with ‘theory,’ [...] ‘queer’ loses its offensive, vilifying tonality and subsides into a harmless generic qualifier, designating one of the multiple departments of academic theory” (Halperin, “Response”). I see no evidence of progress being made when a university agrees to listen to and respond to any body’s plea to declare “I am queer.” On the contrary, in this accepted institutionalisation of both a sexualised self and the corresponding knowledge of the queer “I” produced by such an act of articulation, I see only a continuing regulation of the body in the academy specifically and in Western culture in general. It is a lot easier for a university to provide a space in which “gays” and “lesbians” can

meet and discuss under the rubric of “queer” than risk having becoming-queerer bodies roam its corridors and classrooms unscrutinised. Similarly, it is a lot easier for the wider culture to tolerate the existence of the homosexual than to accept an inability to control a more radical rewriting of the body and its capacity for pleasure. Without doubt, Western culture will come to accept the homosexual’s demand to declare, “I do, ’til death do us part,” because such a declaration grants the culture eternal visibility of the same-sex desiring body and, therefore, easier regulation of what the body does throughout the entirety of its now homosexualised lifetime (Durber, “Application” 126-27).

Instead, this thesis aims to reveal the possibilities of becoming a body without the substance of sex: a Body without Sex (BwS). This body is one that is forever in the process of becoming queerer. It is never fully queer, never quite here. In his investigations into the history of sexuality, Michel Foucault located sex and sexuality as specific matters of concern for subjects with a will to know. The endless circulation of the discourses of sex and sexuality around us and upon us—indeed, of all discourses that produce knowledge—is what enables us to continue to understand ourselves as knowledgeable and capable of knowing. Knowledge is what sustains the body in the position of “I.” In my desire to move away from such naïve and regulating comprehensibility, I argue for a focus on unknowability as a site in which the body that interacts sexually with same-sexed bodies might evade the imperative to come out as “gay.” In a space of unknowability, matters of sex are able to elide any signification and therefore any suggestion of an eternal identity for the body. The construction of a BwS is important to my desire to consider a space of anti-knowledge in a culture otherwise overrun by a quest for knowledge of everything. Sex for a BwS is no more than a momentary act of corporeal pleasure, gone both historically and discursively at the very instance the act of flesh on flesh is all over, sometimes even before.

I find this concept of a BwS completely at odds with my own experiences of doing sex and of being highly sexed and sexualised. How is it that a body like mine that has done/does so much sex, that has spoken and continues to

speak so intensely and insistently about sex, can seek now to contain this sex within scare quotes that signify an illusion in both the acts and the being that such acts have produced? On many occasions, I have stepped out of the closet of assumed heterosexuality and have announced myself as other. I have declared eagerly and easily, "I am a homosexual." I have spat proudly and loudly on the grave of compulsory heterosexuality much to the annoyance and puzzlement of both those who are strangers to me and those who wish to continue to know me but within their own logical framework of sexual reason. There is immense joy to be found in this act of resistance. I have taken pleasure and pride in introducing such a disturbance to other people's thoughts and lives. Now, however, with even greater joy, I must add to the anger and confusion—and perhaps to the pain for some—in my claim that coming out can never offer the kind of freedom the discourse of gay liberation promises. Despite the chants of public pride in which I have participated, despite the countless podiums on which I have danced out an ecstasy-induced celebration of my homosexuality, I now scream even more loudly that it is not good to be gay. There can be no liberated body when the body is contained within the framework of "I am." There is no pride in "I."

Foucault's analysis of the repressive hypothesis, as explained in *The History of Sexuality 1*, disputes the assumption of a repression of sexuality throughout the Victorian era. In contrast to any widespread belief in a censorship of sex in this period of seeming conservatism, Foucault asserts that there was, in fact, a proliferation of the discourse of sex. Sex was something that had to be spoken of incessantly, not simply for the purpose of condemnation or tolerance of specific corporeal acts, but for the mandatory interpellation of the body into systems of manageability and regulation. My thesis begins with an application of Foucault's deconstruction of the repressive hypothesis to the discourse of gay liberation. In reading Foucault within the context of my own post-gay subjectivity, I have come to understand how contradictory it is to claim that I am oppressed sexually and simultaneously to demand recognition and acceptance by my family, the state and the world with

reference to the sexual acts I do. It surely reveals a major contradiction in the conceptualisation of any possible freedom to suggest that the body should proudly want to be known in terms of what normalised systems of surveillance over its material form and its pleasures already wish it to be known as.

In conducting this research, I have witnessed how my natural sex has become some other body's sex: my sex has become "sex." I have come to understand homosexuality as a product of the culture's compulsory homosexualisation of the same-sex desiring body and its pleasures, and therefore as a method of control. This thesis, therefore, is also about the de-gaying and the de-homosexualising of the sexual being I have known myself to be since that one moment in the past when I first came out of the closet. It is an attempt to offer an explanation for why my body has felt always somewhat out of place in being defined as "homosexual" or as "gay" simply because it is a body that has sex with those who have been (according to normative readings of anatomical bodies) sexed the same.

I am conscious also of how much this work has been influenced by an ongoing battle with(in) me, between the political and the apolitical aspects of self. On the one hand, I am hyperactive in the way I direct immense and incessant anger at a world I see filled with corruption, inequities, discrimination and intolerance. On the other hand, I desire to play no part in this unjust world. A part of me has given up on trying to live the kind of politicised and public life demanded of us as enlightened citizens of democratic systems. I see no point in seeking to make a difference in any culture that perpetuates systems of domination and oppression, no matter how equitable and fair this culture simultaneously purports to be. For this reason, the first section of the thesis offers an attack on the homosexual type that could be read as an overtly and overly angry rush into nihilism. In dismissing the need to know self as a homosexual, I am left with a headless body, a body without any thought of sex. The usage of sexuality and speech as forms of political resistance are dead and buried in my construction of the corpse of the homosexual "I," while the

decapitated body lingers with little respect for the culture in which it continues to reside.

And yet, as if to reveal the biggest contradiction in my voices and actions, I recognise that, in fact, I spend much of my time seeking to be heard and known. Despite my many moments of despair, I really do wish to make a difference. Moreover, despite my ongoing criticisms of the academy, I really do want to play a part in this institution's production and circulation of knowledge. Surely, this thesis offers a significant example of the importance of such desires to my life and to me. The body that survives at the end of section one of this thesis, therefore, is not without living, breathing, desiring flesh. This body is not dead; it continues to twitch. Even after beating the homosexual self to death, I still wish to continue to enjoy the body and its possibilities for experiencing intimate pleasures with same-sexed others. I still want to have sex. In the second section of the thesis, therefore, I offer a new becoming for the decapitated body, as I construct a non-politicised, non-visible "Body without Sex." To be a body without thought in relation to the corporeal pleasures it can experience does not suggest being nothing. On the contrary, a BwS offers so many more possibilities beyond the eradication of the pervasive and perverse discourse of (homo)sexuality. It offers life for the body and its pleasures beyond the death of the (homo)sexual type.

Towards the end of the first volume of his *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault left behind an emotional call for a queer kind of corporeality in which a focus on bodies and pleasures could take precedence over sexuality (157). A BwS does not seek out such a possible future. It does not seek to give knowledge of how every body must or might become a new form of corporeality. Becoming a BwS is no denouement to the storying of all bodies and their pleasures. Rather, in the Deleuzoguattarian<sup>1</sup> sense, becoming a BwS offers a "plateau"—a resting space of silence on which the body can experience desires

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<sup>1</sup> Jennifer Livett describes Deleuze and Guattari as an "odd couple": "One Deleuze and one Guattari equals one 'Deleuzoguattari.'" She accredits the term "Deleuzoguattari" to Philip Goodchild who uses it throughout his work, *Deleuze and Guattari: An Introduction to the Politics of Desire* (Sage, 1998).

and pleasures differently to how they are organised in the culture. Within a space of the unknowable, there is no connection between this sex and that sex. Indeed, there is no sex at all. There is no compulsory memorisation of corporeal pleasures that enables the pervasive gaze of the discourse of sexuality to penetrate our bodies, and have us believe, with lifetime passion, that to be who these sex acts are said to signify is what grants the body its freedom. To the contrary, within a space of becoming unknowing and unknowable, a BwS suggests the possibility of experiencing a joyous otherness to what is identifiable and, therefore, easily regulable by the discourse of sexuality into which all Western bodies are misplaced so easily and too willingly. Becoming a BwS is not only possible; it already is. A BwS exists in the very desire that drives the search for some other place beyond the body's current state of being.

## **1.2 Summary**

In section one, I address the importance of continual historical and personal articulation of the homosexual identity to the discourse of gay liberation. In the first chapter of this section (chapter two), I establish the framework of the homosexual subjectivity I aim to critique: the post-Stonewall Americanised gay model located within a narrative of citizenship and rights, and desirous of a liberation deemed within reach but always somewhere in the future. For the discourse of gay liberation, this model signifies a turning point in the culture's understanding of same-sex sex and relationships. The first section of my thesis, however, argues that there has been no epistemological shift with the rise of "gay." Within the discourse of gay liberation, "homosexuality" and "homosexual" continue to be accepted as truthful interpretations of all same-sex sexual contact and the bodies involved. Indeed, this discourse actively participates in the construction of such a homonormativity because it can have

no repressed desires and beings to liberate if these interpretations are not maintained.<sup>2</sup>

The purpose of chapter three is to offer a critique of the normalised reading of the body and its experiences of same-sexed pleasures as indicating the existence of the homosexual and a homosexuality. If we are to seek out ways of doing same-sex corporeal pleasures without allowing the bodies involved to be visible to a culture currently demanding the sexualisation of every body, the term “homosexual” can no longer be read as truth. In fact, we need to bring to a close the narrative of homosexuality that has dominated discussions on same-sex sex since the late nineteenth century. Continuing articulations of a sexual identity through coming out as “gay,” however, work to reject any possibility of becoming other than homosexual. In chapter four, therefore, I offer an attack on the process of coming out through describing this storying of an emerging homosexual self as a process of discipline necessary in the culture’s desire to continue sexual regulation of the body and its capacity for sexual pleasures within the context of an autonomous “I.” Despite the rhetoric of the discourse of gay liberation, to come out as gay cannot liberate the subject from mechanisms of control. On the contrary, this discourse too becomes such a mechanism when it manages to exist as the legitimate and only framework in which the same-sex desiring body can be free.

Section two moves beyond this deconstruction of a homo- and gay-normativity in the search to establish the possibility of becoming a body that experiences pleasures of the flesh without any recognition of the sex it is and the sex it does. I start by asserting the need for queerer consideration of corporeal acts. Here, my understanding of queer should be read as the excess to already normalised systems of knowing. In this sense, queer is outside the culture’s pervasive will to knowledge and should be distinguished from attempts to locate “queer” as a signifier of non-heteronormativity. Queerness does not stand in opposition to heterosexuality or heteronormativity. Rather, queerness

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<sup>2</sup> For the purpose of this thesis, “homonormativity” refers to the normalisation of the homosexual type rather than to the establishment of a legitimate social position for the homosexual.

encourages and signifies a rejection of the very categorisations of sexual desires, pleasures and bodies, of which heterosexuality is only one. For this reason, I emphasise the importance of *becoming queerer over being queer*. To become queerer, I argue, is to seek to access spaces of unknowability and thereby to cause disruption to the culture's naturalised will to knowledge.

Specifically, the method of becoming queerer I offer in chapter five is the deployment of silence. While silence has been defined as a means of allowing oppression to take place unnoticed and unchallenged, I argue instead for recognition of silence as a possible site of resistance to expected ways of being. In silence is the possibility of becoming other than what has been narrativised already because of the culture's obsession with audible articulation. With reference to bodies and pleasures, silence works as a conscious resistance to compulsory sexualisation, producing a space of unknowability in which subjectivity becomes unimaginable and where actions of the body are deemed to be of flesh and not of self. The body in silence is no more than fragmented moments of flesh. Silence for the body that has sex with bodies of the same sex, therefore, offers an opportunity to reconceptualise this moment of intimate corporeal pleasure outside the demand that it signify sex and therefore the construction of a sexuality connected to "I."

In chapter six, I complete the construction of a "Body without Sex" through dismantling knowledges of anatomical sex and the act of sex that seek to entrap the body from birth. Rather than advocate a need to challenge and change normative assumptions of how the body should be of a particular sex and perform sex, I argue in favour of a becoming that is devoid of such methods of control. Both anatomical sex and the act of sex need to be silenced. In becoming a BwS is the unknowability of what the body does when it experiences intimacy with another body. Becoming a BwS, therefore, involves a rejection of the compulsory organisation of certain corporeal parts and certain interactions between bodies. A BwS's disorganisation of the narrative of compulsory sexualisation allows the body and its pleasures to rest in the

moment in which corporeal pleasures occur. There is no past or future tied to a narrative of identity in becoming a BwS. There is no memorisation of sex here.

In section three of the thesis, I begin to put the concept of becoming a BwS into practice as I assess the extent to which this body is possible or evident already in three male-male intimate unions that exist outside the homonormative model supported and promoted by the discourse of gay liberation. I turn first to a man-boy relationship. While this particular relationship is read widely as an abhorrent and abusive attack on the naturalised innocence of the non-adult subject, I argue that the man's articulation of a love for boys does not challenge the culture's normalised understandings of sex and sexuality. To the contrary, the notion of being a man with a desire to be (sexually) intimate with a boy is produced and sustained within these discourses. I then consider the concept of "mateship" as an example of how a male-d body might experience corporeal intimacy with other male-d bodies without having to define such contact as homosexuality or the body as homosexual. In contrast to the assumption that a refusal to acknowledge one's involvement in same-sex sexualised pleasures signifies repression and oppression, I argue that the signifier "mate" introduces disruption to the demands of the discourse of sexuality to know the body according to what it does. "Mates" are not singular bodies with singular identities; they are conjoined in intimacy. In the final part of this chapter (chapter seven), I focus on the possibility of sex between brothers. The silence surrounding brother-brother sex provides a space in which brothered bodies are able to evade the sexed and sexualised identities forced on them because of their unwitting interpellation into the highly sexual familial sphere. This silence, however, is being undermined by an insistence on equating incest with homosexuality.

Chapter seven offers a springboard for further discussions in relation to possibilities of experiencing same-sex sexualised pleasures in spaces that silence compulsory homosexualisation for the bodies involved. It is my hope that this chapter will encourage further consideration of the applicability of

becoming a BwS to other forms of unions I have not explored, including those between women and women, men and women, and other differently sexed or non-sexed bodies. Furthermore, I hope to be able to continue this line of thought in my research with the aim of exploring the possibility of becoming a BwS in more detail and with more application to other intimate relationships, as they are experienced in the everyday. My hope is that such an exploration may assist some bodies to experience intimate contact with other bodies without the need to align these momentary acts with a lifetime of being.

This desire for the continuation of knowledge indicates a contradiction in my theoretical position. In this thesis, I contest the construction of the knowing “I,” while simultaneously I seek the approval of those who already occupy this position in the academy. I seek out a body without knowledge of an identity (of sex) while simultaneously I become—and continue to become—an “I” with knowledge (of sex). I emphasise and exploit this contradiction in chapter eight, where I speak of the hypocrisy of my position. In this chapter—more of a middle than an ending—I consider how my narrative of anti-knowledge might move beyond the knowledge of “I.” A BwS is left dangling, as I contemplate the possibility of falling deeper into the unknown and unknowable through a brief consideration of the importance of the unconscious. This turn towards psychoanalysis pre-emptly the path I anticipate I must take in any further research and in any further desire to move the body beyond being a BwS.

## **Section One – Silencing Compulsory Homosexualisation**

Tolerance is the result not of enlightenment, but of boredom.

— Quentin Crisp, *The Naked Civil Servant*

## The Trap of Coming Out

In simplistic terms, “coming out” is a self-confessed rejection of the heterosexual position and an indication by the subject of his<sup>1</sup> willingness to be identified publicly thereafter as a homosexual.<sup>2</sup> Coming out of the “closet” is the final stage in a teleological journey towards realisation of a homosexuality already present in self, but formerly hidden by compulsory heterosexuality. Having made this courageous step, the homosexual-identifying subject can begin constructing a life(style) based on being truthful to self and to others, without any further need to hide behind a surface of deceit. There is no equivalent term to define the process in reverse. Coming out of the closet is a one-way street. It signifies a head-on and outright rejection of the heterosexist

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<sup>1</sup> A preference for the male pronoun as a shorthanded way of referring to all human subjects reaffirms the normalised marginalisation of female subjectivity in the English language and within Western culture in general. In order to address this, I favour alternative means of reference, such as the use of “(s)he,” “she/he” or the more neutral “it,” even as I see in the former two terms further normalisation of the male/female binary systems of sex and gender. Throughout this thesis, however, I use the male pronoun predominantly. This should not be read as an attempt to remove the female subject from discussions on sex and sexuality. Moreover, it should not be read as yet one more attempt by a “gay man” to elide debate on female-female sexualised contact, despite criticism of such an approach (de Lauretis iv-v). Rather, it indicates the cultural and social sexing of my corporeal materiality as “male” by others and by self since my birth. It is, after all, the male-d body I speak of specifically in this work. In the latter chapters of this thesis, I explore the construction of a “Body without Sex” in which issues of maleness and femaleness, man and woman become irrelevant to the body. I hope that those who take offence to my sex-ed/ist usage of “he” throughout this thesis might be placated, therefore, by my desire to become a body without the substance of discriminating and unnecessary sex; and by the eventual disappearance in this thesis of the discriminating male-d “I” on which I have relied for too long in my search for and engagement in sexualised pleasures of the flesh.

<sup>2</sup> “Coming out” can refer to self-identification in contexts other than sexual identity. For example, it is possible to “come out” as Jewish or as a victim/survivor of child abuse and/or incest. More recently, “coming out” has been appropriated by those wishing to express public pride about their fatness (Schuyler). However, in the struggle for social and political liberation, the phrase has had particular relevance to the issue of homosexuality. The *Macquarie Dictionary* defines this term as: “**a.** to appear; be published. **b.** to be revealed; show itself. **c.** to make a debut in society, on the stage, etc. **d.** to emerge; reach the end. **e.** (of a photograph) to be developed successfully. **f.** to declare one’s homosexuality.” This entry also notes an obsolete use of the phrase to indicate, “to leave Europe or America to make a home in Australia” (“Come Out”). This latter definition is of particular interest to me, given that since my own “coming out” from Europe to Australia, I have found it increasingly less liberating to make public declarations of my experiences of same-sex sexualised contact within the paradigm of homosexuality. Indeed, it is only after coming out to Australia that I started to consider the discipline involved in the articulation of a gay identity.

notion that participation in same-sex sexualised pleasures is a “narrative ‘cul-de-sac’” offering only “temporary straying from the path of heterosexuality” (Mariam Fraser 110). For those who experience it, coming out as a homosexual is a run from the “straight” and the narrow into “gay” and wide-open spaces.

There can be no widespread condemnation of those who support this narrative through their articulations of self as gay. After all, coming out of heterosexuality and into homosexuality can make a person feel good. Such a transformation may provide subjects with access to certain kinds of pleasures and happiness previously denied them because of their social interpellation into compulsory heterosexuality. At times, coming out as a homosexual can offer a means of geographical and emotional escape for people otherwise expected to continue to exist in intolerant and inflexible communities in which they have felt, for whatever reason, a sense of dislocation. The success of the gay liberationist drive to encourage people to come out of the closet and thereby to become a member of a homosexual community has resulted in very real benefits for many real people.

It is neither my role nor my intention to suggest that the homosexual person is the problem. The criticism I offer of the gay liberationist discourse should not be taken as an assumption of any support on my part for attacks on homosexual people. I strongly condemn such attacks as they continue to occur with unacceptable regularity on the streets, in our homes and workplaces, and through the application of discrimination in the implementation of state and legally sanctioned policies. I recognise the need to differentiate between homosexuality as experienced by real bodies and homosexuality as a social category (Tatchell 35-36). Just because I have been granted the funded luxury of taking time out from the former to investigate the latter does not mean I have any right to claim my findings to be truths to which all bodies should subscribe. The philosophers of Greek antiquity had neither the intention nor the means to impose on others their views regarding same-sex sexualised pleasures. Instead, they relegated these views to a sphere of personal and individual

ethics (Greenberg 182).<sup>3</sup> Thankfully, I too am in no position to demand that people should comply with my theorisations regarding the inadequacies of the category of homosexual. The conclusions I form in this thesis are the result of a personal investigation into the meanings attached to same-sex sexualised pleasures. These conclusions are not applicable necessarily, therefore, to all bodies and their intimate sexualised contact with other bodies. Moreover, as a teenager who once experienced an incredible sense of relief and found immense enjoyment in announcing myself to be gay (whether people wanted to hear it or not), I rightfully could be accused of hypocrisy if I were now to encourage an outright attack on those who opt to speak the “coming out” speak.

Instead, my concern is that the insistence on a need to come out of heterosexuality into homosexuality works to reinforce the reality of a simple binarisation of corporeal pleasures. Articulation of self as a “homosexual” is read as truth. “I am a homosexual” reflects what “I” truly am. Thus, in speaking of self as a homosexual, the articulating subject fails to recognise the containment of the body within an established regulating discourse of sexuality. I too am guilty of having imagined myself to be truly gay. I once believed in being a homosexual. However, I now share Robert Reynolds’ concern that the construction of an in/out binary assists in obscuring the fiction of the homosexual being (*From Camp* 55). The successes of the gay liberation movement may have permitted the invention of “a way of being, a sense of identity, and a way of speaking about ourselves that has made it possible to claim ‘rights’” (Plummer, “Speaking” 22). The categorisation of certain bodies as “homosexual” may have made the successes of this movement possible.

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<sup>3</sup> The suggestion that bodies and pleasures should be understood within the context of personal ethics underpins Foucault’s analysis of sex and sexuality in volumes two and three of *The History of Sexuality*. Certainly, recourse to a system of personal ethics may provide one means of removing sexualised pleasures from the context of communal morality in which they have been placed and through which they now are monitored. Within the context of a rights-based culture, it is feasible to suggest that bodies should have the right to engage in the kinds of pleasures they desire and choose provided such pleasures do not involve non-consenting others or inflict unwanted harm on others. However, to rely on a system of personal ethics as a way of performing and monitoring sexualised pleasures is highly individualistic in its approach. Such a system continues to assume the existence of an “I” capable of making decisions for the body. It is this domination of the body by the knowable “I” that I write against in this thesis.

However, the political and social benefits gained by constructing a gay community of self-articulating homosexuals are not enough to discount the continuing regulation of the body within arbitrary systems of sexual classification, especially when these classifications result in the silencing of alternative ways of understanding corporeal pleasures with same-sexed bodies. Furthermore, the successes of the movement to secure rights for homosexuals are not sufficient to ignore the processes of marginalisation—consciously political or unconsciously discursive—in which this movement and its homosexualised subjects now participate.

In this first section, I explore the importance of the act of “coming out” to the construction of a homonormativity on which the discourse of gay liberation depends. I discuss how this discourse works to discipline the body into being a homosexual through promoting compulsory articulation of who we are with reference to what the body (sexually) desires to do and/or actually does. I reject the claim of any epistemological shift in understandings of same-sex sexualised pleasures even with the development of a publicly strong and visible gay community, such as we might see in existence today. In taking the view that liberation is an ideological utopia invested with power and knowledge for the purpose of controlling the body, I argue that the discourse of gay liberation allows for greater visible surveillance of human corporeality through this discourse’s participation in the disciplining of the same-sex desiring body as “homosexual.” The discourse of gay liberation does not produce freedom. Rather, it is yet one more attempt to establish bourgeois hegemony over all bodies through excessive observation and arbitrary interpretation of what the body does with other bodies in bed and elsewhere.

## **Chapter 2 The Normativisation of “Gay”**

## 2.1 The American Stone-Wall

Until 1969, same-sex love was forcibly locked in a closet. But then the story changed. Then the story read:

Just after midnight on Saturday, June 28, 1969, drag queens, street people, and patrons of the Stonewall Inn, a mob-controlled dance bar in Greenwich Village, fought back during a police raid. The riots continued for the next two nights and became a symbol of proactive gay resistance. This new sense of empowerment and individual autonomy, combined with the awakening sense that freedom for those outside the mainstream was possible, led to the formation of the gay liberation movement. (Bronski 67)

This one event is viewed by many as a major point of transformation from closeted passivity to public and vibrant activity for those involved in non-heteronormative sexualised activities. Specifically, it is embedded in the narrative of “gay” liberation. Its significance extends far beyond the borders of the city in which it first occurred. Indeed, Stonewall is celebrated around the globe as the birthday of the emancipation of all same-sex desiring subjects, of “homosexuals,” to the extent that such celebrations often take precedence over a focus on more localised and other national histories pertaining to same-sex sexualised affairs (Altman, *Global* 87; Carbery 7-8; Willett 202).

Locating the birth of the liberation of the homosexual within the borders of the United States of America is congruent with the normalised placement of this one nation at the very centre of the debate concerning democratic freedoms in the latter half of the twentieth century. Similar liberation movements certainly took place concurrently elsewhere.<sup>1</sup> Additionally, similar and different kinds of liberation movements continue to occur today in places other than America.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example, the latter chapters of Jeffrey Weeks' *Coming Out* for an introduction to the gay liberation movement in Britain, or Graham Willett's *Living Out Loud* and Robert Reynolds' *From Camp To Queer* for historical accounts of gay liberation in Australia.

<sup>2</sup> Baden Offord's *Homosexual Rights as Human Rights*, for example, considers same-sex issues as they are understood and debated today in Indonesia and Singapore, as well as in Australia. It is also important to recognise that America (and the West) is often the oppressor under attack

However, in general, it is the American culture that is seen to have instigated and nurtured the 1960s' counterculture resistances to discriminatory restrictions that prevented specifically blacks, women and homosexuals from participating in society on an equal level. Narratives that tell of the successes of these resistances work to reaffirm the continuing practical and theoretical dominant position the U.S.A. holds in the discussion of individual human rights and cultural citizenship. This they do through telling tales about what happened in America, how American society has dealt with the demands of counterculture movements, how American society has progressed in regard to respecting the rights of formerly marginalised groups, and how America continues to lead the way in the proliferation of human rights throughout the world.

The fact that these social struggles took place inside the borders of American culture, and therefore reveal already existent inequalities in the American democratic system, has not managed to destabilise the belief in the United States of America as the promised land of the free. Not even an increasing resistance to American cultural and military imperialism (as evidenced in the rise of the late twentieth-century anti-globalisation movement and the immense vocal opposition in 2003 to American-led pre-emptive attacks against the sovereign state of Iraq) appears capable of dislodging the notion that America is the land of opportunity for all. Ironically, what such heightened recognitions and criticisms of flaws in the American system emphasise is that the United States of America is still very much the universal place of hope for the establishment of a utopian democratic structure. As subjects to a narrative of Enlightenment, we continue to expect better of America. We continue to believe in its journey from oppression to liberation, while we continue to believe in our journey from enslavement to freedom. Even in our resistance to America, it is of the "American Dream" that we continue to dream, as if therein lay the

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within contemporary liberation movements, particularly with reference to this culture's imposing and discriminating economic and military powers over non-Westernised (read: non-Christian and non-white) others.

only hope of achieving liberation. The American dream is our freedom, therefore, but it is simultaneously also our prison.<sup>3</sup>

In his introduction to an account of *The Rise of a Gay and Lesbian Movement*, Barry Adam asserts:

The movement in New York City is the best known, and the movement in the United States in general is much better documented than movements in other countries. Though Italians know about the Stonewall rebellion in Greenwich Village, and mark it with a gay pride day, few Americans know about Bologna's city-sponsored gay community center. (xi)

Despite acknowledging the limitations imposed when “knowledge of the movement follows a ‘center-periphery’ pattern” (xi), Adam's tale offers an example of how America manages to establish and maintain a point of centrality even in the narrative of the liberation of the same-sex desiring body. He locates the Stonewall riots as pivotal in a movement that began with Karl Ulrichs' now dismissed notion of a third sex (16-17) and finished with a global explosion of celebratory “queer” coming out (165-76). Likewise, in a “personal interpretation of the [gay and lesbian] movement” (xv) that claims the existence of homosexuality “extending back to the earliest historical records and including most cultures for which we have information” (4), Margaret Cruikshank identifies the American Stonewall as “the shot heard round the homosexual world” (69). Ken Plummer shares this view when he writes: “Homosexualities have become globalized. The very [gay and lesbian] movement itself appeared in a series of

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<sup>3</sup> My critique of the American system represents a wider critique of the Enlightenment project on which much of Western culture and history depends. In Foucauldian terms, no democratic system—no matter how equitable and fair it claims or appears to be—can avoid systems of power/knowledge. Foucault's understanding of the way power works, therefore, differs from a Habermasian respect for the ideals of the Enlightenment (Clarke 86-87). While Habermas recognises flaws in the practice of democracy, nevertheless he continues to insist that this system of government is the best option we have. His discussions in this regard, therefore, focus on how private individuals might better access already existent public institutions in order to create fairer positions for their private selves and a more equitable society in general (Calhoun; Habermas, “Concept”). I discuss my disregard for continuing the search for utopian equality within the private/public spheres of Western democracy in more detail in chapter five (5.2.1.)

quick shudders as the ripples from Stonewall [...] were heard around the world” (“Speaking” 17). The (sexual) world, therefore, is the space in which the American culture and the American nation are dominant. We are expected to know this world and to construct and understand our identities within it. Stonewall is placed at the centre of the history of same-sex sexualised affairs because the placement of America at the centre of history is an accepted and normalised way of reading the past and future. All other possible readings are considered irrelevant, if considered at all.

The opportunities provided by the construction of a meta-history of same-sex sexualised unions in which America figures as central are said to outweigh any damage caused by the silencing of diversities that do not fit the story, even as the “discoverers” of this meta-history recognise the potential for such damage in the tales they tell. As Adam puts it:

If there is a danger in a book about any social movement, it lies in a tendency to identify a retrospective coherence in its subjects—one that obscures the grass-roots reality consisting of fits and starts, fragile initiatives and collapses, and individual feats of boldness that characterize the formation of a social movement. Writing about a “gay/lesbian movement” inevitably evens out the diversity of experiences and aspirations that go under this label [...].

The “payoff” in doing sociological history, on the other hand, is pulling together and displaying the accomplishments and missteps of past actors to better inform action in the present. (ix-x)

Rictor Norton has argued in support of such stories. In Norton’s opinion, scholars who write these narratives do not “construct” a gay history, but rather succeed in “uncovering” it. Social constructionists, therefore, do a great disservice to this kind of work, and to those who produce it, in their suggestions that history is “merely fabricated” (129-30).

Central to the maintenance of the dominant position for the nation of America (and the myth of Enlightenment) is the telling of tales about things

getting better, about progression towards the realisation of “The Dream,” even if such progression is only ever a dream. The specific tale the discourse of gay liberation tells about the history of oppression of same-sex desire in America makes it clear that widespread paranoia over the threat of pollution posed by homosexual infiltration once encouraged government intervention to legalise discrimination against suspected homosexuals (Adam 62-65). Dennis Altman suggests it is ironical that, to the best of his knowledge, “the United States was the only country other than Nazi Germany and its satellites to set out systematically to establish procedures for the classification of homosexuals” (*Homosexualization* 70).<sup>4</sup> More recently, he has suggested the continuing irony that America should maintain a dominant position in the gay liberation movement when, in fact, the development of legal rights for homosexuals has been accepted more readily in Europe (*Global* 87). Yet, the ongoing mythological status of the Stonewall riots as a turning point in the liberation of the homosexual helps secure the position of favo(u)r America currently holds in the discourse of gay liberation; and this it does not despite, but because of all the historical (and contemporary) evidence that should suggest otherwise. The tale of Stonewall insists the paranoia and oppression have diminished as a result of the determination and strength of the gay liberation movement’s resistance to dominant heterosexuality. In general, life for homosexuals in the post-Stonewall era is much better because of the capacity and willingness of the culture to change under pressure. In America, freedom really is a possible future. In America, freedom truly resides.

### 2.1.1 Dismantling the Stone-Wall

The notion of a singular truthful history is, however, already under threat. In Foucauldian terms, history can no longer be assumed as the truth of the past,

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<sup>4</sup> The fear of the threat posed by homosexuality to social stability in the post-Second World War period was not exclusive to American culture. Gary Wotherspoon notes, for example, how homosexuality was labelled by the New South Wales Police Commissioner as “the greatest menace facing Australia” at that time (“From Sub-culture” 58).

but rather must be seen as “one way in which a society recognizes and develops a mass documentation with which it is inextricably linked” (*Archaeology* 7). In particular, there is a growing wariness of the kind of history that seeks to tell of progressive shifts from darkness into light, from tyranny to freedom. Enlightenment myths of a future heaven, of a better tomorrow, are being challenged. As Steven Seidman puts it:

The great modernist stories of progress or decadence almost always operate with one-dimensional notions of domination and liberation. Ignoring actual complex conflicts and power dynamics with their ambiguous calculus of gains and losses, benefits and costs, pleasure and pain, these grand narratives frame history and social conflicts in stereotypical millenarian [sic] or apocalyptic images. For these modernists, the dynamics of domination are merely a matter of freedom lost or gained; whole strata, indeed whole epochs, are described as unfree, alienated, or repressed; large chunks of time are regarded as periods of darkness or light, freedom or tyranny. History is thought to play out a unidimensional human drama revolving around the human quest for liberation against the forces of domination. (*Difference* 55)

Plummer further explains this disruption to the simple binary of truth and falsehood in history through noting the emergence of the “late, the high, or the post-modern”:

It is a time when the grand narratives have come to an end; a period of fragmentation, de-differentiation, indeterminacies, immanences, de-structurings, de-unification, de-centering. The quest for the grand truth, the scientific solution, the correct political position, the linear progression, and the theoretical purity are now all seen as flawed. Indeed, such pursuits have been used in the past as a means of coercion and tyranny [...]. (“Symbols” xiv) <sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Plummer’s interest in the disruptions posed by the “high modern era” relate specifically to understandings of “homosexualities.” He recognises these disruptions to be a product of the

The postmodern perspective is what Seidman refers to as a “relentless epistemological suspicion” used by marginalised groups to the extent that “no social discourse can escape the doubt that its claims to truth are tied to and yet mask an on-going social interest to shape the course of history” (*Difference* 48).

Seidman’s awareness of a “relentless epistemological suspicion” highlights the existence of criticisms aimed specifically against dominant disciplinary discourses by marginalised groups such as feminists, gays, African-Americans and the disabled (48). However, those discourses already recognised as dominant are not the only discourses affected by the destabilisation of a singular, concrete history. This same suspicion must also be turned against the very discourses that claim to support marginalised subjects but which, in fact, assist in the production of their disciplined subjectivities. In assessing the effects of the destabilisation of metanarratives on the specific topic of sexuality, Plummer writes elsewhere:

And all of this must impact out [sic] sexualities. It is no longer the source of a truth as it was for the moderns with their strong belief in science. Instead, human sexualities become destabilized, decentered and de-essentialized; the sexual life is no longer seen as harboring an essential unitary core locatable within a clear framework (like the nuclear family) with an essential truth waiting to be discovered: there are only fragments. (“Symbols” xiv)

If *no* social discourse can escape suspicion, the discourse of gay liberation too must come under scrutiny for the way it seeks to establish a truthful history of same-sex sexualised affairs. As Scott Bravmann argues,

though the study of gay and lesbian history provides cogent ways of addressing questions of identity, politics, community, and difference, historical events and memories of them also continue

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narrative of modernity, which, at the same time as it seeks to organise and control the homosexual type, brings about contradictions to this categorisation. His comments in this regard reflect a general postmodern approach to the discussion of identities, where such an approach signifies a move into “a new world order” which Plummer later defines as “late modern” rather than “postmodern” (*Telling* 17).

to impose the present with meaning and give the past a surplus of signification that is itself in need of critical analysis. (4)

Bravmann specifically targets the myth of Stonewall as in need of deconstructionist attacks in order to dispel the notion that this one single event is tied exclusively to the reality of gay and lesbian subjectivities. In order to reassess the way Stonewall assists in the production of these disciplined subjectivities, there is a need to address the complexity of social and historical factors that contribute not only to the event's occurrence but also to the meanings attached to it (68-69).

The retrospective attachment of a "mythological status" to the Stonewall riots (Harris 1) helps construct a fictional but powerful binary between the repression of beforehand and the liberation of now. Research conducted within the post-gay liberation context into same-sex sexualised relationships of the past often reproduces this binary (Chauncey, Duberman, and Vicinus 4). By referring to the riots at the Stonewall Inn as the birth of emancipation for the subject who desires an object of the same sex, the discourse of gay liberation is able to position today's "gay" subject as liberated in contrast to his "homosexual" ancestor of yesteryear. With knowledge of this history, any man who experiences same-sex sexualised contact with another male-d body today is encouraged to read this intimacy as a signifier of his oppression or liberation. While the discourse of gay liberation certainly recognises any freedom as yet incomplete, still emphasis is placed on the possibility of achieving such a utopian emancipation because of the epistemological shift said to have occurred when the "homosexual" refused to stay quiet and started to riot as "gay." Through the promotion of this historical narrative of progression, the discourse of gay liberation is able to construct a façade of change, to convince all same-sex desiring bodies that things have improved (or are improving), when the reality is that there has been no dramatic change in discussions surrounding sexuality between the pre- and post-Stonewall eras (Warner, *The Trouble* 163-66).

This is not to say that a greater exploration of any emerging homosexual (or gay) liberation movement in countries other than America could offer a more balanced account of same-sex corporeal intimacies. It is not that I seek a retelling of the history of homosexuality to include more localised stories of emerging freedoms and continuing struggles as they occur in differing cultural contexts. Nor am I suggesting that non-Western understandings of same-sex sexualised unions necessarily would help challenge the centrality of the Americanised gay model, albeit such narratives are important to any critique of universality and factuality in Western sexual identity categories. Even though we are starting to see the emergence of critiques of the epistemological shift suggested by Stonewall in the publicising of non-Western perspectives on same-sex desire and narratives of a happy pre-1960s Western gayness,<sup>6</sup> these alternative narratives do not displace the discursive regulations put in place whenever a history of same-sex pleasures is (re)told. They do not remove the body and its pleasures from the assumption of knowability and truth.

The problem with any attempt to tell a history of same-sex sexualised unions is that, like all stories, like all histories, the tale can offer only a partial representation of what has occurred. When we research and read to gain knowledge or to gain understanding, we would be wise to keep in mind the limitations imposed by the languages we use: “Words can never capture the totality of the real. They can never fully represent us” (Stavrakakis 52).<sup>7</sup> The whole truth does not emerge from obsessing over minute and arbitrary moments of our lives in an attempt to pack these details into a neat and tidy story of the past that seeks to validate the self of the present. The stories that

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<sup>6</sup> Peter Jackson and Gerard Sullivan’s edited collection of essays, *Multicultural Queer*, explores how non-Anglo subjects negotiate their sexualities within the dual context of existing within traditional ethnic cultures, yet being a part of Anglicised Australian culture (20). George Chauncey’s *Gay New York* reveals evidence of the existence of a visible “gay” subculture prior to the Stonewall riots.

<sup>7</sup> Stavrakakis’ assessment of the tool of language works within a Lacanian framework of lack. Within this framework, the linguistic field enables the construction of an identity and the translation of our experiences into commonly understood terms. However, this entry into language results in the “loss of immediacy” and the development of a sense of self that is never complete, never whole (52-53).

emerge can be written, read and told only in very specific historical and cultural contexts that help frame understandings of self. As subjects to a pervasive discourse of sexuality intent on knowing all bodies as sexual in one form or another, we should recognise how we are encouraged to read and understand our experiences of corporeal sexualised contact within the context of much wider cultural narratives. We should recognise how we are encouraged to know always what this contact means not in the moment, but rather with reference to our knowledge of the tales told about similar existing sexual beings before us and alongside us. The tales of sexual repression and liberation, therefore, should be recognised as seeking to impose some sense of uniformity upon what otherwise might be no more than isolated and temporary experiences of pieces of flesh.

## **2.2 The Rising Power of “Gay”**

There can be no single history (or present) of same-sex sexualised intimacies to speak of. Conflict over the meaning of such intimacies has existed at least since the suggestion of a need to understand them by locating and simultaneously discovering a sexuality within individualised bodies. Attempts to assert the homosexual type as valid and real in this debate have been (and are) fought for alongside those whose interests and understandings differ. The debate in Germany at the beginning of the twentieth-century, for example, focused on a conflict between those who saw same-sex love as evidence of a different kind of human being—a “third sex”—and those who considered it the ultimate expression of intimacy between males within a society in which male-female relationships were nevertheless necessary (Adam 16-17, 20-22). More recently, the constructionist approach to the discussion of same-sex sexualised contact has undermined any attempt to assign transcultural and transhistorical meanings to such intimacies (Plummer, “Speaking” 8). Despite its widespread popularity, particularly among those who participate in same-sex sexualised activities today, not even a post-Stonewall gay liberation movement has been able to offer

a uniform and monolithic consensus of like-minded agitators who shared the same platform and priorities. Instead, it [has] comprised a volatile mixture of contradictory faces that maintained a precarious balance, forming a fragile coalition [...]. (Harris 191)

In this contemporary movement, there have been (and are) the assimilationists and the radicals (Adam 65-80), those who want nothing to do with commercial ventures and those who want to work alongside them (Willett 144-46), and many a compromise between the two (Woolcock and Altman 331-34).

In the early days of the movement, some theorists and activists even saw problems in adopting a sexual identity that sought to exclude heterosexual desires. Instead, they insisted that “gay” signified a freedom from identification with sexual roles and sexual identities (Reynolds, *From Camp* 74-75). Dennis Altman wrote of a sexual liberation that would enable people to use their bodies for “sensual enjoyment as an end in itself, free from procreation or status-enhancement” (*Homosexual* 99) and of a liberation whereby “homosexuality and heterosexuality would cease to be viewed as separate conditions” (103). Less than a decade later, he observed the failure of the gay movement to sustain this approach:

In the early days of the movement, both women and men saw the process of gay liberation as intimately related to the blurring of sexual and gender boundaries [...]. Our biggest failure was an inability to foresee the extent to which the opposite would happen and a new gay culture/identity would emerge that would build on existing male/female differences. (*Homosexualization* 211)

For Altman, this shift towards the establishment of a gay identity signifies, somewhat contradictorily, the “greatest single victory of the gay movement” (9). For Jeffrey Weeks, however, the conflict between those who wish to expose the production of exclusions and those who demand inclusion reveals a mutually dependent relationship, a successful working together of two seemingly oppositional approaches: “In practice, the two moments constantly flow into

each other, reinforcing one another. Neither one can work without the other” (“Living”).

Certainly, the ethnic model for same-sex sexualised behaviour that became a popular political and personal approach in the 1980s offered nothing new to understandings of same-sex corporeal intimacies. Tales of a homophile movement in Germany at the beginning of the twentieth-century already tell of an awareness by some that same-sex desire was a distinct characteristic identifiable within individual bodies. The existing concept of a “third sex” at the time offered proof of the extent to which some people involved in same-sex sexualised behaviours had started to think of themselves as a people apart (Adam 17).<sup>8</sup> Others have suggested that this consciousness of being different because of a fondness for and participation in same-sex sexualised activities can be traced back further still (Bray 88, 103; Halperin, *One* 8-9). What distinguishes this more recent focus on homosexual ethnicity from previous claims of a shared commonality between bodies that engage in same-sex sexualised pleasures, however, is the emerging importance of human rights and individual freedoms. Same-sex sexualised intimacies in the latter half of the twentieth century are connected specifically to a post-World War Two anti-fascist interest within Western cultures in developing and securing “citizenship,” a concept Weeks defines in terms of belonging: citizenship is “about the nexus of rights and responsibilities that entitle the individual to be included within the polity” (“Same Sex”). Sexual citizenship, in particular, is what Plummer has defined as “a cluster of emerging concerns over the rights to choose what we do with our bodies, our feelings, our identities, our relationships, our genders, our eroticisms and our representations” (*Telling* 17).

It is, therefore, a burgeoning discourse of civil rights and citizenship that produces the possibility of being “gay.” We—those of us who participate in same-sex sexualised practices—“have become constituted as *gay* in the terms

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<sup>8</sup> For a more detailed account of the struggles for a legitimate homosexuality in Germany in the late nineteenth century, see James D. Steakley’s *The Homosexual Emancipation Movement in Germany*.

of a discourse of ethnicity-and-rights” because this paradigm had proven dominant in the sphere of political advancement, particularly in the wake of the success of the civil rights movement (Sinfield, “Queer” 196; Sinfield, “Diaspora” 271-72; emphasis in the originals) and, indeed, the women’s rights movement. More cynically, David Thorstad has argued:

The real motivation behind this revival of the “inborn” argument is political, not scientific. The gay assimilationists want to become part of an existing, inequitable capitalist society, not change that society in any fundamental way. Their approach is inherently selfish, not altruistic. They seek minor adjustments in the status quo, not radical social change. They have been co-opted by the heterosupremacist power structure. (“Pederasty”)

Certainly, discussions that seek to pull apart the productive processes of the discourses of sex and sexuality are not as visible today as they are in the narratives of gay liberation that tell of riotous demands immediately after Stonewall. Rather, the current focus is on how best to fit socially non-normative homosexual types within the boundaries of sexual normality. Specifically, debates concerning same-sex sexualised pleasures and relationships today tend to concentrate on the issue of gay marriages and the rights of gay/lesbian couples to access fertility treatment and adoption. Western culture is struggling over how to deal with those who publicly identify as gay and who demand their full citizenship regardless of—and therefore because of—their homosexuality. It is trying to deal with the reality of “homosexuals” who have come out of the closet as “gay” and who want to be treated as citizens with equal rights.

Admittedly, I lament the decline of visible radicalism in the gay movement specifically and in the debates on and practices of sex in more general terms. I do not share Altman’s praise for the securing of the ethnic model as the dominant form of understanding same-sex sexualised intimacies and desires. However, I recognise that any decline from apparent radicalism to conservatism within the gay liberation movement needs to be understood within the context of social and historical change, rather than simply apportioning blame to those

who identify as “gay” for “yielding to the pressures and rewards of social conformity” (Jagose 59).<sup>9</sup> The concept of a distinct sexual orientation should be understood further within the context of an emerging individualism within Western culture. Rather than suggesting an awakening to what had been there in hiding, a coming into knowledge of homosexuality reflects a narrativisation of certain corporeal behaviours conducive to the emergence of an Enlightened knowing “I.” The homosexualisation of the body is compatible with the emergence of a particular expectancy that the body should be sexual and should know the form of its sexuality as it relates to the autonomy of “I.”

To analyse any shift from radicalism to conservatism that has occurred in the development of the gay liberation movement, however, is not my major concern here. Rather, the purpose of this thesis is to add to attempts to reignite a radicalism that can undermine the production of normative sexual positions, where the homonormativity (re)produced in the discourse of gay liberation is one such position. What concerns me are the means by which homosexuality and homosexuals continue to be spoken into reality by the demand to understand same-sex sexualised contact within the confines of the search and fight for gay liberation. In this sense, I argue firstly that the timidity of the constructionist debate has permitted the essentialist narrative to continue, and secondly that the essentialism of a homosexual orientation is supported by the narrative of “gay.”

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<sup>9</sup> This does not excuse us from accepting responsibility for what we have become. While we are subjects of the cultural discourses in which we exist, this does not suggest we play no part in the creation and circulation of these discourses, and, therefore, in the construction and control of our bodies. In his critical assessment of gay culture, Daniel Harris argues that the commercial and economic packaging of same-sex sexual behaviours was desired by those who engaged in such activities. It was not forced upon us; we invited this corporate takeover of our sexualities, bodies and pleasures (6). As “homosexuals,” we have recognised our own lack of autonomy and therefore desire the kind of autonomy we assume we lack to make us whole. Our narcissistic desires to be seen and known have led us to participate in the “self-colonizing trajectory” of identity politics so that we could have a name for self (Butler, “Subjection” 245-46). Thus, we have revealed a self-imposed fascistic desire for the control of the body and the self (Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus* 29). Now, as a result of the successes of the gay liberation movement, not to be allowed to have this control wilfully imposed upon the body—not to be able to identify as “gay”—is to be oppressed. The “machinic enslavement” of which Deleuze and Guattari speak (*Thousand* 460), indeed, has become a prerequisite for our (sexual) freedom.

### 2.2.1 The Illusion of Constructionism

In theory, the social constructionist approach to the issues of sexual desire, sex and sexuality is able to thwart any attempt to foreclose the possibility of mutation in the historicisation and understanding of sexualised contact between same-sexed bodies. Mary McIntosh's "The Homosexual Role" (first published in 1968) offered an early and highly influential attempt to bring a halt to the re-emergence of the essentialist argument. Indeed, as Weeks declared in his analysis of this article thirty years after its initial publication, "The Homosexual Role" proved a success because "however we try to deal with the flux of sexualities, we can never again believe that homosexuality is simply a condition which some people have, and others do not" ("Homosexual" 142). Specifically, McIntosh had argued that homosexuality should be seen as indicating a social role rather than a condition ("Homosexual" 29). It was a means of organising and containing deviancy (27) and a conditioning of sexual desires and behaviours many people found comforting because it gave a legitimate excuse for their activities (28). In Carole Vance's assessment, the development of social constructionism has produced a diversity of ways in which we can analyse sexual behaviour. These include consideration of the differences in meaning attached to sexualised acts across cultures and histories, and differences between collective and individual understandings; a critique of categorisations based on object choice; and—the "most radical form of constructionist theory"—consideration of sexual desire itself as a historical and cultural construction (42-44).

However, constructionist theories of the past few decades have not maintained any significant and revolutionary critique of the processes that produce and sustain sex and sexuality as real elements of human existence. Vance has identified a difference between the "radical" edge of social constructionist theory that questions the truth of desire and the "middle-ground" theories that accept the existence of desire (43-44). Yet, it is the latter approach that has gained popularity in the thirty-five years since McIntosh reignited the debate. In the social constructionist model, sexual identity may

appear “as a symptom of the Foucauldian paradox: that is, as both a vehicle of creativity *and* a category of constraint” (Creet 184; emphasis added), but it is the creative aspect of this identity that gets most of the attention and application. The severity of the constraints imposed on the body through compulsory sexualisation is sidelined by the vocalism of the possible pleasures such discipline provides.

The concept of a sexual identity offers social constructionists the chance to consider pluralities and multiplicities: to turn identity into identities. Such an approach permits those in the constructionist camp to maintain the reality of their bodies (of knowledge) in order that they might continue to position themselves as knowing subjects with valid contributions to the ceaseless debates on sex and sexuality. In their jubilation over separation of act from identity, social constructionists are able to maintain the reality of sexuality, thereby granting themselves an object to research, observe and know (and perhaps be) ever more intensely as their research progresses and their conclusions profess to liberate. In general, therefore, the most popular social constructionists have adopted a placatory position towards the notion of an ethnic sexuality. They have played around with it, but accepted it as real. They have assumed sexuality to be something every body knows. This they do within a culture in which knowledge of the sexual self continues to play an important role in the allocation or refusal of freedom to the body; a culture they therefore support and sustain.

Jeffrey Weeks is exemplary of this position as he attempts to steer a compromise between, on the one hand, recognising the power of an identity in the political and legal spheres of “liberal pluralist societies” (*Sexuality and Its Discontents* 198) and, on the other, arguing the need to critique categorisations of sexual orientations that deny much broader possibilities (*Against* 68-69). While he recognises that the “strategic” aim of the gay movement must challenge “all the rigid categorisations of sexuality,” he simultaneously applauds the “tactical” move to defend the rights of those who identify as homosexuals

(“Capitalism” 19).<sup>10</sup> For Weeks, identities are “necessary fictions” (“Myths” 14) in a world in which homosexuality *is* discriminated against and in which our sexual pleasures *are* political. He writes:

A sense of identity is essential for the establishment of relationships. [...] Identity may well be a historical fiction, a controlling myth, a limiting burden. But it is at the same time a necessary means of weaving our way through a hazard-strewn world and a complex web of social relations. Without it, it seems, the possibilities of sexual choice are not increased but diminished. (*Against* 85)

While essentialists like Norton disagree with the suggestion that one could ever found an identity based upon a falsehood (21), others in the social constructionist camp support Weeks’ stance. Joshua Gamson, for example, has argued that “clear categories of collective identity are necessary for successful resistance and political gain” in an “*ethnic/essentialist* politic” (396; emphasis in the original). While he simultaneously recognises how such categories pose an “obstacle to resistance and change” within a deconstructionist/queer context (396), he does not dismiss the importance of collective identities. Rather, he asserts their suitability in a way that reflects Weeks’ support for the mutual relationship between these two opposing approaches. Similarly, in an attempt to forge a link between homosexual rights and human rights, Baden Offord maintains the usefulness and effectiveness of a homosexual identity to help construct a community of people who may not identify as homosexual, but who nonetheless *need* this point of connection to enable them to work together in the current system. His belief in the necessity

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<sup>10</sup> My input into the debates on sex and sexuality clearly differs from that of Jeffrey Weeks. I have a preference for the kind of queering of these debates found in the writings of Judith Butler, amongst others, whereas Weeks does not hold such works in equal high regard (“Homosexual” 132). However, I must admit that I admire the optimism Weeks regularly expresses in his written and oral works. He is joyful in his celebration of the possibilities of sexual expression that have emerged in the past few centuries, whereas I view these possibilities as ongoing systems of constraint. I am unable to share his point of view, therefore, even as I may envy his positive contentment.

of this fictional category is furthered by his fear of a postmodern fragmentation he assumes brings about instability and disunity (2-5).<sup>11</sup>

Paul Berman suggests this recourse to identity politics is a reaction on the part of the radicals to the outcomes of their own demands. Identity politics offered a safe space for those who were terrified by the realisation that their demands for social change had placed them in new and unknown positions (156-59). Similarly, with reference to the adjunct pressures of economic capitalism on the construction of sexual identities, Michael Bronski asserts:

This process of social containment, presenting less-threatening forms of social change through commodification, developed for two reasons. As much as people wanted and enjoyed these new freedoms, they also viewed them as a potential threat to the existing social order. Caught between the desire for pleasure and the security of a tightly ordered society, they were comfortable with a compromise that allowed limited freedom without fear of disorder. (69-70)

Any attempt to offer a radical dismantling of the discourses that work to produce the sexualised body, therefore, appears to construct a fear of letting go of the comfortable stability that comes with knowledge of the sexual self. Too much deconstruction produces a fear of becoming other than what currently is understood as possible within the established discourses of sex and sexuality, namely a sexual body of some shape and form.

The threat is that without the necessary interpellation of corporeal materiality into a fictional sexual identity corresponding to “I,” there can be no body of sexual knowledge that allows “I” to be sexual and free, or—as is the case for academics in particular—to continue the practice of research into sexual beings and sexual lives. Alan Sinfield, for example, has exposed some

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<sup>11</sup> As I have argued elsewhere, however, Offord’s book, *Homosexual Rights as Human Rights*, “is not just another pro-gay rant. Rather, Offord presents both a compelling argument for why homosexual rights have been established as human rights paired with contentious criticisms of how this further confines a homosexualised subject within an already heterosexualised public space” (Durber, “Possible Wrongs”).

fundamental flaws in the ethnic gay model. This model manages to pit gay against gay in a capitalist market often to the detriment of the non-white, non-middle-class subject (“Queer” 197-99). It is incapable of offering any challenges to normative social structurings of sex and gender, and forecloses personal options about social intimacies (“Diaspora” 271-73). Despite this, Sinfield argues that this model cannot be abandoned (“Queer” 199). For many who participate in and/or research same-sex sexualised intimacies, there is nothing beyond being gaily homosexual. There is no other conceivable way of enjoying contact between same-sexed bodies outside the paradigmatic insistence that such contact produces knowledge of and/or for a homosexual “I.” The (homo)sexual “I” must be maintained at all cost.

This attack on constructionist theory does not suggest any proof of essentialist thought. It is not sufficient to make the claim, as Raja Halwani does (27), that one shred of evidence to discount social constructionism is enough to refute it entirely. The suggestions put forward by social constructionists have been important to the debates on sexual identities and sexual behaviours. For example, since McIntosh’s article, the advancement of social constructionist theories has encouraged consideration of the role of political performativity in identity positions (Epstein 17-23; Smith and Windes 34-36). There has been the important suggestion that people may rehearse already established narratives of identity in order to obtain a desired subjectivity. Such a process undermines the essentialism of identity through its recognition of how knowledge is circulated to produce comprehensible identities (Plummer, *Telling* 42). Additionally, constructionist theories have made it possible for people to initiate a critique of former and widely accepted claims that we do what we do because we cannot help it. However, as a means of building queerer theories concerning pleasures of the flesh, the constructionist inputs may now be as stale and redundant as the essentialist conclusions they purport to challenge.

Weeks has argued the essentialist/constructionist debate to be “tedious” (“Homosexual” 135). John Boswell labels it “arcane” (“Revolutions” 19). In my opinion, the monotony of such a debate is not due to the repetition of ideas. At

times, it is useful to revisit old ideas in order to readdress issues yet unresolved or to help establish new ideas within different cultural and historical contexts. Rather, the monotony of the essentialist/constructionist debate rests in the inability of the conclusions formed to produce new ways of doing corporeal intimacies that exceed the culture's demand for sexual knowledge. The constructionist critique of essentialist claims has not been successful in dismissing compulsory sexual knowledge of the body and its pleasures. On the contrary, the fear of becoming other than sexual permits surveillance and scrutiny of the body to continue, thus supporting the culture's insistence on the construction of an identity, specifically a sexual "I." Recognition of sexual identities as "necessary fictions" does not expose them as false and unreal. Rather, it proves them true and real, because they remain valid within the specific cultural and historical context of here and now (Halperin, *One* 28).

### **2.2.2 "Gay" and the Normalisation of Homosexuality**

In order to talk about gay liberation or gay rights, it is necessary first to imagine the construction of a community of bodies. Regardless of whether the point of commonality between these bodies is essentialised or recognised as constructed, regardless of whether the demands put forward are conservative or radical, the need for such an imagined union remains the same. For the body to be able to convince the culture of its worth and right to be free, it is necessary that it seek out an identity that can be seen as "a valid expression of the human condition" (Humphreys, *Out* 40). This kind of unification of the body is a prerequisite for any engagement in negotiations concerning rights and citizenship. The very existence of a gay liberation movement and/or a gay rights movement depends on the belief that it is possible and acceptable to form such a unified identification for the body. Furthermore, the popularity of these movements depends on the ability and acceptance of uniting the resulting self with other bodies similarly unified, irrespective of whether all of the bodies

involved share the same understandings of the corporeal pleasures they experience.

This imperative to unite bodies distinguishes the deployment of sexuality in the public sphere from any real transgressive possibilities that society might address its entire approach towards existing categories of sex and sexuality. It reflects how the discourse of sexuality helps prevent any radical transformation of the body and its pleasures through interpellating all bodies into its own restrictive terrain. With reference to Weeks' exploration of the concept of citizenship in *Invented Moralities*, Robert Reynolds writes:

The politics of citizenship asserts a claim to rights within existing practices and institutions. These claims, while important, are usually negative freedom: freedom from interference rather than the assertion of a right to be different. The push for citizenship is reluctant to question the social ordering of sexual identities for it unsettles an integrationist logic. In contrast, a politics of transgression pushes boundaries, overturns conventions and defies existing social relations. It imagines new ways of living that cannot be contained in contemporary arrangements. (*From Camp* 5-6)

Such transgressive imaginations cannot be conceived of within the confines of a subject required to know the body of self (and others) as sexual in being because of a sexuality it is said to have already. The gay movement, for example, be it one of liberation or assimilation, be it radical or not, merely continues the reality of a being who is homo-sexual. The result of the effort to write and thereby stabilise the history of same-sex sexualised affairs is the interpellation—wilfully or by compulsion—of any man who engages in sexualised contact with other male-d bodies into the naturalised category of homosexual on which the discourse of gay liberation depends.

Despite recognition of the relevance of specific historical and cultural conditions to the construction of the gay model, this essentialist homosexual ethnicity continues to be reaffirmed in narratives that speak of how a love that

once dared not speak its name moved from oppression into freedom, from darkness into enlightenment. The discourse of gay liberation tells a universal story of the marginalisation of homosexuals before the rise of gay liberation. It constructs thereafter a unification of these bodies under a common and proud gay identity. Thus, the truth of the homosexual is written into the history of the emergence of gay. According to the gay liberationist version of history, the patrons of the Stonewall Inn on the evening of June 28, 1969 were already homosexuals in dispute with the police. Their courageous refusal to be tamed and controlled is what signalled their emergence as liberated gay subjects. These homosexual-to-gay transformations are the ancestors of all who engage in same-sex sex today. There is, therefore, no difference in the interpretation of same-sex sexualised pleasures to separate these meta-identities. Rather, the point of separation is merely an American Stone-wall, a fictionalised marker of a barrier to freedom and the freedom beyond: homosexual oppression to gay liberation.

We may theorise the gay identity as a short-term solution (Tatchell 49) or as a “necessary error” (Butler, *Bodies* 230) to help achieve equality and remove oppression. However, such attempts to emphasise the cultural and historical temporality of this identity only serve to mask the resulting processes and practices of control. As Diana Fuss argues, the temporary interventionist tactic carries with it the potential to establish a permanent model (*Essentially* 32). There is always a danger in the performance or rehearsal of an identity that the subject might forget the fiction in which its body engages:

Once we have made up categories or concepts, [...], it is easy to reify them—that is, it is easy to treat them as real and universal and to forget that we made them up. It is easy to treat the category as having a real, true, invariant meaning and to forget that it is a word that we made up. (Muehlenhard 102)

The processes of invention are subsumed too readily and too often by a naturalisation of the “truths” that emerge.

Boswell's insistence that "gay" should no longer signify only those who have a conscious recognition of the importance of their same-sex desires to the construction of self, but also incorporate all who display such desires ("Revolutions" 35), indeed, suggests that "gay" has become the contemporary version of what "homosexual" once aimed to be. Such an expansion of the term reveals the extent to which "gay" has superseded the use of "homosexual" in defining all bodies that engage in same-sex sexualised acts. In the modernist paradigm, "homosexual" signifies a "rigid scientific discovery." In the postmodern confusion, the term becomes a "diverse signifier of potential, plurality, polymorphousness" (Plummer, "Speaking" 13). "Gay," however, overrides and suppresses this possibility for dissenting diversification. It reveals the strength of the borders of sexual otherness and the desired erasure of any hope of fluidity. It helps remove the element of choice when it comes to matters of sex. Indeed, "gay" is the contemporary living defence of an essentialised homosexuality, even as this homosexuality becomes postmodernly plural (Gay Left Collective 58).

Today, for most people, "gay" does not offer any suggestion of fluidity or diversity of sexual expression. Most gay-identifying people do not recognise the construction of the homosexual identity as an arbitrary but culturally imposed interpretation of what the body does with bodies sexed the same. Rather, they insist they do sex, and they do it in a particular way because they are fundamentally homosexuals. Moreover, most take offence to the suggestion that their gay identity is a fiction for this suggests the possibility of change. Any claim that gayness is mutable, and therefore can be altered, threatens the core of the gay rights movement and the foundation on which many people now build their lives (Horowitz and Newcomb 12).<sup>12</sup> Thus, in order to help fend off a

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<sup>12</sup> The claim to immutable homosexuality can also backfire on any attempt to seek protection for the gay citizen. When the right to privacy is claimed or contested within a legal framework, the discovery and knowledge of an immutable homosexuality is removed from the self and placed in the hands of the courts. While participation in a certain act might indicate a person's irrefutable inclusion in an immutable category, this belonging and the acceptance of the immutability of the category do not guarantee legal protection for the person discovered and named. Rather,

suggestion of variability that hints at the possibility of a cure, the discovery of a biological trait or gay gene becomes a popular dream for many who seek evidence to support the fixed and immutable nature of their homosexual orientation (Sinfield, "Queer" 196; Tatchell 50).<sup>13</sup>

While the discourse of gay liberation rejects outright any suggestion that homosexuality is in need of a cure, still the desire for an essentialist—and thereby legitimate—cause continues to reveal an acceptance by self-identifying gays of the pathological view of their own sexual activities as behaviour driven by a condition (Greenberg 190). "Gay" offers no resistance to the normalised process of constructing pathological sexual types that began with the creation of the homosexual type. This more recent identity may remove same-sex sexualised contact from the pathologies of doctors and their clinics, but it places such intimate corporeal experiences firmly in the pathologies of a social movement that celebrates the reality of the (homo)sexual being. Today, the immutability of homosexuality is played out and supported by gay rights campaigns that aim to secure legal protection for the same-sex desiring body. In the development of a gay identity and in the courageous publicity of a gay solidarity we see a celebration of this regulation of corporeal pleasures. Public

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immutability is merely one factor taken into account in decisions that determine the appropriate level of protection or scrutiny (Halley 358-60).

<sup>13</sup> Chandler Burr's *A Separate Creation* and Edward Stein's *The Mismeasure of Desire* refer to the well-documented claims of Simon LeVay and his focus on the hypothalamus of the brain as an indicator of sexual orientation. Stein's text is the more critical of two in its exploration of how this debate and the research have been situated within dominant discursive understandings of sex and gender. In the December 2003 issue of the British magazine *Gay Times*, the editor Vicky Powell dismissed the need for any scientific investigation into the cause of homosexuality by arguing: "At the end of the day what does it matter why someone is gay? And what good can actually come out of finding the ever-elusive 'gay gene' or the medical reason for homosexuality?" (9). My own position on this topic is one that, indeed, seeks to question the "reality of scientific entities" rather than focus only on a deconstruction of the categories produced and circulated by such entities (Halwani 47). Scientific investigations into same-sex sexualised contact may produce evidence at some point in the future to suggest that participation in such activities is "natural" and identifiable within specific bodies, perhaps even within all bodies. However, I see a danger in relying on the truths of science to explain and legitimate behaviour in a culture where recourse to choice of pleasure evidently is still not enough. What kind of culture do we exist in if only scientific evidence can validate the kinds of things we do with our bodies? What kind of freedom can the body have if its actions must always comply with scientific "knowledge"?

displays of gay pride are celebrations of the enclosure of the body within a restricting and restricted identity that is desperately and yet falteringly barricaded off from heterosexuality (Durber, "Mardi").

Jeffrey Weeks may express concern over a forgetfulness of history on the part of those who adopt a post-Foucauldian abstraction of his work ("Homosexual" 131-32). However, I suggest that social constructionists like Weeks who work with the notion of necessary fictions are similarly guilty of seeking to enforce forgetfulness on those of us who participate in and/or investigate sexualised contact between same-sexed bodies. We are compelled to forget that same-sex sexualised contact may signify something other than the existence of the homosexual "I." It is necessary to consider, therefore, this conceptualisation of a real homosexuality that encourages gayness. Before we can begin to imagine new modes of corporeality and new modes of experiencing flesh on flesh, we first must question the fundamental reality of the homosexual being.

## **Chapter 3    The Homosexual Myth**

### 3.1 Introducing the Homosexual

It is believed that homosexuality needs no introduction (Ruse, *Homosexuality* ix). Regardless of the diversity of judgements attached to same-sex sexualised contact—irrespective of whether one abhors it or, alternatively, constructs a lifestyle in which it plays a central and positive role—there is a general agreement in Western culture that the body’s anatomically determined sex is the primary focus in the pursuit of any sexualised pleasures. It is taken for granted that a person can be defined easily and correctly as a “homosexual” or a “heterosexual” according to the sex of the object of his/her desire. This binary of sexual orientation is accepted in both the “realist” understanding of sexuality as reflecting an innate desire and the “nominalist” understanding of sexuality as a construction resulting from external modes of cultural context (Seidman, “Deconstructing” 125-26).<sup>1</sup> Any counter-claim to this understanding, whereby a man who engages in same-sex sexualised contact seeks to dispute the “fact” that such corporeal pleasures are acts of homosexuality and that he is a homosexual, is deemed to be either the result of internalised repression or scientifically and genetically inaccurate. The naturalisation of the homosexual/heterosexual binary in Western understandings of sexualised corporeal pleasures works to foreclose the possibility that participation in sexualised activities with a body of the same-sex is not related to a specific desire for that same-sexed body and therefore does not signify a homosexuality of any kind.

This chapter offers a critique of the taxonomy of sexuality that has given rise to the popular belief that same-sex sexualised contact equals homosexuality. Such a critique is needed not only because a questioning of the

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<sup>1</sup> “Realists” and “nominalists” are alternative terms used to describe “essentialists” and “social constructionists” respectively. John Boswell uses these former two terms to explain the “epistemological controversy raging among those studying the history of gay people” (“Revolutions” 19). In his explanation, realists perceive the existence of a “real order” in the world, one that exists before or even without human observation. In contrast, nominalists argue that the order of the world is created through the observation and naming humans undertake. Realist understandings underpin much of the research undertaken within the scientific disciplines, whereas philosophical enquiry is dominated more by nominalist interpretations. With regard to the specific debate on sexuality, realists assert that humans actually occupy different sexual positions, whereas nominalists argue that such positions are constructed through processes of categorisation (18-19).

stability of the homosexual subject is a necessary part of queer theory (Seidman, "Deconstructing" 118), but also because of my own desire to explore the possibility of becoming other than the homosexual I have known the same-sex desiring body always to be. Despite formerly having accepted my same-sex sexualised experiences as indicative and proof of a natural and unquestionable homosexuality within me, I now challenge the belief that the sexed body is always the focus in the search for and enactment of corporeal pleasures. I now question whether the term "homosexuality" can define correctly all sexualised contact that occurs between bodies sexed the same. Rather than accept as truth the notion that same-sex sexualised contact is proof of a person's homosexuality, I suggest instead that an enforced interpellation of all men who have sexualised contact with other men into the position of the "homosexual" reveals the culture's docile acceptance of the arbitrary construction of this being.

The term "homosexuality," whether considered real or fictitious, essentialist or constructionist, signifies a naturalised desire for a body of the same sex and an acceptance that this desire underpins all sexualised contact between bodies sexed the same. The insistence that this term speaks the truth of all corporeal contact between male-d bodies reveals the extent to which the pervasive discourse of sexuality continues to rely on the production and observation of the sexed and sexualised body for the maintenance of its system of disciplinary categorisations. David Halperin has suggested that the "ideological baggage" of "homosexuality" hinders investigations into the sexual lives of the ancient world ("Sex" 40-41). I assert that it continues to pose such an obstacle for any consideration of or participation in sexualised pleasures today. As such, the concept of "homosexuality" is very much in need of an introduction.

### **3.2 The Discipline of the Sexual**

"Sex" and "sexuality" are not the same things. In general, the former is understood as physical contact involving the genitalia, whereas the latter is the

personalisation of what this contact means and how it is governed (Danaher, Schirato, and Webb 135). What they share in common, however, is their (dis)placement in the culture as real. In order for such a rigid understanding of same-sex sexualised contact as “homosexuality” to have emerged and to remain, the culture must first have an acceptance of “sex” and “sexuality” as offering truthful interpretations of certain corporeal experiences. I do not wish to dispute the fact that bodies actually engage in acts of corporeal contact involving particular parts of the anatomy, namely the genitalia. Equally, I do not wish to dispute that bodies can experience incredible pleasures by participating in such acts. However, the demanded interpretation of these acts and the resulting pleasures as “sex” is questionable. Similarly, the suggestion that this sex is preceded by and reveals a “sexuality” is open to contestation. While it may involve bringing into question some of the feelings and emotions we tend to read as evidence of the essence of our being (Simon 31), if we are to understand the way the homosexual body is a product of cultural discipline, the assumed realities of “sex” and “sexuality” need to come under scrutiny.

It is the normative body that knows and does “sex.”<sup>2</sup> In contrast, a post-Foucauldian theorising of the body emphasises how “bodies, sensations, pleasures, acts, and interactions are made into ‘sex’ or accrue sexual meanings by individuals, groups, discourses, and institutional practices” (Seidman, *Difference* 81). What comes to be defined as “sex” differs across cultures and histories. What we read as “sex” is specific to our own cultural and historical location (Rupp 295-301). “Sex” is not what certain corporeal acts essentially are, but rather what we think they are. It is not the genitalia, therefore, but rather the head that is our “most erogenous zone” (Caplan 2). It is the mind—necessarily separated from the body through the deployment of Cartesian

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<sup>2</sup> The chaste body should not be read as either non-normative or as resisting the normative. The *Macquarie Dictionary* defines “chastity” as “being virtuous” or “free from obscenity, decent” (“Chastity”). A poststructuralist interpretation of chastity must recognise how, in order to be chaste, the subject first must have an awareness of the specific corporeal acts he/she does not wish to participate in. The chaste person already has knowledge of “sex.” His/her identity as being chaste, therefore, contains an inclusion of this knowledge, even as the identity reveals a choice, willingness or determination to exclude the body from engagement in those specific activities known already as “sex.”

dualism to control the wayward flesh—that demands the existence of a corporeal form that can be understood within the context of its experiences and disciplined accordingly. A focus on the genitalia as the more obvious site of “sex” only imposes restrictions on corporeal pleasure and contradictions on the body:

That penis, vagina, breasts, and so forth, are *named* sexual parts is both a restriction of the erogenous body to those parts and a fragmentation of the body as a whole. Indeed, the “unity” imposed upon the body by the category of sex is “disunity,” a fragmentation and compartmentalization, and a reduction of erotogeneity.

(Butler, *Gender* 146; emphasis in the original)

Moreover, the interpretation of all activities involving the genitalia as “sex” demands conformity of the body to established systems of knowledge concerning its actions and specifically its intimate engagements with other bodies.

Similarly, “sexuality” does not occur naturally within the human subject. In contrast to the essentialist acceptance of a limited number of reasons for why we do the kind of “sex” we do—heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual, etc.—sexuality is an attempt to understand corporeal pleasures in simple and containable terms. David Halperin defines it as the conceptualisation of

the total ensemble of physiological and psychological mechanisms governing the individual’s genital functions and the concomitant identification of that ensemble with a specially developed part of the brain and nervous system. (“Sex” 41)

He adds that from the nineteenth century onwards, sexuality is understood to be “a mute force that shapes our conscious life according to its own unassailable logic and thereby determines, at least in part, the character and personality of each one of us” (41). First used as a signifier in 1800 (Caplan 2), “sexuality” therefore emerges as “the consciousness one has of what one is doing, what

one makes of the experience, and the value one attaches to it" (Foucault, "Sexual Choice" 142).<sup>3</sup> It, too, is not natural, but rather came into existence

as a conjunction of strategies for ordering social relations, authorizing specialized knowledges, licensing expert interventions, intensifying bodily sensations, normalizing erotic desires, multiplying sexual perversions, policing personal behaviours, forging political resistances, motivating introspective utterances, and constructing human subjectivities. Sexuality, in the last analysis, is thus an apparatus for constituting human subjects. (Halperin, "Historicizing" 22)

It, too, is more important to the dominating mind than it is to the subordinated body.

A body born into a period of history and into a culture that practises to the point of obsession an intense will to know the sexual self—like contemporary Western culture—is presented immediately with a tool to assist in the search for such knowledge. This tool is sex, anatomical sex.<sup>4</sup> "It's a boy," for example, insists "You have a penis," which translates into the expectation that the identified "man" will come to understand and use the named penis in certain normative ways. The normalised classifications of sex—"man" and "woman"—offer powerful, exterior techniques of correction, which aim to construct "the obedient subject, the individual subjected to habits, rules, orders, an authority that is exercised continually around him and upon him, and which

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<sup>3</sup> In this interview with James O'Higgins, Foucault makes clear his preference for the study of sexual behaviour that does not locate it simply within discourses of liberation and repression, but rather considers it within a framework of shifting personal and cultural understandings of particular acts.

<sup>4</sup> From here, I make a distinction between anatomical sex and the act of engaging in corporeal pleasures by referring to the former as sex and the latter as "sex." This should not be taken as an indication of my support for any essentialist reading of anatomical sex in contrast to my recognition of the construction of "sex." Rather, these terms serve only to help make a distinction between the two. As I argue in chapter six (6.3), anatomical sex too is a form of regulation imposed on the body, and one that cannot be sustained if we are to seek out new ways of experiencing "sex." Both sex and "sex" have been real to me at a time when I willingly confessed to being gay. Both will become irrelevant within the construction of a "Body without Sex," the central idea towards which this thesis moves.

he must allow to function automatically in him” (Foucault, *Discipline* 128-29). Indeed, the tool of the penis is so ingrained in understandings of man-ness, just as the tool of the vagina is so deeply ingrained in understandings of woman-ness, that the discovery of the knowledge of both one’s capacity for “sex” and one’s sexuality is almost guaranteed.

Certainly, those specific parts of the body identified as relating to “sex” can be used in a variety of ways. There can be no assurances, for example, that a man will always use his penis in accordance and compliance with familial or wider cultural interpretations of what is appropriate and legitimate. In practice, the possibility of diversion from culturally ascribed heteronormative applications of the naturally sexualised genitalia is evident in any decision by the man to participate in penis-penis contact. It is also evident when the man decides to have his sex(ual) tool physically removed in order to adopt a new sex that will enable his body to participate in new forms of “sex.” However, the discourses of “sex” and sexuality do not concern themselves with any such possibilities of “deviation.” Deviations from the preferred norm do not affect the corporeal control these discourses assume. Irrespective of whether the body becomes a normal or an abnormal sexual type, irrespective of whether the body engages in morally defined good or bad “sex,” so long as the subject recognises the body and specific parts of the body as sexual, the disciplining required by these discourses is achieved. The chaste body, the paedophile body, the reproductive body, the homosexual and the heterosexual: these are all examples of successful constructions of a docile being who knows the body as sexual.

This insistent labelling of bodies as sexed and sexual—the compulsory sexualisation of the body—reveals a conscious awareness by the culture of its desire to discipline all bodies within its borders. As Butler argues:

That the body which one “is” is to some degree a body which gains its sexed contours in part under specular and exteriorizing conditions suggests that identificatory processes are crucial to the forming of sexed materiality. (*Bodies* 17)

As Ladelle McWhorter further explains in a critique of how such discipline affects the lives of real bodies in the everyday:

Our classification system—both its requirement that people be their sexualities and the division of sexualities into hetero and homo—is a social control used to manipulate and manage people and to distribute or withhold goods; it is a political tool, and its employment is never disinterested. (McWhorter 31)

Such a system of discipline seeks to penetrate ever deeper into the actions of the body in order to discover ever new forms of corporeal pleasures and types of sexualised beings. This it does in order to maintain the “*perpetual spirals of power and pleasure*” that grant the discourses of “sex” and sexuality knowledge of and over the body (Foucault, *History 1* 45-47; emphasis in the original).

### 3.3 A Compulsory Imagined Sexual Binary

The result of a taxonomy of the body that has sought to interpret intimate contact between bodies in relation to a sexuality determined by observation of the body’s assigned anatomical sex has been the introduction into the culture of the homosexual/heterosexual binary. After the introduction of this binary,

people belonged henceforward to one or the other of two exclusive categories, and much ingenuity was lavished on the multiplication of techniques for deciphering what a person’s sexual orientation “really” was—independent, that is, of beguiling appearances. (Halperin, *One* 16)

Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick has claimed this binary to be one of the most important foundations of contemporary Western culture, to the extent that no understanding of the culture can avoid a critical analysis of it (*Epistemology* 1). While a consciousness of sexual behaviours and sexual identities may have preceded the coinage of the binary, the introduction of the terms “homosexual” and “heterosexual” into the wider culture brought an unavoidable new identification for all bodies already categorised and identified according to the

naturalised man/woman divide. As Sedgwick writes: “It was this new development [of the homosexual/heterosexual binary] that left no space in the culture exempt from the potent incoherences of homo/heterosexual definition” (2). The aim of her *Epistemology of the Closet* is, she states, to reveal the extent to which the “homo/heterosexual definition *has* affected our culture” (11; emphasis added). Steven Seidman cites Sedgwick’s text as one of the key contributors to queer thought (“Deconstructing” 125). In his assertion that queer theory is interested in the destabilisation of the homosexual/heterosexual binary in order to help remove the exclusions and hierarchies which accompany the binary’s naturalisation (126-28), he shares Sedgwick’s insistence that this particular binary form of classification is a real part of every body’s life.

Many theorists have taken on board the demand to accept and analyse this naturalised binarisation of bodies. In conclusion, many have sought to undermine the assumption of a distinct separation between the binary’s two types of sexualised beings by arguing the mutual dependency of the terms. Diana Fuss, for example, has explored and exposed the proximity of the heterosexual to the homosexual through her suggestion that each side of the binary works as an exterior to the other’s ideal interiority. The attempt to place a border between the “inside” and the “out” of each means that the excluded other becomes a necessary part of what is included in the construction of the self. Homosexuality, therefore, works to “haunt” the heterosexual whole, while heterosexuality is always the measure of the (in)completeness of homosexuality (“Inside/Out” 2-4). Similarly, Ki Namaste uses a Derridean poststructuralist framework to explain the containment of the homosexual other within the heterosexual subject and vice versa. In order to emerge as a homosexual, for example, the subject first must recognise his constrained location within enforced heterosexuality and, simultaneously, the closet that exists around him (194-98).

The result of these analyses is that each side of the homosexual/heterosexual binary becomes dependent on the other to understand and maintain its own normative position within the discourse of sexuality. Each type

must look to the other to know how to perform the kind of “sex” appropriate and correct within the limits of its own bordered normativity. The framing of the ideal body within this binary—irrespective of whether this body is defined as homosexual or heterosexual—relies upon an expulsion of, or rather a refusal to acknowledge, abject elements that do not fit the picture of the sexual normativity to which it subscribes. The homosexual body, like the heterosexual body, requires its binary opposite to perform the bodily functions it will not perform. It requires its own sexualised self to disavow certain feelings and desires as irrelevant or inappropriate to self when, in fact, this self has clear knowledge of such feelings and desires, and their relationship to self (Tatchell 52).<sup>5</sup>

The instability in each side of the binary—and, therefore, the unstable nature of the binary itself—is revealed further in the inability of actual bodies to prove beyond any hint of doubt their absolute position in one category or the other. As Ladelle McWhorter points out:

Not only can a straight couple do most of the things we [homosexuals] do, but lots of straight people have done all the things we do, because they have had sex with someone of the same sex at some point in their lives. (113)

While McWhorter’s claim too easily assumes too much about the sexual activities of lots of people, straight or otherwise, her point nevertheless emphasises how bodies cannot be divided up successfully and appropriately into heterosexuals or homosexuals, not even through established knowledge of the sexual pleasures they do. Does evidence of having participated in anal sex, for example, enable an unquestioned reading of the body as a homosexual? While anti-sodomy laws have formed a major part of the fight for homosexual equality, clearly there is nothing to stop—and nothing does stop—non-

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<sup>5</sup> Judith Butler has expressed a similar poststructuralist understanding of how the masculinised body is able to maintain its rational and normative position as masculine. It is the others to the masculine—the female, child, slave and animal—who must perform what the masculine will not perform. Such a rational body, however, is in crisis (*Bodies* 48-49).

homosexual-identifying people from taking immense pleasure in this act.<sup>6</sup> Additionally, it is debatable to what extent a body must engage in certain sexualised practices before it can be identified successfully as homosexual or heterosexual.

Numerous investigations into human sexual behaviour—dating back to the 1948 Kinsey Report, at least—have revealed with conviction that the labelling of bodies as “homosexual” or “heterosexual” is an inadequate, incorrect and misleading way of understanding why bodies do what they do. Alan Bell and Martin Weinberg’s extensive post-Kinsey analysis of homosexuals and their (homo)sexual behaviour aimed to reveal and emphasise how the use of a singular signifier to define the sexual orientation and behaviour of a person—*the* homosexual or *the* heterosexual—was misguided (23). In contrast to previous investigations that had focused on the differences between a group of homosexuals and a group of heterosexuals (49), Bell and Weinberg sought to address the differences in desires and behaviours among homosexuals. They discovered that being a homosexual did not mean one would have exclusively homosexual desires and feelings (57). Such surveys have helped to expose “enormous gaps between our practices and our pretenses” (Kincaid, *Child-Loving* 137). Even as a body may display homosexualised or heterosexualised behaviours and desires, neither “homosexual” nor “heterosexual” is able to serve as an adequate descriptor of the wholeness of its being. These signifiers are unable to preclude the possibility that the homosexualised or heterosexualised body will reveal at some point, or simultaneously, behaviours and desires of the other. Thus, they do not guarantee unquestionable knowledge of the bodies to which they are applied.

Clearly, therefore, the homosexual/heterosexual binary does not speak the truth of corporeal sexualised pleasures. Instead, it is located more

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<sup>6</sup> In his analysis of why gay men in particular became the target of the HIV virus and the negative social meanings attached to it from the mid-1980s on, Paul Sendziuk points to the findings of a survey that reveal a large increase in the number of heterosexuals incorporating anal sex into their regular sexual practices. While the percentages of those introducing anal sex into their sex lives appears small (at around 5%), as Sendziuk suggests, considering the size of the heterosexual population, this figure actually indicates a large number of bodies (14).

accurately within a culturally and historically specific modernist theoretical space. In contrast to its assertion of truth, it should be understood as an interpretation of corporeal contact made in the specific context of a “twentieth-century, complex, industrial society” (Vance 46).<sup>7</sup> The categories of homosexuality and heterosexuality may “have achieved the status of assumed knowledge” (Irvine 221-22). Furthermore, the notion of being able to divide bodies up into distinct homosexual and heterosexual types may have formed “the centrepiece of the sexual wisdom of our society” (222). However, any claim to “truth” for the binary cannot excuse the continuing production of knowledge this binary imposes on corporeality, where the production of such knowledge is involved in efforts to normalise and control every body in the culture. Acceptance of this binary must be viewed within a context of techniques of normalisation rather than as absolute fact.

### 3.4 The Discipline of the Homosexual

With reference to the specific manner in which same-sex sexualised contact is read as “sex” and indicative of a homo-“sexuality,” it would be both presumptuous and misguided to claim that men who had sexualised contact with men prior to the construction of the homosexual type did not recognise their interest in the male-d body as an important and central part of their character, life and/or sexuality. The introduction of the signifier “homosexual” as a way of seeking to explain the position of men who have sexualised contact with other men cannot negate the existence of a homosexual consciousness before the nineteenth century (Adam 1-11; Ariès 64). Suggestions that the modern homosexual emerged as a result of industrial capitalism (D’Emilio), the urbanisation of the population (Greenberg 183-84) or the popularity of certain social clubs of the seventeenth century (Halperin, *One* 8-9; McIntosh,

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<sup>7</sup> Jonathan Ned Katz suggests that the terms “homosexual” and “heterosexual” first appeared in an American medical journal in 1892. At this time, “heterosexual” too referred to a type of invert: a person who had desires for both sexes or abnormal desires towards a member of the opposite sex. Only during the first quarter of the twentieth century did “heterosexuality” start to be understood as indicating a normal sexuality that stood in opposition to abnormal homosexuality (“Homosexual” 177-78).

“Homosexual” 34-35) offer convincing evidence of a distinct and recognisable identity—for some—based on same-sex sexualised practices prior to the coinage of the term. Men who had an interest in pursuing sexualised pleasures with other men did not have to wait until they were labelled “homosexuals” before they were able to understand the importance of these desires and pleasures to their identities and lifestyles.

Equally, however, it would be presumptuous to claim that all men who had sexualised contact with men before the nineteenth century were aware of their sexualised practices in accordance with the definition implied by the construction of the homosexual type (Greenberg 180). In their analyses of histories of same-sex affairs, both Halperin and Boswell are sceptical about the accuracy of investigating same-sex relationships under the rubric of homosexuality. Halperin insists that consideration of one’s position as a homosexual (or a heterosexual) in the classical period was overridden by different classifications in place at this time (“Sex” 41-48).<sup>8</sup> Similarly, Boswell argues that the discussion of whether same-sex relationships in pre-modern Europe were homosexual relationships poses an “anachronistic and to some extent unanswerable” question, given that the distinction suggested by the binary of homosexuality/heterosexuality was, albeit not unimaginable, less important to the people of this period (*Same-Sex* xxv).

Dispute over the historical and cultural emergence of a homosexual consciousness is widespread and it continues (Bronski 54-55; Fuss, *Essentially* 107-08; Greenberg 187-88; Hekma 119-22; Jagose 10-13; Norton 63-67). However, such dispute does not bring into question the interpretation of same-sex sexualised corporeal contact that the signifier “homosexuality” assumes to know with unquestionable truth. Annamarie Jagose has asserted a similarity

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<sup>8</sup> In his latter two volumes of *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault explores in detail differences in the processes of observing and understanding the human experience before the nineteenth century, thus further disrupting the assumption that sexuality has been a constant throughout history and further exposing how humans have come to perceive themselves as subjects of desire and as subjects with an identifiable sexuality (*History* 3: 4-5). Halperin’s consideration of the importance of diet and man-boy unions to such processes (“Sex”)—a consideration he repeats and expands in *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality*—reflects and refers to Foucault’s work in this regard.

between the suggestion by Weeks that homosexuality is a constant throughout history with only changes in attitudes towards it and the observation by Halperin that “homosexual” is a recent way of understanding and defining same-sex sexualised activity (15-16). Certainly, there is a similarity in the assumption that these signifiers can be used to define all forms of sexualised contact between same-sexed bodies at any point in history. However, Weeks’ claim is one that further essentialises the homosexualisation of same-sex corporeal pleasures through a reading that fails to consider the multiple ways in which bodies and cultures may understand them. While neither reading offers truth, the claim that homosexuality is a constant throughout history and the claim that same-sex sexualised contact is a constant throughout history are, nevertheless, entirely different statements. Whether or not people of the past constructed a lifestyle based on their passion for sexualised contact with same-sexed bodies before the emergence of the term, therefore, is not the issue. Rather, it is the term “homosexual” itself—and what it claims to signify—that is in need of attention.

Said to have been coined in German in 1869 (Adam 16; Bronski 64; Jonathan Ned Katz, *Invention* 53; Plummer, “Speaking” 5), “homosexual” first appeared in translation in the English language just over two decades later (Halperin, *One* 15; Jonathan Ned Katz, “Homosexual” 177; Jonathan Ned Katz, “Coming” 216). The introduction of this signifier into the culture reveals an attempt to isolate sexualised contact with a person of the same sex from other forms of sexual “perversion,” and thus to identify and institutionalise the act as an independent character trait (Halperin, “Sex” 38-39). As Foucault has argued, this kind of signifier took specific corporeal acts already defined as “sex,” held them up as proof of the individual’s fixed sexual orientation, and thereby produced a permanent being:

Homosexuality appeared as one of the forms of sexuality when it was transposed from the practice of sodomy onto a kind of interior androgyny, a hermaphroditism of the soul. The sodomite had been a temporary aberration; the homosexual was now a species.

(*History* 1 43)

Specifically, “homosexuality” sought to assign an interior and innate desire to the act of sexualised contact between men (de Lauretis vi). The “homosexual” therefore became (and becomes) any man who engages in such practices.

Discoveries about the “homosexual” in the late nineteenth century (or today), therefore, do not “represent scientific breakthroughs, elucidation of previously undiscovered areas of knowledge; rather they were [and are] ideological responses to a new way of organizing one’s personal life” (D’Emilio 105). The establishment of the homosexual type is congruent with the general shift during the modernist period towards the disciplining of the body. The conceptualisation of a homosexual type allows for the “whole” person—and not the singular act of “sex”—to become the focus of study. Such a process of categorisation offers an example of how the body can effectively become “the site, or the ‘local centre,’ of power-knowledge under the surveillance of experts and authorised watchers [...]” (Danaher, Schirato, and Webb 142). As Halperin has suggested, the reason “homosexual” became such a popular term (particularly in the scientific disciplines initially) was because of its reliance on “positive, ascertainable, and objective behavioral phenomena—on the facts of who had sex with whom” (“Sex” 39). Such “facts” emerge, however, through the normalisation of viewing specific acts with particular types of sexed bodies as indicating an innate sexual desire that now causes the person to carry out such acts of “sex.”

Since the invention of the term, “homosexual” has sought out male-d subjects who participate in same-sex sexualised contact in order to embody its own discursive object. It thus assumes the right to take charge of particular bodies that engage in certain pleasures. Today, it is extremely difficult for a man who expresses sexualised interest in another man to dispute that this interest indicates homosexuality and to deny, therefore, that he is a homosexual. Visible or audible proof of the male subject’s participation in same-sex sexualised acts is enough to “out” him as a homosexual, even if this identification does not reflect the subject’s own understanding of self. For most people, therefore, my desire to “come out” and declare, “I am *not* a

homosexual” must appear ludicrous, particularly when this body admittedly and so willingly continues to experience sexualised pleasures with other male-d bodies. The immediate assumption might be that I am repressed; that I am incapable of recognising what/who I am because of the continuing negative social connotations attached to homosexuality. I am suffering, it would seem, from internalised homophobia. The myth reinforced in any such critical compassion or assumption is that homosexuality *is* the universal definition of all participation in same-sex sexualised acts. Such an assumption permits the containment of certain corporeal acts within an identifiable being and, therefore, the regulation of the body to survive unchallenged.

Certainly, the difference between sexual act and sexual being has been argued adequately within both social constructionist theory and essentialist notions of sexuality (Halwani 42-44; Horowitz and Newcomb 14; McKenna 56; Padgug 59). It is now almost orthodox practice in investigations into same-sex sexualised activities to accept the hypothesis that not all men who engage in such activities can be said, strictly speaking, to be homosexuals (Weinberg). It has become an accepted approach “to distinguish between on the one hand, homosexual behaviour, and on the other homosexual roles, categorisations, and identities” (Weeks, *Sex* 96). However, this recognition of multiplicity continues to rely on essentialist notions of “sex” and sexuality. As Rosemary Hennessy suggests, postmodern criticisms of sexuality remap social relations, but do so by maintaining the material practice of sexuality within changing, but universally existent social contexts (144).

The problem with the category of homosexual is not simply that it permits oppression of certain bodies, but that it permits regulation of an act that could be interpreted otherwise in multiple ways outside the compulsory understanding of this act as sexual and as specifically homo-sexual. In interpreting sexualised contact as evidence of the truth of a person’s being, “homosexual” removes the pleasure from the body and positions it as an indicator of a licit or illicit, moral or immoral, public or private, but definitely sexual identity. This identity offers an abstract union with similar others, but herein denies the right of the subject to

the usage of the body outside the discursive formation into which it is now called. “Homosexual(ity)” removes the body from the exact moment of experiencing any intimate contact with a same-sexed body and places this body securely under the control of the established discourses of “sex” and sexuality. It removes the act of flesh on flesh from the moment in which the act occurs, and locates this act for all eternity within those bodies that participated. It traps this moment and holds it forever within self with the result that to not be this homosexual “I” is to be denied any experience of the pleasure.

In contrast to Plummer’s suggestion, therefore, “homosexual” is not “both rigid scientific discovery *and* diverse signifier of potential, plurality, polymorphousness” (“Speaking” 13; emphasis added). On the contrary, it absolutely denotes that the male-sexed object is the thing desired by the male sexed and sexualised subject whenever any intimate contact occurs between the two. “Homosexuality” is a term that has permitted an abundance of various same-sex intimacies to be displaced through its own demand to speak of them all (Jonathan Ned Katz, “Coming” 230-31). The term connotes an essentialist interpretation of same-sex intimacies because it claims, firstly, that the corporeal contact involved is sexual contact, and, secondly, that the desire for this “sex” emerges from “a determinate source from which all sexual expression proceeds” (Halperin, *One* 24). “Homosexual” is a closed definition for “someone, male or female, who is erotically attracted to members of his/her own sex” (Ruse, *Homosexuality* 1). It seeks to foreclose any other possible interpretations of why certain bodies perform these particular acts with other same-sexed bodies. Herein lies the existence of a popularised form of corporeal discipline.

### **3.5 The Death of the (Homo)Sexual**

Queer theory may have assisted in expanding investigations into an array of issues deemed relevant to non-heteronormative bodies, but such investigations can be achieved only when the homosexual/heterosexual divide is maintained as a reality in cultural analysis (Plummer, “Speaking” 10). Any

possibilities of becoming *queerer*, therefore, are restrained by the continuing insistence of a real homosexual/heterosexual paradigm in which all bodies exist, but from which some already “queer” bodies seek freedom. Thus, the desire to become queerer is thwarted by the naturalisation of the containment of the “queer” body within the paradigm of the sexual. The queer body too is a sexualised being. When queerness is known in this manner, understandably we arrive at the point of believing, as Namaste has (199), that even queer theory recognises the impossibility of moving outside the homosexual/heterosexual binary conceptualisation of corporeal pleasures.

To scrutinise and better understand an existing homosexual/heterosexual binary, therefore, is not enough. We should not be overly concerned with exploring how bodies are affected/infected by this binary. Similarly, it is no longer enough to suggest, “We need to challenge the assumption that sexuality is necessarily organized around a binary division between homosexuality and heterosexuality” (Stein and Plummer 139). It does not satisfy the desire of becoming queerer simply to recognise the binary of homosexual/heterosexual as a system of constraint that is “inevitably brutalising for everyone caught up in its ruthlessly over-simplified categories [...]” (Watney, *Policing* 27). Any attempt to understand the importance of the binary to the historical and cultural placement of the body assumes already this binary to be a reality in the lives and experiences of every body. Paradoxically, one can hope to disempower the effects of the homosexual/heterosexual binary on the body only once we recognise how “we” are empowered already to be sexualised subjects according to the binary’s terms. Regardless of whether it helps construct either effective political identities or criticism of the inequities the binary sustains, therefore, any reference to the binary continues the sexual regulation of the body. The emerging subject can fight to be legitimately one type or the other—homosexual or heterosexual—(or somewhere in-between), but there is always a victory in this fight for the disciplining processes of compulsory sexualisation.

Sedgwick's insistence that "our" culture has been gravely affected by the homosexual/heterosexual binary continues to grant such a power for this binary over the body. In her attempt to explore the effects of the binary on the construction of social and sexual categorisations, she normalises the narrativisation of the body with reference to the binarisation of its pleasures and desires. She brings every body inside this narrative and labels the affected bodies accordingly as "us." Such a naturalisation of the sexualisation of the body accepts the impossibility of seeing bodies differently. Despite Weeks' claim that such things no longer exist, the homosexual/heterosexual binary thus remains a master discourse "telling us how we should behave" (*Invented* 27) because it continues to tell us how we do behave. It tells every body of its compulsory sexualisation and of the position from which any resistance to this sexualisation must begin.

Far from being any form of reality to work with, therefore, the binary of homosexual/heterosexual must come to be seen as a façade. Rather than assuming it to be a "necessary fiction," we need to enter further into the illusion of the binary in order to reach a point where it disappears from knowledge altogether. There is no possibility of becoming a queerer body within a framework of analysis and understanding of bodies that ties all bodies to this binary. What we need in place of an acceptance of the effects of the binary on the body is a way of perceiving the body without reference to it:

In order not to be trapped in opposition to the norm, in order not simply to supply the definitional labor that *homo* provides to *hetero* [and vice versa], we have to take up an analysis that extends beyond definitional boundaries to the network that forms the normative and normalizing structures we face. (Jakobsen 522; emphasis in the original)

As Plummer has also argued: "We need more and more ways of thinking about same-sex sexualities and relationships that do not lock us up in controlling categories, but which instead empower us towards difference and diversity" ("Speaking" 15). Such thinking needs to go beyond the normalised ability of "I"

to know the body's same-sex sexualised experiences with reference to the eternal existence of a (homo)sexuality existing already within self.

A timid constructionist reading of the homosexual/heterosexual binary may focus on how the reality of the binary rests in its popularity. Even as we may recognise its cultural and historical location, still, we are compelled to consider it because so many people do use the terms "homosexual" and "heterosexual" to refer to self. Such an approach accepts that popularity equals reality, and thus fails to question how people are encouraged to know and display a sexuality that complies with the requirements demanded of them as model citizens. It assumes an ability to understand sexual behaviours and desires from the sexual relationships made visible to a culture already actively promoting homosexuality and heterosexuality as truths, already actively discriminating in its acceptance and rejection of sexualities and sexual behaviours. Boswell has argued that "public acknowledgment of erotic components of relationships is certainly not a reliable indication of what they might mean privately to the individuals involved" (*Same-Sex* 273). Similarly, Gilbert Herdt has highlighted the discrepancy between public performance of sexualised acts and the meanings privately attached. He therefore questions whether sexual practices can be explained and understood fully as cultural institutions (605-07).<sup>9</sup> The way sexualised acts are discussed and understood, even by the participants, reveals a form of discipline already undertaken, already achieved. Our stories of the sexual are mere bricolages built from fragments of the wider culture in which our bodies exist (Plummer, *Telling* 36).

The purpose of Foucault's analysis into sexual types is not to suggest that the homosexual, amongst other types, is a subject worthy of such discussion, but rather to expose how "he" has become so for the purpose of effecting invisible but normative surveillance over corporeal pleasures, namely,

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<sup>9</sup> With reference to insemination practices between men and boys in certain indigenous cultures, Herdt considers the possibility that the participants may experience a level of personal pleasure that goes beyond any institutionalised demand for these acts. Any such pleasure is silenced, however, in most debates on these practices, and, indeed, is silenced often by those involved.

in this case, male-male sexualised contact. It is, as Halperin has argued, a dangerous misconception to view sexual identity signifiers as “empty of ideological content” and thus as “purely descriptive” (*One* 45). “Homosexuality” is a label that seeks to define what the culture requires access to: the body and its pleasures. The homosexual is not just a construct, therefore, but is constructed as a reality—whether essentialist or constructionist—in order to permit normalised control of the flesh. The only achievement of this construction has been to introduce into history, and into the history of sexuality specifically, a normative sexual category that appears to placate many, but which is arguably a very rare reality (Simon 35). We accept and applaud this sexual type because knowledge of the existence of the homosexual puts us in a position formerly denied or formerly unimaginable. It grants us a level of sophistication unknown to those oppressed and repressed bodies of former times. We—in this time and this place, as twenty/twenty-first century citizens—are knowing and wise, much more knowledgeable and wise than those who came before us or those who do not exist in our culture. As Danaher, Schirato and Webb explain it: “The knowledge that is produced in our episteme is also our ‘truth’—and it ends up becoming everybody else’s ‘truth’ as well” (29).

The existence of the homosexual type must be challenged if the body is to have any hope of experiencing same-sex sexualised pleasures without reference to and allegiance to an eternalised “I.” This is not an impossible becoming. After all, as Weeks has explained, “sex” is a “‘fictional unity,’ that once did not exist, and at some time in the future may not exist again. It is an invention of the human mind” (*Sexuality* 15). In Foucauldian terms too:

Sexuality must not be thought of as a kind of natural given which power tries to hold in check, or as an obscure domain which knowledge tries gradually to uncover. It is the name that can be given to a historical construct: not a furtive reality that is difficult to grasp, but a great surface network in which the stimulation of bodies, the intensification of pleasures, the incitement to discourse, the formation of the special knowledges, the

strengthening of controls and resistances, are linked to one another, in accordance with a few major strategies of knowledge and power. (*History 1* 105-06)

By deconstructing the essentialism of “sex” and sexuality, Foucault manages to reconstitute “knowledge and sexuality as sites of contestation, thereby opening up new opportunities for both scholarly and political [and personal] intervention” (Halperin, “Historicizing” 23). His analyses of discourse help loosen the embrace wrapped too tightly around the words and things we assume as real (Foucault, *Archaeology* 49). We may be pressured into assigning meanings to the sexualised experiences of our bodies. Moreover, these meanings may be formulated under certain cultural conditions over which we appear to have no control (Jonathan Ned Katz, “Homosexual” 179). However, it does us no good to fall back into the trap of speaking of a history of homosexuality (or histories of homosexualities). Such a habit only reaffirms that the cultural condition of *being* a homosexual or of *doing* homosexuality must affect all bodies that engage in same-sex “sex.” The homosexual dictate should not be so powerful. Its time of assuming such unquestionable and imposing power over the body and its pleasures must end.

## **Chapter 4 “I” Need to Speak “Gay”**

#### 4.1 An Incitement to Speak Gay

Foucault's first volume of *The History of Sexuality* tells of an "incitement to discourse," an imperative and a compulsion to speak. In contrast to a belief in the past as an era of censorship specifically of "sex," Foucault makes the claim that there has been

a steady proliferation of discourses concerned with sex [...] an institutional incitement to speak about it [...], a determination on the part of agencies of power to hear it spoken about, and to cause *it* to speak through explicit articulation and endlessly accumulated detail. (*History 1* 18; emphasis in the original).

In furthering his explanation of how such compulsory talk of "sex" has had an impact on human subjectivity, Foucault continues:

This is the essential thing: that Western man has been drawn for three centuries to the task of telling everything concerning his sex; that since the classical age there has been a constant optimization and an increasing valorization of the discourse on sex; and that this carefully analytical discourse was meant to yield multiple effects of displacement, intensification, reorientation, and modification of desire itself. (23)

This incitement to talk about "sex" and about a self involved in acts of "sex" has not abated. Today, on the advice pages of magazines, in the studios and "reality" settings of the television media, in the "privacy" of the rooms of counsellors and practitioners in sexual health, in "sex" surveys, in our everyday jokes and friend-to-friend conversations, a discourse of "sex" flourishes. It would appear that our desires to articulate (our) "sex" are insatiable, for we are living in the midst of a cultural obsession with the telling of tales in which "sex," "I" and the sexualised self must be central. "Sex" has become, as Plummer describes it, our "Big Story":

Tell about your sexual behaviour, your sexual identity, your dreams, your desires, your pains and your fantasies. Tell about your desire for a silk hanky, your desire for a person of the same

sex, your desire for young children, your desire to masturbate, your desire to cross dress, your desire to be beaten, your desire to have too much sex, your desire to have no sex at all, and even your desire to stop the desires of others. Tell about your sexual dysfunction, your sexual diseases, your orgasm problems, your abortions, your sexual addictions. Let us know what you get up to in bed—or what you don't get up to! Tell about your partner who loves too little or too much, who is gay or transexual, who is older or younger. (*Telling* 4)

In our condemnations of and support for certain kinds of “sex,” we talk freely and loudly about our preferred type of “sex,” and we find immense pleasure in doing so. “Sex” and “I,” “I” and “sex”: it is impossible to keep these two fictions apart.

For the discourse of gay liberation, this speaking of self as sexual—as specifically homo-sexual—is central to the fight for freedom that grants this discourse its *raison d'être*. In rejecting the taken-for-granted right of external institutions to speak on behalf of bodies that engage in same-sex sexualised practices, this discourse has demanded respect for the right of the “homosexual” to speak out on behalf of self. Here, public articulation of a gay identity is

a ritual of discourse in which the speaking subject is also the subject of the statement; [...] a ritual in which the expression alone, independently of its external consequences, produces intrinsic modifications in the person who articulates it: it exonerates, redeems, and purifies him; it unburdens him of his wrongs, liberates him, and promises him salvation. (Foucault, *History* 1 61-62)

Within the discourse of gay liberation, the coming-out story is applauded as the moment in which the journey of self-discovery from assumed heterosexuality towards the reality of homosexuality has been completed. Positive changes in self-perception and lifestyle occur when “I” identify as “gay.” The ability to

speak of a homosexual self is celebrated because such an act of speech is said to signify the freeing of the same-sex desiring subject from the restraints that formerly prevented his/her liberation (Cruikshank 130).

Foucault's model of an incitement to discourse, however, reveals a concern about how articulation helps situate the speaking subject within readily available parameters of control. Contrary to the suggestion that speech by self can offer the promise of future liberation—a suggestion that the discourse of gay liberation holds firmly—Foucault explores the normalised methods of regulation that occur as a result of any participation in talk. In regard to the specific disciplining of a sexualised self, he warns against becoming docile to a system that accepts the ability of “sex” to “tell us our truth, or rather, the deeply buried truth of that truth about ourselves which we think we possess in our immediate consciousness” (Foucault, *History 1* 69). As he insists elsewhere, the belief that speech can produce liberation for the articulating subject is a tool of power and control:

As always, it uses what people say, feel, and hope for. It exploits their temptation to believe that to be happy, it is enough to cross the threshold of discourse and to remove a few prohibitions. But in fact it ends up repressing and dispersing movements of revolt and liberation... (“Power” 114)<sup>1</sup>

In the same breath as he identifies the speaking subject to be the subject of the statement, Foucault describes the incitement to discourse as

a ritual that unfolds within a power relationship, for one does not confess without the presence (or virtual presence) of a partner who is not simply the interlocutor but the authority who requires the confession, prescribes and appreciates it, and intervenes in order to judge, punish, forgive, console, and reconcile; a ritual in which the truth is corroborated by the obstacles and resistances it

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<sup>1</sup> Foucault made this statement in a discussion with Bernard-Henri Lévy, first published in French in 1977, translated by David J. Parent and published in English in the same year.

has had to surmount in order to be formulated [...]. (*History* 161-62)

Within the Western context specifically, the imperative to talk is entrenched in a cultural attachment to the influential discourse of Christianity, which, for the purpose of establishing the “good Christian” model, demands

the nearly infinite task of telling—telling oneself and another, as often as possible, everything that might concern the interplay of innumerable pleasures, sensations, and thoughts which, through the body and the soul, had some affinity with sex. (20).

The “Christian pastoral” compels us to confess not only those acts that contravene laws, but also our every desire in order that all desires can be brought into discourse effectively (21).<sup>2</sup>

Steven Seidman has demonstrated an application of his scepticism of all social discourses in his insistence that “No discourse or representation of homosexuality, no matter how sincerely it speaks in the name of liberation, can escape the suspicion that it exhibits particular social interests and entails definite political effects” (“Deconstructing” 117). In this chapter I direct such a suspicion at the discourse of gay liberation, a discourse that now occupies a dominant position in the debates on and representations of same-sex sexualised pleasures between men. I explore how the announcement of “I am gay” assists this discourse in its efforts to construct bodies that engage in same-sex sexualised contact as “*socially organised biographical objects*” (Plummer, *Telling* 34; emphasis in the original).<sup>3</sup> I argue that the discourse of gay

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<sup>2</sup> Foucault iterates this point when he writes elsewhere: “Everyone in Christianity has the duty to explore who he is, what is happening within himself, the faults he may have committed, the temptations to which he is exposed. Moreover, everyone is obliged to tell these things to other people, and thus to bear witness against himself” (“Sexuality” 178).

<sup>3</sup> The suggestion that through speech we produce ourselves as “biographical objects” offers an alternative and a challenge to the assumption that speech about the sexual self reveals the truth of who we are. In his analysis of how we make sexual stories, Plummer emphasises how personal and cultural situations influence the way we produce self as an object with a biography of “sex” and sexuality. The aim of *Telling Sexual Stories* is to undermine the essentialism of the sexualised self in a way that reflects Foucault’s concern over our insistence on viewing self as the site of (sexual) knowledge.

liberation is engaged actively in seeking to impose a compulsory homosexuality on all men who have sexualised contact with men. This it can achieve with ease and without dissent by masking such discipline as a signifier of the body's liberation.

If we—such homosexualised men—are to avoid replicating the very structures of inequity we claim to stand against in our rejection of normative and compulsory heterosexuality, we need to (re)take stock of the “constitutive exclusions that reconsolidate hegemonic power differentials, exclusions that each articulation [of being gay] was forced to make in order to proceed” (Butler, *Bodies* 118). We need to question how the discourse of gay liberation has taken control of our bodies and our pleasures, and how we—as subjects of this discourse—seek to impose this control on others in order to sustain the reality and comfort of “I.” To celebrate a homosexual subjectivity through taking on a gay identity does not remove us from discourses of power. It does not enable us to live free from discipline, nor does it render us guiltless in the application of discipline. To the contrary, as Butler further writes:

When the articulation of coherent identity becomes its own policy, then the policing of identity takes the place of a politics in which identity works dynamically in the service of a broader cultural struggle toward the rearticulation and empowerment of groups that seeks to overcome the dynamic of repudiation and exclusion by which “coherent subjects” are constituted. (117)

The imperative to articulate, “I am gay” effects such a policing of the body and its capacity for sexualised intimacies. It thereby forecloses any serious challenge to pervasive understandings of what the body does with other bodies in moments of intimate pleasure.

#### **4.2 Concern Over Gay Speak**

In the context of a wider, late 1960s counter-cultural claim that the personal *is* political—that “everyone’s political views should be read as expressing his or her particular, subjective interests” (Warner, *Publics* 34)—the

gay liberation movement revisited the idea that public affirmation of a homosexual orientation would provide a major step towards removing discrimination against the non-heterosexual subject. Following on from failed attempts to convince same-sex desiring bodies to announce publicly their non-heterosexuality in Germany at the beginning of the twentieth century (Adam 20-28) and rejecting the post-World War II “homophile idea of the sacredness of privacy, as well as its effectiveness as a political strategy, gay liberation demanded that private lives become public” (Bronski 67). This appeal for self-affirmation has continued with the development of the gay liberation movement to the extent that the act of “coming out” has become “a sacred personal and political event” as evidenced in the establishment and popularity of annual gay pride marches and festivals (Seidman, Meeks, and Traschen 12). These signifiers of freedom (amongst others) are “summoned as cornerstones of the gay community, indices of the emergence of a long-repressed collective identity” (Fuss, *Essentially* 97).

In the early days of the movement, Dennis Altman highlighted the importance of shedding the “pretence” of straightness in order to avoid the “miserable and lonely lives” lived by those “unable to function fully as straights and equally unable to accept their essential gayness” (*Homosexual* 20-21). Here, the political was connected to the personal in a way that undermined the ability of the same-sex desiring subject to avoid the dictate of a re-emerging ethnic homosexuality. Today, so intense is the demand for those who engage in same-sex sexualised activities to speak of self as “homosexual” that any refusal to comply can be met with the claim that the silent subject is “not experiencing real human existence” (Mark 257). Those who do not speak of self as homosexual are said to have no positive identity and to be living “double lives” (Johansson and Percy 281). Not to “come out” as a homosexual, not to articulate self according to the demands of the discourse of gay liberation, is to be denied humanity.<sup>4</sup> Within the gay liberation movement, the right to speak

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<sup>4</sup> A similar denial of wholeness is forced upon those who do not conform to the linear development of a homosexual identity as prescribed by popular developmental models that

about one's involvement in same-sex sexualised contact, indeed, has become "legitimately associated with the honor of a political cause" (Foucault, *History 1* 6), while coming out of the closet has become a necessary and "valuable catalyst for personal growth" (Chekola 71).

The narrative of homosexuality, as it is (re)discovered and (re)written within the discourse of gay liberation, does not negate outright the importance of concealment in regard to same-sex sexualised practices and desires. Of a past era when disclosure of such practices and desires could threaten one's employment, living arrangements, family and life, it is possible to acknowledge retrospectively that silence was a legitimate and often necessary tool for survival (Adam 60-65). As Bell and Weinberg's investigation into the diversity of homosexual experiences reveals, the degree to which same-sex desiring subjects of the past were open about their sexual orientation and behaviours depended on a variety of issues, including socio-economic status, the level of education of the individual, social interests and social adjustment (63). Today, despite both the comparatively strong public visibility of homosexuals and the significant cultural changes that have benefited the social and legal position of those who wish to engage in same-sex sexualised pleasures and relationships, silence continues to be useful whenever geographical location or entrenched cultural homophobia prevents the homosexual subject from speaking out publicly (Cruikshank 48-49). Continuing discrepancies between interpersonal and institutional understandings of homosexuality still affect the different levels of openness the subject might be willing or able to take on board (Seidman, Meeks, and Traschen 11). However, recognition of a necessary deployment of silence by certain bodies based on individual cultural and historical location does not undermine the naturalness of the homosexual orientation. On the contrary, recognition of a need at times for silence indicates sympathy for those

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insist on seeing a progression from actions of the body to awareness of the mind (Horowitz and Newcomb 4-5). Doing homosexuality is the first step; recognising self as homosexual must follow. Speaking out about one's homosexuality is considered the best way of knowing what exists already (Minson 21).

who consciously seek to conceal a homosexual orientation they are aware exists. Such objects of pity thereby have been homosexualised already.

A person's reluctance to come out as gay when he is known to participate in same-sex sexualised pleasures is condemned more vehemently. The deployment of silence as a means of evading admission of personal participation in homosexualised activity is challenged by claims that such a position helps maintain an inequitable heterosexualised status quo (Tierney 40) and fails to provide necessary visible and positive models on how to live differently (Gross 23, 126). While concealment may have been a legitimate excuse in the past, with the normalisation of a narrative that tells of a shift from oppression to liberation, of a courageous leap over the American Stone-wall, "collective visibility overrules the right of privacy" (Johansson and Percy 3). In this present time of liberation, there is less need for silence and less patience for those who will not identify publicly as homosexual. The debate on "outing," which first became a political issue in the late 1980s (Gross 60-69; Johansson and Percy 3), intensified the demand to comply with the identification requirement of the discourse of gay liberation. A reluctance to acknowledge citizenship in a "queer [sic] nation" has been used to legitimise the tactic of exposing as "homosexuals" men known for their participation in sexualised contact with other men (Johansson and Percy 281). While many objections to outing focus on the invasion of the individual's right to privacy, support for this practice is strongest when the person is known to participate privately in same-sex sexualised activity while failing to support publicly—or, worse still, condemning—the aims of the gay liberation movement (Gross 65-66, 101, 126). In these cases, non-articulation is seen as enabling the person to "pass" and thus to benefit from deceptively assuming heterosexuality (Bronski 170), while more visible—and implicitly more courageous—homosexuals must face the brunt of society's continuing discrimination (Gross 128).

The notion of the closet thus constructs a division between those who are "in" and those who are "out," whereby the latter are necessarily "stigmatized as living false, unhappy lives" (Seidman, Meeks, and Traschen 10) or described

as “psychological cripples” (Reynolds, *From Camp* 94). The result of this in/out divide is the construction of a binary of well-formed, happy homosexuals versus the maladjusted and the trapped homosexuals. It suggests that there are the successful gays and the failed gays (Davies 77). Any refusal or inability to recognise one’s gayness is interpreted as the result of internalised homophobia; the failed gays are suffering the unfortunate effects of existing in a heterosexualised culture. While the aim of the discourse of gay liberation is to obviate the need to hide one’s participation in same-sex sexualised contact, there is no consideration within this discourse that resistance to an insistence on “coming out” may not be an act of homophobia or a signifier of fear. There is no recognition that a refusal to be “out” may be the result of a difference that exists between the language already in place to explain the “sex” that has occurred and the subject’s own understanding of what any same-sex sexualised experience might mean.<sup>5</sup>

In this normalised interpretation of those who refuse to come out or cannot come out—those who will not or cannot talk—as leading less than real lives, we see not what Reynolds has referred to as a “fresh normativity at play” (*From Camp* 94). Rather, this interpretation continues the culture’s construction of a visible, understandable, knowable and controllable homosexuality. The pathologising of acts into sexual types, into “a life form, and a morphology” (Foucault, *History* 1 43) is not a closed chapter in history, therefore, but an ongoing process. Today, such a pathologising is reinforced by advocates of gay liberation and by the gay lobby’s increasing demands for the establishment of equal rights for the naturalised homosexual species. The continuing failure of the gay liberation movement has been a refusal to recognise that its own insistence that we should speak out about our same-sex corporeal pleasures

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<sup>5</sup> As Ladelle McWhorter rereads her sexualised position within a Foucauldian framework, she comes to understand her silences as indicating a distance between her understandings of “sex” and those promoted by the discourse of gay liberation. In realising the essentialist undertones of the gay liberationist discourse, she seeks to remind herself of a desire to resist all forms of sexual identification rather than to take on board the notion that “gay is good.” She writes: “Then I have to remind myself that rhetoric that makes queers feel ashamed is not ‘gay-affirmative’ even when it claims to be. Analyses that berate victims of homophobia for ‘internalized homophobia’ are the tools of the homophobes” (98).

under the rubric of homosexuality is an act of colonisation of bodies and pleasures complicit with the desires of a culture obsessed with knowing all bodies within the sexual paradigm.

#### 4.2.1 The Discipline of Coming Out

In his analysis of the demise of a unique gay sensibility, Daniel Harris is critical of the monotony of the coming out narrative that underpins the gay liberationist drive to reveal the extent of homosexuality in Western culture and to validate calls for emancipation of the homosexual type.<sup>6</sup> With particular reference to the gay literature of the 1980s, he writes with obvious disdain:

The gay community seemed hopelessly mired in an emotionally stagnant state of euphoria, forever fixated on a single moment, the admittedly triumphant occasion of coming out, an event these writers were doomed to relive over and over again ad infinitum, digging themselves deeper and deeper into the same yawning intellectual rut. (2)

Reynolds has attempted to excuse such a euphoric acceptance of the coming-out process by claiming that “a moment of startling transformation” had to occur before coming out could be considered “an ongoing process that was both highly ambiguous and fundamentally performative” (*From Camp* 57-58). Such a claim mimics the timidity of constructionists who view the gay model as a “necessary fiction” on a political stage. It recognises the temporality of the coming-out narrative, but enshrines this narrative in the history, present and future of any body that engages in same-sex sexualised activities. This it does

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<sup>6</sup> Harris' criticisms about the popularisation and mainstreaming of gay culture are certainly powerful. His book, *The Rise and Fall of Gay Culture*, had an enormous influence on my early theorisations of an anti-gay position. However, in his concern over the impact of commercialisation and assimilation on gayness, he too speaks of a unified gay culture. When he writes, for example, that “It is only a matter of time before our distinctive characteristics as a minority begin to dissolve” (38), he reaffirms the naturalness of both a homosexual minority and the differences shared by those included in this minority. Harris' critique, therefore, while it continues to be influential and relevant, nevertheless resorts to the kind of essentialism from which I seek to distance my own work.

through a refusal to upset the status quo of the many men today who view their naturalised homosexual position with reference to a personal journey of coming out and to the wider history of how homosexuality fought to come out of oppression. It allows these stories of enlightenment to be accepted as truths in this time and thereby allows them to be transcribed as truths across time. To maintain the closet and coming out as valid components in the history of any body with an interest in same-sex sexualised pleasures seeks to excuse the regulation of this body into the naturalised category of the homosexual when, in fact, such a desiring body may never come out nor come into this category at all.<sup>7</sup> It upholds the legitimacy of the need to speak of the sexual “I” in order to free the body from discipline when, in fact, as Ladelle McWhorter has argued, “Repression is not a primary phenomenon in the history of sexuality, and confession is not its remedy. Rather, confession is simply an administrative imperative” (18).

Foucault reads the construction of a natural but latent sexuality as a means by which people “not fully conscious of the intricate mechanisms of their own sexuality” could succumb to the discipline of the confessor. Sexuality is a means to get us to talk (Cousins and Hussain 212). The coming-out event, dressed up and paraded around within a package of liberation, continues the imperative for confession. With every word, an articulation of “I am gay” reveals the success of the culture’s demand for corporeal surveillance. “I am gay” brings the body and its pleasures fully into view with the subject’s consent. The confessing subject proudly inscribes on the body a sexuality, thereby making available “an essential and deterministic causality—a fixity of desire” (Plummer, *Telling* 93).<sup>8</sup> We confess and make visible that which the culture renders

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<sup>7</sup> In his analysis of how certain individual men have found access to same-sex sexual pleasures, Gary Dowsett emphasises the involvement of the body rather than the social. It is the body—the tongue, the skin, the cock—that leads the hunt for such pleasures. As he asserts, men are able to find and enjoy such corporeal pleasures “without recourse to gay liberation tropés [sic] or complex theories of sexuality” (“Bodyplay” 37).

<sup>8</sup> As Plummer points out, while contemporary criticism of the medicalisation of homosexuality has attacked the notion that homosexuality is a sickness, this same process of medicalisation has been used to provide a focus for mobilisation. The suggestion that they are sick has given

invisible. We placate the fears of a culture obsessed with knowing through giving it access to knowledge of our bodies and pleasures within the paradigms already established for such knowledge to be found. We comply with the demand to be (homo)sexual and thereby submit our ability to mutate—to become other than we are and other than we are expected to be—to a system desirous of never-ending sameness, where such sameness assures the success of control (Grosz, “Rethinking” 223).

The mechanism for effecting control over bodies that engage in same-sex sexualised pleasures is modern, therefore: it works by subjecting bodies to subtle methods of regulation and discipline. Foucault explains this ability to control bodies without force:

He who is subjected to a field of visibility, and who knows it, assumes responsibility for the constraints of power; he makes them play spontaneously upon himself; he inscribes in himself the power relation in which he simultaneously plays both roles; he becomes the principle of his own subjection. By this very fact, the external power may throw off its physical weight; it tends to the non-corporeal; and, the more it approaches this limit, the more constant, profound and permanent are its effects: it is a perpetual victory that avoids any physical confrontation and which is always decided in advance. (*Discipline* 202-03)

Today, the discourse of gay liberation does not need public displays of physical torture to bring the body into line. It does not need to whip the same-sex desiring subject into submission. The interpellation of the body into being a homosexual works today “not by law but by normalization, not by punishment but by control, methods that are employed on all levels and in forms that go beyond the state and its apparatus” (Foucault, *History* 1 89). There is no longer

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homosexuals something to fight against as a gay community. In addition, this medicalisation has paved the way for the more recent suggestion that rather than an illness, homosexuality is a condition over which one has no choice—“a disadvantage, maybe, but no sickness” (*Telling* 93).

any need for external institutions to tell us what the body is. The desire for corporeal liberation is enough to encourage us to talk.

Like the demands for confession within the Christian tradition, the purpose of articulating a homosexual self is to invite interpretation. “Tell me your desires, I’ll tell you who you are” was typical of the nineteenth century’s demand that the body offer up its pleasures in order to reveal an innate and internal sexuality (Foucault, “Michel” 128).<sup>9</sup> Equally, “Tell me about your desires for bodies of the same sex, I’ll tell you that you are gay” is typical of the demand that the body offer up its same-sex desires and pleasures in order to reveal the truth of a hidden and natural homosexuality residing within. The incitement to confess same-sex desires and pleasures within the paradigm of homosexuality is typical of Western culture in the late-twentieth and early-twenty-first centuries in which the discourse of gay liberation resides as a legitimate and dominant definer of same-sex desires and pleasures, and of the bodies to whom these can be linked. Despite claims to the contrary, therefore, coming out as “gay” cannot offer greater freedom from discursive regulation than the straight identity from which it is assumed the homosexual speaking subject manages to escape forever. In fact, a belief in being gay helps foreclose any threat of fluidity in corporeal pleasures through encouraging greater involvement of the gay-ed body in functions that it is expected to enjoy. “I am gay” assists the subject in training its body to not think or do sexually otherwise (Goode 63).

In the advice columns of gay magazines, in the confessions of the televised “freaks” who fight out their non-heteronormative sexual frustrations to the public chants of “Go Jerry,” in the prods, pokes and highly personal probings of the sexual health clinics, in the discoveries of “sex” surveys, in the many situations of (un)friendly flirting at the workplace, in the bars and on the streets, in the anonymous encounters between bodies inside the steamy walls

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<sup>9</sup> In this interview with Stephen Riggins in 1982, Foucault emphasised the link between the construction of the homosexual type and a rising interest in the development of the individual within western culture. Homosexuality, therefore, like all forms of sexuality, is not a secret that exists within the individual, but rather is a “symptom” of this individualisation.

of licensed sex-on-premises venues, in private orgies, in website chat rooms, in parks and toilets and on beaches, there exists a continuation of corporeal regulation. In thinking and speaking of self within the paradigm of homosexuality, the subject is involved in the surveillance of the body. In thinking and speaking of others similarly—in the insistence on defining all same-sex sexualised contact as “homosexual”—the subject participates in the policing of the bodies of others. We unquestionably accept every body has a sexuality to speak of. The gay subject accepts the diagnosis of his homo-sexuality and he lives with this disease. Indeed, he flaunts it in his willing articulations of “I am gay.” His entry into normativity is granted through his acceptance of the existence of a sexual orientation and the importance of this orientation to the construction of his whole being.

In coming out of the closet as “gay,” therefore, sexuality and sex continue to be central to us, for sexuality and “sex” are now who we are. Without them, we are nothing. “I” need “sex” and “I” need a sexuality that enables me to have and enjoy this “sex.” Such talk brings our desires and our pleasures into understandable spheres. It creates an “I” within established frameworks of knowledge, thereby giving the body an identity and a place in the culture. The discourse of gay liberation purports to be on our side: the homosexual “I” side. It asks us to believe in our repression and to tell a personal tale of homosexuality in order that we might overcome the feelings of isolation, loneliness and fear we must feel. It grants us the right to be “I,” and wants our cultural position to be one of equity. However, in return, we are to remain subjected to the confinement of a knowable homosexual “I.” The paradox, therefore, is that as this discourse attempts to offer freedom, it simultaneously denies this through the introduction of “dogma and institutions of its own” that now surround and protect the homosexual option (De Cecco 52). In Foucauldian terms:

It might well be that our will to know is not just historically unique and far from natural, but also dangerous. It is quite possible that a consequence of this whole compulsion to confess and the will to

discover the truth in ourselves (in that part of us which remains most hidden) may be that the process in which we become subjects of our desire simultaneously subjects us. (Visker 86)

We come out of the closet, move away from the restrictions of an assumed heterosexuality, and simultaneously step into a cage of propagated freedom.

#### 4.2.2 A Discourse's Fear of Demise

Of course, the perceived threat to the discourse of gay liberation is that any removal of the subject's right to speak of self as homosexual will permit the debate on same-sex sexualised pleasures to fall once again into the hands and voices of others. These others might dare to argue that men are drawn to such pleasures not because they are real homosexuals, but because they are "pseudohomosexuals": men who participate in homosexualised acts merely because they are experiencing a crisis or a failure in their life (Ruse, *Homosexuality* 49). Alternatively, these others voices might attempt to use homosexuality as an excuse for those bodies that do not conform to normative models of sex, gender and sexuality. Rather than a valid way of being, homosexuality is in danger of being seen as a convenient means of containing any body that deviates from the norm, thereby permitting the body sexed and gendered according to the heterosexist discourse to maintain its position as real and right in opposition to this false and wrong homosexual other (McIntosh, "Homosexual" 27-28). According to the discourse of gay liberation, any suggestion of the non-existence of the homosexual enforces a repressive silence on what is unquestionably real. It risks preventing the person desirous of same-sex sexualised pleasures from knowing he *is* a homosexual, and therefore discouraging him from entering into a community that might secure his gayness (Reynolds, *From Camp* 16). Such a suggestion, therefore, is aligned with the "conservative politics" that speak only of homosexuality as "dark" and "aberrant" (Sullivan, "Politics" 62), a position that reveals the existence of homophobia.

The discourse of homophobia, however, is as reductive in its understanding of same-sex sexualised contact as the understandings it seeks to challenge (Watney, *Policing* 47). Plummer has referred to homophobia as a “myopia” that blinds the homosexual into believing in the repressive hypothesis in which he naively and wrongly sees self as the most oppressed of all: “To focus upon homophobia is to reveal one’s own myopia and to do a disservice to the more general attitudes of sexual negativism in society” (“Homosexual” 63). Through its suggestion of a universal feeling of oppression for all who engage in same-sex sexualised acts—an assumed commonality disputed by Elizabeth Grosz (“Rethinking” 211)—homophobia occludes any attempt to break the monopoly that homosexuality holds in the discussion of sexual oppression.<sup>10</sup> It also forecloses any serious investigation into a much broader queerness in the culture through its focus on the notion of a dominant activating oppression. In contrast to the history of queer explored within dominant gay liberationist narratives, queerness includes far more than merely the oppression of the homosexual type (Norton 132). To talk of sexuality in terms of repression and liberation, however, “is to be ensnared in the relations of power themselves and to mask the fact that their mechanism and functioning are quite different” (Cousins and Hussain 202).

Foucault’s first volume of *The History of Sexuality* poses an important challenge to “theories of sexual liberation based upon the repressive hypothesis, which suggest [...] that there is some essential sexuality which could be revolutionary if only it could escape the constraints imposed upon it” (Macey 364). Rather than accept the possibility of a future in which a utopian freedom would be realised, Foucault “believed that liberation struggles rooted in demands for a right to one’s sexuality are limited insofar as they accept the fixing of sexual identity established by institutions interested in regulating and

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<sup>10</sup> As Gayle Rubin has suggested, other non-gay forms of sexualised pleasures and unions do challenge this monopoly (“Sexual Politics” 108-09). Some of those she names—cruising, pederasty and sadomasochism—can involve male-male sexualised contact. The oppression felt by people who engage in these types of activities and unions undermines the assumption that all oppression of male-male sexualised behaviour can be understood within the context of homophobia.

controlling it” (Sawicki 100). There is a need to investigate the placement of the same-sex desiring subject as unquestionably oppressed, therefore, because, in the Foucauldian sense, the minoritised homosexual is not the victim of operations of power, but, in fact, is produced by these operations (Jagose 80). Rather than a natural heterosexual hatred of homosexuality, homophobia is the price paid for insisting on viewing human sexuality within the confines of the homosexual/heterosexual binary and thereby locating the same-sex desiring body within the category of homosexuality deemed to be always in direct opposition to—and therefore in conflict with—dominant heterosexuality. In accepting the essentialism of a homosexual orientation, we accept an inferior status guaranteed by the heterosexual’s hatred of homosexuality (Lehring 193) and by the discourse of homophobia that speaks of this hatred as truth. To refuse or reject any investigation into the reality of the category of homosexual on the grounds that this kind of questioning reveals a homophobic tactic, therefore, serves no better purpose than to mask the way in which the body that participates in same-sex sexualised contact is produced as a subject of homophobia.

The real fear of the gay liberationist agenda is that without the existence of a narrative of homophobia, the homosexual identity will be deconstructed to the point of erasure, thereby leaving the discourse of gay liberation with nothing to shout about. This fear reflects the general fear of poststructuralism: that a preference for a deconstruction of identities leaves nothing of substance on which to base a politics (Fuss, *Essentially* 103-04). The discourse of gay liberation cannot survive without its object of knowledge: the homosexual. It is, therefore, in the interest of this discourse to ensure that this particular sexual type is not eradicated from knowledges of human sexuality, even if this means offering active support for practices that seek to contain all recognisable sexualised contact within the “ruthlessly over-simplified categories of homo- and hetero-sexuality” (Watney, *Policing* 27). Elsewhere, Simon Watney has claimed that “gay” works to refute the centrality of this binary in the formation of sexual truth. In his critique of those who dismiss coming out as a form of confession

and control, he asserts the need to recognise a difference between “confessional and affirmative discourses.” The latter, he claims, are politically active in their opposition to institutional powers that control definitions and practices of sexuality (“Banality” 19). Yet, while “gay” may signify a political and personal rejection of the pathologisation and medicalisation of same-sex sexualised desire, it does not refute the reality of the categorisation of such desires and their corresponding practices as “homosexual.” Indeed, “gay” and “homosexual” are no different in respect to their suggestion of the importance of same-sex desires and pleasures to the construction of an identifiable “I.”

The rescuing of the man who enjoys sexualised contact with other men from the claws of the medical and psychiatric professions, just as these professions once rescued that very same sexualised contact from the law, does not grant freedom (Foucault, Hocquenghem, and Danet 280-81).<sup>11</sup> To assume such an epiphany of liberation is to fail to ask “Who and what has a hold on me now?” As Plummer explains:

The story telling process flows through social acts of domination, hierarchy, marginalisation and inequality. Some voices—who claim to dominate, who top the hierarchy, who claim the centre, who possess resources—are not only heard much more readily than others, but also are capable of framing the questions, setting the agendas, establishing the rhetorics much more readily than the others. (*Telling* 30)

While the discourse of gay liberation assists those who participate in same-sex sexualised pleasures to understand how the storying of their sexual self is

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<sup>11</sup> This discussion between Michel Foucault, Guy Hocquenghem and Jean Danet focuses primarily on the matter of sexual relationships between adults and children. In this particular section of the interview, however, Danet refers to the battle between the law and medicine for control of a “population of [homosexual] perverts” from the nineteenth century on. Furthering this line of thought, Foucault argues that while the law may lose such control because of decriminalisation of certain sexualised acts in the late twentieth century, nevertheless, a more pervasive form of control will emerge. He suggests that “sexuality will no longer be a kind of behavior hedged in by precise prohibitions, but a kind of roaming danger, a sort of omnipresent phantom, a phantom that will be played out between men and women, children and adults, and possibly between adults themselves [...]” (281).

influenced by a dominant and pervasive heteronormativity, it fails to recognise and address its own position of dominance in the storying of same-sex pleasures. Today, indeed, this discourse—and the political movement attached to it—frames the questions, sets the agenda and establishes the rhetoric in the debate on sexualised intimacies between same-sexed bodies. Its power to do so rests in its ability to hide its own mechanisms of control over the bodies it claims to speak of and for.

Gay liberationist tactics therefore assert that a public pronouncement of one's homosexuality can work to override the discrimination effected in the homosexual/heterosexual binary, but do not maintain any substantive and operative attack against the restraints placed on understandings of corporeal pleasures and desires by the naturalisation of this binary. There has been no eradication of the concept of a category of homosexual as distinct from a heterosexual one, as Dennis Altman so wishfully predicted in an early assessment of the intent of the gay liberation movement (*Homosexual* 103, 154). In the movement today, there is no distinctively audible critique aimed against the normative interpretation of sexualised contact according to sexed-body preference. Instead, the discourse of gay liberation adheres to the ideological placement of sex and sexuality within frameworks of oppression and liberation. It truly believes that "Tomorrow sex will be good again" (Foucault, *History* 17). More specifically, it believes that homosexual sex will be better for the non-heterosexualised subject. Such a promise to those bodies that participate in same-sex sexualised contact can be sustained only through an insistence that such bodies also participate in active and ongoing articulation of their desires and pleasures within the recognisable paradigm of an ethnic homosexuality. Indeed, the reality of homosexuality depends on such compliance, for, according to the aims of a "queer politics" intent on making homosexuality more visible,

coming out and acting out are part of the cultural and political meaning of what it is to be homosexual; speaking one's desire, the public display of desire, is essential to the desire itself, the

desire cannot be sustained without such speaking and display, and the discursive practice of homosexuality is indissociable from homosexuality itself. (Butler, *Excitable* 107)

Moreover, despite its consistent and many promises, the discourse of gay liberation has not delivered its subjects from fear and discrimination (Seidman, “Deconstructing” 117). It has not been able to prevent the continuation of legal and physical attacks against those who show an interest in—or appear to show an interest in—same-sex sexualised pleasures, not least because it helps to essentialise the very persons these fears and discriminations need (Minson 19-20). A gay liberationist discourse wants to sustain the reality of the homosexual being and, therefore, must participate in the search for bodies that fit the description of a whole homosexual self on which its mission relies. With knowledge of the reality of a homosexual being, the culture is able to determine the status of this being. It can grant the identifiable subject respect and rights or not, basing its decision on flexible and arbitrary interpretations of worth with reference to the sexualised acts and desires to which the body—through willing confession—has been aligned. Ironically, therefore, a gay liberation movement cannot exist without the possibility that homosexuals might be oppressed. It cannot do without attacks on the homosexualised being it claims to want to protect and free. Attacks—whether physical, social, legal or otherwise—against homosexualised bodies are necessary for the movement’s existence.

### **4.3 The Other Side of Out: Toward a Corporeal Silence**

It is an important part of the queer project to “suggest that the processes whereby identities are constructed should become objects of criticism in their own right” (Bower 282), for these processes produce exclusions in their finalised definitions of identities and thereby “support a narrow range of ways of organizing bodies, pleasures, gendered selves, and intimacies [...]” (Seidman, Meeks, and Traschen 31). While identities certainly can be understood within a constructionist framework as connected to and dependent on cultural and

historical specificities, it is the “terministic fields in which identity occurs” rather than the identity itself that are in need of much greater interrogation (Smith and Windes 39). The kind of homonormativity now re-represented in the canonised texts of contemporary (gay) culture<sup>12</sup> needs to be attacked if we are to reignite the passion and courage to become more than what we are expected to be by the demands of the normalised discourse of sexuality. It is an insistence on striving towards some telos of respectability, security and stability that prevents us from exploring in body the possibilities of existing outside the identities we have come to assume as natural and true. A deconstruction of the very processes that produce the homosexual identity—and, indeed, all sexual identities—will help us construct alternatives to the continuing expansion of the field of normalisation as it produces and disciplines ever new forms of identification.

Rightly, Butler has expressed a concern over the suggestion that gay men (among others) “cannot assume the position of the speaking subject within the linguistic system of compulsory heterosexuality” (*Gender* 148). To claim that gay men cannot gain access to language assumes too much control over language by the heterosexist discourse and does not allow for consideration of how language can be used to effect challenges and change.<sup>13</sup> There is nothing to stop—and nothing has stopped—marginalised groups from redeploying the language of the culture to highlight their own marginalisation and/or to better their own social position. The (re)appropriations of such words as “nigger” and

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<sup>12</sup> Representations that seek to suggest—or prove—the normality of the homosexual are not exclusive to the media of gay culture. In recent years, similar representations have started to emerge in the wider mainstream media. Television programs like *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy* (BravoTV), for example, appear to suggest an increased tolerance for non-heterosexual subjects. There is a need to consider, however, the type of homosexuality produced and approved by such texts. The characters in *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy* reveal an interest in and a talent for fashion, bodily appearance, cooking and interior decorating—traditional feminine qualities now stereotypically associated with the contemporary ideal gay man. This particular television series also appears to endorse the idea that homosexuals are necessary, evolutionarily, to provide services to heterosexual men in preparation for their mating rituals.

<sup>13</sup> Here Butler refers to the work of Monique Wittig, who, in contrast to Butler, argues that the discourse of heterosexuality has power over the use of language. Butler’s dispute challenges the power language can have over other marginalised subjects, such as women and lesbians.

“queer” by non-whites and non-heterosexuals, respectively, offer examples of how power over language is not static. The “slaves” can snatch control of words and their meanings from the hands of their “masters.” Such shifts in the control and usage of particular words, however, do not challenge the processes that form the identifications into which the slaves (and the masters) have been interpellated already. The bodies that seek to take charge of words that both signify second-class citizenship and legitimate black or homosexual oppression still identify as non-white or non-heterosexual. The discourses of race and sexuality are still relevant to the construction of the “I” in these particular cases. These discourses, therefore, continue to participate in the disciplining of the self. As Butler has clarified elsewhere:

The expectation of self-determination that self-naming arouses is paradoxically contested by the historicity of the name itself: by the history of the usages which one never controlled, but that constrain the very usage that now emblemizes autonomy; by the future efforts to deploy the term against the grain of the current ones, efforts that will exceed the control of those who seek to set the course of the terms in the present. (“Critically” 14)

Gay men can assume readily the position of the speaking subject, but this they can do only after they have accepted the identification of self as “homosexual,” a classification governed and controlled not by heterosexuality but by the culture’s will to know all bodies as sexualised in some form. Modern Western culture seeks to know with equal assurance the truth of the existence of the heterosexual and the homosexual to effect control over all of the bodies residing within its borders.

An appeal for sexual citizenship under the umbrella of “gay,” therefore, merely (re)produces an essentialist model of homosexuality so that those who engage in same-sex sexualised contact can now be identified symbolically and effectively as an immutable class of people (Smith and Windes 26-29). The safety on offer within this framework is more than what Julia Creet explores in her anxiety over a lesbian identity: that a homosexual identity can function

politically “as a defense against re-incorporation into heterosexuality or into the categorization of what more accurately might be bisexuality” (186). Rather, the safety of being “gay” offers comfort from the fragmentation that accompanies any challenge to normalised ways of understanding self. To know “I am gay” helps reaffirm the capacity of an autonomous “I” to know self, sexually at least. A gay ethnicity is as beneficial, if not more so, for the maintenance of the singular, autonomous “I” as it is for the “homosexual.” It provides the security of a “consistent, integrated sense of a self” (Plummer, *Telling* 86).

Even as the protagonists, as the ones doing the “sex” or speaking the sexual, we are not immune to the regulations imposed by our contexts. The belief that we are capable of knowing what has happened in the past relies upon a continuation of the belief that we are knowable beings today. The belief that we are capable of knowing who we are today relies on our acceptance of categories constructed in the past while simultaneously we eradicate the processes of their construction as we locate them now within an essentialist (sexual) self. “I”—the knowing subject—may have been granted the right to live out an “Enlightened” life in a true state, freed from the superstitious confinements of a system that formerly denied the subordinated subject any access to knowledge of self and self-approved perception of the world. “I” may now believe in the capacity of my knowledge to tell, to speak and to write the sexual. However, what is demanded of this “I” is that it occupies a disciplined position that is in some way knowable to begin with. The discourse of gay liberation, therefore, is of immense importance to a culture reliant on maintaining knowledge of bodies. This culture welcomes it even as it may not welcome its subjects so warmly. When “I” come to know what it is “I” am and announce self accordingly—when I declare “I am gay”—there is the potential for the culture to utilise this articulation to discipline the body into never becoming otherwise. The culture can see the body and know the body; thus, it can control the body.

As practitioners of theories of sexuality and as practitioners of sex, if we continue to deploy “gay” as a means of defending our right to use our bodies in

ways that we deem to be appropriate and normal, we are guilty of fostering the naturalisation of disciplines that seek to regulate our understandings of these corporeal materialities and their practices. We would be guilty of accepting sexuality as natural and real, rather than viewing it as

a historical construct [...] a great surface network in which the stimulation of bodies, the intensification of pleasures, the incitement to discourse, the formation of special knowledges, the strengthening of controls and resistances, are linked to one another, in accordance with a few major strategies of knowledge and power. (Foucault, *History 1* 105-06)

Foucault's push towards transgression is one that argues in favour of seeking out spaces in which bodies and pleasures can avoid already established methods of understanding that are able to constrain and restrain them (Manning 108). It is this kind of Foucauldian desire I have followed in my attempt to dismantle the homosexualisation of same-sex sexualised pleasures to the point that what I am left with now is, indeed, no more than flesh and its potential for pleasures. With the homosexual "I" now displaced and buried, with the declaration of "I am gay" silenced, I seek to rest in this space. Rather than hope to construct a new type of non-homosexual same-sex desiring being, I wish to linger a while in the silence away from the gaze of compulsory sexualisation, for this silence offers a "plateau" of new becomings.

## **Section Two – Becoming a Body without Sex**

How can you crave something your whole body rejects, and even increase the cravings the greater the protest from the body?

—JT Leroy, *The Heart Is Deceitful Above All Things*

## Silent Necessities

In Foucauldian terms, sexuality is a myth, a constructed but naturalised means of identifying individuals and a historically imposed method of control that reveals the extent to which the rising middle classes of the nineteenth century were prepared to go to cultivate and protect their own sense of being (Cohen 79-80).<sup>1</sup> The act of “sex,” the disclosure of sexual activity and the claim of a sexual identity are all practical reinforcements of the (mis)placement of this myth within the body. They reaffirm the existence of the sexual self and the incapacity of the body to be just flesh. A queer theory that assumes an oppositionality to heteronormativity may challenge heterosexist assumptions about the sexual and the body, but it continues to produce knowledge of the body with reference to anatomical sex, activities of “sex” and a sexuality. Even as already existing and dominant knowledges in these areas are disputed and contested within its terrain, an anti-hetero queering sustains the myth of the sexual body.

The result of such a queering of bodies, therefore, is that notions of homosexuality and heterosexuality are not displaced but rather reinforced. At best, a focus on a deconstruction and/or a reconstruction of the homosexual/heterosexual binary is able to achieve a shifting of homosexuality from “the frozen margins of power” to “the beating heart” (Weeks, “Homosexual” 148). Similarly, to use “queer” as a means of including all forms

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<sup>1</sup> It is no longer just the traditional wealthy middle classes who deploy the discourse of sexuality to protect their own sense of self-worth. While a Marxist understanding of power and knowledge explores differences in class based on ownership of capital, the power and knowledge of the discourse of sexuality engulfs all who participate in the culture’s will to knowledge, irrespective of social status determined by capital and/or birth. As subjects of the post-Enlightenment Western culture, all bodies are expected to exist within and celebrate their belonging to such a class. All are expected to exercise their right to be the holder of knowledge regardless of social and economic position. The middle (bourgeois) class today, therefore, is not a categorisation of people with the power of wealth. Rather, it includes all bodies that believe in the reality of “I” as the owner and distributor of knowledge, sexual or otherwise.

of sexual being (Reynolds, *From Camp* 162)<sup>2</sup> or all forms of sexual otherness (Greenberg 191) merely expands the possibilities of being sexual. While Fuss has argued that an emphasis on multiple and fluid sexual subjectivities offers a more mature politics than the singular ethnic model of sexual identity (*Essentially* 104), the continual exposure of mutating sexual subjectivities effectively serves no better purpose than the enlargement of the regulatory field of normalisation (Dean 18). In any attempt to define queer alongside the sexual, the myth of sexuality is able to survive. Indeed, it flourishes.<sup>3</sup>

To a certain extent, Seidman has addressed this paradox of queer. On the one hand, he shares an enthusiasm for considering ways of doing the sexual beyond the restrictions imposed by the homosexual/heterosexual binary, and therefore sees attacks on this naturalised binary as relevant and necessary. He writes:

A binary sex system, whether compulsively heterosexual or not, creates rigid psychological and social boundaries that inevitably give rise to systems of dominance and hierarchy—certain feelings, desires, acts, identities, and social formations are excluded, marginalized, and made inferior. (“Deconstructing” 126)

He too is concerned about a metanarrative of queer that has emerged in deconstructionist tactics deployed by those who claim to be or who are labelled queer theorists. In Seidman’s opinion, (too) much of queer theory promotes individuality and a politics of difference based on tolerance (135). In its position as anti-heteronormative, anti-straight and/or anti-gay, queer certainly becomes

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<sup>2</sup> Reynolds notes how this definition of queer threatens to undermine the gains of the lesbian and gay movement by welcoming and supporting other non-homosexual sexual subjects in the bid for greater equality and social inclusion.

<sup>3</sup> Not even a queerness that signifies bisexuality can evade this problem, for bisexuality too continues to view the sexual activities and sexed anatomies of bodies as signifiers of sexual beings. Bisexuality too assumes such knowledge. Peter Tatchell, therefore, is misguided in his attempt to align “queerness” with “bisexuality” by arguing that individuals have the capacity to experience both homosexual and heterosexual desires. An “intrinsic” bisexual queerness has the potential to become, he claims, “more commonplace than it is currently” (40-41). Such a bisexualised queerness is written within the same essentialist framework used to define and determine heterosexuality and homosexuality. It therefore fails to queer the sexing and sexualising of the body.

a sexualised position exterior to the very norms it opposes, where such a position relies on the normative sexual other for the construction of the anti-normal, queer self, and thus paradoxically reinscribes the resisting queered body within the field of normality. In Fuss' analysis of the connection between the inside and the outside identity:

Any misplaced nostalgia for or romanticization of the outside as a privileged site of radicality immediately gives us away, for in order to idealize the outside we must already be, to some degree, comfortably entrenched on the inside. We really only have the leisure to idealize the subversive potential of the power of the marginal when our place of enunciation is quite central.

("Inside/Out" 5)

A body that is queer, therefore, is unable to escape the boundaries of the discourse of sexuality even when its intention is to violate them. Instead, it becomes the other side of yet another metanarrativised binary in which homosexuality and heterosexuality are no longer in opposition, but working together against queer. It becomes yet one more identity in the system of compulsory sexuality.

While the discourse of gay liberation has sought to undermine the dominance of heterosexuality by working with the "truth" of a homosexuality in opposition, the discourse of queer now attempts to undermine the dominance of the homosexual/heterosexual binary by locating queer as yet another oppositional truth. Being queer is a truth and a reality; it is something to be known even if it is not yet fully known. Much more than "homosexual," much more than "gay," therefore, "queer" is the greatest gift given to date to a culture demanding knowledge of the body. The confessions of the queers give to the naturalised discourse of sexuality an endless scope of beings yet unknown, but potentially knowable. Those of us who are subject to a culture of confession of the sexual can continue to participate in the attempt to hunt down the queer subject within self and/or others. We can label it, seek to define it and thereby help to control it. The "I" in the statement of "I am queer" signifies a continuing

belief in the truth of the sexual self, thus wilfully re-interpellating the body into the naturalised system of a will to sexual knowledge.

In Seidman's view, queer theory has a responsibility to question the elisions and exclusions that result from an insistence on locating all of our sexual desires within a system of sexuality that assumes gender (sex<sup>4</sup>) as the ultimate and only focus. His desire to see queer theory move beyond the scope of current thought, however, is thwarted by the continuing presence of a will to knowledge within his critique. He berates Sedgwick and Butler for their failure to move beyond a deconstruction of the homosexual/heterosexual binary to establish clearly how, when and why such an epistemological shift away from this containment of sexual desire might and will occur.<sup>5</sup> He understands (Sedgwick's) queer theory as "a social ideal where desires, pleasures, bodies, social relations, and sexualities multiply and proliferate," but immediately demands to know what such "an order of difference" will look like (136). Because his demands have not been answered, he accuses Sedgwick and others of maintaining a silence on the picturing of this future, seeing this silence

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<sup>4</sup> In his discussion of sexual orientation, Seidman's use of the term "gender" suggests confusion over the differences between anatomical materiality and social/cultural roles and behaviours. He suggests, for example, that sexual orientation is equated with "gender preference" and that the gay and lesbian movement has been concerned with "legitimizing same-sex gender choice" (127). Certainly, the belief that sex is of nature and gender is of culture no longer holds true, given contestations of the naturalness of sex (e.g. Butler, *Gender* 9-11). The separation of gender from sex is not a reality, but rather the result of culturally and historically specific readings of the body. However, the gay movement has made no effort to debate the right to have "sex" with somebody of the same gender. There has been no call, for example, for the right of a "man" and a "woman" to engage in a sexualised union even though their gendered positions may be of the same kind. Where we have an anatomically determined "man" who acts like a woman and an anatomically determined "woman" who too acts like a woman, the right of these subjects to engage in "sex" is protected already by the culture's reading of "sex" as related exclusively to anatomical sex within a heterosexual discourse. The culture does not make legal judgements of sexualised unions on the basis of the gendered positions of the subjects involved.

<sup>5</sup> Lois McNay has aimed similar criticism at Judith Butler, accusing her concept of agency of lacking in any social and historical specificity (175-78). In an interview with Vikki Bell, Butler's response to this kind of criticism is to argue that theory is not the same as politics. The latter is made in the moment, whereas the former is understood more appropriately as a means of conceptualising much broader ideas without any need for, or hope of, prediction of what will emerge ("On Speech" 166-67). While I am not convinced that theory too cannot be made in the moment, nevertheless Butler's dismissal of the suggestion that theory needs to be relevant to practical politics gives hope to those of us who enjoy the politics of theory.

as “indicative of a refusal on the part of many queer theorists to articulate their own ethical and political standpoint and to imagine a constructive social project” (136).

I do not support one particular model of queer theory—that of Sedgwick or Butler—over another—that of Seidman. This is not a matter of who is better at telling the truth. The issue I have with Seidman’s assessment, however, is that he asks for the narrative of queer to be told to its end. He assumes queer has such an ending to speak of, and thereby exposes himself in particular and the academy in general as products and maintainers of a desire for knowledge within a culture with an insatiable will to know. In order to establish this ending, Seidman insists the debate begin with recognition of personal specifics as they relate to historical and cultural positions without recognising that history and culture too are frameworks of understanding and are not removed, therefore, from relations of power (Bhabha, “Freedom’s” 47-48). A queer theory that seeks to establish new forms of identifications does not exist outside the culture of knowledge. On the contrary, the desire to know what queer is and where it will take us is produced by and produces a subject with a will to knowledge. Moreover, any criticism of queer for its failure to give a full picture fails to recognise the pleasures gained in doing away with plans, futures, predictions and finalities. It misses out on the joys of a silent unknowability. As a response to Foucault’s assertion that “being without a program can be very useful and very original and creative” (“Sex” 172), I aim to imagine a body that is without the control of any identity, past, present or future. This is a body without knowledge of the sexual. The kind of body I explore in this second section of my thesis exists outside the demand for teleological transition from one identity to another as times and spaces change. It does not aim to be; it is always in the process of becoming.

Like Deleuze and Guattari, I am tired of “arborescent culture” (*Thousand* 15). In particular, I am tired of the way in which Western culture seeks to construct knowledge of the body with reference to arbitrary moments of the past, as if to suggest these moments can be read as an eternal truth of who we

are. I wish to rest for a while on a “plateau” of unknowability, to enjoy an explosion of becomings that might be radical enough to disrupt all systems of knowledge concerning the body and its assumed natural state of sexuality. It is away from the linearity of trees and through the tangles of rhizomes that the body has the best chance of becoming other than what it must be within the confines of a system of compulsory sexualisation. In the Deleuzoguattarian sense, the rhizome “is a liberation of sexuality not only from reproduction but also from genitality” (18). Indeed, it may be a liberation from the concept of sexuality itself.

In this second section of the thesis, therefore, I delve deeper into silence to establish for the body a suitable means of evading the homosexual dictate. In dismissing the suggestion that silence necessarily equals oppression, I establish a framework of silent corporeality in which male-d bodies might engage in sexualised pleasures with other male-d bodies without having to rewrite the intimacies that occur with reference to a normalised history of homosexuality and a present of gayness. To be silent about such activities offers the body the chance to experience moments of corporeal intimacy without having to drag these moments out of a private closet and into a public display of what “I” do, who “I” am and where “I” want to be situated in the social. If “Memories always have a reterritorialization function,” then silence is one becoming that is wonderfully “antimemory” (294). It offers a space of unknowability in which the body that experiences intimate corporeal pleasures does not have to carry any memory of these pleasures into a being or a desiring to be. It allows the body to do what it does in the moment and disputes any attempt to prolong that moment through the endless rewriting of what has occurred.

If there is to be any further queering of bodies, it must involve a continuous and disturbing challenge to the institutionalisation of pleasures (Edelman 345-46), a rejection of the suggestion that queer theory must make the private political, and a shift away from, to the side of and beyond notions of *being* queer. In order to establish possibilities of intimate unions independent of

sexualised categorisations, we must avoid a claimed intent to establish substantive, positive, alternative identities (Halperin, *Saint* 66)<sup>6</sup>, and instead strive to assert a constant mutability that can avoid any appeal for a unified “family” (Edelman 344). It is necessary, therefore, to question—to make always queerer—the reliance upon articulation as the truthful means of defining the body and its pleasures. What is dismissed in the demand for the establishment of “I” through speech is the possibility that non-articulation (silence) might allow the construction of corporeal intimacies that do not comply with the normalised understanding of such sexualised contact as essentially indicative of the real presence of “I.” If we are to experience possibilities of the body in ways that remove the body from normalised mechanisms of control, there is a need to become a non-knowing, a subjectless, self-less piece of insignificant flesh—an ever queerer than already queer(ed) body.

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<sup>6</sup> Halperin’s position on queer is contradictory. While he asserts that queer needs to shift away from seeking to offer up yet one more positive and alternative identity, nevertheless he continues to situate queer as a positive and creative resistance to the norm—the heterosexual norm—for the purpose of creating alternative identities (*Saint* 66-67). In my opinion, queer does not need to be limited to attacking already established norms. Indeed, if queer is restricted to this kind of activity, then understandings of queer and becomings of queer are controlled already by the structures of the institutions and identities under attack. On the contrary, therefore, in my application of a queerer silence to the sexualised body, I suggest a becoming that is able to exist outside the framework of norms versus abnorms, dominants versus oppositions.

## **Chapter 5    Hearing Silent Voices**

## 5.1 Breaking the One Silence

Encouraged by the challenges of the 1960s' counterculture movements, academic investigation—and, in particular, research within the disciplines of the humanities—has sought to highlight the discriminatory nature of Western modernity. An understanding of silence as “a strong rhetorical strategy to preserve socio-political ideology” (Bruneau 42) has been used to justify the instigation of audible attacks against this metanarrative and its unfair positioning of other-ed subjects. The removal of silence is necessary, it is claimed, if we are to liberate marginalised subjects from this particular metanarrative's homogenising and damaging demands. Politically too,

it is possible to argue for a steady progress towards speaking the unspeakable through the last thirty years of the twentieth century. Along with the successes of feminism and postmodernism's critique of single-voiced conservative narratives, the contemporary reception of Western Marxism has helped to open political discourse to issues of ethnicity, colonialism, gender and sexuality. What had once been silenced, taken for granted in the ruling Western powers' definition of the status quo, was now vocally and publicly protesting. (Mills and Smith 4)<sup>1</sup>

In discussions on the treatment of women and racialised others, in the call to arms for a legitimate homosexuality, silence has been singled out as a major force of disempowerment (Christine Noble 192). It has been seen as an imposition on the ability of marginalised subjects to access appropriate histories and lifestyles. In the postmodern critique, which aims to “release all of the silenced and censored subjugated knowledges and social voices which are

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<sup>1</sup> Mills and Smith refer specifically to the gay and lesbian movement as an example of a political movement that has rejected silence. In their reading of this movement and its effects, they accept the narrative that tells of a gay and lesbian unmasking of previously hidden tales. Gay and lesbian liberation, they assert, has “given voice to spectrums of experience that had previously been silenced in Western culture [...]. Movements like gay and lesbian liberation have provided the counter-institutional settings in which hidden experiences could be spoken and shared” (3-4). Such a reading fails to acknowledge the role speech plays in the construction of the experiences and their meanings. Instead, it assumes that speech is the medium through which we communicate what already exists.

mired in shame, fear, and despair” (Seidman, *Difference* 105), silence has become a space of unquestionable oppression.<sup>2</sup> Forcibly imposed through the expectation that everyone should conform to modernity’s singular and dominant model, silence is the instigator of suffering and the denied ability to talk (Walker 11-15).<sup>3</sup> Thus, it is undesired irrefutably by all.

Under such pressure to bring about a universal and utopian emancipation for all, silence is in danger of obtaining/maintaining a singular meaning. In the postmodern recognition of language as a multi-purposeful tool that can enable marginalised subjects to bring into effect their own liberation, the multiplicities of silence are silenced. Such an essentialising of silence “as an absolute and discrete category [...] unnecessarily constrains our understanding of the role of silence” (Szuchewycz 258). Indeed, to assume that silence means the same thing for all bodies produces simplistic and insubstantial understandings of their positions. As Saville-Troike explains: “Stereotyping and misunderstanding occur when the patterned use of sounds and silence by members of one speech community are interpreted according to the norms and rules held by members of another” (14).

If we are to avoid the establishment of new modes of oppression in the critique of oppression, we must grant silence too a diversification that can recognise the multiple specifics of a subject’s context. We must consider that

The respective proportions and particular forms of speech and silence are significant only as variables within a certain culture.

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<sup>2</sup> Seidman applauds a dismantling of silence. His concern over how a culture of Enlightenment positions all within restricting frameworks of knowledge and discipline encourages his plea for a “politics of margins” in which differences and decentring rule the day (105-06). While such an approach permits differences and multiplicities to have a say in the construction of a democratic culture, the aim of this chapter is to dispute the belief that this is the body’s greatest hope of freedom.

<sup>3</sup> Michelle Walker’s reading of silence as suffering relates to Jean-François Lyotard’s notion of a *différend*. In her analysis, Lyotard’s *The Differend* “is fundamentally concerned with the suffering that accompanies our ability to speak certain things” (11). Indeed, as Lyotard explains it, the subject’s realisation that it lacks the language to express what it wishes to put into language arouses a “feeling of pain which accompanies silence” (13). Such a reading of silence as pain and disempowerment differs from the kind of pleasurable and powerful silence I celebrate in this thesis.

They form part of the target-oriented behaviour of members of that culture and make sense only when interpreted within that specified context. If the features concerned are moved outside their domestic sphere and are given interpretations from the outside, it is understandable that the result is misguided.

(Sajavaara and Lehtonen 278)

If we are to come to an appreciation of the existence of “many silences” (Foucault, *History 1* 27), we must recognise the equating of silence with oppression as only one possible knowledge of silence constructed within a particular narrative framework. If “Like knowledge, two silences are never the same” (Christine Noble 199), then we must start to consider the diversity of meanings and efficacies available when a body does not speak.

The aim of this chapter is to explore beyond the notion that silence equals oppression with specific reference to the discourse of gay liberation and its acceptance of the classification of the same-sex desiring body as “homosexual.” In the “liberal” narrative of the postmodern, the compulsion to be sexual is opened up to multiplicities in the hope that such a visible pluralisation can offer the body a liberation denied it by modernity’s insistence on singularity. In the postmodern attempt to recognise and bring value to the multiplicities of our sexual intimacies, silence is sidelined, while the shout goes out for a “need to speak not of sexuality but of *sexualities*” (Weeks, “Living”; emphasis added). According to the discourse of gay liberation, a non-silent, public articulation of our same-sex corporeal desires and pleasures is the only hope of achieving sexual liberation. I offer a critique of this position in my consideration of how silence offers a space in which the body that engages in same-sex sexualised contact is able to avoid the dictate of compulsory homosexualisation.

## **5.2 The Homosexual’s Silence**

The discourse of gay liberation views the cultural and social stigma attached to homosexuality (“homophobia”) as the cause of a man’s inability to declare publicly his desires for same-sexed bodies. Accordingly, this discourse

reads the act of “coming out” as a resilient transcending of “circumstances in a way that will foster transformation and growth” and as “a protest against certain social expectations that are built on alienation and limitation” (Jude Noble). Proponents of gay liberation fight for the subject’s ability to speak publicly of their homosexual orientation on the basis that such visibility proves—or helps create—the subject’s normality. Any failure to make public this normative homosexuality is said to preclude any possibility of liberation for the body that experiences pleasures with same-sexed bodies. As Bronski argues: “To deny the importance of sexual activity in a gay person’s life is to remain in the closet. Any movement for liberation or rights that does not include the acknowledgment of sexuality is going to fail” (80). For the discourse of gay liberation, therefore, silence offers the opposite of freedom. It is a nurturer of fear, shame and ignorance. It aims to destroy what is “true.”

This notion of silence is loudly audible within the context of the debates on HIV/AIDS and the connecting of this particular viral threat to the homosexualised body specifically. Government and media refusals to speak out about HIV/AIDS in the early years of the epidemic have been critiqued widely—by homosexuals in particular—for encouraging the circulation of misinformation and prejudice in regard to details about the virus, its effects, potential means of infection and protection, and the specific bodies assumedly most “at risk.” Media headlines that once spoke of a “gay plague,” and religious rhetoric that continues to speak of divine retribution for those who condemn themselves through active participation in homosexual “sin,” may seem laughable (to some) in Enlightened and civilised societies that claim to favour secularisation and the truths of science over superstition and myth. However, such assumptions about the exclusivity of the HIV virus’ objects of attack were widely believed and, indeed, continue to circulate to the extent that they are able to influence personal attitudes and public policies (Bronski 75-8; Sendziuk). In such an environment, to remain silent about the “truths” of HIV and one’s personal HIV status (particularly if this status is a “positive” one) signifies

complacent acceptance of the fate a homophobic culture wishes to bestow upon the homosexualised body: death.

From the position of the homosexual who already sees his civil status being undermined consistently by a pervasive and dominant heterosexuality, it is easy to understand why such a discriminating society would wish to deploy the narrative of HIV/AIDS as a gay plague. The narrative of homosexuality as dirty and punishable (by death) already exists in the culture. It is not beyond the scope of imagination, therefore, to claim that an inevitable death will come to the “unnatural” homosexual. The desire to align HIV/AIDS with the death of the homosexual reveals yet one more attempt by a homophobic culture to eradicate the homosexual, both figuratively and materially. Indeed, when contained exclusively within the homosexual body, HIV offers proof of the unnaturalness of homosexual activity, imposing on the virus cultural meanings that exceed and contradict those of the medical discourse.<sup>4</sup> The dominant narrative of heterosexuality speaks of its own purity and of a natural existence for heterosexual bodies. A natural heterosexuality will live forever. It is granted such an automatic right to eternal life through its historical and discursive alignment with certain sexualised practices connected to a demanded evolution of the human species. In contrast, the unnatural homosexual will die. Such a narrative is credible because homosexuality is read as that which cannot sustain life. It is not reproductive (Cameron and Cameron 618). Instead, it is merely pleasure and therefore wasteful.<sup>5</sup> The alignment of homosexuality with

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<sup>4</sup> In the early days of the virus, there was no clear distinction between cultural myths surrounding HIV and the “facts” produced within the medical discourse. On the contrary, those working within the health sectors only had access to the same “truths” available in the wider culture, and many, therefore, contributed—consciously or not—to the circulation of myths and misinformation regarding the virus, even in their own health practices.

<sup>5</sup> In chapter two of *The Pleasure Principle*, Michael Bronski discusses the relationship between heterosexuality (reproduction) and homosexuality (pleasure) within the context of a culture (Western) that has taken for granted the need for repression of pleasure in order to ensure the creation and maintenance of a civilised society (15-25). Where sexual behaviour is linked to production and the creation of future labour (children), pleasure is deemed unnecessary and wasteful. Within a culture focused on such a (re)production of labour, homosexuality could be considered unimportant to the extent that its repression becomes normalised. However, when this established social and sexual system of (re)production is seen by people to be too

death through HIV/AIDS, therefore, offers an example of how the dominant and default class of heterosexuals manages to use the myth of a class of deviant homosexuals to secure its own seeming immutability and therefore stability (Halley 360-61).

The response to the suggestion that the death of the homosexual is natural and insignificant has been the promotion of a counter-narrative that speaks of homosexuality as life. The suggestion that homosexual = AIDS = death is combated through the telling of stories about HIV-positive bodies that survive: “People *Living With HIV/AIDS*” (PLWHA). Here, HIV/AIDS, which has been used to legitimise further attacks against the homosexual by a heterosexualised and homophobic culture, is reappropriated<sup>6</sup> in a way that disrupts the desire of a deadly other to kill off the homosexual. Affirmations of homosexual bodies living with a disease once considered deadly aim to discredit the equating of HIV with an immediate death sentence and thereby to displace the vulnerability of the homosexual.<sup>7</sup> This approach offers an example

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repressive and too anti-pleasure, the introduction and promotion of homosexuality becomes an available and important method of resistance.

<sup>6</sup> It is arguable that the initial appropriation of the HIV virus occurred in the alignment of HIV with a natural death sentence for the homosexual, for this process took the virus out of its primary corporeal environment and placed it within a discourse of sexual morality to reread it as a signifier of punishment. The attempt to redefine HIV as a virus with which a body can live, therefore, becomes an act of reappropriation.

<sup>7</sup> When offering representations of the HIV-positive body, current gay publications no longer portray the once familiar near-death figure, his skeletal frame in a bed surrounded by mourning family members. This former “Grim Reaper” approach has been criticised for being too oppressive and for failing to focus on safer sex practices (Sendziuk 137-45). Instead, these publications now display images of muscular and healthy looking HIV-positive bodies within the context of advertisements promoting and seeking to sell normative signs of longevity: insurance, travel and mortgages. This shift away from representations of death towards images of life could be read as a reflection of the advancements made in social and medical understandings of the HIV virus. Indeed, for many people—particularly those living in cultures where the required drugs are available and affordable—HIV no longer signifies death. People are *living* with HIV. However, representations of HIV-positive bodies that show no hint of illness or death in the colourful lifestyles they portray may have helped dismiss the notion of HIV/AIDS as a serious health issue in the minds of many sexually active men, particularly those who have never known the “grim-reaper” approach. Recent reports show a general increase in HIV infections among men who have sex with men throughout the Western world (Dunne, “Computer Virus”; Dunne, “Teenage Kicks”; “Global Concern”). Gay publications commenting on the findings of such reports surely also have a responsibility to investigate the effects their lively advertisements of HIV are having on people’s attitudes toward the virus.

of the strength of the gay community in its ability to rebut attempts to discredit the importance of the homosexual body in a culture still governed by heterosexist ideology. However, such resistance does not challenge the myth of eternal heterosexuality. In reinscribing the homosexualised body within the same essentialising discourse of sexuality that produces the heterosexual, the counter-narrative of PLWHA misses an opportunity to expose the need for homosexuality by an already unstable heterosexual subject (Butler, *Bodies* 113). Instead, it reaffirms an absolute and permanent state of being for the homosexual, thereby further working to ward off any possibility that this (and the heterosexual) categorisation of bodies might be erased one day.<sup>8</sup>

This kind of engagement against—or, rather, alongside—heterosexuality has permitted the discourse of gay liberation to mount a successful case for the lifting of discriminatory laws and social attitudes affecting bodies that engage in same-sex sexualised practices. To essentialise the homosexual body is an acceptable and workable practice for a movement seeking to achieve equality and legitimacy for bodies formerly denied access to the social. Such an approach, however, accepts a restrictive understanding of power, thereby limiting the kinds of resistances (and becomings) the body might form and evoke. While a recognition of power as hierarchical may encourage a

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<sup>8</sup> My critique of the rejection of silence within the discourse on HIV/AIDS does not negate the importance of attempts to speak out about HIV/AIDS in response to the refusals of governments and societies to do so. The dissemination of information about the virus and about the specific kinds of sexual practices most likely to put the body “at risk” is an act of speech that views silence as dangerous and therefore rejects it. Indeed, from the point of view of the medical discourse specifically and a discourse of humanism in more general terms, given that HIV is a virus that invades and attacks the body, silence is a dangerous and potentially lethal thing. Talk has helped to save lives and will continue to do so. However, in what Altman describes as a “very Foucauldian way,” this talk has helped also to (re)produce categories of people and practices (“On Global”). It is possible to speak out about the HIV virus and to seek to educate people about it without having to insist that the bodies being spoken to (or of) need to align themselves with observable sexual identities based on the sexualised pleasures they participate in. HIV education can focus on a discussion of the relationship between HIV, the body and intimate pleasures between bodies without having to refer to categories such as homosexual, heterosexual, bisexual, etc. Does it matter, for example, if a person is a homosexual or otherwise if the issue needing to be addressed is the insertion of the penis into the anus? Is anal “sex” not something all bodies are capable of doing, rather than merely something that only homosexuals are likely to do? To seek to educate people about HIV/AIDS by referring to specific sexual acts deemed relevant to them simply reaffirms the normalised method of assigning particular sexual acts to particular sexual types.

resistance against those ostensibly at the top by those ostensibly at the bottom, it does nothing to bring about a system of “power without the king” (Foucault, *History 1* 91). On the contrary, it singularises the enemy in a “reverse-discourse that uncritically mimics the strategy of the oppressor instead of offering a different set of terms” (Butler, *Gender* 19).

Given the established disruption of a singular history and the disruption of any notion of homogeneity among marginalised groups, the suggestion that we are dealing with the unfair positioning of the homosexual in a sexual hierarchy governed by compulsory heterosexuality can no longer be taken as fact. Rather, such an understanding of the positions occupied by bodies results from an acceptance of a particular reading of the body with reference to a historically and culturally determined compulsory sexualisation. I am not denying that certain bodies experience unfair treatment because of the corporeal pleasures they experience and crave. There is sufficient evidence to suggest that physical, social and legal oppression was applied to bodies that engaged in same-sex sexualised contact long before the pathologisation of these acts into a homosexual type from the nineteenth century on (Foucault, *History 2* 18-20; Norton 62-64). Additionally, it would be unwise to claim that such bodies do not face real oppression today. In certain cultures, people continue to be stoned for their participation in homosexualised acts (“Gay Nigerian”; International Lesbian and Gay Association). In other cultures (e.g., America), people can be tied up and left to die simply because it is assumed they have an interest in such acts (“Murder”). My concern is that knowledge of a compulsory sexuality for every body merely helps to reveal which specific bodies can be singled out for attack (or protection). What emerges in the proliferation of the discourse of sexuality is an increased understanding of who and what the homosexual person is expected to be, and where he is placed—discursively, politically and physically—within the social framework. Political, legal and physical oppression of the homosexual are simply the consequences.

Bodies that engage in same-sex sexualised contact have no absolute point of commonality. Their articulated identification with a community of

homosexuals is an attempt to forge such a bond, but the resulting union is only ever an “enforced but imperfect separation from the *straightgeist*” (Sinfield, “Diaspora” 280; emphasis in the original). Furthermore, this identification is only ever a signifier of compliance with the dominant narrative of what the sexual is and how it can be known. Despite the popularity of metanarratives that bring same-sex sexualised contact and relationships out of the darkness of death and into the gayness of life, therefore, such narratives need to be understood within the context of a culture that views articulation as necessary for the realisation of the latter. Western culture has shown that life can be granted to the same-sex desiring body, but this granting of life now has a prerequisite: the body must not remain silent about the same-sex sexualised practices it participates in and enjoys. On the contrary, it must speak of self as a living, breathing eternal homosexual. The demand for audible speech, therefore, is a form of corporeal control.

### **5.2.1 Private/Public Disciplining of Non-Silent Bodies**

The publicised demand that bodies should be free to engage in certain same-sex sexualised acts seeks to correct discrepancies in the state’s dealings with heterosexuals and homosexuals, whereby the latter are singled out for discrimination and denied any right to privacy through legally sanctioned interference (Sedgwick, *Tendencies* 10). Here, the dichotomy of private/public is understood as the difference between what a person does in his/her own private space (the bedroom, for example) and what he/she does in the public view of others. In more general terms, “private” signifies the space of the individual, his/her freedom and rights—a space deemed in need of protection against intrusion from the discriminating surveillance of the state and its institutions (Calhoun 7). Appeals to the public sphere for recognition of a right to individual privacy place a level of trust in the ability of the democratic system to effect any changes necessary to secure equality for all of its citizens. The appeal by the gay liberation movement for the homosexual’s right to privacy

reaffirms the naturalness and necessity of such trust through a willingness to permit public discourse to determine the extent to which same-sex sexualised practices and unions can be considered legitimate private affairs.<sup>9</sup>

Certainly, the belief that public protection of individual privacy can offer fairness for all has not been allowed to persist without dissenting views. As the debate over the need to curtail public intrusions into private affairs continues in pluralistic societies, criticisms of the private/public binary have emerged. Among such criticisms is the suggestion that a private/public binary helps preserve normative patriarchal structures through controlling the ways in which bodies are permitted to express their gender, racial and sexual differences in both private and public realms (Duncan 128; Nancy Fraser, "Politics" 294-95; Nancy Fraser "Rethinking" 5-9). The notion of a singular private/public binary too has been rejected in favour of recognising differences in respect to both individual subjects' understandings of what is private and what is public, and the kinds of public and private spaces to which they might have access (Duncan 129-32; Nancy Fraser, "Politics" 292-93; Nancy Fraser, "Rethinking" 19-23; Habermas, "Further" 427-28). Such criticisms seek to emphasise how the public sphere in its current form fails to offer the kind of utopian freedom a democratic framework promises to deliver. Moreover, they reveal that not every body has equal access or an automatic right to privacy.

In response to the limitations imposed by current structurings of the private and public spheres, Nancy Fraser has explored a more postmodern integration of multiple public spheres. In her critique of a Habermasian-style singular bourgeois public sphere, she argues that equity of participation seeks only to negate, and thereby ignore, social differences of individuals ("Rethinking" 9-13). Her design of how public debate can work more effectively

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<sup>9</sup> There is additional concern that a focus on the right to engage in same-sex sexualised practices in private helps confirm the illegitimacy of any public display of same-sex attraction (Bronski 239-41). Laws that uphold the right of the homosexual to have "sex" in private produce a privatised homosexual who has a responsibility to carry out self-regulation in public spaces (Mort; Watney, "Banality" 18). The heterosexual subject too certainly carries such a responsibility, but the extent to which heterosexualised public displays of affection are scrutinised and punished is not nearly as severe.

in a “postbourgeois” space requires multiple “subaltern counterpublics” to work in conjunction with a wider public sphere (13-18), greater consideration of the differences that exist in definitions of “private” and “public” (19-23), and greater connection between the role of opinion and decision making (23-26). Chantal Mouffe has called for a similar anti-essentialist form of political citizenship, but one that does not allow for the issue of pluralities to undermine the need for a communal “we.” She rejects a notion of pluralism that sees bodies disappear into hyper-individualistic positions because of a fear that such a position keeps us “blind to relations of power” and thereby disables us from participating in the ongoing construction of a democratic system (40).

However, such attempts to criticise the current model of private/public discourse do not undermine the ideals and promises of the democratic system. On the contrary, they reaffirm the ability of this system’s public sphere to self-correct (or, rather, to correct under pressure) for the benefit of all bodies located within the borders of a democracy. Fraser seeks to expose the superiority of the white, male heterosexual subject constructed and sustained within the idealistic model of a singular bourgeois public sphere. Accordingly, she wants greater acceptance of plurality and difference within the public sphere to help displace this particular subject from his position of dominance. Mouffe too seeks a model of citizenship of “*equivalence* that does not eliminate *difference*” (38; emphasis in the original). What these approaches fail to notice is how any recognition of “difference” reveals the successful interpellation of the body into normalised frameworks of knowledge. Any acknowledgment of an identity for the body within discourses of race, sex, gender and/or sexuality, for example, suggests already the construction of an “I” who agrees to comply with such knowledge of the body in order to adopt a position of negotiation for the body and its deeds.

Paradoxically, therefore, the body is afforded or denied a position of respect through first agreeing to belong to the discursive identifications already in place to differentiate and control it. It can only engage in the debate on its public and private position after it has taken on board an identification already

accepted as a legitimate framework in which to know it. To use Stuart Hall's opinion on the importance of ethnicity as an example, one cannot even begin to act and speak unless one first understands one's location in "some *place* [...] some history" ("Ethnicity" 18; emphasis in the original). Such an insistence on knowing self with reference to the "hidden histories" of one's own ethnicity in order to "come in from the margins and talk" (18) resembles the gay liberationist demand that bodies must know the hidden histories of their (homo)sexuality in order to come out of the closet as gay.

In the calls for changes in the way a democracy operates in its treatment of both private and public subjects, therefore, it is the dominance of particular kinds of bodies that are opposed, but not the dominance of normative systems of knowing all bodies. Resistance to one particular subject position by bodies that do not share the same colour, genitalia or sexual orientation with this dominant type do not undermine the discourses that produce the segregations to begin with. In being black, woman and/or gay, the body does not escape the discourses that have produced and continue to promote differences and inequities. On the contrary, any racialised, sexed, gendered and/or sexualised knowledge of self signifies the success of the body's interpellation into established frameworks of knowledge that permit such observation, control and discrimination to continue. In agreeing to comply, formerly marginalised bodies certainly have the chance to be accepted as legitimate public entities. To some extent, black bodies, female bodies and homosexual bodies have proven this. However, this coming into private and/or public legitimacy does not remove the body from the normalised processes of (re)construction and taming that occur in order to produce such a position (Bronski 37-53; Clarke 5; Seidman, *Difference* 244-45). On the contrary, the body merely becomes black like white, woman like man, homosexual like heterosexual (Olkowski 674). Not even an expansion of these frameworks of knowledge to include diversity and multiplicity can remove the body from the disciplines they enforce, for, as Homi Bhabha has observed, our sense of willingness and capacity to accommodate diversity—the

multiculturalism of liberal democracies—is yet one more system of containment that seeks to prevent a politics of antagonism (“Third” 208-09).<sup>10</sup>

The problem with accepting the appropriateness of understanding and determining acceptable sexual structures within a public/private binary, therefore, is not that this method produces often discriminating distinctions between legitimate and deviant sexualised behaviours. It is not even that this method works to position certain bodies and certain corporeal acts as legitimately public and legitimately private or deviantly public and deviantly private. Rather, the problem rests in the compulsory sexualisation such an illusionary binary helps to impose and maintain. Decisions regarding acceptable private and public behaviours are arbitrary and therefore always open to contestation and change. Irrespective of what becomes good sex and bad sex at any time in any particular culture, therefore, the normalised practice of discussing the body and its pleasures within a public/private binary manages to evoke a naturalised power for the pervasive discourse of sexuality in its insistence that bodies and pleasures be sexualised at all. Specifically, the discourse of gay liberation seeks the right to privacy for homosexuals through its paradoxical engagement in “a proliferating *public* discussion of their needs and desires, their rights and responsibilities” (Weeks, “Living”; emphasis added). The attainment of full homosexual citizenship, therefore, means the surrender of the body and its pleasures to mechanisms of discipline and punishment appropriate to the community into which this body now is legitimately received (Hubbard 63). This granting of citizenship is read as a signifier of one’s own liberation. However, it is an illusory liberation for, as Halperin has recognised, the requirement by modern forms of governmentality that bodies see themselves as free citizens is a means by which the state can

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<sup>10</sup> Mary McIntosh too disrupts the assumption of equity in the discourse of multiculturalism through her assertion that multiculturalism fails to recognise how the cultures brought into this melting pot of liberalism are not equal to begin with. Additionally, she questions the existence of any real identifiable cultural connection between parents and children, thus undermining the essentialism of the cultures on which multiculturalism depends. She argues that an application of the notion of multiculturalism to a consideration of lesbian and gay subjectivities specifically is absurd, given that, in general, most lesbians and gays do not share the same sexual orientation as their parents (“Seeing” 210).

be relieved of some of the burden of surveillance necessary for the success of control (*Saint* 18).

There is, therefore, a danger in requesting or demanding that a government—political, legal or otherwise—respect the rights of bodies to do as they please with other consenting sexualised bodies. Paradoxically, such a demand asks the power of the law to take charge of bodies in its protection of their freedom and accepts the charge it has taken already. Vikki Bell has highlighted the existence of this contradiction when appeals are made within a feminist context for women to be granted more access and more equity under the protection of legal rulings. For Bell, such an approach fails to question the normalised placement of the law as having access to the truth of what it means to be “woman.” In her critique of the reliance on the law as the protector of “woman,” she states: “The Truth that is propounded in any particular case [...] is based upon a method which establishes the law’s status as knowledge, and the legal personnel as experts” (10).<sup>11</sup> According to the Western democratic ideal, the rules of law are neither imposed on the body—and therefore imperialistic in practice—nor constitutive of the body and its subjectivity. Rather, they are “civil,” natural and protective of the rights of essentialised bodies. Within the Western consciousness, the law precedes the body. It protects the body’s natural state. As Deleuze and Guattari assess it:

The law ceases to be the overcoding of customs, as it was in the archaic empire; it is no longer a set of topics, as it was in the

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<sup>11</sup> Similarly, in his “Ecliptic of Sex,” Jean Baudrillard rejects the suggestion that entry of the female into public discourse necessarily signifies her freedom. Woman, he argues, may have had more power over man because of her ability to exist outside dominant discourse, but such power is lost when the secrecy of woman is revealed. Here, Baudrillard attempts to rewrite the narrative of female “seduction,” positing it as a powerful tool of resistance. His analysis may indicate a desire to see women retreat from any involvement in public life. It could be read as an attempt to reinscribe a traditional position under a new theoretical pretext. Certainly, his position could be critiqued for its lack of attention to real female bodies and their experiences of discrimination and marginalisation in private as well as in public spheres. However, it also offers a strong theoretical rebuttal of the foundation on which the 1960s counterculture movements—and those beyond—have based their politics and activism. Coming out into public life, and thereby discarding one’s former power of secret seduction, does not produce a guaranteed freedom. Rather than focus only on what is gained by such an emergence, Baudrillard highlights a need to consider what is lost.

evolved States, the autonomous cities, and the feudal systems; it increasingly assumes the direct form and immediate characteristics of an axiomatic, as evidenced in our civil “code.”

(*Thousand* 453)

However, as Foucault has stated in his preface to Deleuze and Guattari’s *Anti-Oedipus*, the law is one of the “old categories of the Negative” on which human subjects have relied for too long to help them construct their realities (xiii).

Fundamentally, the law too is discipline. Any debate over what kind of government can best serve our multiple desires and needs evades the possibility that the body may need no governance at all. It fails to consider what kinds of bodies might emerge outside all spheres of governmentality and what kinds of pleasures such bodies might experience once there.

A retreat from a focus on the private and public spheres as the main arenas in which a pleasurable life can be constructed may signal an end to participatory democracy. For some, such a retreat suggests going against the intentions and benefits of democracy (Robbins xi-xii). I cannot bring myself to lament such a possible outcome, for I do not share the view that what we have is better than what we imagine to exist in the non-democratic societies of our imaginations.<sup>12</sup> I do not wish to deny my concurrence with Sedgwick’s recognition of a Western culture that is wasting away in its disregard for its own peoples, queer or otherwise (*Tendencies* 16). Dismissal of a need to understand sexualised acts and sexualised bodies within the paradigm of private/public opens up the possibility of considering how we might construct spaces fluid and shifting enough to permit bodies to act out corporeal pleasures

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<sup>12</sup> The suggestion—and widespread belief—that democracy exists in certain nations of the world but not in others underpins and encourages cultural, economic and military efforts to enforce change in the latter, particularly when democracy is espoused as a superior form of communal living (as it generally is within states that recognise their own system as democratic). The claim that certain nations are lacking in democracy and, therefore, are in need of democracy is used to justify any intervention into the affairs of non-democratic others by self-defined democratic states. Similarly, such an understanding of the world encourages citizens of self-identified democratic nations to accept the democracy of their own state as natural and fixed, thereby suppressing both criticisms of their own system and consideration that what they have is, in fact, antithetical to the ideals of democracy.

and desires without ever being discovered and known (Hubbard 65-67). If the discourse of sexuality is always on the hunt for new forms of sexualised desire in order to legitimate and condemn its notions of sexualised beings, one possible solution is *not* to participate in its “*perpetual spirals of power and pleasure*” (Foucault, *History 1* 45; emphasis in the original). It does us no good to try to run from the gaze of the will to sexual knowledge so that we simply validate its power over us. Nor must we always stand up to it and demand that our own knowledge of the sexual self become the new truth, for this too continues its power. When we play the cat-and-mouse game, running around in circles within the confines of the normalised discourse of sexuality, we merely reaffirm intimate sexualised pleasures as “the central mode of self-legitimation or public identity making,” thus foreclosing a radical revision of the body and its pleasures (Berlant 77). Instead, therefore, we need to find ways of stepping outside this discourse’s field of vision. We need to make sure that wherever the discourse of sexuality makes a discovery and claims to know us, the body is absent from that space of knowledge. We need to find ways of becoming other than what this invasive culture can ever imagine, see or hear the body to be.

### **5.3 The Effects of a Resisting Silence**

In an essay on the role of silent camp as a mode of queer resistance in pop art (“Silent”), Jonathan D. Katz disputes the notion that silence in the re-Stonewall Cold War era necessarily signified a space of oppression for men with an interest in same-sex desires and practices. His aim is not so much to negate this particular interpretation of silence. Such a silence certainly existed, for some. Instead, he argues that often silence was deployed additionally as a tool of resistance in an environment where conformity to hegemonic social norms was not only consciously demanded but also discursively required within the framework of a modernist culture in which knowledge of self (as normal) was (is) paramount. Rather than offer any negation of dominant discursive patterns, however, the use of silence by certain artists aimed to mimic these patterns and to expose the campness—and therefore the construction—of

reality. Katz suggests that silence was reclassified in this pop art context as a part of sound rather than other to it, accepting a general poststructuralist argument that silence should be seen less as the non-existence of language than as a significant component of it (Bruneau 18).<sup>13</sup> In his assessment, silence is still audible. Indeed, its audibility is what makes it a threat through shifting the onus of the construction of knowledge away from the addressee and on to the listener/addresser.

The location of meaning as the responsibility of the interviewer is always a part of communication (Sarup 78). Additionally, the assumption that the interviewee shares the same meaning as the interviewer is a presupposition of the latter (Lyotard 18).<sup>14</sup> Still, however, some form of articulation by the interviewee is required if the interviewer is to secure knowledge of the person with whom they speak. After all, according to the modernist paradigm, “I” am the holder of knowledge of self; “I” must speak if such knowledge is to be imparted to others. Knowledge of an “I” who is other to the “I” of self, therefore, is dependent on the “I” of self first listening to the articulations of the “I” of other and then interpreting what has been said. Silence on the part of the interviewee—the “I” of other—puts a stop to this process of acquiring knowledge. It manages to bring into question the interviewer’s fundamental will, capacity and, indeed, right to know who and what this other “I” is. If used effectively, silence can offer the scrutinised interviewee the opportunity to deflect the gaze away from the demand to establish self as a knowable “I” and

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<sup>13</sup> In an earlier essay on “John Cage’s Queer Silence” (1999), Katz hinted at an understanding of silence different to the kind of silence that exists in a binary with sound when he wrote: “Silence, in short, is not another kind of music, but a challenge to the construction of music itself.” This earlier definition seeks to expand the power of silence to dismantle normative binary structures in which all forms of resistance can be accommodated and contained too easily.

<sup>14</sup> Madan Sarup uses the terms “listener” and “speaker.” Lyotard writes of “addressor” and “addressee.” I use “interviewer” and “interviewee” to emphasise the position of the interviewer as the initiator of the conversation through which access to knowledge is sought. The interviewer has asked a question concerning the position of the interviewee. For example, the interviewer has asked: “Are you a homosexual?” The interviewer now expects the interviewee to answer within the same framework of knowledge from which the question is posed. It is expected that the interviewee will know what a homosexual is and will respond accordingly. The interviewer anticipates a response that reaffirms both the normality of his/her own question and the right of self to have asked for confirmation of such knowledge from the other.

towards a questioning of the habits of the interviewer who, in waiting to hear and interpret, assumes already a position of authoritative “I” and rightful holder of knowledge of other(s). The “seasoned addressee [interviewee]” who refuses “to give information demanded by the questioner [interviewer] shifts—if only temporarily—the power base from the questioner to the addressee [interviewee]” (Kurzon 94).

This shifting of power from interviewer to interviewee is effected through the kind of “sly civility” to which Homi K. Bhabha refers when he speaks of the native’s refusal to satisfy the coloniser’s demands for articulation of self within the colonial narrative:

The natives’ resistance represents a frustration of that nineteenth century strategy of surveillance, the *confession*, which seeks to dominate the “calculable” individual by positing the truth that the subject *has* but does not *know*. The incalculable native produces a problem for civil representation in the discourses of literature and legality. [...]. The uncertainty generated by such resistance changes the narratorial demand itself. (*The Location* 99; emphasis in the original)

The colonial “I” relies on the confessions of the subordinated native to maintain and continue the narrative of its own superior being. When the native displaces anticipated identification by refusing to speak of self within the prescriptive narrative of the coloniser, the normalised positions of both subjects are brought into dispute. Through silence, the nativised other is able to force the question: for what reason must “I” speak of self within the confines of a narrative written by this coloniser? Accordingly, the coloniser is compelled to consider: for what reason must “I” know this other in accordance with the rules of the narrative in which “I” demand it should speak of self?

The native’s silence thus poses a challenge to the coloniser’s insistence on securing the position of both inferior native other and superior colonial self. It challenges the coloniser’s normalised will to knowledge, and exposes this will as something more than simply a desire for education, progression and a better

future for all. Through silence, such naturalised assumptions about knowledge and the quest for it are displaced in favour of a revelation of the active but formerly hidden discourses that enable the construction of superior and inferior subjects within normalised hierarchical frameworks. As a result of being forced to listen to silence, the “I” who once sought knowledge of an other is forced to confront its own position and the conditions of its own will to know. This will to knowledge is revealed now as seeking to validate and sustain normalised positions of power in which the colonising “I” remains always dominant.<sup>15</sup> Through silence, the colonising “I” is removed from the comfort of “an unselfconscious complicity with dominant forms of expression” and pushed “towards a degree of self-consciousness about one’s role as a reader or maker of meaning [...]” (Katz, “Silent”).

Power works most effectively when it is able to hide itself and its mechanisms of control (Foucault, *History* 186). In contrast, the intense visibility of power renders resistance to it a possibility, because those seeking to undermine dominant institutions and ideologies know exactly where and how to position their attacks. Katz’s focus is clearly an American Cold War culture in which the structures of power were strong, centralised and therefore highly visible. With reference to this historically specific period in a particular culture, he asks: “But what happens when that legitimacy begins to fray, when other competing discursive possibilities are allowed a hearing?” (“Silent”). The legitimacy of a strong and pervasive McCarthyist culture, indeed, did start to fall

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<sup>15</sup> Bhabha has argued elsewhere that the fluidity of the coloniser’s language renders it open to contestation by the colonised other. Within a postcolonial discourse, the other has been able to utilise the language of the coloniser to adopt a subject position outside the history and culture of the colonising “I” with whom the power of speech formerly resided. Through an appropriation of language, the other is able to produce a counter-narrative that displaces universalisms of culture, history and time, thereby producing new frameworks in which both the colonising “I” and the colonised other can be read differently (“Freedom’s”). Butler shares this approach when she asserts that the lack of any determinable referent in the signifier “homosexuality” ensures it can never refer to any specific body with absolute certainty. Indeed, this “lack of capture constitutes the linguistic possibility of a radical democratic contestation, one that opens the term to further rearticulations” (*Excitable* 108). However, the appropriation of language only manages to produce a new kind of “I” for the previously other-ed subject. While the position of this newly formed “I” may differ from the position in which the colonised body was placed previously by the coloniser’s narrative, nevertheless it does not remove the body of the other from discipline because of its continuing availability as “I.”

apart in America as the 1960s approached. A formerly pervasive and centralised power base began to disperse and power began to fragment. At this time, a burgeoning gay liberation movement was able to vocalise its own resistance to dominant heterosexuality. It was able to demand a public hearing. In such a push for audibility, silence was written as the other side of speech, as the closet of homosexual oppression. No amount of silence could grant the homosexual access to the power the gay liberationist discourse desired for this subject. On the contrary, silence was deemed responsible for having produced and sustained a culture of surveillance, paranoia and fear in which the homosexual (amongst others) had been denied subjectivity and had suffered as a result.

Yet, the silence deployed by the artists to whom Katz refers—Warhol, Cage, Johns and Rauschenberg—does not comply with this equating of silence with repression. Theirs was not a silence that signified a desire to remain hidden even as the mask of silence was worn, sometimes quite literally.<sup>16</sup> In its ability to break down normative modes of communication and thereby bring the listener's modes of constructing reality under scrutiny, in fact, their silence got them noticed. As Katz describes it, the silence of music and painting forced a revision of the attainment of meaning away from the other—text or artist—toward the one doing the viewing or listening. This mode of silence, therefore, posed a novel form of resistance.

While it would be too simplistic—and in this era of poststructuralist dominance perhaps academically politically incorrect—to suggest we exist once again in a culture identical to the one Katz describes, nonetheless there are certain similarities. Despite the differences in time and geography, we (“I”) are living in a similar space. Today, there is an increasing centralisation of power in an American-style democracy, capitalism and military (Bhabha, *The Location* 20). There is a strengthening of a few major points of power over our bodies

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<sup>16</sup> Katz refers to one of Warhol's first showings of a collection of his pop pictures during which he wore a mask and gave others masks to wear. He also played music so loudly that it was impossible for anybody to sustain a conversation.

and our lives to the extent that the “Yankee way of subjectivation” (Guattari 3) is becoming increasingly a reality for many bodies in this world.<sup>17</sup> There is also the sense in which a general organisation of intellectualism permits critique of the culture and its systems to continue without affecting any real or significant change. Elsewhere, Katz has described the way intellectuals managed to appease the Cold War culture and their own position within it by focusing on economic possibilities (“Passive Resistance”). In a similar way, intellectuals today are driven by the promises and the deliveries of affluence in which we see hope of equality for all, but from which we benefit already. Moreover, with specific reference to the sexual, a dominating sexual normativity continues to be instrumental and imperative to the implementation and maintenance of the control of the body. The discourse of gay liberation may argue that heterosexuality was unjustly the dominant form of sexual normativity in Cold War America and that it continues to be so today, but the pervasive discourse of sexuality has never been interested in issues of repression and liberation. Its only concern is to ensure that every body is knowable within the boundaries of the sexual paradigm. What is dominant today, therefore, is not heterosexuality, but rather a system of compulsory sexualisation of all bodies within the culture.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Any talk of Americanisation means Westernisation, which, when forced onto others through military, economic or cultural methods, equals colonisation. As Western subjects, American or otherwise, we are involved in the continuation of imperialistic expansion. We speak of liberation, equality and freedom for all. We locate fascism as a force that exists elsewhere, always outside our culture and our history. Yet, our insistence that democracy is the best way of life for all reveals the extent to which fascistic discipline has become an acceptable part of the Western way of life. We fail to see the presence of fascism within our space, within our time. We are unable to see its effects on the construction of our Western democratic subjectivities right here and now. A concern over such an intense presence of fascism within Western culture underpins the Deleuzoguattarian investigation into the organisation of bodies as explored in *Anti-Oedipus* and *A Thousand Plateaus*.

<sup>18</sup> In general, coming out has been an issue for the homosexual subject. It has been taken for granted that heterosexuals do not have to make any public declaration of their sexual orientation. Within a culture in which heterosexuality is seen to be dominant, one is assumed heterosexual unless one states otherwise. Increasingly, however, as heterosexual bodies willingly take on board elements formerly associated with the effeminate man (read: the homosexual)—e.g., an interest in fashion, care over appearance, the wearing of jewellery, perfume and make-up, etc.—heterosexuals too are being forced to come out of the closet to defend themselves against their apparent homosexualisation (Durber, “Playing”).

At this time now and in this culture here, therefore, the deployment of silence in regard to participation in same-sex sexualised pleasures might offer the possibility of disrupting the demand for the body to be read within narratives established by the normalised and powerful discourse of sexuality. It might permit a resistance to the narrative of homosexuality propagated by the discourse of gay liberation which acts now as the colonising interviewer, anticipating that all of its captured bodies will speak the homosexual identity it needs to confirm and sustain its own position of dominance over same-sex pleasure-seeking bodies. To be silent when asked a question about one's engagement in same-sex sexualised activities helps to shift the attention away from the construction of a normative homosexual identity in the interviewee and toward the reason for the interviewer's need to know. "Tell me your desires, I'll tell you who you are" (Foucault, "Michel" 128) is no longer simply a compassionate attempt to assist the same-sex desiring subject to come to terms with his/her sexuality. Rather, it is exposed as a means through which the interviewer can validate and strengthen his/her sexualised subjectivity. Such a desired confession demands the other speak to "I" within the confines of the language of the normalised discourse of sexuality on which "I" depend already for knowledge of the sexual self. It begs: "Tell me you are gay in order that I may continue to know who I am accordingly, in opposition or in common." Silence on the part of the interviewee removes from the interviewer the right to such knowledge of the sexual, while simultaneously shaking the stability of the very frameworks in which all knowledge of self is achieved.

### **5.3.1 A Queerer Silence**

In her discussion on the role of the courts in the reaffirmation of the class of heterosexuals as natural, legitimate and stable, Janet Halley attacks the kind of silence that seeks to deny a person who identifies already as a homosexual the right to live a sexual life with impunity. Through silence, we become members of the "default class" of heterosexuality, supporting its naturalness

and stability. Until we speak out about being other than heterosexual, the “glory days” of heterosexuality will remain (372-73). Halley’s position concurs with the gay liberationist stance that abhors both any refusal to allow the homosexual to speak out about his sexual orientation and any discrimination against this subject based on this orientation. The discourse of gay liberation reads the “closet” as a space of silence from which the homosexual must be freed if he is to attain equal status in the culture. However, it is something entirely different to suggest that a man should be permitted the right to be silent about his involvement in same-sex sexualised contact on the grounds that such pleasures indicate neither acts of homosexuality nor the existence of a homosexual being. The silence of oppression and the silence I speak of are entirely different altogether.

In contrast to the dominant understanding of silence as oppression, silence can become something of substance and benefit “if it is assumed to represent the omission of something negative” (Tannen 94). Once the Lyotardian notion of silence as necessarily “a suffering that terrifies us, repulses, disgusts us” (Walker 20) is discarded, once this interpretation of silence is seen as only one form of silence among many, silence can be recast to offer an active form of resistance to the constraints imposed on the construction of self by the demand for speech. Indeed, it can become a way of undermining the suffering of speech that now terrifies, repulses and disgusts because of the way the imperative to talk seeks to bring the body into normative systems of control. According to such a revision of the silence/speech dichotomy, it is no longer silence but rather talk that has a detrimental effect on the body and its pleasures, because talk claims to be able to disclose what is hidden. Within the discourse of gay liberation specifically, articulation is read as a means of exposing and circulating knowledge that an oppressive silence already knows, namely, the existence of the homosexual. Thus, articulation aims to contain the body within a dangerous discourse of (sexual) truth.

The kind of silence I propose is one that disputes the demanded right of the discourse of gay liberation to take charge of the pleasures of the flesh

where such pleasures occur between bodies sexed the same. Under certain conditions, the deployment of silence surrounding participation in same-sex sexualised activities can signify a rejection of the demand that the body must be aligned with the homosexual “I.” It offers an escape from the assumption of immutability in the homosexual/heterosexual binary, an escape otherwise denied the body because of the prominence and power of the discourse of gay liberation. The subject who is aware of how the narrative of homosexuality disciplines the body and its pleasures through naturalised methods of categorisation is able to undermine the project of compulsory (homo)sexualisation through a deployment of silence to reject the visible activities of the body as an adequate representation of self. The man who has sexualised contact with other male-sexed bodies can refuse to identify with the homosexual collective because he recognises that such an identification fails to explain what occurs at the moment of contact. Silence, therefore, is able to indicate a conscious rejection of the categories of identification already available to define what and who the body is sexually. It is able to work as a queer(er) manipulator of the normalised correlation between an inner truth and an outer flesh. As Diana Fisher has argued, for some bodies silence can be useful. It can help to construct the kind of closet in which bodies are able to “escape from the dominant ideology organizing and monitoring” their lives (174). In simple terms, silence permits the body to *do* without having to *be*.

Foucault’s rejection of the repressive hypothesis undermines the pervasive and persuasive view of subjects located always within systems of domination and oppression. In the Foucauldian model, there is no one point of central dominance. Resistance is futile because, “if there is no binary division between resistance and non-resistance, those who resist are also agents for the power against which they struggle [...] (Cook 113). In Alan Sheridan’s interpretation, Foucault has posed the question: “Does the liberationist movement constitute a true opposition to the machinery of power and the repression it operates or does it, on the contrary, form part of the same historical network that it condemns?” (169). The unarticulated answer to this

question is that it does precisely the latter. A discourse of gay liberation, for example, permits the disciplining of the body by reinstating power relations that construct knowledge of homosexuality in such a way that this knowledge and its construction can pass by unnoticed and uncritiqued (Halperin, *Saint* 19-21). There is no resistance in knowable resistance.

In his analysis of how canonised norms are able to shift positions within discourses in order to maintain their power, however, Itamar Even-Zohar argues that a lack of any strong, visible and readable subculture renders the central point of power weak in its attempts to target oppositional stances to its own normative position. “The canonised repertoires of any system” rely on oppositions to permit the system to evolve and mutate, so that the system itself never collapses (16-17). Katz mirrors this understanding in his claim that “Once marked as oppositional, any disturbance can then be incorporated into a discourse of oppositionality which only serves to catalyze oppressive constructions [...]” (“John”). Resistance therefore reproduces domination. The normative system of sexualisation demands that resistance to its dominant hegemonic norms be made evident. If the body remains silent about the pleasures it experiences, however, the power of the discourse of sexuality over it is removed. If corporeal pleasures are hidden from the gaze of the pervasive discourses of sexualisation—and therefore from the attempts of the categories of homosexual and heterosexual to define them and the bodies involved—the power formerly invested in and against these discourses disappears. Silence helps remove the relationship of power that the discourse of sexuality establishes in its insistence that all bodies must exist somewhere within its borders. In silence, there is no more talk of dominance or resistance with reference to particular sexual types and specific sexual behaviours. The discourses that produce categories of the normal and the abnormal disappear because of the body’s refusal to talk within them, to them and about them.

By moving the focus away from the identity and placing an emphasis on the importance of geographically and metaphorically “secret places where they

can engage in covert activity” (Johansson and Percy 244),<sup>19</sup> men are able to deploy silence as a space in which the body can experience pleasures without having to submit these pleasures to normative disciplining structures. Such men, as they exist in the silence of unknown geographical or unknowable metaphorical spaces, disallow the normative discourse of sexuality from uncritically discovering a sexuality it claims to be natural to them, but which in fact must be extracted from their bodies and pleasures.<sup>20</sup> This kind of silence is not one that seeks to hide knowledge, therefore. Rather, it disputes the normative frameworks and, indeed, the existence of knowledge itself. It is a space in which the body is able to disrupt the cultural demand to speak of who “I” am with the belief that such an act of public articulation can offer the body (sexual) liberation. The body in silence cannot talk. Instead, it welcomes such a seeming disability as an ability to reject compulsory organisation of its form into a coherent and knowable self.

To be so silent about one’s participation in intimate sexualised corporeal pleasures is no lonely pursuit. The kind of silence I propose does not indicate

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<sup>19</sup> Johansson and Percy argue that society depends on a certain level of privacy that is always beyond the gaze of public scrutiny. No form of government, even that of a totalitarian regime can have absolute access to every detail of every body’s life. When rules or protections of privacy are broken or penetrated, people will seek out new spaces in which they are able to hide their activities (244-45). The silence I speak of is such a space. It is neither geographically nor physically locatable. To render it so, to speak of what and where this silence is, would make it and the bodies who occupy its space visible to a culture of surveillance and control. The silence, therefore, will shift. Silence is always one step ahead of and always greater than knowledge.

<sup>20</sup> This kind of rejection of the category of homosexuality is evident in the practices of many male-d bodies that seek out sexualised contact with other male-d bodies in public places (at “beats” or “cottages”). For many of the men who frequent such places, a homosexual identity is neither practical nor relevant, nor even desired. Their ability to engage in same-sex sexualised contact without placing this one particular aspect of their life as central to the construction of an identity offers an example of the way in which normative models of sexuality are not appropriate for all. While such bodies can be read as homosexuals in denial or as homosexuals existing in cultural frameworks that force denial (homophobia, marriage, etc.), these understandings of their positions reflect the interpretation of same-sex sexualised activities that both the discourse of gay liberation and a discourse of homophobia support. They do not consider the different ways in which male-d bodies are able to experience such activities and pleasures without recourse to a dominant discourse of homosexuality. Put simply, such readings fail to recognise that you do not have to be a homosexual to enjoy “sex” with men.

isolation of the body from other corporeal forms. It does not foreclose the possibility that the body might have “sex” again. As Tim Dean argues,

queer theory stakes its utopian claims on the conviction that opposing “society itself” doesn’t necessarily incur the loneliness of psychosis, foreclosed from all social ties, but that, on the contrary, queer political resistance provides access to alternate forms of community and other social ties—perhaps even other *forms* of social tie[s], different ways of knotting the subject to society and community. (Dean 227; emphasis in the original)<sup>21</sup>

Silence permits the body to continue to participate in same-sex sexualised contact while avoiding interpellation into a system of subjectified classification which requires all of its desires and actions of the past, present and future to be related to an identity and regulated accordingly. In silence, we see the emergence of a “more postmodern concept of the closet” (Reynolds, “Postmodernizing” 349) in which the body may consciously reject interpretation of its corporeal pleasures while it seeks solitude to organise its pleasures otherwise, if such organisation is desired at all. Silence, therefore, enables the construction of intimacies outside the normative system of corporeal regulation that seeks to prolong such unions because of some assumed point of connection between bodies in the “necessary fiction” of sexual orientations. As Foucault suggested: “I often wondered why people had to speak. Silence may be a much more interesting way of having a relationship with people” (“Michel”

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<sup>21</sup> There is nothing to fear about the desire for utopia. While the very nature of a utopia might suggest the impossible, such a position is never beyond the imagination, and therefore never beyond the scope of a reality always constructed anyway. Moreover, a utopia of the imagination might not be utopian in reality, but it is the desire of getting there, of reaching a beyond, that helps bodies move outside already dominant systems of regulation. If our dream is to reach a utopia always somewhere in the distance, we are always in the joyful process of moving, never still and, therefore, never locatable. Perchance, however, we will meet other shifting, always becoming-queerer bodies along the way. This understanding of utopia as offering possibilities of becoming differs from the kind of utopian identification I discuss alongside heterotopic disruptions in chapter six (6.2). In contrast to the view of utopia as offering fluidity and possibilities, an identity is a utopia that seeks to remain stable through erasing any possibility of becoming other.

122). Through the application of silence to one's engagement in sexualised pleasures new possibilities of corporeal intimacy begin to emerge.

### 5.3.2 The Fear of Silence

In a culture in which the will to knowledge is a normalised part of being human, indeed, in a culture in which “I” cannot exist without knowledge, silence is feared. Thus, there are many attempts to contain it. For Stephen Tyler, for example, the use of silence to resist a negotiation between subjects to some point of common understanding offers an affront to habitual practices to which we—bodies desiring more than objectivity—are drawn and compelled. Accordingly, the deployment of silence as a means of confusing and destabilising normative methods of intersubjective speech becomes communication in “bad faith.” It upsets “common-sense understanding” through making suspect that which should be above suspicion (147). Ken Plummer suggests that a cycle of inadequate language in which to describe issues relating to “sex” specifically is responsible for the way in which the child—and therefore the adult who comes from child—is left with “an enormous potential for misunderstandings, an exaggerated and spiralling concern for relatively minor matters” (“Understanding” 240). Silence, therefore, is both ignorant and ignorance. It is to blame for the confusions we have about “sex,” as if to suggest that “sex,” indeed, is something hidden behind the silences that protect it and prevent it from becoming known.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> In his analysis of how children construct “sexual scripts,” Plummer identifies four areas of importance: absences, values, secrecy and social uses. A combination of these work to help the child come to an understanding of what “sex” is, how it is important and how it can be used. The issue at stake, therefore, is not whether the child is sexual, but rather in what manner the child understands his/her own sexuality (238-40). While Plummer’s analysis suggests a coming into sexualisation for the child as opposed to the essentialist notion that the child has a natural sexuality that develops, he views the silence and the secrecy of this process in negative terms. Instead of considering how silence offers a space in which the child might avoid bringing the body and sexualised experiences into normative systems of knowledge, he emphasises the confusion and the exploitation that result. Knowledge of “sex,” therefore, is deemed more mature and more desirable than any space of silent experimentation among bodies.

Silence also creates fear. With silence comes the threat of being known incorrectly. In refusing to answer when placed under scrutiny and interrogation, the silent subject runs the risk of allowing the interviewer to assume knowledge and to thereby maintain the stability of “I” through recourse to the answers already anticipated. A reluctance to articulate and thereby make audible any critique of the interviewer’s position does nothing to undermine the power and superiority this interviewer continues to assume. Similarly, in refusing to engage with dominant discourses already recognised to produce valid knowledge of the self, the body may be defined regardless within such discursive frameworks. In Butler’s attempt to expand Louis Althusser’s concept of interpellation, she suggests that the subject does not have to hear or answer the call to be labelled and known accordingly. Interpellation does not require the subject’s response or agreement. Indeed, the process of interpellation is beyond the control of the subject who is located within systems of knowledge that exceed the capabilities and capacities of self-knowledge (*Excitable* 30-34). According to this reading, even a silent subject is unable to exist outside systems of knowledge, for the subject cannot control what is being said about it elsewhere beyond its own field of knowledge. Even “the discourse that inaugurates the subject need not take the form of a voice at all” (31). Silence, therefore, is rendered powerless, for one is spoken about elsewhere and always.

Furthermore, the ability of silence to remain silent is undermined by a pervasive will to knowledge that demands the occurrence of negotiation even when we think we are not involved in such processes of communication (Bhabha, “Third” 216). In order to alleviate the fear that accompanies silence, efforts are made to render silence knowable and understandable, to dismantle its silence. Silence is paired strategically in a binary with sound (Andrew Edgar 313-14), for example, thus making it not just audible but also readable. In Foucault’s analysis, silence is “the things one declines to say, or is forbidden to name [...] less the absolute limit of discourse [...] than an element that functions alongside the things said, with them and in relation to them” (*History* 1 27).

Foucault's definition of silence here reflects his emphasis on discourse as the space in which all subjects and cultures are constructed. Within the Foucauldian framework, there is nothing outside discourse. Discourse is all and everything there is. Silence too, therefore, is readable within discourse. It becomes politicised activity, denied of any right to be simply silent. According to such an interpretation of the activity of silence, now even our silence positions us. Even silence produces "I" and "I" am understood in relation to my silence because all silence is understandable to "I."

The biggest fear for "I" is that "I" will not know. We—subjects of Enlightenment—do not wish to linger as unknowns and unknowables in silence. We need to know and we need to be known. The very possibility of being unknown and unknowing creates a panic that demands we give the culture unlimited access to our thoughts and desires to discover us. We want to be discovered because being known is the only way we know how to exist. We maintain a belief in the freedom of "I" and thereby fail to pay attention to how such access to knowledge of the body grants the culture the right to control the body through the knowledge produced and circulated about it. Similarly, the fear of not being known grants us—academics and all other Enlightened subjects—an unquestioned right to force our way into spaces of silence under the excuse that we are helping to relieve the suffering experienced by those bodies imprisoned within. The silent bodies of the masses are in pain, we claim. They are being tortured in and through silence, while we, in contrast, have the benefit of language to ensure our freedom. With compassion, we aim to help these silent bodies gain the capacity for speech through teaching them our language or by speaking for them. We will assist them to speak of "I" because we claim to pity their position of silent non-subjectivity, when, in reality, we demand such speech from them to validate our own positions. Their silence threatens us, because without hearing them speak within our systems of knowledge, we cannot continue to display them as other to us: as masses in contrast to our intellectualism. We sustain our own positions of known and

knowable “I” through probing into the lives and lifestyles of the native masses. We who investigate and break silences are being slyly civil.

Where silence denies access to knowledge, fierce emotions of resistance can be expected out of a frustration that stems from an inability to decipher the subject within normalised categorisations and an inability to know self accordingly. The threat to the will to knowledge is not that abhorrent sexualised behaviours might be exposed, but that they might be removed from the sexual orientations to which they have been historically and culturally ascribed. Similarly, the threat to the discourse of gay liberation is not that men might have sexualised contact with other men while in denial of their sexuality, but that they might form physically pleasurable relationships with each other based on desires not focused on sexed bodies; that such men might find ways of doing corporeal pleasures outside the expectancy that these pleasures reveal a responsibility to identify with the gay liberationist cause. Non-speaking makes it impossible to establish whether the subject has had sexualised contact with a body of the same sex in the past, will have in the future, or, indeed, is having such contact right now as we all continue to speak. The threat to the normative taxonomy of the homosexual is that male-d bodies might fuck with other like-minded male-d bodies in ways that the homosexual signifier cannot control. The culture will not welcome any disruption to such an established ability to discipline the body.

Those who seek and practise silence should not be alarmed by the ferocity of the anger aimed against them. On the contrary, they should relish it, for such an adverse reaction is surely the dream of becoming queerer. To introduce discomfort into the order of things—to produce a continuous disorder of things—cannot be avoided if we are to consider queerer ways of stepping to the side of attempts to regulate our bodies within knowable systems of classification. It is with joy that we should welcome our incomplete knowability and the excess to known bodies. It may cause great discomfort to silence normative (homo)sexualisation, therefore, but this is not enough to prevent me from wishing to continue this line of thought. As Bhabha has argued: “It is only

by losing the sovereignty of the self that you can gain the freedom of a politics that is open to the non-assimilationist claims of cultural difference" ("Third" 213). If we are to create queerer experiences, we must be willing to relinquish the comfort of "I."

## **Chapter 6    The Becoming Body**

## 6.1 The Sexual Body: Problematic Site of Knowledge

Foucault expressed a particular interest in the body: a concern with how it is regulated and the forms of resistance it might offer. In *Discipline and Punish*, he locates human corporeality as the most effective site for the application of control, an argument widely shared in analyses and critiques of Western modernity:

Since the dawn of the industrial age, Western civilization colonized our biology: it devised an “*anatomopolitics*”—a politics of the body—in conjunction with a “*biopolitics*”—the planning of the population. Human sciences such as psychology, medicine and demography seized the “confessed” body as an object of social concern and governmental manipulation. Once more a crucial alliance between power and knowledge was struck.

(Merquior 121; emphasis in the original)

In poststructuralist and postmodern debates, recognition of the desire of the metanarrative of modernity for control of the body is coupled with attempts to dispute and disrupt the claustrophobic frameworks in which the body is understood and expected to reside. Such interventions into modernity’s mission to curtail and control the body aim to offer the disciplined body possibilities of resistance to normative systems of regulation. Elizabeth Grosz writes in this regard:

Rethinking the body implies major epistemological upheavals not only for the humanities, which have tended towards idealism, but equally for the natural and social sciences, which have at least aspired to materialism. (*Volatile x*).<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> “Idealism” for Grosz is the suggestion that “man” and “woman” are unnecessary fictions. She has dismissed Butler’s approach to the sex/sexuality debate by declaring gender a redundant category (“Rethinking” 212-14). Her approach to sex, however, maintains the sex-ability of the body. Even as she accepts the Foucauldian notion of sex as a “production and enactment of sexual difference” (213), thereby recognising both the instability of the formed materiality and the disciplining processes involved in achieving such a form, nevertheless, in her desire to establish a “corporeal feminism” in *Volatile Bodies*, “woman” is upheld as a real bodily site of

Grosz's approach is exemplary of the many attempts to consider the body not as the stable, unmarked and passive object of study, but as an active agent in the construction of the truths established about it. It is out of a desire to resist the systems of discipline and punishment effective in the production of the modern sexual subject specifically that Foucault follows up his conclusion of the disciplined body with a call for the deployment of the pleasure-seeking body. A year after the publication of *Discipline and Punish*, now at the end of his first volume of *The History of Sexuality*,<sup>2</sup> he implores with obvious passion: "The rallying point for the counterattack against the deployment of sexuality ought not to be sex-desire, but bodies and pleasures" (157).

The suggestion that the body—and its discovered and discoverable pleasures—might offer an escape from social and discursive regulation imposed by the sex-object understanding of desire has been met with both interest and joy. In response to Foucault's call to corporeal arms, Butler wrote:

For a brief but impressive linguistic moment, Foucault held out the possibility that we might cease to think of sexuality as a specific attribute of sexed persons, that it could not be reducible to the question of his or her "desire," and that overcoming the epistemic constraint that mandated thinking of sexuality as emanating from sexed persons in the form of desire might constitute an emancipation, as it were, beyond emancipation. The phrase, "bodies and pleasures" held out the possibility of unmarked bodies, bodies that were no longer thought or experienced in terms of sexual difference, and pleasures that were diffuse, possibly nameless, intense and intensifying, pleasures that took the entire body as the surface and depth of its operation.

("Revisiting" 11)

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resistance. Such recourse to an essentialist categorisation of certain bodies is her response to the "idealism" she rejects.

<sup>2</sup> *Discipline and Punish* was first published as *Surveiller et Punir: Naissance de la Prison* in 1975; his first volume of *The History of Sexuality* as *La Volonté de Savoir* a year later, in 1976.

Foucault's approach exposed sexual identities and orientations as the results of the disciplining of the body within normative systems of identification and sexualisation. Those who agreed with his analysis could turn now with excitement to the body and its pleasures as a means of escaping such control. We who have been disciplined will be disciplined no more, for the body and its pleasures are finally ours to experience and enjoy in resistance to the discourses that seek to tell us what the sexual is and how we should be sexual. The body has been warned of its docile position. It has been informed of its vulnerability to powerful but hidden systems of mass discipline. Accordingly, the body's mission is to seek out ways of rejecting conformity to normative modes of being expected of it. It must face up to systems of discipline and confront them.

However, no sooner does the body emerge as the best hope of a future freedom from discipline, when it too comes under scrutiny for the discipline such a resistant body enforces. Foucault challenged the normative sexualisation of the body and the normative construction of "sex." In exposing how this thing we call "sexuality" has been implanted in and imposed upon the body, he encouraged—and sought out—new ways of doing corporeal pleasures that might avoid entanglement in the prohibition-permission debate through a focus on the body as the site of (as yet) undiscovered and unexplored intensities (Bersani, "Foucault" 12-13). As appealing as such a pursuit of pleasure may seem, as Butler has acknowledged, there is a danger in seeking to narrativise a focal shift from sexual identity to bodies as if this signalled an epistemic one ("Revisiting" 16). As she expands on her warning that the joy of bodies and pleasures was but a *brief* moment of excitement, she declares Foucault's preference for a binarism of bodies and pleasures over sex-desire to be a "strange" ending to "a book that puts into question binary opposition at every turn" (16-17). In the insistence on a focus on the body as the best possible context for experiencing freedom and undisciplined life, we risk reinventing knowledge through yet one more system of regulation. We come to rely on the ability of "I" to reclaim/take ownership of the body, a belief that suggests a

desperate grab for the security of “control and autonomy, in an increasingly invasive and precarious society” (Baxandall 244).

The problem we are faced with, then, is to what extent a focus on the body as a site of sexual resistance can offer any real resistance to the regulation of the sexualised body and its pleasures. The culture’s premise is that all sexual bodies need protecting. Its best promise is that some sexual bodies deserve the right to enjoy “sex.”<sup>3</sup> A body located somewhere within the borders of the premise and the promise reaffirms the assumed right of the culture to know for the good of the body—and for the good of society as a whole—what the body does. No attempt to keep experiences of “sex” hidden (from the law, the media or wider public scrutiny), for example, removes the body from compulsory sexualisation. On the contrary, when one recognises a need to keep quiet about “sex,” one already understands the body to be of “sex” and therefore also to be subject to surveillance, judgment and, where necessary, punishment. One understands the importance of the sexualised body—and its corresponding pleasures—to the establishment of self. Whenever the body is deployed to demand the right to be sexual in any particular way, we see a reaffirmation of the legitimacy of the culture’s interference into when, how and for what reason the body comes into intimate contact with other bodies. Similarly, when we create new ways of being sexual, we continue to accept compulsory sexualisation of the body. Any invention or discovery of new ways of being sexual or of doing the sexual seeks out and discovers these inventions and discoveries within the very same discourses from which a Foucauldian resisting body seeks to escape. Such a creative body continues to produce and do “sex.”<sup>4</sup> Even in our sexual resistance, we

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<sup>3</sup> Children, for example, are excluded from this promise, as are those whose demands for sexual pleasure do not conform to normative understandings of “sex,” as such understandings relate to current notions of morality and decency.

<sup>4</sup> It has been suggested, for example, that fist-fucking was “a truly original invention” (Rubin, “Sexual Traffic” 68). Indeed, it has been argued that this was the only new invention of pleasure to have occurred in the twentieth century, that is, before the invention of phone/fax “sex” at the turn of the century (Halperin, *Saint* 92), to which we surely must add now the invention of cyber “sex.” While the suggestion that people did not use the fist and the anus for penetrative

continue to confess our corporeal activities within powerful systems of control. The resisting body of sexual pleasure is a body disciplined already within the discourse of “sex.”

In this thesis, I have outlined already the problems of discipline that arise whenever the subject brings its corporeal pleasures into public discourse. I have explored the possible effects on the body when silence is displaced in favour of articulation. I have argued that even the intended resistance in announcing, “I am gay” forecloses the possibility of experiencing corporeal pleasures with same-sexed bodies outside normative regulating systems into which all bodies forcibly are placed. The aim of this chapter is to argue that there can be no space of silence for the body that engages in a debate on good “sex” versus bad “sex.” There can be no becoming queerer for any body that becomes involved in the discussion of what it can and cannot do sexually. A body concerned with issues of sex, “sex” and sexuality is a body that knows its position as man/woman, sexual and sexualised. A body that utters these terms, whether to defend, offend or rewrite them, is a body already located and knowable within these disciplines. Only through entry into a space in which the body can be silent about all matters of the sexual can there be any hope of eradicating the insistence that the body’s intimate interactions with other bodies are of any concern to anyone, least of all to “I.” This chapter therefore furthers my desire to access a site of unknowability in which the body may still experience same-sex sexualised pleasures, but in which the notion of being a homosexual—and sexual—remains unimaginable. In an attempt to discover a space of becoming outside the culture’s compulsive will to know all spaces in which the body might reside, I construct a “Body without Sex” (BwS).

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pleasure before the twentieth century assumes too much about the inventiveness of this more recent century’s sexual citizens, moreover, fist-fucking is not an invention that removes corporeal pleasure from the realm of the sexual. To the contrary, fist-fucking is understood as an act of “sex” and therefore reaffirms the body as a legitimate site of sexualisation.

## 6.2 Heterotopic Possibilities: Reaching an Other Plateau

Becoming a BwS is not a natural, automatic or simple process. Such a becoming is particularly difficult if one already knows the body to be with sex and capable of “sex,”<sup>5</sup> as the homosexual “I” does. Like all becomings, becoming a BwS demands attention, concentration, practice and a certain amount of discipline. For bodies that exist within the borders of a culture that demands knowledge of self with reference to the normalised and dominant homosexual/heterosexual binary, becoming a BwS might seem like an impossible pursuit. Indeed, it might appear that a BwS were a becoming that an already homosexualised body has no chance of experiencing. If the demand of the discourse of homosexuality to have all same-sex desiring bodies contained and identified within its borders is as intense as I have argued it to be, what real hope is there for the body that shows evidence of having this kind of desire to escape such a field of surveillance? How can the body shake off the intensity of the sexing and sexualising processes that have constructed it as homosexual and on which its continuing existence as “I” now depends?

Let me start by saying that it is not impossible for sexualised bodies to experience escape from all the sexualising demands placed upon them. Just because “I” have recognised the body to be a homosexual does not erase the possibility that this body might move beyond this homosexual imaginary. On the contrary, the possibility of becoming a BwS emerges from a particular time in history and a particular place in culture in which “I” have known the body to be a homosexual. It is a reaction to and against the homosexualisation of the body. As restrictive as I have argued compulsory sexualisation to be, therefore, nevertheless the very imagining of bodies as sexed and sexualised within the normative paradigms of man/woman and homosexual/heterosexual has

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<sup>5</sup> To iterate and clarify, I use the term sex (without quotation marks) to refer to the body's anatomically defined position. “Sex,” on the other hand, signifies the act of intimate sexualised contact between sexed bodies. In this chapter, I seek to undo the essentialism of both in order to establish a body without sex and “sex”: a BwS.

produced a space of excess in which the body is able to exist as other than sexed and sexualised.<sup>6</sup>

In his discussion of the role of “Different Spaces” in a post-colonial, post-structuralist context, Foucault introduces the notion of heterotopias. I wish to apply this notion of a heterotopic displacement of utopian images to knowledge of the homosexual self and thereby to explore how a heterotopic understanding of the homosexual type permits the construction of a BwS for the formerly homosexualised body. For Foucault, heterotopias are the “sorts of places that are outside all places,” and are to be distinguished from utopias, which he defines conversely as “emplacements that maintain a general relation of direct or inverse analogy with the real space of society” (178). Heterotopias are spaces of interaction between differing and often seemingly unconnected forms and/or concepts, spaces that appear to be occluded by the utopian structures that desire to govern, but which nonetheless may occur in any utopian structuring of life. They are not separate from utopias. Rather, as Foucault further suggests, when a subject sees its image in the mirror, the mirror can serve as both a utopia and a heterotopia, for the mirror is the in-between space, an “intermediate experience” (179).<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> It is important to emphasise that the becoming body is not compelled to travel this same path of sexualisation and then desexualisation. Silence as an act of conscious resistance to the regulation of same-sex sexualised pleasures within the signifier “homosexual” is one possible mode of its application, but it is not the only one. My body has been sexualised. I have understood same-sex sexualised pleasures as proof of being a homosexual. I attempt now to move beyond this, to explore the possibility of becoming otherwise. However, any suggestion that all bodies must follow this same trajectory assumes a natural history for all bodies that engage in same-sex sexualised pleasures. It suggests that a coming out as a homosexual must be experienced before the now homosexualised subject can begin to unpack the narrative of homosexualisation in which his corporeal pleasures are known. In order to allow for the possibility of multiple silences, it is necessary to recognise that many bodies are able to manage their desires and “sex” lives without ever using sexual categories as methods of understanding (van Naerssen 178-79). Some bodies do not know their same-sex sexualised pleasures as homosexual pleasures. Some people who use their bodies for such purposes already do not know self as homosexual. Indeed, they have never come out into such knowledge.

<sup>7</sup> In this same essay, Foucault discusses the concept of heterotopias with reference to physical locations in the culture, such as cemeteries, libraries and museums. These spaces, while they exist alongside everyday society, simultaneously disrupt the normative behaviours and practices of the social through their merging of life and death, and histories. In my discussion here, I focus exclusively on the notion of the mirror as a site of both utopian and heterotopic

In the case of the former, while the subject recognises the image in the mirror to be outside self, nevertheless this subject accepts the mirror image as a perfect and unquestionable image of self. The mirror as utopia provides the means through which the subject is able to see self. Understood as a heterotopia, however, the mirror reflects back to the gazing subject questions concerning its real space of being in relation to the reflection on offer. It brings the construction of the truth and the perfection of self into question. The experience of the heterotopia “disposes people to wonder which world they are in” (Danaher, Schirato, and Webb 113). To explain the effects on the viewing subject who stares at his image in the mirror as heterotopia, Foucault writes: “From that gaze which settles on me, as it were, I come back to myself and I begin once more to direct my eyes toward myself and to reconstitute myself there where I am” (“Different” 179). A heterotopia has the same effect on the gazing subject as silence on the “I” who demands and expects the other to respond with sound. It displaces the normalised position of the “I” who assumes a capacity and right to know, but who relies on the existence of an already imagined utopian image of the other to secure and maintain such a position.<sup>8</sup>

A heterotopic rereading of the homosexual self reveals this particular sexual type to be an image produced by the mirror as utopia. Such a mirror proclaims to give a truthful representation of the body that stands before it. It reflects: “I am a homosexual.” This truth, however, is anticipated and demanded already by the body that resides within a culture in which “I” as

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possibilities. The notion of the mirror works well when applying the concept of heterotopia to a non-physical space such as homosexuality because the non-physical relies more heavily on representation to produce itself as a reality in the minds and lives of those who look. The homosexual is not material but, rather, is made to appear so through consistent references to it within legal, political, social, discursive, media and corporeal practices. To assume that such representations offer a true image of the homosexual self is part of the process that works to establish the homosexual type as normative. To disrupt this truth is part of the process of becoming a BwS. The mirror—that space of gazing upon the body of self to know self—provides a space of becoming that exists beyond the desire for a different but normative and stable “I.”

<sup>8</sup> See my discussion on the disturbance silence introduces to normalised subject positions in chapter five (5.3).

knowledgeable and knowing exists as a real entity. In such a culture, identity is expected and demanded. The body, therefore, relies on the mirror as utopia to produce an image that can uphold the utopian identification of “I.” In this culture and in this time, the identity of the homosexual is available to produce such an identification. In contrast, the mirror as heterotopia encourages questions about the construction of this reality.<sup>9</sup> The body that stands before the mirror as heterotopia is able to dismantle the utopian notion of being a homosexual. It is able to enter into a space of becoming other than what a utopian imagination of homosexuality suggests and expects of the body on display. The definition of heterotopia I use, therefore, recognises the importance of what Affrica Taylor has referred to as “the effect of misplacement or displacement” in any construction of a space of reality for self (qtd. in Billingham 119).<sup>10</sup>

The homosexual type is a utopian image in the Foucauldian sense because it is “a kind of shadow that gives me my own visibility” (“Different” 179). It is not naturally there, but exists to grant and secure the position of “I” demanded of the body and on which the body simultaneously relies for recognition of its existence in the culture. The homosexual type takes all

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<sup>9</sup> In a similar application of Foucault’s notion of the mirror as both a utopia and heterotopia, Fred Botting discusses the role of the gothic in eighteenth-century fiction. As a mirror of utopia, fiction is expected to reflect an ideal position to the reading subject: “[...] fiction ought to provide examples of good, virtuous behaviour through representations of real life and nature, the probability of its depictions bound up with its enlightened and didactic function” (8). In contrast, the mirror as heterotopia disturbs the security of the reading “I.” It disturbs reality because it transports “readers into remote and unreal places” (9).

<sup>10</sup> In his discussion of the British television series *Queer as Folk* (Red Productions, 1999), Peter Billingham explores the extent to which the construction of a fictional gay culture in England’s Manchester serves as a heterotopic site through which assumed fixed and stable identities can be undermined. As a fictional representation of a “real” place in late twentieth-century culture, *Queer as Folk* first appears to offer a true account of contemporary gay life. Through its emphasis on drugs and nightlife, “sex” and sexual relationships, it highlights the major cultural shift that has occurred in understandings and tolerance of homosexuality. It offers a utopian image of what it means to be gay today (119). However, as Billingham concludes, *Queer as Folk* also forecloses any closure on the binary opposition of sexual desires and behaviours. Its characters, their lives and their relationships are too complex simply to be assimilated into truths of any naturalised homo- or hetero-sexual identity. The geographical, emotional and sexual spaces in which these characters reside are simultaneously heterotopias, therefore, because they reveal the imagination as opposed to the reality of gay life. This heterotopic displacement of the utopia of “gay” affects not only the characters in the fictional text but also the viewing, sexualised subject (155).

corporeal forms with a penis, sexes them alike, observes those bodies that engage in intimate flesh-to-flesh contact with bodies sexed the same, determines such contact to be of the same “sex,” and thus identifies these bodies as being of the same kind. The body is homosexual because of an assumption and acceptance that there are no differences in and can be no challenges to normalised understandings of sex and “sex” as they are deployed to produce the sexual being. The homosexualisation of the body and its pleasures, therefore, offers a neatly packaged framework in which to attain and sustain knowledge of a sexed and sexualised self, but it is one that relies on a willingness of “I” to be docile to normalised methods of seeing and knowing the body.<sup>11</sup> An ability to articulate, “I am homosexual” results from accepting the perfection of the image on offer. The viewing “I” does not question the construction of what it sees. Instead, it accepts the image as truth, for the subject of “I” believes in its right and ability to secure knowledge of the body.

In their introduction to *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari express distaste for what they describe as a fault of Western culture in its search for linear traces of being:

It is odd how the tree has dominated Western reality and all of Western thought, from botany to biology and anatomy, but also gnosiology, theology, ontology, all of philosophy [...]. Here in the West, the tree has implanted itself in our bodies, rigidifying and stratifying even the sexes. (18).

Such distaste is coupled with their preference for discovering other ways of living:

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<sup>11</sup> The struggle to reject a homosexual identity based on one’s fear of becoming a homosexual does not displace the mirror as utopia. When “I” see the body as potentially homosexual because of the activities it participates in or desires to do, but seek to maintain an image of self as heterosexual, this image continues to be the signifier of what the body is. Irrespective of whether “I” settle on a heterosexual image or a homosexual image, or even if “I” remain somewhere in-between the two in the illusion of bisexuality, the body continues to exist within a framework of knowledge that links the body to an “I” of sexual identification and, thus, to a utopian vision of unity, coherence and identity.

We're tired of trees. We should stop believing in trees, roots, and radicles. They've made us suffer too much. All of arborescent culture is founded on them, from biology to linguistics. Nothing is beautiful or loving or political aside from underground stems and aerial roots, adventitious growths and rhizomes. (15)

An obsession with trees, they claim, has implanted roots inside our heads, producing arborescent thoughts when, in fact, "the brain is not a rooted or ramified matter" (15). Their preference is for rhizomes: maps of desires, multiplicities of becoming. The rhizomes of Deleuze and Guattari emerge across plateaus, vast spaces of intensities and pleasures. Such rhizomes avoid any search for beginning or end. They are as alive with desires and becomings as they are void of static and stationary beings.

As much as I write and speak against the power of the discourse of homosexuality, I cannot deny that, at one time, homosexuality has been such a plateau. The conceptualisation of a distinct and immutable sexual orientation based on one's desire for a body of a specific sex has permitted new ways of living and new forms of being, new desires even, to emerge. The category of homosexual has been used with great success to afford many bodies the pleasures of being non-heterosexual at least. From a plateau of homosexuality, it has been possible to imagine a number of different roots, hence the many ongoing debates that rage in regard to the histories of the homosexual, the truthful definition of its meaning and the rights of homosexuals in society today.<sup>12</sup> Indeed, homosexuality has been a plateau on which I too have been

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<sup>12</sup> One such root is the current discussion on same-sex marriages. The rush to redefine marriage as a union between man and woman certainly would have been unimaginable before the popularisation of the gay rights movement. However, this movement's insistence on the legitimacy of same-sex marriages reveals the extent to which same-sex relationships are being disciplined within an arborescent framework of homosexuality. In an interview conducted by Judith Butler, Gayle Rubin has insisted that the "voluntary" kinship systems of homosexuals differ from the more institutionalised kinship arrangements between heterosexuals ("Sexual Traffic" 59-60). Such rhizomatic differences, however, are given solid roots and, therefore, tamed in the homosexual's demand for the right to marry. As I have argued elsewhere: "With the signing of any marriage act that permits for homosexuals to legally wed, these terms that claim to speak the truth of our sexual desires will be more efficient in the controlling and disciplining of our pleasures. At the moment when we stand up in front of a crowd of family and

able to imagine new ways of living and new ways of forming intimate relationships. It has been a plateau—or, quite literally, a podium—on which I have danced with ecstatic joy. I have fought for it, researched it, worked for it, demanded and outed it at every available or refused opportunity. My recognition of the disciplining processes implemented in the construction of the homosexual body does not displace the pleasures of these memories. As Deleuze and Guattari state:

Minorities, of course, are objectively definable states, states of language, ethnicity, or sex with their own ghetto territorialities, but they must also be thought of as seeds, crystals of becoming whose value is to trigger uncontrollable movements and deterritorializations of the mean or majority. (106)

For many bodies, the homosexual continues to be a becoming and therefore a space of exciting intensities, even if I no longer view it this way.

However, this plateau of homosexuality—like all plateaus in an arborescent culture—has been too rooted, too disciplined. In an interview with Brendan Lennon in 1981, Foucault urged:

Rather than saying what we said at one time, “Let’s try to re-introduce homosexuality into the general norm of social relations,” let’s say the reverse—“No! Let’s escape as much as possible from the type of relations that society proposes for us and try to create in the empty space where we are new relational possibilities.” (“Social Triumph” 160)

Instead of viewing the plateau of homosexuality as a vibrant space of becoming—as something desirable rather than a form of desire (Foucault, “Friendship” 135-36)—the discourse of gay liberation has taken it as a truth to be deployed to help establish a utopian structuring of beings. The homosexual

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friends and declare ‘I do,’ we will be attesting to the truth of the historical and cultural confinement of our pleasures within the homosexual category. We will be consenting to being forever homosexuals without questioning the limitations now imposed upon us and upon our pleasures as a result of this tolerated confession” (Durber, “Application” 127).

has been so traced and copied that the same-sex corporeal contact it aspires to make pleasurable has been engulfed by the establishment of solid and multiple roots. Homosexuality, rather than being an intense moment of pleasure for the body, instead has become a state of being, worthy of admiration or disgust, worthy of rights or attack. It has become the kind of oppressive tracing Deleuze and Guattari warn against when they write:

Once a rhizome has been obstructed, arborified, it's all over, no desire stirs; for it is always by rhizome that desire moves and produces. Whenever desire climbs a tree, internal repercussions trip it up and it falls to its death; the rhizome, on the other hand, acts on desire by external, productive outgrowths. (*Thousand* 14)

The arborisation of the homosexual has been achieved through the telling of tales that trace its connections to history and to self. It has defined beginnings, current relevance and a promised eternity. It has been naturalised across history, it is lived in the present and it is spoken of and laid down in law as an unquestionable reality of the future. These roots have become so entangled that all energies are spent now on trying to sort out the scrambled mess and find the “real” histories and causes of what is assumed a true state of being.

Such a firm rooting of the homosexual type cannot escape its links to heterosexuality. The demand to have a truthful image of the homosexual as a reflection of self is the result of a displacement of the utopian image of the heterosexual. Within the discourse of gay liberation and by those who identify as gay, the heterosexual self has been viewed through the mirror as heterotopia, encouraging the body to question the truth of this image. The heterosexual “I” is seen as a construction. However, this questioning has not maintained the mirror as heterotopia. On the contrary, the body that has refused the image of heterosexuality has demanded instead the image of the homosexual. This body has come out of heterosexuality and into homosexuality. Unlike a BwS, therefore, the homosexualised body has exchanged one utopian image for another without waiting to see what pleasures might be experienced in the in-between space where silence overrides

compulsory sexualisation. It has not dared to wait and see what life might be like for the body outside “I.”

Within a heterotopic rewriting of this arborescent and utopian homosexual type, there is room for consideration of where the body might exist beyond the image of self offered by the naturalised and perfect reflection of the homosexual “I.” A heterotopic rereading of the truth of “I am homosexual” recognises the utopian image of the homosexual “I” to be dependent on the eternal displacement of the body to some other space outside where the body stands. As Foucault explains: “Due to the mirror, I see myself absent where I am, since I see myself over there” (“Different” 179). The image of the homosexual “I,” therefore, is not what the body naturally is because knowledge of the body as a natural homosexual relies on relinquishing the body to external modes of discipline that define and construct the body. An acceptance of self as a homosexual depends on a willingness to give the body over to the “I” that is elsewhere to where the body stands. These modes of discipline—the discourses of sex and sexuality specifically—are able to mask their power over the body by offering to “I” a reflection of the body with the promise that this reflected body is free.

Through a heterotopic realisation of the distance between the body and “I,” however, the homosexual becomes an imagined type, a reflection of what the body must be in order to give it an identity of “I.” Thus, in the mirror as heterotopia, the body becomes not homosexual. The homosexual “I” is not the body at all, indeed, it never has been. On the contrary, the homosexual has been forever distant from the body, for the “I” is always an identity that comes from outside the body and not from within the same space as this corporeal form. Theorising the homosexual type as a heterotopic imaginary in this way presents the possibility of disrupting the sexual organisation of the body, thus offering the body the chance to exist otherwise and elsewhere. Through a heterotopic lens, the security of “I am a homosexual” begins to fade until eventually in place of this former imagination stands (for the moment, at least) an empty space: a silence into which the body now may enter.

### 6.3 Undoing Sex

In the practice of becoming a BwS, we must begin with anatomical sex. The ability to determine a sex for the body is vital within a modernist framework because it reinforces the body as a suitable site of knowledge for and of self (Nicholson 48). When sexed, the body becomes mine and an indication of who “I” am. To be able to see the body as sexed reaffirms the stability of the knowing “I” through (re)affirmation of the capacity of “I” to know. To articulate “I am man” accepts “I” as legitimate knower of the body. Correspondingly, such knowledge of sex offers an example of how the body serves as a legitimate object of discourse for a culture intent on maintaining the reality and power of “I.”

Moreover, the sexing process is an important part of the homosexualisation of the body, because—to iterate the arborescent nature of the concept of homosexuality I critiqued in chapter four—a “homosexual” is “someone, male or female, who is erotically attracted to members of his/her own sex” (Ruse, *Homosexuality* 1). The categorisation of certain bodies as “homosexual” seeks to refuse the bodies under scrutiny any opportunity to evade compulsory sexing. The body with a penis that experiences sexualised contact with another body with a penis is known as a homosexual because of the sex such bodies are seen to have in common: a shared man-ness signified by the existence of the penises. I have known self to be a homosexual because I have known both self and those with whom I have experienced corporeal sexualised pleasures to be men. I have secured such knowledge through reading my penis and the penises of these others within the normative discourse of sex. It is extremely difficult to escape compulsory homosexualisation when one has “sex” with someone of the same sex. This difficulty results not only from the popularity of the category of homosexual as a normalised way of defining this particular form of “sex,” but also because in any sexualisation of bodies, anatomical sex is the most prominent and pertinent means through which such knowledge is acquired. The body’s sex is a prerequisite to its sexualisation. In the desire to become a body that is without

compulsory homosexualisation, therefore, it is sex that first needs to be silenced.<sup>13</sup>

Already the natural sex of the body has come under aggressive and compelling attack:

The notion of a biological “nature,” prior to culture and eternal, is now for many feminists, poststructuralists, and philosophers and historians of science, thoroughly suspect. It is not just that gender—the social, cultural, historical characteristics which accrue to the biological category “sex”—is at issue. Rather, the “sex” of gender, the “doer behind the deed” of identity, has been subjected to radical critique. (Bailey 100)

Certainly, there is widespread resistance to the suggestion that there is no essential connection between genitalia and anatomical sex. Most people believe that a penis signifies a natural man and a vagina signifies a natural woman respectively. We believe in man and woman because we have direct and everyday access to at least one body and to genitalia that comprise but a small part of this corporeal entity. We regularly see our penis or vagina, and thereby have consistent and constant access to knowledge of our sex as man or woman accordingly. Additionally, most people believe there can only ever be two types of sexed beings because we also have access to representations of bodies and/or real bodies which reveal genitalia similar or different to our own, where such recognition of similarity and difference relies on an agreement to

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<sup>13</sup> The issue of gender is a different matter. Certainly, gender roles have been used to identify differences in sexual orientations both among those who engage in same-sex sexualised acts (Chauncey 12-23) as well as by those who have sought to police such acts (Adam 63, 87). Indeed, it has been argued that the category of homosexual helps construct a “deviant” space in which those who do not conform to normative gender roles prescribed by the heterosexist discourse can be excused and contained (McIntosh, “Homosexual”). In academic debates at least, the sex/gender discourse has been split, allowing gender to be understood as culturally and historically determined behaviour, as opposed to the biological determination of sex (De Cecco 60; Stein 31-32), a distinction Judith Butler describes as false (*Gender* 7, 11). However, as I have argued in this thesis, gender is not a concern in the will to know homosexual bodies (see p. 101, n. 4). People come out as “gay” because they recognise self to have the same genitalia as the body toward which they feel desire. The way gay-identifying people act out gender roles may or may not be similar, but, for homosexualisation to be a success, the sex of the bodies must be the same.

see sameness in all penises and a different sameness in all vaginas. The existence of the natural man and the natural woman, and the way the sexes are recognised through a focus on the body's reproductive organ, continue to be taken as fact (Ruse, "Sexual" 65).<sup>14</sup> However, significant evidence to the contrary exists. Despite cultural efforts to suggest and enforce otherwise, the body cannot remain the site of unquestionable knowledge of sex. Thankfully, "I" am not man irrefutably.

In his consideration of the scientific investigations into sexual orientation, Edward Stein exposes a number of discrepancies in the essentialist notion of a man/woman divide. Not only are such discrepancies revealed in the confusion that sometimes faces doctors in their attempts to identify anatomical sex through observation of uncertain genitalia (27-28), but also in the biological discovery of more types of sex than the typical norms of the XX (female) and XY (male) chromosomal structures allow (24-27). According to Stein, the sex of the body can be determined through a number of different methods including, but not limited to, "chromosomal makeup, internal genital structures, external genitalia, secondary sex characteristics, or some combination of these (and other) characteristics" (28). The sex of the body, therefore, is not natural and stable, but is affected by the process of sexing undertaken. Thus, while the presence of a penis or a vagina on the material body may be a popular method of assigning a male or female sex to the body, such knowledge does not emerge naturally or freely. It is neither absolute nor final. Rather, this method of determining the sex of the body relies on arbitrary and dubious scientific knowledge, the questionable truthfulness of visual observation<sup>15</sup> and the

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<sup>14</sup> An acceptance of the penis and the vagina as reproductive organs is the result of successful cultural discipline. Here, the biological narrative of reproduction takes precedence over other ways the "penis" and the "vagina" might be storied. Increasingly, however, these specific parts of the body are being read outside the narrative of reproduction not least because reproduction can and does occur elsewhere (Bersani, "Rectum" 322).

<sup>15</sup> Mariam Fraser considers the reliance of Western culture on the connection between what is visible and what is truth: "It is the force of this tradition which ensures that material bodies, encoded with the seeable signs of identity, are assumed to carry their 'truth,' overtly and irrefutably, on the surface of their skin" (110-11). Within such a culture, one only has to have access to the naked flesh of the body to be able to determine the sex of that body.

contestable validity of the two-and-only-two system of anatomical beings. Additionally, the assignment of a man/woman sex relies on a relentless disciplining of the body within dominant frameworks of knowledge about sex. In the very application of the label of “boy” or “girl” to the body resides the cultural demand that this named body will come to know and use its—now we must say his/her—genitalia in ways that reinforce the truthfulness of the existence of “I” as man or woman, but never as both.<sup>16</sup> Moreover, this demand for sex is enforced vehemently. In Western culture, the demand for physical conformity to the two-and-only-two system of sex is so vicious that “corrective” surgery is performed on bodies showing evidence of “ambiguous” genitalia (28-29).<sup>17</sup>

Apart from scientific disruptions to the naturalised man/woman divide, furthermore, the sexing of the body can be understood in relation to the cultural and historical location of the body. In Linda Nicholson’s account, the Western body has come to be identified as man or woman because of increased

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<sup>16</sup> Sex-reassignment does not offer a challenge to the demand to know self as sexed. While it is an option for any body that disapproves of the man-sexed position it has been given, the construction of a vagina to reveal self as truly woman reaffirms the normative man/woman binary. Such a transformation of the genitalia can help align feelings with what is visible, but it thereby also essentialises the connection between the interior and the exterior, and demands that a person must know self to be either man or woman without “confusion.” The person who chooses to have “her” penis-organ replaced with a vagina-organ does not become a BwS. On the contrary, the resulting body is absolutely with sex. It knows its wholeness through the construction of sex. The effect of the transformation is to re-discipline the body through continuing observation of the newly constructed genitalia.

<sup>17</sup> The most recent reaction to the destabilisation of the natural man/woman binary is a focus on the discovery of genes. In an attempt to deal with those bodies that do not conform to normative sexed positions in terms of their chromosomes and/or external genitalia, the search for genetically provable sex is underway. Indeed, now genetic sex is seen as the first stage of the process that turns an embryo into a child of a particular sex (Badinter 36). As Butler argues, however, such investigations take the man/woman binary as their starting point. Rather than question the validity of this binary, instead, the intention of the discourse of genetics is to find yet one more piece of evidence to prove sex as truth. Those bodies that do not comply with normative understandings of sex, therefore, are used to help establish a more coherent and stable support for the naturalised man/woman binary, while the flaws in the binary these bodies expose are displaced (*Gender* 135-41). This misuse of non-normative bodies to prove the truthful normality of the man/woman binary is evident in the kind of language used to discuss those bodies that are not, or do not agree to be, either man or woman. Such non-conforming bodies are, for example, “under-developed” or “poorly developed,” or they “fail to develop.” They have “unusual characteristics,” “defects” and “syndromes.” They are “less fertile” or “infertile” (Russell 291-94), as if to suggest that fertility is now a fair and unquestionable marker of the body’s normality with respect to sex.

industrialisation and the encouragement therein of a definitive split between the public workplace and the private home. There has been a shift away from viewing bodies as one type expressing different stages of development toward the notion of bodies as distinctly male or female. Recognition of a variety of differences between individual bodies has been replaced, therefore, with a singularly vast difference between two categories of bodies (46-48).<sup>18</sup> In certain cultural contexts, the fact that a body comes with a penis does not foreclose the possibility that it might be accepted as “woman” and permitted to participate in a sexualised union with a “man” within a discourse of heterosexuality (Rubin, “Traffic” 181-82). Reading the body as a product of history and culture permits an understanding of sex as determined by and dependent on the body’s existence in time and space. Here, the essentialist notion of a man/woman binary (and only ever these two types of bodies) becomes a way of thinking about the body, but a conceptualisation unable to remain consistent throughout history and across cultures, even as it continues to dominate in Western culture. Thus, sex can be removed from nature. It can be understood as the result of complex changes that have occurred and continue to occur in, around and on the corporeal form.<sup>19</sup>

Judith Butler offers important arguments to assist the body’s entry into a space of “mature” contestation over the assignment of a sex to its corporeal materiality. She begins:

The category of “sex” is, from the start, normative; it is what Foucault has called a “regulatory ideal.” In this sense, then, “sex” not only functions as a norm, but is part of a regulatory practice

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<sup>18</sup> An understanding that bodies are of the same type but of different gradations of sex along a male-female continuum does not undermine the normalised positioning of the female body as inferior. As Nicholson clarifies, even in this earlier view—a view that nonetheless continues to have credence today (Stein 31)—“the female body was seen as a lesser version of the male body” (46).

<sup>19</sup> The popular essentialist narrative of genetics does not dismiss such constructionist approaches. However, constructionist approaches are considered secondary to and dependent on essentialist factors and facts. For example, in recognising that environment can help trigger sexual development, Peter J. Russell emphasises how the pathways towards this development are, nonetheless, “under genetic control” (298-99).

that produces the bodies it governs, that is, whose regulatory force is made clear as a kind of productive power, the power to produce—demarcate, circulate, differentiate—the bodies it controls. Thus, “sex” is a regulatory ideal whose materialization is compelled, and this materialization takes place (or fails to take place) through certain highly regulated practices. In other words, “sex” is an ideal construct which is forcibly materialized through time. It is not a simple fact or static condition of a body, but a process whereby regulatory norms materialize “sex” and achieve this materialization through a forcible reiteration of those norms. (*Bodies* 1-2)

Her notion of performativity removes the body from nature and repositions it in an environment in which the body is involved in and surrounded by a cycle of repetitious rehearsals. For Butler, all constructionism is necessarily iterative (10). Indeed, as she seeks to explain further her theory of performativity, she iterates:

The “performative” dimension of construction is precisely the forced reiteration of norms. [...] Performativity is neither free play nor theatrical self-presentation; nor can it be simply equated with performance. [...]

Here, at the risk of repeating myself, I would suggest that performativity cannot be understood outside a process of iterability, a regularized and constrained repetition of norms. And this repetition is not performed *by* a subject; this repetition is what enables a subject and constitutes the temporal condition for the subject. (94-95; emphasis in the original)<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Butler's earlier exploration of performativity in *Gender Trouble* (171-80), first published in 1990, focused on gender performance and the processes of doing gender that work to suggest a being of gender. Her need to repeat herself when later revisiting the concept of performativity in *Bodies That Matter* seeks to respond to criticisms that her former theorisation suggested free will: that the subject can wake up in the morning and don any gender of choice (*Bodies* x). The repetition is unnecessary, however, because such criticisms are unfounded. Butler's

Nothing—not even the body—is constructed and finalised at the initial point of its birth.<sup>21</sup> Everything is produced, reproduced, then re-reproduced, and so on and so on *ad infinitum*. Specifically, the sexing of the body too is an act of performance. The body is always in the process of being (re)sexed. Even the notion of a naturalised sex relies on the eternal re-enactment of being man or woman to the point that such acting appears real.

These—and other—narratives of opposition to the conceptualisation of sex as nature suggest that sex does not exist in the reality of the whole body nor in any of its fragmented parts. The presence of a penis is no indication that a specific body is man. Only on reading that particular part of the body according to the rules of a normative discourse of sex does the body become man. Only when “I” continue to *do* man through using my penis within already learned and well-rehearsed modes of man-ness is the body able to sustain the position of “I *am* man.” Such attacks on the body’s natural sex force “man” and “woman” to deal with objections to the assumption of their naturalness. The aim of these attacks is to give the disciplined body the chance to be other than the kind of sex it already is. The hope is that those bodies born into a claustrophobic system of sex might outgrow their disciplining as man or woman, and begin to recognise the lie of the sex-truth they have been fed and encouraged (under the threat of punishment) to believe. If the sex of the body

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theorisation of performativity in *Gender Trouble* is clear in its suggestion of the constitution of the subject not prior to but through performance. In this earlier text, she has expressed clearly that “[...] acts, gestures, and desire produce the effect of an internal core or substance, but produce this *on the surface* of the body, through the play of signifying absences that suggest, but never reveal, the organizing principle of identity as a cause” (*Gender* 173; emphasis in the original).

<sup>21</sup> Indeed, within Butler’s analysis of the body, it is possible to argue that the body too is non-existent outside the myriad of discourses persistent in their attempts to produce and contest knowledge about it (*Bodies* 66-67). Butler’s deconstructionist approach verges on existentialism because the ontological status of the body is denied outside (gender) performativity (*Gender* 173). However, simultaneously, the reality of the body is saved from such a void by the eternity of constructionism. Butler has argued that the “essential incompleteness” of the category of woman allows this category to serve as a site of endless contestation (21). This essential incompleteness of the body enables her to write about the body and to rewrite it endlessly. The body’s ontological status is preserved, therefore, through its interpellation into compulsory performativity. Her unsettling of the matter of bodies does not imply that bodies do not/have no matter, but rather that they always matter in an eternity of different ways (*Bodies* 30).

is determined by history and culture, if it is fluid and changeable, we are called upon to use our bodies to alter the natural sex the body already has.

However, such attempts to deconstruct the essentialism of sex are not without problems. Despite the potentials in the anti-essentialist, pro-constructionist efforts to see the body otherwise, the resisting or resist-able body is a body produced already within normalised epistemological methods of surveillance of sex. A deconstructionist approach towards a natural sex does not eradicate the social demands for conformity within the man/woman paradigm. It does not erase the importance of cultural and historical specificities involved in the disciplining of bodies within this normative sexed framework. On the contrary, it insists that this cultural and historical process of sexing has occurred: the body is already boy-ed or girl-ed. The body capable of resisting compulsory sex, therefore, is a body that has been sexed already according to the rules of the normative discourse of sex, rules that any resistance to sex aims to work against. Thus, to call upon the body to participate in a process of liberation out of the disciplines to which it has been tied is to rely on the body already subjected to these disciplines, and to work within the very same discourse of corporeal subjectification one attempts to abandon. Any resistance to compulsory sex paradoxically relies on compulsory sexing.

To return to Butler, alongside the necessary repetitious construction of the sexed "I," Butler explores the existence of an excess: "the production of an 'outside,' a domain of unlivability and unintelligibility that bounds the domain of intelligible effects" (*Bodies* 22). Butler's insistence on the existence of an excess in any production of the body is the reason she sees a weakness in the Foucauldian concept of the disciplined subject, and why she turns to psychoanalysis to develop a more complete understanding of the construction of the subject (22; "Subjection"). As she seeks to establish a theoretical position that differs from the one she reads in Foucault, she considers it important to preserve

the outside, the site where discourse meets its limits, where the opacity of what is not included in a given regime of truth acts as a disruptive site of linguistic impropriety and unrepresentability, illuminating the violent and contingent boundaries of that normative regime precisely through the inability of that regime to represent that which might pose a fundamental threat to its continuity. (*Bodies* 53)

Her notion of “The Lesbian Phallus” seeks to offer an example of the kind of becoming that can emerge from refusing an essentialist and normative sexed position in favour of concentrating on what is excess. The lesbian phallus is a possibility not only because there is no guarantee the body will become docile to a system that demands the alignment of phallus with man (64), but also because, as Butler rightfully argues, the very fear of castration suggests that the phallus cannot be fixed permanently in place (101-02). In her analysis of the body, therefore, Butler adopts an approach taken by many who work within a queer framework. Through noting the severity of the culture’s efforts to force all bodies to conform to sex and gender norms, she aims to reveal the fundamental unnaturalness of sex and gender. Through focusing on the “persistence and proliferation” of positions that do not conform to these norms, she hopes to expose opportunities of resistance to the “intelligibility” the discourses of sex (and gender) claim for the body (*Gender* 24).

Certainly, if the phallus is imagined in relation to the lesbian subject, this offers the opportunity

to promote an alternative *imaginary* to a hegemonic imaginary and to show, through that assertion, the ways in which the hegemonic imaginary constitutes itself through the naturalization of an exclusionary heterosexual morphology. (Butler, *Bodies* 91; emphasis in the original)

However, the extent to which such a re-imagining can access the “outside” is questionable. To what extent do the phallus and the lesbian emphasise the excess of the body, if at all? How far can the body defined within the narrative

of a lesbian phallus become other than what is demanded of the body by the heterosexual discourse Butler consistently blames for normalising bodies in the first place?

Butler's hope in establishing the notion of the lesbian phallus is to contest "the legislation of compulsory heterosexuality" and "to open up a discursive site for reconsidering the tacitly political relations that constitute and persist in the divisions between body parts and wholes [...]" (74). Her reading of sex is a position marked out for the body through the subject's fantasy of approximating what has been defined as sex within the symbolic, where the "heterosexist constraint that compels the assumption of sex operates through the regulation of phantasmatic identification" (97). The point of dominance to which she refers is the male heterosexual, for this is where she reads the phallus to be located within Lacanian (and Freudian) theories. Certainly, therefore, within a framework in which the male heterosexual is aligned with the phallus, the suggestion of a lesbian phallus might offer a means of attacking the normativity and dominance of maleness and heterosexuality. However, what is missing in Butler's assessment of sex and sexuality throughout this text is recognition of the presence and participation of the normative discourse of homosexuality in the disciplining of bodies.

In her vision of a lesbian phallus, Butler relies too much on the power of this (homosexual) abject not just to distort, but also to alter fundamentally the terrain of the dominant. She makes the claim that a return of the abject homosexual "would refigure, redistribute, and resignify the constituents of that [heterosexual] symbolic and, in this sense, constitute a subversive rearticulation of that symbolic" (109). She reaffirms her support for a resisting homosexuality when she insists: "The resignification of gay and lesbian sexuality through and against abjection is itself an unanticipated reformulation and proliferation of the symbolic itself" (110). Butler's argument in *Bodies That Matter* is that if the body is accepted as having been sexed through normalising processes, it is clear that "normative heterosexuality is *partially* responsible for the kind of form that contours the bodily matter of sex" (17; emphasis added). She dismisses

heterosexuality as the only “regulatory regime operative in the production of bodily contours” and considers it sensible to ask “what other regimes of regulatory production contour the materiality of bodies” (17). However, the partial responsibility of normative heterosexuality gets her full focus throughout the entirety of her analysis. She stops short of considering that homosexuality too is one of the other regimes of discipline.

I am not offering any attack on her work that Butler is unaware of. On the contrary, Butler clearly recognises that lesbianism is not free from discursive constraints but is “as constructed as any other form of sexuality within contemporary sexual regimes” (85; emphasis in the original). She acknowledges the fictional context in which she works, expressing doubt about the reality of both the phallus and the lesbian category (57, 85). In between her moments of believing in the ecstatic joys of the resignification proposed by the lesbian phallus, she identifies some of the problems involved in bringing identities and sexualised practices under the control of the law (109-10). In addition, she finishes this particular section of *Bodies That Matter* (“Identification, Prohibition, and the Instability of ‘Positions’”) by noting how “the legitimation of homosexuality will have to resist the force of normalization for a queer resignification of the symbolic to expand and alter the normativity of its terms” (111). She then concedes that heterosexuality is not always or necessarily “rooted in such a full-scale repudiation and rejection of homosexuality,” hence her preference for the phrase “normative” heterosexuality (111). However, she fails to apply this same kind of differentiation between heterosexuality and normative heterosexuality to the homosexuality she assumes to be rooted so deeply in oppression. There is no emphasis in Butler’s analysis in this text that homosexuality too can become normative: that there is a discipline of homonormativity. Instead, she uses an underlying dominance of heterosexuality to guide her towards the construction of a lesbian phallus position that, in the end, is no less fictional than the one she aims to leave behind. Butler’s notion of performativity, therefore, does not lack “social and historical specificity,” as Lois McNay has claimed it does (178).

Rather, it is located very clearly within a social and historical context of seeing homosexuality as subordinate to heterosexuality, a view I dispute in my focus on the subordination of the body to compulsory sexualisation, homo, hetero or otherwise.

Butler's best hope, therefore, is that bodies will err in the process of their performances; that their materialisation as normative sexed subjects will fail to take place, thus revealing "man" and "woman" to be different from how they appear to be. This approach does not attack the normativity and dominance of the discourses of sex and sexualisation. There is no excess to the space of "man" or "woman" in any re-performance of these categorisations of sex. There is no sense of becoming post-sex in Butler's analysis. On the contrary, her analysis works within the discourses of sex and sexuality to produce a body sexed as woman and sexualised as lesbian. The heteronormative imaginary on offer in the mirror as utopia is displaced through her construction of an "alternative *imaginary*" to offer a new way of looking at the "unrepresentable" body (*Bodies* 91; emphasis in the original). However, the new form of identification she offers provides no adequate or thorough consideration of how all bodies are disciplined into categories of sex according to expectations of reproductive capacity.<sup>22</sup> Instead, Butler merely replaces one utopian identification with another. Not even a promoted tacit politics of difference can guarantee the end to categorisations of different bodies, because knowing difference fails to prevent us from thinking of bodies in terms of inside versus outside, us versus them, the abnormal in opposition to the normal. It merely mutates these differences as it mutates knowability of the bodies involved. Thus, Butler's resisting body is imprisoned within a metanarrative of

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<sup>22</sup> Elsewhere, in an interview conducted by Peter Osborne and Lynne Segal, Butler has outlined the need for consideration of how the body is sexed with reference to its expected capacity to reproduce ("Extracts From"). Here, she makes clear her position that knowledge of the body as sexed and sexualised with reference to reproduction produces simplistic and normative positions for all bodies to exist in. However, such a critique of the sexing process is not evident in her attempt in *Bodies That Matter* to construct the lesbian phallus. Instead, she merely seeks to rewrite the results of the sexing process to produce a different, but similarly normative kind of body.

performativity in which it is compelled to rehearse over and over the sexed and sexualised positions already available to it, but from which it can never escape.

I find it depressing that much of what passes as radical (in academic thought) these days does not envisage the end of sex.<sup>23</sup> If Elizabeth Grosz is to be believed,

In dissolving oppositional categories we cannot simply ignore them, vowing never to speak in their terms again. This is neither historically possible nor even desirable insofar as these categories must be engaged with in order to be superseded. (*Volatile* 24)

Sandra Lipsitz Bem has reneged on her earlier desire for such an ending, calling instead for the volume of deconstructionism to be turned up, not down.

She concedes:

In my heart of hearts, I am still deeply attracted to the principle of dismantling both gender polarization and compulsory heterosexuality by trying to make the male-female distinction as minimal a presence in human social life as, say, eye color or foot size. At the same time, however, I have also come to think that this goal is an unreachable utopian fantasy. After all, not only does the sex of the body (by which I mean the biology of reproduction) matter more than eye color or foot size, from which it follows that there is probably more of a biological limit on how minimal a presence sex could come to have. In addition, history probably imposes a limit as well—unless, of course, we can all manage to come down with amnesia for the many cultural and historical associations between male/female, masculine/feminine and heterosexual/homosexual. (330)

The lack of radicalism predates the likes of Grosz and Bem. In a much earlier attempt to undo the assumption of uniformity in the sex/gender system, Gayle

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<sup>23</sup> My depression resembles that of Stevi Jackson, who writes: “I find it depressing that much of what passes as radical these days does not envisage the end of gender hierarchy or the collapse of institutionalized heterosexuality, but simply a multiplying of genders and sexualities or movement between them” (80).

Rubin asserted that “any society *will* have some systematic ways to deal with sex [...]” (“Traffic” 168; emphasis added). Relying on sexual anatomy and the “capacity and necessity [of humans] to create a sexual world” (168) as absolute facts, Rubin called for a reorganisation of the sex/gender system by means of political action through which “an androgynous and gender-less (though not sexless) society” could be established (204).

An interest in unpacking the current sex system, such as we have seen in feminist theory over the past thirty years, has nothing to do with wishing to displace knowledge of the body produced within the discourse of sex. On the contrary, a space of difference between men and women is to be maintained even within the deconstructionist attacks. A radical vision of a world without the unfairness of sex is overruled and undermined by the demand that we focus on the unfairness produced in the space between these two naturalised types of bodies. Such a lack of radicalism suggests the impossibility of being without sex. “I” am man no longer because of nature, but now because of biology, reproduction, culture and history. Accordingly, the man-ness of “I” must be changed—within culture and history, at least—to provide a more equitable relationship between man and woman, but the man-sexed body of “I” must remain as real. To be without sex is now too utopian because sex is unquestionably more important than most other aspects of our life. As Bem’s excuse for the withdrawal from a radical rethinking of bodies shows, the body’s capacity to reproduce is paramount. The body must be man-ed or woman-ed because it is important for the body to know its place within a culture of incessant reproduction.

I am not denying the existence of a world in which bodies that reveal evidence of “having” a penis are treated differently from those who occupy the alternative space of being “without” in the normative male/female sex binary. The reality of a patriarchal system lies in the recognition of differences in the treatment of bodies, and is a means by which we are able to highlight injustices handed down to bodies with a vagina by bodies with a penis. However, there is also a danger in allowing the narrative of patriarchy to essentialise the

categories of man and woman through suggesting that the oppression of the latter is caused by the superior position of the former. Such a notion of patriarchy only manages to reaffirm the inequities that exist between bodies “with” penis and those “without” because it (re)produces bodies as “man” and “woman” accordingly. There is a vast difference between stating that a patriarchal system is the cause of oppression of women and claiming that one way of addressing the widespread oppression of bodies with a vagina is to consider the existence of a patriarchal system.

The concept of patriarchy, therefore, needs to be rewritten to avoid a simplistic universalising of power for all men over all women. Some male-d bodies are unable to reach or benefit from the position of superiority the patriarchal narrative assigns to or assumes for them. Equally, some female-d bodies denied any position of power within this narrative nevertheless manage to achieve such a position. The narrative of patriarchy needs to be understood as a way of speaking about an exercise of power that can advantage some bodies in relation to other bodies. The ability to know or perceive self as superior is not restricted to those bodies that come “with” penis.<sup>24</sup> Indeed, the narrative of a patriarchy today may have more to do with capital and wealth rather than any assumption of a biological sex (Hennessy 170-72).<sup>25</sup>

Foucault once asked whether we truly need a true sex. He immediately answered his own question in the affirmative, not because he believed this to be the case, but because Western societies have deemed the existence of a true sex to be more necessary than “the reality of the body and the intensity of its

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<sup>24</sup> In his attempt to displace masculinity as an identity of men, Matthew Shepherd has suggested that masculinity should be understood as a practice employable by “either sex” as “a way of exercising power based on the discursive construction of a (‘masculine’) superior and a (‘feminine’) inferior that encourages and perpetuates sexual differences in power so that men as an apparent ‘class’ can exercise power over women as an apparent ‘class.’” (177). This is the view of patriarchy I take, albeit that “either sex” needs to be transformed into “any body” if we are to refute the essentialism of the two-and-only-two system of sex.

<sup>25</sup> Like Rosemary Hennessy, Butler also recognises the importance of resisting “the colonizing epistemological strategy that would subordinate different configurations of domination under the rubric of a transcultural notion of patriarchy.” An understanding of how all women are oppressed by all men because of their sex/gender fails to take into account how one’s position in the culture is affected also by other discourses such as race, class and sexuality (*Gender* 46).

pleasures" (*Herculine* vii). This critique of Western culture's focus on sex rather than on bodies and pleasures accords with his earlier call to arms in the name of the latter at the end of the first volume of his *The History of Sexuality*. If we are to think seriously about the eradication of the sex binary—an eradication that will have enormous anarchical effects on the way bodies live out their lives—there is a greater incentive to adhere to the Foucauldian genealogical system through which bodies can be "understood in relation to the production, transmission, reception, and legitimation of knowledge about sexuality and sex" (Bailey 102). However, we must avoid the pitfalls of any institutionalised discipline—even the discipline of cultural studies in which I work—that has come to rely on the very signifiers of "social subjectivity" that it simultaneously claims to abhor (Bhabha, *The Location* 176), sex included. We must allow a space in which the body can experience pleasures without recourse to a discourse of compulsory sex. We need to permit the body the right to remain silent about this thing called sex so that the sexing of the body can no longer be repeated, rehearsed or performed, and so that sex can no longer be seen and therefore constitute knowledge of the body. Specifically, we need to consider that sex may play no part in the moment when body and body have "sex."

#### **6.4 Undoing "Sex"**

"Sex" for a BwS is an impossibility. The body with an awareness of "sex" is a subject with knowledge of what he/she is doing in the moment of "sex" and how he/she comes to be doing such an act. A man understands he has a penis, for example, and understands what this penis signifies in terms of his capacity to be sexual. He understands the relevance of this penis to the act of "sex." Furthermore, such a sexually aware body is a subject knowledgeable of the role "sex" plays in the construction of self after the event. In contrast, a BwS has no knowledge of being man-ed with penis for it has no sex. It has no knowledge of the signification of that particular part of its flesh to its position in the culture. Use of that particular organ to (re)affirm the body's position as sexual is beyond the imagination, let alone capability, of a BwS. Such a use is

also beyond this body's will, for where there is a will to understand what this particular piece of flesh signifies in terms of a sexualised position, there exists for the body a will to knowledge that is incompatible with becoming a BwS. A BwS is anti-knowledge and anti-"I." It therefore must be anti-"sex."

This is not a call for chastity or reclamation of virginity. A BwS is no religious dream that enables the body that has sinned to resurrect its innocence and purity through a promise never to sin again. On the contrary, a BwS is quite capable of doing those things normatively defined as sin or "sex." Indeed, it can do them with pleasure. As Sedgwick contemplates the bleakness of Western culture—a bleakness I share—she urges a need to recapture or reinvent, to become creative beings whose creativity and artistry are not tied to capitalist or state imperatives and gains. Such creativity offers a means to escape the bleakness. Sexualised pleasures are not removed from the possible tools of creativity. Indeed, they are at the forefront (*Tendencies* 18-20). A BwS is a creative body capable of experiencing all the pleasures of the flesh we might currently define as "sex" and more. The problem is to ascertain how the body with no knowledge of sex/"sex" can continue to enjoy intimate corporeal pleasures with other bodies. The answer lies in a disorganisation of "sex." Where a BwS differs from the body that has sex and does "sex" is in the former's experiencing of corporeal pleasures without the need to attach memory and meaning to these pleasures so that they can be b(r)ought into an economy of sexuality with all its bourgeois trappings of commercialism, discipline and an Enlightened knowing (of) self. A BwS does not desire the kind of organisation that en-/disables the body to be known as a sexualised being. A BwS gets its pleasures from participating in organ-less "sex."

The body is organised from birth. To organise is "to form as or into a whole consisting of interdependent or coordinated parts, [...] to assume organic structure" ("Organise"). To be organised is to accept this unity and to accept the regulation of one's organic materiality accordingly. To be organised sexually means one must accept unity of the body through paradoxical acceptance of the significance of its fragmented parts (Butler, *Gender* 146).

Among others, the discipline of psychoanalysis desires and compels us to undertake such imaginary completion of the body. According to the psychoanalytical conceptualisation of the sexualised body, our sexual desires are considered first and foremost. These “instincts” have been “auto-erotic” in childhood, but emerge in puberty to find their object of desire (Freud, “Transformations” 127). The sexual instincts drive and propel the body into a sexual culture where the body comes to occupy the position of “I.” Within the psychoanalytical narrative of the subject, “I” cannot be unless the body has a daddy and a mommy with whom it can identify, unless it has an understanding of how its birth began with their sex and “sex.”<sup>26</sup> “I” am born not only with, but also through a penis and a vagina of sex and “sex.” Through the implantation of the sexual desire within the corporeal frame, the body is compelled to have a will to know “Which sex am I?” Through the imposition of the necessities of civilised existence on the body, “I” must ensure the body’s corporeal performances comply with normative models of “sex.” The compulsion speaks loudly: “Take a look: daddy has the penis; mommy goes without.” This is the Oedipal framework. It has all the answers concerning sex and the sexual. It is here where every body must seek out its sex and “sex.” It is here, therefore, that the tragedy of the tale of compulsory sexualisation begins.

As a subject of the daddy/mommy culture, the body has a necessary relationship with the phallus. Grosz explains this relationship:

By means of the phallus, the subject comes to occupy the position of “I” in discourse; by means of its signification as lack, the subject can use language in place of a direct or unmediated relation to the Real, a relation that it must relinquish. (*Jacques* 125)<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> I use the terms “daddy” and “mommy” throughout this thesis to signify the subject of the father and the subject of the mother respectively as these subjects exist in the normative family system, a system established, demanded and sustained by the culture’s compulsory Oedipalisation of the body. Deleuze and Guattari use these terms in their analysis and criticism of psychoanalysis and the Oedipal narrative in *Anti-Oedipus*.

<sup>27</sup> The Real is not reality. It is the outside and pre-reality. Psychoanalytical theory positions babies in the realm of the Real for they are before organisation. The Real is a pure state, inaccessible to those who have developed beyond “baby” and into a state of wholeness

The consequence of relinquishing a relation to the Real—the consequence of the body’s civilisation into “I”—is the interpellation of the body into systems of desires that produce only lack. We live with repression and we long for freedom. In Lacanian terms, our wholeness depends on the attainment of some other, where such completion is thwarted always by the gap that exists between the other and self. We may want, but we can never have. We may desire, but we will never experience the joys of eternal fulfilment. The discipline of psychoanalysis insists there is no escape from the demands and failures of our sexual desires. Our only hope is to be able to align these “instincts” with objects that do not lead us astray from civilisation. We must listen to the masters of this discourse, for they are capable of keeping us on a normative sexual track.

Foucault revealed a wariness of psychoanalysis and its disciplinary effects. His investigation into the construction of sexualised subjects offers a specific attack on the assumption that psychoanalysis was rightfully the discourse to end all discourses on the body (Black 42). If Foucault was harshly critical of psychoanalysis in particular, it is an attack many non-heteronormative subjects might support. Understandably, homosexuals in particular have expressed a concern over the right of psychoanalysis to take charge of the meanings of sexual behaviours and identities (Adam 87-88; Cruikshank 7-8). After all, psychoanalysis has a recognised history and a continuing present of using its findings to effect discrimination against and treatment of non-heteronormative behaviours and bodies (Adam 17). Not even a more tolerant form of psychoanalysis put into practice—one that readily steers the subject towards an acceptance of his homosexual orientation (Ruse, *Homosexuality* 62)—can placate a Foucauldian concern over how psychoanalytical theories assist in the construction of disciplined sexualised beings specifically and of docile subjects in more general terms. The suggestion that psychoanalysis should be given greater respect because of its insight into the necessary

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dependent on one’s existence in reality. The Real can be accessed from within reality only through representation, but such representation is never the Real (Grosz, *Jacques* 32-35).

connection between homosexuality and heterosexuality (Fuss, *Essentially* 109-10) cannot compensate for the damage done in the light of applications of psychoanalytical theories to construct and control the normal sexualised self. Such a history of damage, all too recent for too many bodies (my own included), cannot be forgotten easily.<sup>28</sup>

In *Anti-Oedipus* and *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari too are serious about the need for a rejection of psychoanalysis. In Deleuzoguattarian terms, psychoanalysis is a force of power that seeks to deal with the subject who has been unleashed from the confines of the family environment by reinscribing this subject back within the family system (Holland 765). The Oedipal framework disciplines us to think of the body always in terms of its contexts in or outside the familial sphere, rather than as a collection of multiple fragmented parts that clearly offer a critique of this enforced simplification of life (Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus* 14-15). The suggestion that we are products of the familial environment alone is a naïve way of understanding the complexities of our lived experiences.<sup>29</sup> For Deleuze and Guattari, therefore,

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<sup>28</sup> It is important to clarify, however, that the assumption that Freud, in particular, was anti-homosexual reveals the popularisation of a conservative Americanisation of his works (Fletcher 90-92; Watney, "Psychoanalysis" 27-28). In fact, Freud refused to recognise homosexuality as in need of special attention (Wotherspoon, "From Sub-culture" 61). Moreover, he rejected outright the belief that homosexuality was a condition deserving of criminal sanction (Fuss, "Pink" 2). He stood against any moralisation of psychoanalytical theory with the aim of curing the homosexual specifically (Abelove 1-3). Equally, however, he was against the usage of the "Third Sex" notion as a means of seeking changes in legal prohibitions against same-sex "sex" (15-17). In recognising the differing interpretations people had of their inversion, and in noting how inversion could be fixed, fluid or situational (Freud, "Sexual" 46-48), he cannot be linked to those realists/essentialists who insist that "social categories [...] reflect an underlying reality of difference" (Epstein 13). The decision by the American Philosophical Association to remove homosexuality from its list of illnesses in 1973 mirrored the demand by the gay liberation movement at the time that homosexuals should be recognised as an exclusive minority. Freud, however, rejected such an essentialising of the homosexual type (Abelove 18-20). It is for this reason that Henry Abelove, among others, insists the works of Freud (and psychoanalysis in general) need to be revisited (xiii).

<sup>29</sup> Such a simplistic understanding is not removed when the meaning of "family" is expanded to include alternative forms beyond the traditional heterosexist mother-father-children model. As Weeks, Heaphy and Donovan have argued, "despite the dramatic liberalisation of attitudes in recent years, same sex relationships continue to be defined by, and against, the heterosexual assumption" (viii). This is partly due to the fact that legally, socially and morally same-sex families continue to be governed by the "heterosexual assumption" (39-43). However, those involved in same-sex families also tend to replicate the structures of the heteronormative family

Oedipalisation is a danger. It signifies the death of our pleasures and desires as it brings about a colonisation of the interior. In response, Deleuze and Guattari aim to unleash non-organised desires that encourage becomings other than those defined according to family logic. When the body can displace its compulsory interpellation into the Oedipal framework, when it can see its desires and pleasures not as lack but as productive and fulfilling in themselves, then the body lives in a “real” organ-less place, where “everything is possible, everything becomes possible” (27). As Mark Seem points out in his introduction to *Anti-Oedipus*, the approach of Deleuze and Guattari is to encourage “mankind” (sic)—let us now turn this into “every body”—to strip itself of all “anthropomorphic and anthropological armouring, all myth and tragedy” (xx). In becoming bodies without organs, we become discarnate, thus permitting a glimpse of what lies outside the reality in which all human bodies are produced as disciplined and obedient subjects.

We should not assume, however, that our interpellation into a culture of lack and need, and into the Oedipal narrative, is beyond our control. Neither capitalism nor Freud is exclusively to blame. As Deleuze and Guattari insist: “the masses were not innocent dupes; at a certain point, under a certain set of conditions, they *wanted* fascism [...]” (*Anti-Oedipus* 29; emphasis in the original). In his preface to *Anti-Oedipus*, Foucault identifies a kind of fascism much greater, more insidious than the one Western culture likes to locate and isolate too readily within the individualised bodies of others, namely “Hitler” or “Mussolini.” The fascism of every body “causes us to love power, to desire the very thing that dominates and exploits us” (xiii).<sup>30</sup> Western subjects behave in

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in respect to the relationships between adults and children. The importance of biological connections between the adult and the child, and issues of sex/sexuality, for example, are not removed from this alternative family structure (174-76). Moreover, the promotion of homosexual families sustains the cultural myth that “family” is the only means through which a society can function. It continues to normalise the importance of a “stable” parent to the child (Millbank 13), ignoring both the diverse environments in which the body resides and the problems that exist for many bodies (children and adults) within any kind of family structure.

<sup>30</sup> In Foucault’s assessment, fascism is one of the three adversaries confronted by Deleuze and Guattari’s *Anti-Oedipus*. The other two adversaries are those who believe in truth and those who interpret desire with reference to lack.

fascistic ways, oblivious to the existence of such practices of fascism within the everyday.

This fascism governs the kind of “sex” the body can have, everyday. It dictates the kind of “sex” that “I” can desire. Once the body has been homosexualised, for example, “I” know what “sex” my body must engage in and enjoy if it is to maintain the stability of the homosexual “I.” For the homosexualised male-d body, the penis must remain firmly in its place. It must remain unquestionably real. The ability to connect the penis of “I” as man with another man’s penis to attain sexualised pleasure is a compulsory part of being a homosexual. The homosexual “I” must desire the penis of a man, not the vagina of a woman. “I” must discipline the body to engage in pleasures of the penis alone. “I” must cum again alongside, before, on top of and inside bodies similar to the body of “I,” in the sense that these other bodies too must come/cum with penis.<sup>31</sup> A constant ejaculation of pleasures at the site of the penis is necessary for the homosexual “I” to survive. Undoubtedly, such constant engagement in acts of “sex” can prove immensely pleasurable for the body, but these are fascistic pleasures all the same. With wilful consent, the homosexual “I” desires that “sex” dominate the body.

In his desire to establish a preference for pleasure, Michael Bronski discusses the implications of “misrule” on “civilisation.” He asserts that misrule has the potential to disrupt society (228) and to bring about changes in laws (231). Bronski concedes, as I have argued elsewhere (Durber, “Mardi Gras”), that parody and misrule are controlled, disciplined environments (229). However, in contrast to my conclusions, he is adamant that the pleasures of homosexuality can disrupt and destabilise the civilisation of normative

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<sup>31</sup> “Cum” is an alternative spelling for the colloquial use of “come” to indicate the noun “semen” (“Cum”). Additionally, it is used colloquially as an alternative spelling for the verb “to ejaculate.” I use “cum” to emphasise the importance the discourse of sexuality places on the emission of semen from and into bodies in order to reaffirm and reproduce the sustainability of human life. Both homosexual men and heterosexual men rely on ejaculation from the penis to indicate and prove their sexualised position. Ejaculation offers real, observable evidence to prove the ability of the body to be aroused by images and bodies appropriate to the sexual orientation in which it has been located. In the emission of sperm is life as (hu)man and the survival, therefore, of every sexualised “I.”

heterosexuality: “The most essential cultural reversal [...] is that homosexuality is evidence that sexual activity can exist independently from reproduction” (233). Doing “sex” to introduce a temporary element of misrule to the kind of “sex” accepted and applauded in civilisation, however, provokes no significant disruption to the culture’s conceptualisation and control of the body and its pleasures. Firstly, there is the risk that “sex” for pleasure becomes the controlling force of the body through an essentialist assertion that “humans have an *instinctual* desire toward pleasure” (241; emphasis added). Moreover, a “sex”-for-pleasure approach reveals the limits of sexual misrule because there is no space within such misrule for the intimate activities of the body to exist independently of “sex.”

But what of anal “sex”? Does not a man’s willingness to “receive” the penis constitute an act of resistance to normative definitions of “sex”? Kippax and Smith argue that “anal intercourse is not only constructed through bodies engaging in the act, but also through the multiple social contexts in which it is represented” (414). Anal penetration is more than just a penis inside the anus. Those who participate in this act use different scripts to define the experience (420). For some people, the anus signifies a site of pleasure. For others, as is the case in the storying of HIV/AIDS as a sign of divine retribution, it signifies death. For many of the interviewees in Kippax and Smith’s analysis, it is about power (418). In the culture, however, it is taken for granted that penetration of the anus by the penis signifies an act of “sex.” Any body discovered engaged in such an act would have a hard time seeking to deny this, given that the definition of this particular sexualised activity as “sex” is beyond the control of any individual body (Halley 358-59).

The gay liberation movement too has not disputed this “fact.” On the contrary, sodomy—often naively conflated with homosexuality, thereby reaffirming the truthful existence of a special class of “sodomites” (Jonathan Ned Katz, “Coming” 222-23)—has been identified by this movement as a private and legitimate matter between consenting homosexual adults. In its insistence on the anus as a legitimate site of sexual pleasure, this movement

has made no request for the liberation of the body from the discourse of “sex.” Rather, it has reaffirmed the right of the discourse of “sex” to have power over the body and its pleasures through normalising the interpretation of one particular part of the body (penis) entering another particular part of another body (anus) as “sex.” To maintain anal penetration within the discourse of “sex,” even if it is a resisting form of “sex,” upholds the natural existence of the “I” capable of knowing “sex” through surveillance of what the body does, and thus prevents the very subject of “sex” from being destroyed (Bersani, “Rectum” 328).<sup>32</sup>

We might say, then, that the homosexual appears as the “pervert” of Deleuze and Guattari’s critique when they write:

The neurotic is trapped within the residual or artificial territorialities of our society, and reduces all of them [...] to Oedipus as the ultimate territoriality [...]. The pervert is someone who takes the artifice seriously and plays the game to the hilt: if you want them, you can have them—territorialities infinitely more artificial than the ones that society offers us, totally artificial new families, secret lunar societies. (*Anti-Oedipus* 35).

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<sup>32</sup> Furthermore, within gay culture, the demand for de-effemination of the “passive” insertee involved in the act of anal “sex” has been extremely loud. For a man to be fucked, it is claimed, is not to become (like) woman. On the contrary, the reality of man remains throughout and beyond the act of anal “sex”: one should “take it like a man.” Rubin understands the “adoption of masculinity” among gay men to signify both a rejection of “traditional equations of male homosexual desire with effeminacy” and evidence of “a slowly evolving distinction between homosexual object choice and cross-gender or transgender behavior” (“Sexual Traffic” 69). In Jamie Gough’s assessment, the masculinised gay man replaces the type of desired object once available in the form of men who had “sex” with men but who did not translate their sexualised activities into a lifestyle of effeminated homosexuality. With the increase in visibility of homosexuality, homosexuals “*became not just the desirers but the desired*” (130; emphasis in the original). In Bersani’s critique (“Rectum” 313-15), however, the adoption or reclamation of “macho masculinity” in gay culture does nothing to undermine the notion of masculinity that sustains the heterosexual man’s dominance. Masculinity on the gay body is either seen (by heterosexual culture) as a desperate attempt to replicate true masculinity or (by gay culture) as sexual. The latter interpretation ensures that the “logic of homosexual desire includes the potential for a loving identification with the gay man’s enemies” (314). The “straight-acting” gay man—who represents the widely expressed and widely accepted anti-femme, anti-fag sentiment to be found in gay internet chat rooms—reasserts traditional gender positions. Like the separation of the heterosexual man from any homosexualised activities, the masculinised gay man too offers a reaction to the “insecurities generated by economic crisis and the impact of right-wing propaganda” (Gough 131).

The heterosexual is the “neurotic,” for he/she is trapped in the artificiality of the Oedipal. It is where he/she is born. It is where he/she must remain in order to reproduce self both in the form of the heterosexualised body and in the image of the child(ren) that emerge through compulsory reproduction. The homosexual is the “pervert” because he initially recognises the artificiality of the artificial and yet seeks to create even greater forms of artificiality for the benefit of self. The homosexual subject too sees the act of “sex” with same-sexed bodies as a need. He too cannot live without it. He needs reproduction of his own homosexuality to sustain the homosexual “I.”

It is, however, the becoming-queerer—and becoming-endlessly-queerer still—that is the most “schizophrenic” in this “family.” Deleuze and Guattari continue:

As for the schizo, continually wandering about, migrating here, there, and everywhere as best he can, he plunges further and further into the realm of deterritorialization, reaching the furthest limits of the decomposition of the socius on the surface of his own body without organs. (35)

In coming to terms with self as being a homosexual, one spends one’s past, present and future time seeking to discover and then maintain the stability of the homosexual “I.” One seeks an eternal memorisation of “I” so that the desired machinery of repression can take control of the body in exchange for a subjectivity believed to be free, but one that, in fact, is tied to a narrative of repression and liberation, and thereby forever under the surveillance and control of the culture’s will to know. In contrast, the becoming-queerer body is the wanderer and the tester of the boundaries. If the subject is, in Lacanian terms, the “locus or site of the articulation (*énonciation*) of representations, inscriptions, meanings, and significances,” and not the master of these discourses (Grosz, *Jacques* 148; emphasis in the original), then the abject to this is the non-subject and the non-being. The becoming-queerer than “I am” is the demise of all recognition of “I”: the becoming body without master, psychoanalytical or otherwise, and master to none. A BwS is queerer

disorganised flesh interacting with flesh for reasons unknown. It does not know what “sex” is. Neither the self nor any other can have knowledge of this body and its pleasures, for such a becoming body is without the neuroticism and perversion of a knowable and known “I.”

In becoming a BwS, it is possible to undo the control the discourse of “sex” has over the body because “sex” is not intimate, pleasurable interplay between bodies. Rather, it is the arbitrary categorisation of such interplay. “Sex” is not a neutral label attached to a particular set of practices; it is part of the discursive regulation of these practices. Any deployment of the body to help expand legitimate forms of “sex” participates in the expansion of corporeal control desired by the culture.<sup>33</sup> The flesh, the limbs, the orifices of the body can and do take on different meanings, given different historical, cultural and corporeal contexts. In the fragmented space of the postmodern, the fixed state of every tiny part of the body is in dispute and up for grabs. However, we must be wary of seeking to take a firm hold of every part of the body again within a normative discourse of “sex.”

The sexualised pleasures of a BwS are not organised through an insistence that the penis (or vagina) must be involved in the attainment and validation of such pleasures. Nor are these pleasures organised through an

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<sup>33</sup> The sadomasochistic (s&m) scene offers an example of an attempt to focus on pleasure as opposed to procreation. Here, issues of gender and sex might be considered subordinate to the relations of power played out between participating bodies. Robert Connell has expressed a concern that s&m practices play with “sex” in normative structures of power: “Thus, though power is celebrated, it also circulates” (“Democracies” 393). While s&m sexual practices may permit different bodies to occupy positions of top (superior) and bottom (subordinate) temporarily, the fact that these practices rely on a re-enactment of normative power relations suggests they might not survive any real and radical reconsideration of such relations (Bersani, “Foucault”). Furthermore, it is questionable whether s&m sexual practices offer any disruption to the culture’s demand for “sex.” Foucault argues that the production of pleasure in s&m practices helps separate pleasure from “sex” (“Sex” 165). He also suggests, however, that the purpose of the s&m game is “to make use of every part of the body as a sexual instrument” (“Sexual Choice” 152). Such support for the sexualisation of the entire body as a site of pleasure reveals the kind of epistemic shift away from sexual identity to bodies that Butler has critiqued (“Revisiting” 16-17). In this shift, “sex” continues to be real and important. Indeed, the s&m scene relies on “sex” to help displace the normative positions of sexed bodies and to liberate such bodies from normative systems of domination and submission. For those who participate in s&m practices as a way of undermining normalised power relations, pleasure and/or power through “sex” become the new mode of understanding, and therefore regulating, the body.

insistence that any use of this particular part of the body for the purpose of pleasure necessarily indicates the occurrence of “sex.” A BwS is far more “crowded” than this. In the Deleuzoguattarian sense, to be part of a crowd, always on the periphery and never in the centre, is a “very good schizo dream” because such a position is volatile and unpredictable (*Thousand* 29). It is molecular, becoming. For the body that resides always at the extremities of discourse and the culture, the pleasures in the uncertainty of its movements are intense. It never knows where it is heading nor from where it has come. Its life is not interested in histories and futures of being. It experiences pleasures not so that it can be known as a particular sex, nor so that it can know “sex,” but simply in the moment. A BwS is a space of creative becoming outside the demand that its material form and its corporeal activities be proof of the knowledge of who/what it is. It has no interest in a sexualisation of self or its acts. Indeed, any attempt at sexualisation is beyond the space of silent unknowability in which a BwS resides.

### **6.5 A BwS: A Lengthy Climax without Organs**

What is left for the body without the disciplines of sex and “sex”? Certainly, it is not no body at all. In their construction of a “Body without Organs” (BwO), Deleuze and Guattari do not destroy the subject. How can they? How can anyone destroy what is necessary for destruction to occur? The subject is proactive in any act of cultural terrorism, even if the subject itself is the target of the destructive attack. The establishment of a theory or a practice—the two are not mutually exclusive—through which the sexed and sexualised body is dismantled demands the presence of a body to write and articulate such a deconstructive theory and practice. Even as I suggest the possibility of a space in which there is no body of “I,” therefore, there is still a body here in this becoming-queerer moment.

Yet, the subject of Deleuze and Guattari is not the psychoanalytical subject built and controlled through internalities. On the contrary, the intention of the Deleuzoguattarian attack is to “pulverize the traditional notion of the

subject as the ultimate essence of individuation, pre-reflexively contemplating its own existence [...]” (Bains 930; emphasis in the original). Nor is their subject disciplined by uncontrollable exterior influences. The concern that poststructuralist thought has established another metanarrative of subject construction through its reliance on exterior forces of discipline is expressed by Butler in her criticism of Foucault for failing to “accommodate the vulnerability or the unpredictability of subject constitution” in his earlier works (“On Speech” 164). Certainly, *Discipline and Punish* places an emphasis on the way the subject is produced within time and space. Foucault’s first volume of *The History of Sexuality* adopts a similar approach, arguing the construction of the sexual subject to be the result of discursive practices carried out on and around the body in Western culture from the late nineteenth century. Yet, as Paul Bains argues, Foucault works alongside Deleuze and Guattari in his development of the notion of “*le souci de soi*” (“the care of the self”), which moves beyond conceptualisations of the subject with reference to a dualism of exterior/interior production and into the realm of creativity (929). The becoming of Deleuze and Guattari, however, is less stable—queerer—than the focus on a personal ethics Foucault explores in his latter two volumes of *The History of Sexuality*. Whereas Foucault identifies a subject conscious of its thoughts and behaviours, the Deleuzoguattarian subject is more frantic and disorganised: it is schizo. Its purpose is not to become more aware of its existence, but rather “to escape the face, to dismantle the face and facializations, to become imperceptible, to become clandestine” (Deleuze and Guattari, *Thousand* 171).

Furthermore, the approach of Deleuze and Guattari does not promote the pluralised subject. To consider subjectivities over subjectivity, subjects over subject, merely retreats to the paradigm of modernity from which we establish a paradigm of the post-modern. Such a shift in paradigms offers nothing new, not even the shift it claims. The difference between the modern and the postmodern is a matter of the singular versus pluralities, a struggle between one metanarrative and another. It is an interdependent relationship and one that does nothing to undermine the regulation of the body within normative

discursive frameworks. In the Deleuzian sense, “returning to the problems, reinvesting ourselves in their inevitable predicament, [merely] forces a desire for the very thing that dominates and exploits us” (Howard 115).

Instead, Deleuze and Guattari encourage a notion of the subject who is never the subject of discourse, not even the object of discourse. Their notion of a “Body without Organs” proposes a model for the construction of a way of life that is not focused on the desire and demand for an identity. In contrast to the Oedipalised body that is born into and reproduces identities reflective of the self, the BwO is without identification: “The full body without organs is the unproductive, the sterile, the unengendered, the unconsumable” (Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus* 8). The BwO exists in the spaces in-between identity formations: “This subject itself is not at the center, which is occupied by the machine, but on the periphery, with no fixed identity, forever decentered, *defined* by the states through which it passes” (20; emphasis in the original). It is always elsewhere, never in the realm of possible organisation. The subject of Deleuze and Guattari is the organ-less body: the body without organisation.

In material form, this body is no different from the flesh of you and me, but one that refuses organisation of the things the culture has come to define and we have come to accept as (organ)“I”(s)-ed too willingly. It is a body not confined to the organised knowledge of “I,” but with multiple possibilities of becoming for all of its organs (Deleuze and Guattari, *Thousand* 30). The Deleuzoguattarian subject is the responsible, anti-fascist subject of a kind so rarely found in democratic systems where freedom for the body depends on the demonisation of the other alongside the disciplining of self. It is responsible enough to recognise the importance of the creative and the poetic (Bains 933) without having to rely on logic, commonsense, norms, reality—those arborescent concepts that confine bodies to the roots of their own utopian “I”deals.

The problem with any form of rooted, utopian identification is that it produces both the subject who lacks and thus an excuse for the culture to maintain eternal control of the body through an insistence that the subject of “I”

must continue to organise and know the body for the sake of fulfilment and freedom. Oedipalisation—with its utopian identifications of man/woman, heterosexual/homosexual—tells a tale of the subject always desiring to be whole, always looking to daddy/mommy, hunting for the phallus and searching for something external for confirmation of its existence. Such a lacking subject complies with the culture's demand that the body become an object of knowledge. The body is handed over to the subject of "I" to enforce naturalised internal and external surveillance over its actions under the pretext that such ownership is the liberation of "I." The freedom on offer, however, is never achieved. In Butler's assessment, identification can never occur with success; it is only ever "a desired event." She adds:

Identifications are never fully and finally made; they are incessantly reconstituted and, as such, are subject to the volatile logic of iterability. They are that which is constantly marshaled, consolidated, retrenched, contested, and, on occasion, compelled to give way. (*Bodies* 105)

Performance of a desired coherent identity, coupled with the impossibility of complete identification, urges the subject to rely on the tools already available within symbolic reality to continue the search for moments of stability. Such a search is always an unfulfilling act of desperation (Stavrakakis 17-19) because the tools of the culture are never more than fiction; they are never Real.

Deleuze and Guattari do not play around with the lacking subject with the aim of trying to make this fragile being more secure. Rather, their notion of a BwO exposes the construction of the lacking subject and explodes this construction. The BwO disputes the suggestion of a Real whole from which we have emerged and to which we must seek return. It dismisses the belief that we can reclaim a true self through confession with or without the help of the psychoanalytical masters. The Oedipal narrative is a means of producing the fragmented body. The concept of lack, of something in excess of our beings, is itself a product of discourse (Stavrakakis 34). To believe in lack as an essentialised component of self— whether consciously unpacked or still

unconsciously hidden—is a dangerous act, for it permits the discourse of psychoanalysis, among others, to maintain regulation of the body to secure the needs and the moralities of a culture with an obsessive will to knowledge. Any knowledge only reveals the effects of discipline on that body. Thus, no knowledge is truth, not even the knowledge of “I.”

This does not mean that the BwO lacks desire. It desires, but does so without assuming or (re)producing a need to fill an essentialised lack. The desires of the BwO are fulfilment in themselves. It is in the process of desiring and not in the attainment of the object of the desire that satisfaction is produced. Thus, the BwO does not have to own the objects of its desires to experience satisfaction. The objects and ownership of them are unimportant to the process of feeling pleasure, which emerges not through having but through desiring. When a body takes pleasure in its own fragments, in its own isolation and incompleteness, when it does not seek to compensate for what is defined as a lack through a desperate search for identity—sexual or otherwise—there is no construction of “I” of which to speak. When the body is able to evade all demands for its positionality through a celebration of a schizophrenic state feared by the culture, there is no construction of an “I” to assume control. The body that does not desire to satisfy its desires through the securing of an identity or identities, that does not accept how any such positioning(s) can grant it fullness, displaces the existence of an autonomous “I” to see the body, know it and regulate it through the normalised narrative of oppression/liberation. And, when “I” disappear, so too does the power of the will to knowledge that assumes it knows what is best for every body.

The pleasures of becoming a BwS, therefore, are not connected to an eternal dis-/satisfaction with the corporeal pleasures the body acquires or desires. A BwS does not seek to use the body and its pleasures to liberate the sexual or the self, nor does it celebrate oppression through mystification of what is normally assumed an unwanted state. There can be no oppression (desired or otherwise) for a BwS that does not know the rules of the culture, including the

rule of liberated versus oppressed.<sup>34</sup> Moreover, a BwS is not located in the struggle for power in the new postmodern world order. It does not seek to offer any greater truth about what the correct sex or the correct “sex” should be. A BwS exists outside the battle between already established modes of being and the new forms of wanting to be. Instead, it is interested in exploring the gaps not covered by the discourses of sex and sexuality as they continue to work, albeit now with multiplicities, on the assumption of an either/or, of being either with penis or without, taking it or giving it.

Like the BwO, a BwS does not speak in whole sentences understandable to all. It “utters only gasps and cries that are sheer unarticulated blocks of sound” (Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus* 9). Becoming a BwS signifies a queerer refusal to participate in a culture that demands visibility of bodies through articulation. It offers a different model to the normalised organisation of the body in which speech, identification and signification are necessary if the body is to avoid being deviant (Deleuze and Guattari, *Thousand* 159). The satisfaction and fulfilment for a BwS rests in its desire to become neither signifier nor signified, neither interpreter nor interpreted. It is only the Oedipalised—the repressed desiring an unattainable freedom from repression—who read unintelligible sounds as signs of the body’s oppressed state and as evidence of the lack of language available to the “poor souls” not yet permitted to be a part of the civilised system. It is only the docile, fascist body that wants to help every other-ed body come to terms with who “I” am.

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<sup>34</sup> In his discussion on the transgressive attitude of the French writer, dramatist and convicted felon, Jean Genet (1910-1986) in “gay” porn, Toby Manning notes how Genet reclaims and celebrates the position of the criminal in his representations of an underworld of male-male sex. While it is possible to read Genet’s stance as adopting the label of “criminal” assigned to him by the dominant culture in order to rewrite this label, Manning argues that any such notion of “self-oppression” becomes meaningless when the rules of the dominant culture are disrupted (109-11). A BwS does not seek to take on a non-sexualised position that a heterosexual dominant culture has afforded the homosexual body in this culture’s refusal to permit open access to and expression of same-sex sexualised emotion and contact. It is neither an acceptance nor a rejection of this position. Rather, it is a body that exists outside the discourses of sex and sexuality, and, therefore, one able to experience moments of corporeal pleasure not confined to a system of lack versus fulfilment, oppression versus liberation.

When “I” focus all attention on the homosexualisation of male-male intimate contact, “I” lose the ability of the body to experience corporeal pleasures outside this organisation. In order to be a homosexual, “I” must misplace the vibrating intensities the body can feel when it makes contact with other corporeal forms. However, when the body surrenders to the complexities of its pleasures and receives its pleasures from within these complexities, the sexualised subject of “I” is rendered obsolete, and the body as a site of sexual discipline is removed. For the homosexual, the climax is merely a brief confirmation of the body’s homosexualised position. For a BwS, this climax is a lengthy period of intensity. A BwS does not exist on the arborescent tree of (homo)sexuality. It can participate in intimate contact with other bodies, but does not need to seek fulfilment of such pleasures through bringing the moment of contact into a narrative of history or an identity that the subject of “I” hopes will last forever. The pleasure of the climax far exceeds the need to rewrite this pleasure within a narrative that speaks of how such a climax has been reached and must be understood in the future because “I am homosexual.”

Unlike the homosexual, which is a becoming that became a being because of its demand to be totally de-stratified from the heterosexual that once owned it—a de-stratification that Fuss reveals can never be completed (“Inside/Out”)—a BwS is “always swinging between the surfaces that stratify it and the plane that sets it free” (Deleuze and Guattari, *Thousand* 161). In its refusals to memorise its pleasures as signifiers of needs and as signifiers of its identification with “I,” a BwS is able to access the space of the wandering schizophrenic. It is here, there and everywhere. It is unknown and unknowable to the culture with a desperate will to know. A BwS has no id-entity. In contrast to the homosexual type, therefore, a BwS is a becoming without beginning, always somewhere in the middle (293). It teeters in eternal becoming. It wanders on a plateau of momentary intensities it is able to experience without knowledge. It passes through these moments without stopping to establish roots. It does not rest on branches to consider what these pleasures are or what they signify the body to be. In silence, a BwS lingers in a state of climax.

It shudders and shakes, exorcised of all organisation that works to secure the completion of "I."

## **Section Three - A Living BwS**

I had not the slightest impulse to express myself in such a way that I might be understood.

—Yukio Mishima, *The Temple of the Golden Pavilion*

## Realising a BwS

Steven Seidman has identified what he perceives to be a danger for anyone who works within a framework of queer theory. The risk is that the theorist who works queerly—the *queer* theorist—might become trapped in text and ideas while ignoring the necessity of politics and practice (“Deconstructing” 139). My imagination of becoming a BwS might seem too unreal and irrelevant, therefore, given that it is located in the abstraction of the mind of this thesis and, apparently, not enough in the everyday relevance of the body. Becoming a BwS appears insufficiently political in a culture where the personal body is compelled to comply with compulsory politicisation. It is a concept beyond the reach of the body that lives in the real world inhabited by real homosexuals, heterosexuals and other kinds of identifiable and identified sexual beings. Having imagined becoming a BwS, I too am forced to consider to what extent I have become an academic “I” with knowledge but without politicised practice. In the process of this research and in the conclusion of becoming a BwS, have I built for myself an ivory tower from which I am unable to see the reality of how bodies exist (sexually) in the culture today? Does this academic “I” negate the importance of sex and “sex” where such negation is neither practical nor desired by the masses of bodies that reside elsewhere? Do I leave these bodies to suffer under oppression while I seek corporeal solitude (and pending economic comfort) in the myths of my intellectualised, liberated mind?

I offer further thoughts on this position of “I” in the final chapter of this thesis. Before I do so, however, I wish to consider the extent to which a BwS exists already. The becoming a BwS is not something I have been progressing toward. I have not discovered it. On the contrary, the notion of a BwS—like Deleuze and Guattari’s BwO—has been present in this body (of work) from the start:

At any rate, you have one (or several). It’s not so much that it preexists or comes ready-made, although in certain respects it is preexistent. At any rate, you make one, you can’t desire without

making one. And it awaits you; it is an inevitable exercise or experimentation, already accomplished the moment you undertake it, unaccomplished as long as you don't. (Deleuze and Guattari, *Thousand* 149).<sup>1</sup>

A BwS exists already in the desire to become other than “I” who must know all bodies—including the body of self—as sexual. It is there at the very beginning, on the first page of the desire to go beyond compulsory memorisation of corporeal pleasures and homonormativity specifically. It is there in the desire to take a different path from that offered by the narrative of progression from homosexual oppression to gay liberation, and to understand intimate corporeal contact outside such demanded territorialisation.

In the next chapter, therefore, I consider the existence of a BwS in three intimate male-male relationships already available in the culture. These relationships involve men and boys, mates and brothers. The morality and legality of these relationships is not my concern. I do not wish to add to the debate on the legitimacy or illegitimacy of these particular relationships and the “sex” that might occur within. I do not wish to participate in the debate over whether certain bodies should or should not engage in “sex” together. Equally, however, I cannot guarantee that what I write will not be used for this purpose. If my discussion here helps strengthen the voices of condemnation or support of particular sexualised relationships, such a result is the intent of those who wish to contain these unions and the bodies involved within the borders of the discourse of sexuality and thereby to continue to apply notions of sexuality to an arbitrary but naturalised construction of morality. During a brief slippage into an act of confession, Foucault once admitted: “there is not a book I have written that does not grow, at least in part, out of a direct, personal experience” (qtd. in

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<sup>1</sup> In his *Archaeology of Knowledge*, Foucault theorises a similar construction of objects and concepts whereby there is no object in existence prior to its construction. There is no pure and untainted thing awaiting discovery. The object that comes into being “does not pre-exist itself, held back by some obstacle at the first edges of light. It exists under the positive conditions of a complex group of relations” (45). This notion of the formation of objects and concepts is the foundation for Foucault’s discussion on sexual types and sexuality in his *The History of Sexuality*.

Miller 31). His rejection of the demands of the confessional—as explored in his first volume of *The History of Sexuality*—is better served, however, by a don't ask, don't tell policy that insists: "Do not ask who I am and do not ask me to remain the same: leave it to our bureaucrats and our police to see that our [identity] papers are in order. At least spare us their morality when we write" (Foucault, *Archaeology* 17). If we are to write, act and/or speak queerly, we need to abandon any hope of knowing the end result of what we write, do or say (Foucault, "Sex" 172; McWhorter 181).

Rather, I continue to focus on the extent to which silence exists as an important part of the ability of the body to escape compulsory homosexuality. The sexualised pleasures available to bodies involved in relationships between men and boys, mates and brothers do not conform to the culture's current focus on assimilating same-sex sexualised pleasures into the gay model. Indeed, for any body to engage in intimate sexualised contact with a boy, a mate or his brother offers an affront to and an attack on the model of homosexuality desired and promoted by the dominant discourse of gay liberation. This discourse's demand to monopolise knowledge of all same-sex sexualised relationships works to foreclose the possibility of viewing differently the body-to-body intimacies of these three alternative forms of male-male union. In my discussions on man-boy love, close male-male bonds and sexualised activity between brothers of the same family, however, I emphasise how an absence of knowledge about same-sex sexualised pleasures best functions to queer the insistence that all such pleasures are understandable under the rubric of homosexuality and therefore evidence of the existence of the homosexual type. I continue my celebration of silence, therefore, while I seek out the possibility of becoming a BwS for the bodies involved in any intimate man-boy relationship, mateship or brother-brother relationship.

This chapter does not aim to placate criticism of queer theory and its users for working too much inside the head and not enough with the everyday body. Even theory that appears to be overly abstract—perhaps impossibly utopian—deserves a space in the culture. Indeed, given the general malaise

with which I (and others) view the real world, such a space is necessary if people like me are ever to conjure up new ways of living. Without the space of abstraction and non-everyday thought, the body will be read forever within already familiar systems of control. It will never experience the joys of becoming other. In any case, despite its seeming reality today, the realisation of the homosexual is no simple matter of fact. To know the body's desires for and engagement in contact with other bodies as proof of a natural homosexuality involves intense imagination because the homosexual is always in the process of being made real. This occurs through ceaseless surveillance and scrutiny of what the body does with other bodies, what certain corporeal experiences mean, which bodies best contain and display characteristics attributed to the homosexual type, and how best to express, attack and enjoy this state of being. Being a homosexual too, therefore, is an everyday matter of abstraction.

The difference between being a homosexual and becoming a BwS is that the former has been imagined for longer, with greater success and with willing assistance from a number of discourses, cultural institutions and individualised bodies that rely on knowledge of this sexual type to sustain their power over the body. The homosexual is a becoming that has become. Once a rhizomatic plane, it has been narrativised into an arborescent reality. Its fictional status and the necessary imagination of its being are masked by a naturalisation of its being. The fiction of becoming a BwS may exceed that of the "necessary fiction" of those sexual orientations currently accepted as appropriate and truthful knowledge of intimate corporeal experience, but it is no less a possibility for the body than the homosexual type that has been imagined to death. The suggestion that a BwS is too far removed from daily life merely offers an example of how already established systems of knowledge seek to have otherness spoken of within the language of these systems for the purpose of control. "Answer daddy-and-mommy when I speak to you!" (Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus* 45) is a command for the body to comply with such systems of compulsory regulation. "Tell me you know the body is a

homosexual!” continues the daddy/mommy speak. These are commands a BwS just cannot hear. The body that is becoming a BwS cannot placate the desires of the daddy/mommy narrative, no matter how happy such a coming out might make daddy and mommy feel.

## **Chapter 7    Traces of a BwS**

## 7.1 Man-Boy Love: Bed of Knowledge

The concept of man-boy love is without doubt contentious.<sup>1</sup> The challenge man-boy love poses to the culture does not relate exclusively to the homosexualised content of such a relationship. Gay liberation has already addressed this. The politics of gay liberation have questioned the culture's refusal to allow the male-d body to be a legitimate object of desire for the man, and, to a certain extent, Western culture has agreed to tolerate this desire. By forcing a public debate on same-sex sexualised desires and pleasures, gay liberation has managed to encourage recognition of homosexuality as a legally—if not entirely morally—valid sexual position for those bodies that do not conform to the preferred heteronormative model. Thus, “gay” has become the most appropriate definition for a sexualised relationship between men. Indeed, it has become the “correct” model for such a union. For any male-d body that wishes to engage in intimate sexualised contact with other male-d bodies, “gay” is the discursive framework in which the culture permits such contact to occur. However, this acceptance of same-sex sexualised desires and pleasures has affected the adult who is viewed already both legally and discursively as possessing the maturity to consent to “sex,” among other things. “Gay” thus refers to a sexuality that speaks of rights and citizenship available only to the adult subject.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> I opt to use “man-boy” rather than the more recognisable “man/boy” to signify the necessary inclusion of both a man-ed body and a boy-ed body in a relationship between a man and a boy. A man-boy union demands the existence of both a man and a boy to be present; it is not a union that consists of either a man or a boy. This conforms to my use of “/” throughout this thesis to signify an either/or situation in contrast to “-” that signifies the inclusion of both.

<sup>2</sup> To discuss man-boy love alongside gay liberation raises a number of problems. A lingering assumption about homosexuality and paedophilic desire as somehow naturally aligned underpins much of the continuing vocal resistance to social tolerance of same-sex sexualised acts between consenting adults. Graham Willett has argued that the threat to the homosexual of being labelled a paedophile has been largely eradicated (242). Such a claim is somewhat premature. Indeed, as Steven Angelides argues, the heterosexual male who engages in paedophilic behaviour is saved often by a “heteronormative structure” that excuses his behaviour as situational and outside his normal sexual practices. In contrast, the “fixated” paedophilic desires of the homosexual “stranger” are labelled more readily as pathological and dangerous (“Paedophilia”). Despite evidence to suggest that the vast majority of sexualised abuse against children occurs within the heteronormative family environment (Levine 27-29), the male adult who engages in homosexualised acts continues to be demonised as only one

Where the discourse of man-boy love differs from the discourse of gay liberation is in the demand by the former for the right to engage in sexualised contact with those bodies legally and discursively defined by the culture as pre-sexual, innocent and/or therefore deserving of protection (Cunningham 59). The challenge of the man-boy love movement exceeds what has been negotiated to date between the dominant heterosexualised culture and the defenders of the rights of normative homosexuality (Durber, "Oppressed" 117). It is a greater challenge than that posed by homosexuality to heteronormativity (Angelides, "Feminism" 166). While many people may accept the notion of the non-adult subject as sexually innocent to be an "artificial state" in need of abandonment (Califia 139), there is a vast difference between acceptance of the child as naturally sexual and any claim for the validity of a sexual relationship between an adult and a child. In general, the scenario of an adult and a non-adult subject engaged in sexualised contact is understood as an abuse of the child object. Even when it is recognised that not all adult-child relationships involve coercion, still such intergenerational sexualised unions are rejected on the basis that "all forms of paedophile sex, including sex with older prepubescent children, contravene the principle of non-exploitation" (Spiecker and Steutel 287). Man-boy love, therefore, offers an affront to normative standards of what constitutes an acceptable sexual relationship. It threatens the rules of the culture which insists on maintaining strict boundaries between man-ed and boy-ed bodies, and which denies the latter any ability or right to consent to acts of "sex." When it is suggested (as the man-boy love movement suggests) that the non-adult subject too may claim the right to be the subject and the object of sexualised desire, the culture's insistence on maintaining the position of "child" as distinct from "adult" becomes problematic.

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step outside the deviant playground in which a man has "sex" with a child (Lansdown 99-123). I do not wish to support such an assumption. There is no natural and factual correlation between the desire of a man for other men and the desire of a man for boys. However, it is also illogical to mount the counter claim that there is no relationship between the discourse of gay liberation and the discourse of man-boy love. For a brief analysis of the historical and discursive context of the relationship between these two discourses, see my discussion in the Appendix.

My decision to use the term “man-boy love” is equally contentious. Those who insist on maintaining an unquestionable condemnation of all adult-child sexualised relationships deplore any “manipulation” of language that might result in a taming of the severity of the sexual abuse they demand occurs (Duin; Larue). In contrast, those who seek greater recognition of both the diversity of these relationships and the potential for positive experiences for both participants see language as a suitable means of de-victimising the non-adult subject and de-abusing the sexualised contact (Jones 284; Riegel, “Sexual”). The use of the phrase “man-boy love” appears to suggest my support for this kind of union because the term “boy-lover” signifies specifically a man who desires the right to form a legitimate socio-sexual relationship with a boy (Yuill). My decision to use this phrase, however, merely seeks to emphasise the specific focus of my discussion here: sexualised relationships between men and pubescent boys, not between men and pre-pubescent children.<sup>3</sup> There needs to be a much wider understanding of sexualised relationships between adults and non-adults so that sexualised contact between a man and a post-pubescent boy, for example, is not discussed in the same way as we might discuss sexualised contact between an adult and an infant. The term “man-boy love” also suggests an organisation of bodies and pleasures. One can claim to be a “man” who should have a right to love a “boy,” or vice versa, only when one has accepted the organisation of bodies and pleasures through the normative

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<sup>3</sup> Any debate on adult-child “sex” is further problematised by the diversity of terms available to define these relationships and the participants, and by the lack of clarity over the definition of the terms. The love of boys, for example, was labelled as a sexual deviation under the title of “paedophilia erotica” in the nineteenth century (Maasen 48). In everyday conversations and in the media today, “paedophilia” continues to be used to indicate any sexualised relationship between an adult and a child under the age of consent. In academic research, however, this term suggests a specific desire for an infant of either sex (Harding; Rahman 104; Yuill). David Riegel has dismissed it as an appropriate referent for those desirous of the liberation of boy-love (*Understanding* 5). The less commonly used term “ephebophilia” seeks to emphasise a distinction between paedophilic desire for the pre-pubescent child and desire for the post-pubescent adolescent boy. Tariq Rahman has suggested that this term carries connotations of an interest in using boys as replacements for women for the purpose of penetrative pleasure (104). In the distinction Riegel makes between boy-love and criminal “pedosexuality,” such a focus on “sex” is rejected as the only and main concern of the boy-lover (*Understanding* 5).

sexing and sexualising processes. It is this kind of organisation that becoming a BwS aims to challenge.

Nevertheless, any suggestion that a non-adult body (child) is capable of having “sex” encourages a diversity of public responses ranging from outright disgust to controlled acceptance. Andrew Lansdown, for example, has likened the notion of permitting a child to engage in “sex” to allowing the same child to drive a car down the main street or failing to rescue him/her from the approach of an overly playful dog (119). The implication here is that if you truly care about your child, you will not permit him/her to have “sex.” For many, such a position holds true because the damage done to the child as a result of his/her involvement in “sex” is worse than the child dying at the hands of a murderer (Kincaid, *Child-Loving* 183). Those who accept the child as sexual, but who argue a need to protect this sexual child from the seduction of “sex,” reflect Freud’s concern over the potential of an unfettered polymorphous perversity to produce non-normative sexual beings. Within the Freudian framework, the child has not developed the necessary resistances to “sexual excess” and, thus, his/her capacity for engaging in sexual activities without shame is great (Freud, “Infantile” 107-09).<sup>4</sup> Those who advocate helping the child develop a positive attitude towards “sex” adopt a more “liberal” approach in their attempts to liberate the child from culturally imposed connotations of “sex” as shameful and sin (Plummer, “Understanding” 233-35). From such a position, age-of-consent laws provide a safe space of childhood in which natural sexual desires can mature without guilt and interference. These laws help protect the child from the threat of seduction by the irresponsible and deviant adult. Indeed, this is the position adopted by the gay lobby in its attempts to legitimise the right of the body to engage in homosexualised or heterosexualised activities from an equal

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<sup>4</sup> Freud’s position assumes a natural order of sexual behaviour and the necessity of repression if the body is to become “normal” within a “civilised” world. In contrast, advocates of legal protection for the child from the dangers of “sex” rarely recognise the application of repression in the position they take. Rather, their motives focus on the natural innocence of the child. There is, therefore, a contradiction in the suggestion that the child has no capacity to be sexual while simultaneously claiming that this child needs to be protected from the sexual. If the child has no capacity to be sexual, how can any involvement in activities the culture reads as “sex” be understood as “sex” by the child who participates?

age while maintaining age-of-consent laws as suitable markers of when any kind of “sex” should occur.

Within the discourse of man-boy love, however, such laws are critiqued for reaffirming the belief that “sex” for the non-adult subject is always a bad thing (NAMBLA, “Who”). According to this more contentious discourse, these laws read all sexual contact between adult and non-adult as “rape” or “coercive sex” (Thorstad, “Man/Boy” 258), and therefore unnecessarily criminalise all sexual behaviour involving young people, including any “sex” that occurs between young people. Thus, ages of consent are seen as unfair and unnecessary restraints imposed on boys and those (men) who desire to love them. In the words of the North American Man/Boy Love Association:

The effect of age of consent laws is to invade both the perception of one’s privacy and, in many cases, the fact of one’s privacy in order to punish those who would choose to relate to one another outside the narrow and strictly defined limits of state sexuality and the pattern of authority this type of repressed sexuality maintains. (NAMBLA, “Case” 94)

According to those who promote the legitimacy of sexual unions between men and boys, it is not the actual act of “sex,” but rather the illegality of the union that makes the stability of the relationship and therefore the wellbeing of the participants so precarious. The threats involved—for the man in particular—make it less likely that a boy will be able to find a man willing to sustain a relationship even if it proves to be of benefit for both participants (Brongersma 169). In contrast, legal and social acceptance of such unions would remove the need to conduct such relationships in secret and thereby eradicate the damage currently caused to the man and the boy involved. Moreover, uncloseted sexual relationships between men and boys might help combat a socially undesirable

delinquency that may result from the isolation and marginalisation many boys feel (160-61).<sup>5</sup>

The discourse of man-boy love, therefore, proposes a Foucauldian reassessment of the ownership of power between man and boy to suggest that in the act of “sex” involving a man and a boy, there is no man-ed body with and no boy-ed body without power, but rather a relationship of man-boy bodies between which power flows. Linda Martín Alcoff insists there can be no “sex” between an adult and a child because the power relationship between the two is too evident, too natural: “In every culture that exists children are dependent on adults for their very survival” (122) and, thus, the “vulnerability, dependency, and relative powerlessness of children vis-à-vis adults cannot ever be completely eradicated” (123). In contrast, the man-boy love movement argues that the man does not always occupy the dominant position in any man-boy union; boys can and often do exert power over the man (Brongersma 166). Such power is particularly evident in a culture in which exposure of the relationship is likely to prove significantly detrimental to the social position of the man. Advocates of man-boy love introduce into the debate the suggestion that the boy too can be involved in the act of seduction that leads to “sex.” They declare, for example, “I was seduced and picked up by a boy and I’m very glad he did it” (Tsang 40).<sup>6</sup> In an attempt to emphasise the valid subjectivity of the sexual boy, Tom Reeves has argued that the objects of his sexualised interest are neither adults nor children, but rebellious boys with “genuine emotion and authentic, self-originating actions and ideas” (27). The voices of boys who love men are the voices the discourse of man-boy love demands must be heard.

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<sup>5</sup> In the Netherlands, a similar preference for openness has been sanctioned as a suitable means of combating the anti-social isolation many self-identified paedophiles feel and a way of integrating them more fully into society (Underwager and Wakefield).

<sup>6</sup> Daniel Tsang attributes these words to David Thorstad—the spokesperson for New York City’s Coalition for Lesbian and Gay Rights—in his address to the Men and Boys Conference in Boston on 2 December 1978. As Tsang reports, during this conference Thorstad retracted his former denial of being a pederast, noting instead his circumstantial experience of boy-love. Tsang interprets Thorstad’s admission of having experienced sexual contact with a boy as an example of “coming out” as a boy-lover.

Such voices must be permitted to speak of their involvement in sexual contact for pleasure, pornography and payment. Indeed, it is their right to do so, for these youthful bodies constitute a minority group oppressed by wrongfully and unconstitutionally imposed interpretations of what it means when they have “sex” (Youth Liberation).

Certainly, what constitutes an adult and a child is not consistent across cultures and histories.<sup>7</sup> The adult-child binary itself is culturally and historically imposed. Furthermore, the effects of categories of age are profoundly negative in their constitution of a “social underclass” of children whose inferior position in the culture is masked “by a mythical overlay of [their] presumed innocence” (Constantine and Martinson 6). Markers of an ability to consent to “sex” further assume a bizarre scenario wherein a body can suddenly shift from a position of childish powerlessness to one of adult empowerment on the day it reaches a certain age (Angelides, “Feminism” 152). The boy-lover’s tactic of highlighting the oppression of the boy, therefore, exposes the double standards of a culture that recognises the ability of the non-adult to have will but does not apply this same recognition when it comes to the non-adult subject’s deployment of its body for sexualised pleasure. In David Riegel’s argument, there is a contradiction in the way society demands the boy be made responsible for some behaviours and be punished if he fails to comply even if he does not consent, while simultaneously denying him the right to engage in “sex” even if this occurs with his consent (“Sexual”).

This approach, however, is arguably a selfish means by which the man can obtain the boy-object of his desire for the purpose of sexualised gratification. An understanding of sexualised desires as a natural disposition of

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<sup>7</sup> Although defenders of age-of-consent laws may emphasise the biological maturity of the body and its readiness to engage in “sex” as the main reason for the necessary existence of such laws, cultural and historical differences in the ages at which consent is allowed reveal no universal biological framework for the sexual development of the body. A fourteen-year-old body is denied the right to engage in any form of sexualised contact in Australia, for example, but this same body would not be considered incapable of consenting to exactly the same kind of sexualised contact elsewhere (in Holland or Malta, for example). Similarly, while a twenty-year old body was denied the right to consent to same-sex “sex” in Western Australia prior to 2002, this same body’s participation in the same kind of “sex” today no longer constitutes a crime.

self suggests that the aim of the “paedophile” is to have “sex” with children (Spiecker and Steutel 288). The boy-desiring man does not deny the validity of this framework of understanding sexualised desires and pleasures. In agreement, he labels himself a “boy-lover,” with a predisposition to desire and love boys. Thus, his storyings of happily desiring and/or desired boys must be read within the context of his attempts to sustain the naturalness of the boy-loving self and his desires through having the boy made available to him for “sex.” As Vikki Bell has argued, what is being demanded in the call for liberation of a desire for the child is the liberation of the very subject who maintains a position of dominance in the ability to know and to circulate knowledge, but whose dominant status is removed when he is caught having “sex” with a child: the man (159). The tactic of focusing on the oppression of the non-adult subject is further problematic, given that paradoxical in relation to the boy-loving man’s demand that the boy should have the right to be the subject of speech, it is often the man who speaks on behalf of the boy he claims to love.<sup>8</sup>

In Lansdown’s opinion, any emphasis on the child’s struggle out of oppression reveals a typical tactic of paedophile activists (106).<sup>9</sup> Mary deYoung agrees, arguing that this approach is merely a way the man-boy love movement can appeal to “higher loyalties” (113-14). She also suggests that an alignment of socially deviant behaviour with the behaviours of those already considered normal is one way an ostracised group can reduce or remove the stigma against its members (107-08). In Reeves’ position, we see such an alignment in his attempt to establish a distinction between those who desire to have “sex”

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<sup>8</sup> deYoung quotes some of NAMBLA’s stories told by boys loved by men. There is no guarantee that these stories have been written by the boys to whom they are attributed or, indeed, by any boy at all. Equally, there is no guarantee that they have not. deYoung’s position, however, is that the inclusion of these stories aims to assist boy-desiring men to dismiss notions of abuse and harm in the sexual relationships they have with boys contrary to research that suggests otherwise (109-11).

<sup>9</sup> Lansdown also aligns paedophile activists with “radical homosexuals” who, in his opinion, offer a similar focus on the oppression caused to the child forcibly contained within the family system (106-07).

with children and those who desire to have “sex” with boys. After declaring the autonomy of the boys towards whom he expresses sexual desire, he writes: “I am not interested in children. I am positively turned off by the notion of molesting someone” (27). David Riegel makes this same distinction between criminal sexual activity and “love” (*Understanding* 5), although he maintains a definition of the “loved-boy” as “a prepubescent or adolescent boy” who desires an intimate relationship (sexual or not) with an older male (6). The discourse of heterosexuality seeks to normalise heterosexuality through noting its difference from homosexuality. Similarly, the discourse of gay liberation seeks to normalise homosexuality through noting its difference from boy-love. It is, therefore, not unimaginable in this culture to perceive that the discourse of man-boy love will seek to normalise the love of boys by participating in the creation and othering of a greater evil than that currently applied to the boy-loving man. It is also imaginable that such a tactic will succeed.

Western culture is not immune to having to listen to the demands of sexual “deviants” who seek greater political and personal freedoms. It is not averse to accommodating what first may appear an abhorrent request for drastic societal change. After all, it was only just over three decades ago that the same-sex desiring body was met with almost universal political, legal, social and moral condemnation. Back then, mere discussion of same-sex sexualised desires and pleasures exposed a person to a very hostile culture. Those who were found to be involved—or accused of being involved—in such activities once lost their careers, homes and families. Today, however, the “homosexual” can (re)claim these “rights” by standing on the legitimised public platform of “I am gay.” Coming out of the closet has helped dispel the myths surrounding same-sex sexualised pleasures. It has helped expose the “homosexual” to be just like you and me, perhaps even exposed this sexual type as you and me (Plummer, “Pedophilia” 244). Similarly, coming out of the closet to tell tales of loving boys and being a boy-lover is applauded as the greatest hope of resolving the problems for man-boy affairs and the bodies involved (244-45).

In 1991, Sandfort, Brongersma and van Naerssen posed a number of questions concerning adult sexual relationships with minors and the sexual capacity of the child. They asked:

Will pedophilia become a lifestyle for some people based on their personally designed sexual orientation? Will society allow people to adopt such a lifestyle, or will society persist in seeing them only as child molesters? Can sexual involvement between adults and children be only conceived as child sexual abuse, or will the professionals and the public come to realize that there are various kinds of intimate involvement between adults and children and that distinctions between voluntary involvement and forced involvement can be made? Will children get more possibilities to construct their own sexualities, unrestricted by parents, professionals, the church, and pedophiles? (11-12)

Even given the possible future scenario in which a man and a boy could engage legally and morally in a sexualised relationship without widespread social condemnation, this would nevertheless indicate no epistemological shift in normalised understandings of the body and its pleasures. The construction of a man's desire for boys—or a boy's desire for men—works within the same framework of knowledge as the construction of heterosexual and homosexual desires. Articulation of an identity based on a desire for boys is complicit with the normalised understanding of how all bodies work. There is no disruption to the naturalised process of sexing and sexualising the body in the announcement of being a man who loves boys, or vice versa. Rather, such an act of articulation merely reapplies this regulation of the body through continuing to make intimate corporeal pleasures visible within the paradigm of the sexual.

In the articulation of an identity resides the pathway to freedom for the body in the post-Enlightenment context. However, conversely, such an identification of "I" is also a means by which the culture can control the body without having to resort to more overt systems of punishment such as torture or

the law (Foucault, Hocquenghem, and Danet 275). For those involved in the movement to legitimise man-boy sexualised unions, the importance of the articulating, knowable sexual “I” is paramount. When the boy-loving men—“Andrew,” “Bill,” “Carlos,” “Kevin,” “Mikkel,” “Oscar,” “Pyotr” (Riegel, *Understanding* 49-82)—tell their tales of being different but of being normal, therefore, they willingly hand over their bodies and pleasures to the pervasive discourse of sexuality in return for the position of “I” that can now struggle for its place in the culture. In speaking of the love of “I” for boys, the body is (re)written as naturally desirous of a prescribed kind of “sex.” Thus, any liberation granted paradoxically continues the discipline of the body and its pleasures within the normalised system of compulsory sexualisation. Similarly, rather than dispute the autonomy of the adult body as a knowable subject, the discourse of man-boy love seeks to bring the non-adult body too into this sphere of knowability. The boy too must become “I.” He must be allowed to speak of self as a natural “gerontophile,” for example (Yuill), thus granting the boy-ed body the right to take on board an “I”-identity that aims to signify the autonomy of the body and its capacity to know what its experiences of corporeal pleasures mean. While this situation may threaten the culture’s insistence on keeping the bodies of children and adults apart when it comes to matters of “sex,” it offers no critique of the containment of the body within the normative discourses of sex and sexuality. Instead, it establishes yet more types of autonomous “I,” thus again denying the body any autonomy at all.

The articulating boy-lover too, therefore, has failed to heed the Foucauldian advice to be wary of assuming that “sex” defines one’s being (*History* 1 69) and that sexuality is a reality (106). Instead, in the man-boy love movement, once again “sex” and sexuality have become the “ultimate” liberatory tools (NAMBLA, “Case” 95). The boy-lover views his sexuality, and therefore the “sex” this sexuality desires and demands, as something worth

dying for.<sup>10</sup> He listens to and follows the narrative that tells how coming out of the closet—confession—can help remove the stigma attached to his natural being. He too fails to recognise how any bringing of desires and pleasures into language is prearranged by the discourse of sexuality that wants to know sexualised types in order to satisfy its desire for power over every body and every intimate corporeal pleasure. His boy-love—“pedophilia, neophilia, philopédie, pederasty, ephebophilia, hebephilia, Greek love, pedagogical eros, man/boy love, and intergenerational sex” (Sandfort, Brongersma and van Naerssen 7), call it what you will—is not an arbitrary means of understanding what bodies might do within specific cultural and historical locations. It is not a curable illness. In the process of speaking of this particular desire with reference to an immutable “I,” it becomes a sexual orientation as “genetically predetermined” (Riegel, *Understanding* 7) as the culture suggests heterosexuality naturally is and as the discourse of gay liberation increasingly hopes homosexuality can become.

### 7.1.1 Problematic Becomings with Boys

For some boys, the man-ed body serves as a site of mystery, excitement or stimulus (Rind 360; Virkunnen 131). For others, an attraction to the man may be the result of a fascination with the masculine or a desire for the male body rather than evidence of homosexual desire (Gough 125-26). The man may offer the boy financial resources, a sense of importance or a mentor; he may represent the culturally approved father figure. The boy may even enjoy the pleasures he gets from being with the man, pleasures that may be sexual and/or otherwise. “Sex” receives so much attention in the culture, however, that debates on intergenerational relationships tend to focus exclusively on this one particular aspect of the relationship to the exclusion of both consideration of

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<sup>10</sup> Anyone caught in the act of loving-boys quite literally puts their life on the line not only because he exposes himself to severe criminal and/or social sanction, but also because of the established practice in prisons of physical attacks against this sexual “deviant” by those jailed for other reasons (Kincaid, *Child-Loving* 183).

other aspects important to the child and understanding that experiences are not static but change (Sandfort 125). In discussions on man-boy unions too, “sex” and, indeed, sex are the principle foci because both “sex” and sex are considered normalised and necessary spheres of knowledge. In the culture today, there is little space in which to consider for what other reasons a man-ed body and a boy-ed body might come together to form an intimate union. This kind of relationship is discussed always within the paradigm of compulsory sexualisation. The bodies and the intimacies these bodies experience are regulated always within this framework.

For the conditions of a becoming a BwS to emerge, however, the naturalised sexing and sexualising of the body must be removed. A BwS does not recognise the bodies involved in a man-boy union to be “man” or “boy.” Such normative positions are the results of an enforced sexing of the corporeal frames. Similarly, a BwS does not recognise the act of man-ed flesh engaged in intimate contact with boy-ed flesh as indicative of any kind of “sex” occurring. A BwS knows no “sex.” Moreover, it does not view this contact as evidence of any emerging or established sexuality for either of the bodies involved. Any reading of sexualised contact as indicating a future of memorised identity goes against the deterritorialisation of becoming a BwS. The suggestion of having a paedo- or gerento-sexuality—of being a boy-lover or a loved boy—is a product of constructing knowledge on and through the body, and is therefore outside the domain in which a BwS resides. A BwS does not concern itself with after-thoughts that seek to understand the moment of intimacy in relation to who “I” was, who “I” am or who “I” wish to be. For a BwS there is no more, nor any less; there is nothing missing. An act of corporeal intimacy has occurred. Bodies have engaged in pleasure. There is no man-boy love and no paedophilia to speak of beyond or before this moment. A BwS has no post- or pre-conception of “sex.”

Such an attitude reads as extremely dangerous. It appears to grant the man the right to have “sex” with the boy without any need to consider the latter’s consent or the possible lasting effects on the boy. It confronts the narrative of

sexual abuse dominant in any discussion on sexualised relationships between adults and children. Yet, a BwS is not concerned with having “sex” regardless of the volition of the other body with which it interacts. Unlike the body with sex and “sex”—the male/female heterosexual/homosexual—a BwS does not need “sex” to reaffirm its position as a sexual “man” or “woman” to the point that it must enforce its own “I” identity on any other body. It does not memorise or desire an image of self so that it might be driven to seek out “sex” with force or coercion. It has no knowledge of “sex.”<sup>11</sup> In addition, it needs to be said that reading all adult-child sexualised contact within a narrative of abuse fails to consider how “sex” is one way in which the already non-heterosexualised body can express itself as other. When we speak of “sex” as abusive to the child, we need to explore what kind of “child” we speak of (Bruhm and Hurley xxv-xxvi). In his analysis of “Gay and Bisexual Adolescent Boys’ Sexual Experiences with Men,” Bruce Rind, for example, argues that there is a vast difference between situations in which gay-identifying boys engage in sexualised contact with a man and other forms of intergenerational “sex” (348, 358-62).<sup>12</sup> Moreover, we need to be aware of the discipline that the narrative of compulsory abuse imposes on the telling of sexual tales, for the demand to memorise all adult-

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<sup>11</sup> The suggestion that a body could engage in sexualised practices without any consideration of the consequences is likely to spark controversy and outrage, particularly in the current cultural climate. The notion of “sex” without thought and responsibility risks (re)imposing a silence on any incident of abuse. In his latter two volumes of *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault sought to emphasise the importance of the body’s sexualised pleasures within the context of personal memory and consideration of what is good for “I” rather than allowing this body and its pleasures to be defined through external regulation. He therefore emphasised a system of personal ethics. To rely on the ability of self to be the controller of one’s own sexual pleasures, however, reinforces the existence of the knowing “I” and the reality of “sex” (see p. 21, n. 3). A Foucauldian recourse to personal ethics, therefore, does not assist the body in becoming a BwS. In any further research into the applicability of a BwS beyond the scope of this thesis, I will have to consider to what extent a BwS can operate independently of the ethics of the dominant culture and/or whether a reconceptualised system of ethics is necessary to continue offering protection to those bodies currently deemed vulnerable to abuse. For the purpose of this thesis, however, I am concerned only with a theoretical imagining of becoming a BwS. In rejecting the organisation of the body into a sexed and sexualised being, a BwS cannot continue to know sexual abuse. Rather, this body seeks a space outside the cultural and historical space in which every body potentially occupies the position of abuser and/or abused.

<sup>12</sup> I discuss further the importance of early, sexualised contact for gay-identifying men in the Appendix.

child sexualised activity within this dominant narrative means we “lack the possibility to narrate a pedophilia that will have been benign” (Bruhm and Hurley xxix).

Whether welcomed or not, the potential for becoming a body without sex and “sex” within a man-boy relationship is available not least because the stability of the categorisation of certain acts and bodies within the context of “paedophilia” has come under attack. In the face of much opposition, there is a growing scepticism towards investigations into adult-child sexualised relationships and towards the results of these investigations. Such scepticism often points to the hindrances caused by legal and moral restrictions imposed on these unions and by a general lack of recognition and/or acceptance within such research for the diversity of the relationships under scrutiny (Brongersma 147-53; Yuill). Alongside research—and the popular perception—that supports the notion that all children who engage in adult-child “sex” are abused and damaged, there exists an increasing number of academic reports arguing that not all sexual relationships between adults and non-adults are harmful to the younger participant (Brongersma; Leahy; Riegel, “Sexual”; Rind; Rind, Tromovitch, and Bauserman; Sandfort). Furthermore, some critics of the dominant interpretation of adult-child “sex” express a concern that an unquestioned acceptance of “sex” as damaging for the child skews the findings of any research in order to prove this point (Jones).

Others focus on a critique of the manner in which the storying of sexual abuse is told. Because the child is deemed incapable of storying sexual experiences, his/her speech is distrusted and disbelieved (Foucault, Hocquenghem, and Danet 284). The understanding of the sexualised contact that emerges, therefore, reflects the position of the adult speaker as much as, if not more than, the child being questioned. In some cases, false confessions of abuse may be extorted from children through manipulation by psychiatrists who claim to care for these children (274; Rind 360). Certain professionals may even exaggerate the scale of the problem of child sexual abuse to promote their own self-worth and that of the discipline in which they work (Thorstad,

“Man/Boy” 267-68; Yuill). Thus, it is suggested that the damage done to the child may be less an accurate consequence of naked interaction with an adult than the scripted adverse response from social institutions such as the police, social and health services, and the family (Youth Liberation 47), a position long shared by researchers in the field (Angelides, “Feminism” 144-45).<sup>13</sup>

Such disruptions to the dominant narrative that speaks of all adult-child sexualised contact as an abuse of the child and indicative of the perversion of the adult offer a deconstruction of what constitutes a “paedophile” and “paedophilia” to the extent that these signifiers cannot remain unquestionably attached to specific bodies and particular pleasures. In this sense, the debate on adult-child sexualised unions has achieved what those who support the current criminality and immorality of these unions fear most: the raising of doubts about the “truth” of sexual abuse and sexual abusers (Lansdown 113; O’Meara). Recognition of “paedophile” and “paedophilia” as historical and cultural constructions creates a space in which to view these concepts not as true reflections of particular bodies and pleasures, but rather as utopian images of deviancy established within a culture desirous of acquiring knowledge of the sexual body for the purpose of control.<sup>14</sup> In any heterotopic disruption to this utopian imagining, the “paedophile” is no longer an absolute, universal reality,

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<sup>13</sup> Certainly the reverse may occur among those who wish to downplay the extent of child abuse through their attachment of “only benevolent or positive attributes” to their discussions on adult-child sexualised relationships (Yuill). Those who advocate their right to love boys, for example, are likely to tell stories of happiness and fulfilment in order to strengthen their case for the establishment of a legitimate boy-desiring subject position. deYoung has argued that attacks on the professionals who discover and speak of child abuse reveal an attempt by boy-lovers to expose the hypocrisy of the do-gooders in order to reduce the level of their own deviancy in society (111-12). Research that relies on the tales of any adult or child to tell the truth of intergenerational sexualised experiences, however, cannot be taken as evidence of fact. Instead, like all stories of sexualised activity, these tales need to be examined within the wider social context of how we tell stories of the sexual self, what we can and cannot say, and who we think we are when we speak of the self as sexual. As Bruhm and Hurley also explain: “Who tells the story matters because the storyteller defines what can exist in the field of representation” (x).

<sup>14</sup> The notion that an image offers a “utopian reflection” refers to my discussion in chapter six (6.2) on the differences that emerge when one views a sexual identity as a heterotopia rather than a utopia. The concept of the paedophile type is not recognised as the result of cultural and historical definitions applied to certain bodies and acts. It is not viewed through the mirror as heterotopia. Rather, it is seen as real: a utopian reflection of a body that truly exists.

but rather becomes a label attached to adult bodies discovered to have certain desires toward bodies of a significantly younger age. Similarly, “paedophilia” no longer indicates a natural sexual desire located in a few anti-social and deviant bodies, but becomes a means of identifying a particular sexualised attraction from an adult subject to a non-adult object (Li 131). Both “paedophile” and “paedophilia,” therefore, offer the culture ways of attributing particular desires and acts to certain individualised bodies, where the bodies and the pleasures under scrutiny are not consistent throughout history and across cultures (Angelides, “Paedophilia”; Rind).

Such deconstructionist tactics do not translate necessarily into cultural acceptance. Indeed, despite evidence to dispute the popularised narrative that real monstrous paedophiles exist (Levine 22-26) and that only paedophiles are implicit in the eroticisation of children (26-29), the culture continues to reject attempts to speak of *those* bodies and *that* sexuality otherwise. Having to listen to different tales about the paedophile and paedophilia threatens to destabilise our established imaginings of “him” and “his” desires, and thereby to disrupt our need to see this person and these acts as always outside self (Kincaid, *Child-Loving* 204-10). We do not wish to recognise that “I” might play a part in the monstrous discourse of desiring children. Rather, “I” desire to maintain the image of the paedophile as a utopian reflection of a real person, but always as some other body disconnected from the body of “I.” Indeed, in the current cultural climate, it is safer—legally, socially and morally—for “I” to do so. There are multiple dangers in speaking of a sexualised union between an adult and a child, not the least of which is the danger to the speaker himself. While it may be acceptable to deploy the concept of an “academic ivory tower” in which to write books on pederasty in ancient Greece and the boy-lovers of history, for example, to speak of man-boy love specifically in terms that locate it alongside “I” in the here and now is an entirely different matter (Thorstad, “Man/Boy” 268).

The irony in the intensity of the culture’s (witch)hunt for the paedophile type as real and elsewhere, however, is that this reveals a widespread and prolific cultural obsession with the sexualisation of the body of the child.

Because the adult is warned away from experiencing any sexualised desire for or contact with the child, there is a paradoxical normalisation of the notion that the child's body can and does arouse sexual excitement. This process of normalisation is accelerated and heightened by the emphasis the media gives to incidents of paedophilia and the culture's current focus on the internet as the bastion of deviant paedophilic activity (Levine 36-41). As Steven Angelides explains this process: "In other words, the affirmation and the negation of child sexuality are two poles of the same dialectic. Even in negating child sexuality, one cannot avoid reinscribing it" ("Feminism" 147). Indeed, this is a possible outcome of any prohibition on sexualised practices because

the prohibitive law runs the risk of eroticizing the very practices that come under the scrutiny of the law. The enumeration of prohibited practices not only brings such practices into a public, discursive domain, but it thereby produces them as potential erotic enterprises and so invests erotically in those practices, even if in a negative mode. (Butler, *Bodies* 109-10)

Today, the culture's will to know paedophilic desire is so great and the punishment is so severe that every corporeal contact between the adult and the child is forced to come under scrutiny. The warning to be wary of experiencing desire for the body of the child has extended to include touch between stranger and child, between teacher and pupil, even to the act of communal naked bathing between father and son/daughter. Every kiss, every hug and every playful tickle is a potential signifier of paedophilic desire. While on the surface Western culture attempts to de-eroticise the child through excessive surveillance of any adult-child contact, the reverse is actually the case.<sup>15</sup> Now

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<sup>15</sup> Judith Levine's analysis of the relationship between paedophilia and the internet exposes the involvement of the American police and government in the reproduction and circulation of paedophilic material to entrap potential paedophiles, a practise she suggests exposes the frustration of those who work in these institutions "with the paucity of the crime they claim is epidemic" while granting them justification for their jobs (37). The wider practise—often legally supported—of police posing as children and/or other paedophiles on the internet to entice "real" paedophiles into conversation and criminal activity further implicates the culture and its legitimised institutions in the production of paedophilic material and desire. Indeed, while the

the child is ultra-sexualised, and paedophilia is everywhere. Sexualised desire for the child is not just a matter for certain bodies; it involves every body (Sandfort 123).<sup>16</sup>

Those who condemn man-boy love do not recognise the importance of culture and history to the construction of the paedophile and paedophilic desires. They do not see this body and these desires as heterotopic constructions. Instead, in the reflected image of the paedophile other, they see a utopian truth: a universal and real sexual type. The maintenance of this truth is necessary in their bid to displace “him” and “his” desires away from self, and to condemn this body and its desires as deviant others. Angelides has criticised this approach for failing to consider how sexualised desires and practices do not work alongside identities, but are rather a combination of unconscious desires and social constructions. In his assessment of the relationship between feminism and the debate on child abuse, he suggests there has been an overemphasis on promoting a linear model of development from the practices and experimentation of an immature, childhood sexuality to a fixed, adult sexuality performed with awareness and knowledge (“Feminism” 138). Such a focus on a stable identity is inconsistent not only with a psychoanalytical preference for the simultaneous existence of multiple and competing forces acting on the construction of the subject, but also with queer theory’s emphasis on anti-identity and pro-fluidity (142). Angelides’ critique can be applied with equal controversy to the approach of the man who seeks to liberate both the

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suggested intention of this practise is to catch paedophiles, it actually permits any member of the police to view and circulate paedophilic material with impunity.

<sup>16</sup> For Bronski, the historical and cultural construction of the innocent child is what permits the adult subject to utilise the de-sexualised body of the child for his/her own purpose: “Children are often blank screens on which adults project their fantasies. As supposedly presexual or sexless humans, children are viewed by adults as in constant need of protection. Yet, at the same time, they are made to reflect the desires and the sexual and emotional longings of adults” (114). The innocence and silence assigned to the child, therefore, offers a space in which sexual desire for the child can be hidden. Such desire can be translated into a natural nurturing and caring, elements that do not threaten the culture’s insistence on heteronormative reproduction. The dominant position of woman as the most natural of nurturer allows a less intense surveillance of paedophilic desire and activity by women, whereas the definition of man as the natural sexual being and consequently as potential abuser encourages the interpretation of any physical touch between man and child as always-already indicative of paedophilic desire.

love of boys and the boys he professes to love. Even as the boy-lover recognises the image of his body to differ in meaning from the dominant reading of such a body as deviant, still what he sees is not a culturally and historically determined compartmentalisation of specific sexualised pleasures within the body, but a truthful reflection of who “I” am. He continues to accept that the body can be known with reference to its desires and experiences and, thus, dares to declare: “I am a boy-lover.” This man, therefore, is a subject desirous of oppression of the body, for he keeps the body of self—and that of the object of his desire—trapped within the discourses of sex and “sex.” He accepts the stability of the categorisation of the body into “man” while wanting a “boy” to love in a way that does not exclude the possibility of “sex.”

There is, therefore, no difference between the approaches of those who condemn any sexualisation of the body of the child and those who want to have “sex” with a child. As James Kincaid puts it: “It is just that the molesting and the stories protesting the molesting walk the same beat” (“Producing” 12). Age-of-consent laws emphasise sexualised contact with another body as the most dangerous thing the child can do (Plummer, “Pedophilia” 239-41). They demarcate the death of the child and the birth of the adult at the very point of the body’s first involvement in what the culture’s has pre-determined as “sex.” The anti-paedophiles seek to maintain the importance and legitimacy of these laws for the sake of preserving childhood, while the pro-paedophiles speak of the limitations these laws impose on the body of the child. For the thoroughly organised body, participation in the right “sex” at the right time signals its successful transformation from “child” into the subject of “adult.”<sup>17</sup> While the opponents and the supporters of the child’s involvement in “sex” may not agree over what constitutes the right “sex” and the right time, both sides accept the

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<sup>17</sup> The culture does not maintain the same kind of admiration for the boy who enters into adulthood through participation in homosexualised “sex” as it does for the boy who enters into manhood through “doing it” with a female. Similarly, the culture does not maintain the same kind of admiration for the girl who seeks entry into adulthood through having “sex” with a member of the opposite sex as it does for the similarly heterosexualised boy. Sexualised relationships between women and girls tend to be ignored in the debate, thus marginalising the lesbian child (Califia 139-40), while those involving a boy and an adult woman are considered the least damaging of all (Gay Left Collective 56-57; Thorstad, “Man/Boy” 254).

naturalness of the body's sex and its capacity for "sex." Even as they assume oppositional positions, therefore, both the anti-paedophile and the pro-paedophile are concerned with and participate in the regulation of the body of the child with reference to the sexual.

In her analysis of representations of boys in fin-de-siècle literature, Martha Vicinus gives a more fluid description of the boy:

Of indeterminate character, this handsome liminal creature could absorb and reflect a variety of sexual desires and emotional needs. The boy personified a fleeting moment of liberty and of dangerously attractive innocence, making possible fantasies of total contingency and total annihilation. (91)

The body of the boy is neither that of a child nor that of an adult, but somewhere in the middle. The boy does not have to—and often does not—read sexualised acts in the way the culture requires (Virkkunen 131). This is not a matter of the boy with a natural sexual desire being left adrift in a culture that refuses to allow him to speak of or act out his sexualised desires without fear or shame. It is not the role of any other body—the parent, the teacher, the law, the psychologist, the protector, the boy-lover—to establish self as an expert to help the silent boy discover the truth of his feelings. For the molecular body—a BwS unconcerned with being boy/man and sexual—transformation into a sexed and sexualised subject never occurs. With its enforced social status as "adolescent," the body of the boy already exists in a marginalised space of dangerous mutability. It has the potential to become other, to become a desiring machine capable of refuting the culture's required and preferred organisation of its fragmented parts—the penis, for example—into a normative and wholesome adult, man, homo/hetero "I." It can become molecular, resisting particles.

Such an unfettered body does not survive, however, in the attempts to desexualise or sexualise the body according to the narratives of those who desire this body for innocence or pleasure. In any talk of the boy as incapable of giving consent or able to consent, the body's possibilities of being creative are diminished. These possibilities are curtailed and controlled by the

discourses in which the body is placed with force in order to make it a body with the sex and “sex” of a boy. In a culture in which establishment of an identification with “I” is deemed necessary for the body to be free, it is easier to participate in condemnation or condemnation of man-boy love than it is to conceptualise any intimacies between these bodies otherwise. Any search for an identity to explain why some bodies express or act out a sexual desire, however, merely confirms the belief that momentary actions of the body are worthy of excessive scrutiny and surveillance within the naturalised discourse of sexuality. Such a normalised quest for knowledge reinforces the centrality of sexualised pleasures to every body’s life at the expense of diminishing the importance of all other facets and all other experiences that make up who we are, what we do (Li 131) and, more importantly, what we might become. It allows for a momentary act of corporeal activity to be translated into a lifetime of sexual something—be it deviant or normal—that can control the entire future of the body. There is, therefore, no silent space in which to become a BwS in any audible storying of a legitimate or deviant love between men and boys. A fascistic identification of the body with reference to the discourse of paedophilia—as “paedophile,” “man,” “boy,” “child”—leaves no space for becoming a BwS that needs no assistance, lacks nothing, searches for no (knowledge of) “sex.”

## **7.2 The Sexualised Struggle for Mates**

In the Australian culture, “mateship” is a term that is commonplace but widely disputed. The dominant interpretation of mateship speaks of struggles and hardships shared between men, and of their mutual achievement against all the odds. The history of Australia—as it commonly tells its tales of the white man’s discovery, exploration and taming of the land—is built on narratives that speak of such male-male bonds. Mateship is the storying of the lives of the settlers, the pioneers and the achievers. In addition, despite Australia’s historical and obvious continuing allegiance to and dependence on other Western nations—England and America, in particular—mateship seeks to offer

proof of the uniqueness of this nation. It aims to signify a relationship both truly Australian in content and between those who best personify the Australian character. It is “part of the Australian heritage. The male heritage, born in the bush in colonial days, nurtured in the male-dominated isolation of sheep stations and gold fields, glorified by the Anzacs” (Arndt 36). This is the myth of mateship: a myth deployed in the rhetoric of politics, economic, sport and the social to interpellate all (male) bodies that reside in the nation of Australia into a narrative of egalitarianism on which the democratic status of this country depends.

To speak of mateship in such terms allows an evasion of any in-depth critique of this particular nation’s class system. Indeed, it helps dismiss the importance of class to the Australian way of life because, according to the narrative of mateship, Australia is a classless society. Mateship promotes the superiority of friendships between hard-working white men—the “battlers”—as the foundation, strength and future of the nation. The myth of mateship glorifies the “underdog,” thereby encouraging the Australian male either to celebrate his poverty and working/lower class status as the social position in which the true “Aussie” resides; or to dismiss his affluence and middle-class status through believing that even such a wealthy and healthy man has to toil hard and battle to survive. Such an understanding of mateship “glosses over the inequalities of power [between men] within patriarchy,” assuming all men to be equal when the reality of all men’s position in the Australian culture tells a very different tale (Buchbinder 120). In its focus on the importance of the relationships between men to the construction and survival of this nation, mateship also advocates the continuing marginalisation of women (130; Don Edgar xiii). In addition, through its evasion of a narrative of invasion, it perpetuates the continuing ostracism and devaluation of the indigenous peoples of this land.

In an attempt to offer an alternative definition, Don Edgar discusses mateship within the context of marriage. By reclassifying it as central to the family, he removes this kind of union from the exclusively male domain of “beer-swilling, pants-dropping foolery” (xii) and insists that mateship can include a

man/wife relationship in which equity and mutual respect are evident. This attempt to redefine the parameters of a mateship relationship reinforces another important and often taken-for-granted aspect of the mateship ideology. In contrast to the traditional notion of man as ultra-masculine, as excluding women, Edgar now contends: “Being a ‘real man’ is not to be measured by his ability to control or dominate others, rather by his capacity to create a compassionate, sharing marriage and father children in an intimate and loving way” (xvi). Thus, mateship—even in Edgar’s attempt to soften the term—is an insistent signifier of the heterosexuality of the men involved. For a man to describe another man as a “mate” is to describe a bond absolutely devoid of any sexualised contact or desire. Any action that begins the process of sexualised contact is outside the normative position of heterosexuality in which a mateship relationship is located. Indeed, any hint of sexualised desire is the marker of the segregation between homosocialised mateship and homosexuality. One only has to uncover such evidence to know the relationship is a homosexual one. Similarly, one has to be certain of a complete absence of sexualised desire between the men involved to know that their relationship is pure mateship.

In his recent investigations into the troubles of gender “down under,” David Coad exposes how the Australian myth of heterosexual men surrounded by their heterosexual mates is dependent on an elision from history of the homoerotic and the homosexual in these unions. This he does through linking traditional stories of Australian icons—Ned Kelly, Henry Lawson, Gallipoli, Crocodile Dundee—to the emergence of a “queer” landscape that demands and justifies the rewriting he has done. Similarly, in his analysis of the film *Gallipoli*, David Buchbinder has argued that the concept of a heterosexualised mateship can be seen to offer “subversion of patriarchal authority and of certain patriarchal norms [...] by simulating or approaching forbidden homosexuality through the exposure of homosocial desire” (130). Such attempts to rewrite the history of normative masculinity in Australia—and the masculinisation of normative Australian history—expose the eternal presence of homosexual

desire even in the narratives that silence it. Heterosexualised homosociability between mates is rearticulated to expose homosexual desire for the other in each of the men involved. Such narratives of the proximity of homosexual desire to normative heterosexuality reflect dominant understandings of identity construction as explained through a poststructuralist framework in which what is other to the self is contained always within self (Fuss, "Inside/Out"; Namaste). Equally, they comply with gay theory's insistence on the existence of homosexual desire in any intimate male-male relationship, thus encouraging recognition of an innate bisexuality in every body (Altman, *Homosexual* 81, 103).

In the introduction to her analysis of male homosocial desire between men, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick posed the question: "What does it mean—what difference does it make—when a social or political relationship is sexualized?" (*Between* 5). In contrast, I now ask: what does it mean—what difference does it make—when a relationship that potentially or possibly involves sexualised contact is removed from the social and the political? What happens when such a relationship is surrounded not by discussions on whether or not sexualised desire and/or contact exists, but by a silence in this regard? To sexualise a relationship between men is to allow it to be tamed as "homosexuality." To suggest there is no "sex" in the relationship—a process that sexualises the relationship as non-homosexual—is to allow it to be known and regulated as "heterosexuality." The articulation of a relationship with reference to any suspected or real sexualised component works to displace any possibility that the body might cause trouble to normative methods of corporeal regulation. Such disclosure conforms wholeheartedly to the culture's will to knowledge, and specifically to its will to know the sexual position of the body when it makes contact with other bodies. Whenever a relationship and bodies are sexualised, no difference is made at all.

Renarrativised tales of mateship that offer evidence of "sex" occurring between the men involved claim a space for the homosexual and homosexuality at the centre of an otherwise over(t)ly heterosexualised Australian culture.

Such tales thereby comply with the desires and demands of the discourse of gay liberation to “out” the eternal presence of homosexuality in an attempt to destabilise the exclusive power and validity of heteronormativity. The “truth” of the heterosexuality or homosexuality of the union is certainly both culturally specific (Williams 191) and historically contingent (Nardi, “Seamless” 1-4). Indeed, the existence of such a concept as homosexuality within the culture means the truth of a union of mates as homosocial and of the men as heterosexual can never be guaranteed and is never stable. Any insistence on the innate heterosexuality of the relationship produces poststructuralist suspicion of a homosexuality buried deep beneath the surface of this relationship and the bodies involved. Similarly, any attempt to define a mateship as homosexual and the men as homosexuals is difficult to prove with absolute certainty, given the culture’s continuing preference for heterosexuality and continuing definition of all bodies as heterosexual unless explicitly declared otherwise.<sup>18</sup> However, in these pro-homosexual resisting narratives, mateship exists as a site through which the struggle for control of the body can be sustained within the pervasive discourse of sexuality. The debate over whether mateships are truly heterosexual or in reality homosexual offers an example of how the homosexual/heterosexual binary manages to maintain its eternal power over the body through insisting that the discourse of sexuality is the most appropriate context in which to discuss and resolve all relationships between bodies.

The culture has a will to know the body. This has translated into a demand that all corporeal contact be observed, understood and contained by the normative paradigm of the homosexual/heterosexual binary. Thus, for a

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<sup>18</sup> This assumption of heterosexuality is undergoing changes, however, particularly when applied to men. The visible presence of homosexuality in the culture and the proximity of the homosexual’s ideal interests and physical appearance to the new metrosexual man threaten to undermine heterosexuality as the first and only choice when seeking to determine the sexual position of a particular body. It is no longer just “women who have to worry about their appearance, whereas carelessness and a pseudo-naïve ‘naturalness’ are essential parts of masculinity” (Gough 121). Increasingly, therefore, men with an interest in their physical appearance have to come out as heterosexual to dispel any assumption of their homosexuality (Durber, “Playing”).

man to have an emotionally and physically intimate relationship with another man without this being interpreted as evidence of his desire for an object of the same-sex requires a shift away from normative heterosexuality and away from the promoted alternative of homonormativity. In the denial by the one (heterosexuality) of the possibility of such a union and the insistence by the other (homosexuality) upon it in order to maintain their definitions in language and in the culture, there occurs the eradication of the possibility of anything beyond. The suggestion by the discourse of sexuality that all sexualised experiences can be located in the essentialised homosexual/heterosexual binary imposes limitations on the body's possibilities for constructing intimate unions with same-sexed bodies outside the structures already in place to know and control these unions. Indeed, this normalised binarisation of the body's desires and pleasures works to make unsustainable any union not articulated as either homosexual or heterosexual. For "mates" to serve as a site through which the naturalised control of male-male intimacies might be resisted, therefore, it is necessary to consider ways of conceptualising a bond between male-d bodies without reference to the sexualised component that may or may not exist within such a union. For evidence of a BwS to emerge here, it is necessary to remove the focus on the sex and "sex" of the bodies otherwise assumed to be united in intimacy because of the "fact" that they are men with the capacity to know "sex."

The approach I take towards mateship does not advocate a return to the "sweetness" of affection a man was able to express for other men prior to the construction of the homosexual/heterosexual divide (Masten). Instead of seeking to bring the two sides of the binary closer together by reducing the gap perceived to exist between them, I emphasise the importance of this gap as a space of silence in which relationships and bodies might reside. Rather than attempt to prove the existence of homosexualised desire in any heterosexualised male-male relationship—or vice versa—I argue that "mate" serves as a signifier that can both elide and contain same-sex sexualised contact. It is incapable of eradicating the possibility of such contact occurring,

while simultaneously incapable of affirming the existence of such contact with absolute certainty. Thus, it simply does not care. The becoming a BwS within a mateship is made possible not with reference to who the bodies are and what their relationship means in terms of the establishment of individual and identifiable (sexual) subjects. Rather, it exists in the deployment of silence surrounding the possible pleasures the bodies achieve outside any need to bring moments of intimacy into language. In “mate,” we see the possibility for becoming a BwS in the sense that this signifier suggests a bond already intense with emotions, feelings and desires, even if these are never articulated in ways the culture understands and demands. What brings bodies together in mateship is not the existence or absence of sexualised contact. A mateship is not computed of individualised and sexualised bodies in intimate union, but rather the intimate union of un-intimated bodies.

### 7.2.1 Beating Mateships

With reference to the culture of anonymous “sex” between men, Dennis Altman has suggested:

The willingness to have sex immediately, promiscuously, with people about whom one knows nothing and from whom one demands only physical contact can be seen as [...] a desire to know and trust other men in a type of brotherhood far removed from the male bonding of rank, hierarchy, and competition that characterizes much of the outside world. (*Homosexualization* 79-80)

Beats, cottages and teahouses—public spaces where men cruise for and have “sex” with men—are heterotopias in the sense that they exist in society alongside society, but are the “sorts of places that are outside all places, although they are actually localizable” (Foucault, “Different” 178). They do not offer an example of the “crisis heterotopia” (180). Bodies are not placed here *because* of the deviancy they exhibit. Rather, beats are heterotopic spaces in

which bodies are able to experience an “absolute break with their traditional time” (182). They are spaces located in the present time, but offer the body an opportunity to engage in pleasures outside the time—and the culture—in which it normally resides. In Laud Humphreys’ opinion, such public spaces of “sex” offer “a sort of democracy that is endemic to impersonal sex” (*Tearoom* 13). The temporary unions that emerge here appear to reflect more readily the kind of “democratic equality” deemed essential to a mateship bond (Moore 54).

Certainly, the sexualised activities that occur at beats offer a challenge to the rank and competition that continue to rule the “sex” of gay culture, where youth, wealth and appearance play a major role in determining who gets to have “sex” with whom, under what conditions and, indeed, if at all. As Humphreys further argues, the intensity of normalised hierarchies determining the types of bodies most desired decreases in situations where there is less expectation that the body and the mind need to connect. Bodies that seek out “sex” in public spaces lower their expectations and standards (*Tearoom* 13-14). For gay men, therefore, beats provide a break from the demands of popular gay culture, with its focus on safety, decency, fashion and appearances, beauty and compliance with the standards and morals of heteronormativity. Similarly, for men unable to participate in public gay culture due to marital and societal restrictions imposed on their sexualised behaviours, beats offer a temporary outing of sexualised desires that do not need to be reproduced or rearticulated once the body leaves the space of the beat behind and reenters the social. Thus, for both out and closeted homosexuals, the beat provides a geographical and metaphorical space in which it is possible to engage in homosexualised behaviours without having to carry any identity signified by the “sex” into and throughout their everyday lives. At the beat, the body is able to participate in sexualised pleasures without having to expose such pleasures within a framework of who “I” am.

In his historical account of the importance of these spaces to the homosexual subculture in Australia, Garry Wotherspoon criticises those who respond to the existence of beats with automatic abhorrence. He argues that

such an appropriation of space to fulfil subcultural desires and needs necessarily will occur within a society that denies the subculture any space of its own (*City* 68). Given the continuing popularity of beat culture today, even in cities that exhibit a strong and visible gay culture, this claim offers an inadequate reading for why men use public spaces to engage in “sex” with other men. Rather than reject these spaces as either immoral and abhorrent or filled with lonely bodies exhibiting insatiable desires within a culture disinterested in their existence, we should focus instead on the different kinds of intimacies such bodies are able to form once removed from the normative structures of stable identities demanded by the wider culture. Wotherspoon’s analysis mistakenly assumes all the men who use these spaces to be homosexuals. He does not take into account the importance of such spaces to those who do not recognise the need for a coherent connection between pleasures of the body and any sexual identity.

In Gary Dowsett’s analysis of men who have “sex” with men in public spaces, the question that needs to be asked is: “The relation [between the bodies] may be different from what is conventionally expected from sex between lovers, but are these men less than lovers for their silence?” (“Sexual” 87). Undoubtedly, silence is important to the bodies that go to these spaces in search of sexualised pleasures. Silence allows a level of protection against the threat of attack or arrest: “The excuse that intentions have been misunderstood is much weaker when these proposals are expressed in words rather than signalled by body movements” (Humphreys, *Tearoom* 13). Additionally, silence may be the preferred method of communication because it heightens the intensity and/or fantasy of the sexualised experience. In contrast to the impact on the body engaged in talk, the silent body is not forced into a relationship with the other body so that it becomes known as “I” in relation to an other knowable “I.” In silence, the body is able to experience corporeal pleasure without having to speak of this moment with reference to being a particular kind of person with a particular identity and/or lifestyle. It can merely experience the pleasure, then

leave this moment behind as it exits the beat and re-enters the culture conversely insistent on reading every body with reference to “I.”

However, the extent to which these spaces offer any significant resistance to normative understandings of intimate corporeal contact between bodies is debatable. Specifically, it is questionable to what extent the temporary unions formed within these spaces can be seen as an example of the body resisting compulsory homosexualisation. Any man who recognises a beat as a space in which his self-acknowledged homosexuality can be contained without the threat of exposure or engaged in for further pleasure already reads such a space as offering confirmation of his homosexuality. His position complies with the discourse of gay liberation’s attempt to reaffirm the naturalness of homosexuality through establishing a binary between homosexuals inside and homosexuals outside the closet.<sup>19</sup> Is it fair to suggest, therefore, that the unions formed in the act of public, anonymous “sex” could be defined as “mateships” in the way I wish to deploy this term to signify an elision of the dictate of compulsory homo- and hetero-sexualisation?

In his discussion on the relationship between liberation, sex and commodity culture, Guy Davidson finds Altman’s stance on “sex” venues ambiguous. Altman sees these venues firstly as possible sites of utopian democracy where bodies are de-clothed of their real-world positions and robed in common through their shared search for “sex.” He then dismisses the possibility for such utopianism because of the location of these venues within a middle-class commercial sphere. This is not an ambiguity Altman does not recognise for and in self. He has clearly stated his “strange ambivalence towards baths” (qtd. in Davidson). Indeed, even as he writes of the democracy of bathhouses and their ability to help dismantle normative assumptions about “sex” and the way it should be procured, he simultaneously makes clear the irony that sexual liberation should rely on capitalist-motivated environments to provide spaces in which to experience such freedom (*Homosexualization* 85).

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<sup>19</sup> See my discussion on the surveillance the narrative of coming out and the closet has on the body that engages in same-sex sexualised contact in chapter four (4.2.1).

Altman's comments, however, address anonymous "sex" between men in bathhouses specifically. It is perhaps necessary, therefore, to make a distinction between the use of saunas and the use of public beats for the purpose of engaging in "sex," not least because the latter include no economic transaction. No body—but the bodies involved—benefits from any "sex" that might occur. Indeed, this may account for the increased resistance to such spaces and the intensity of efforts by police to engage in operations of entrapment of those who frequent them (Altman, "What" 57).

However, even in the non-commercial, non-profit spaces where anonymous "sex" occurs between male-d bodies, there is no reason to assume the non-existence of the "I" who knows the body as man and sexual both before entering such a space and throughout the duration of any experience of corporeal pleasure therein. Certainly, a body needs to be identified as "man" if it is to gain access to a licensed "sex"-on-premises sauna. Quite simply, the presence of a non-man-ed body is against the rules and regulations. Similarly, the presence of a recognisable non-man-ed body at a beat would undermine the desire of the male-d body that goes there to engage in "sex" exclusively with other male-d bodies. As Dowsett has argued consistently, the silence deployed by bodies engaged in anonymous beat sex also presupposes the participants have knowledge of the skills and processes involved in this kind of corporeal interaction ("Bodyplay" 31; *Practicing* 143-44; "Sexual" 87). The silence of the beat, therefore, is a silence that reaffirms the absolutes of sex and "sex" through its recognition of *not* having to bring these essentialised components of the body into speech. The man who goes to a beat does not have to declare his desires to have "sex," because such desires are assumed already by the mere fact of the presence of his man-ed body in this space. Indeed, rather than a silence that undermines the sexing and the sexualisation of the body, the silence of beats may provide a space in which the man can engage in known homosexualised "sex" without risking the kind of effeminisation of self applied to those who "flaunt" their homosexuality in public on a full-time basis. The silence of men at beats offers a resistance to gender-bending practices that a culture of

men who have sex with men has offered in the past (Chauncey 100-01) and continues to offer today (Gough 127). Beat culture, therefore, is very much about “sex” between men.<sup>20</sup>

The willingness of certain bodies that frequent beats to take on board the identity of “MSM” (men who have sex with men) further reveals the continuation of the culture’s success in its bid to contain all bodies within the regulating discourses of sex and “sex.” This label, while it seeks to emphasise the importance of behaviour over identity, ironically offers a means of identifying men who engage in same-sex practices outside the established gay community. The silence of these men has presented particular “problems for those who seek to research aspects of their life-styles and behaviour” (Bennett, Chapman, and Bray 310). As I have suggested in this thesis in my earlier discussion on the interpretation of silence within the discourse of gay liberation (111-12), those involved in advocating awareness of HIV/AIDS abhor silence because of the threat non-articulation poses to the life of the body existing in a culture where the virus of HIV also resides. Thus, these educators demand that any body engaging in same-sex practices speak of self within a language of truth and safety. They view non-articulating bodies with pity; they pity their exposure to a damaging and potentially deadly viral attack on the body. Yet this pity and this demand for identification also serve to validate the position of the colonising “I” who assumes the right and responsibility to know what these bodies are, where they go, what they do and why they do it. MSM, therefore, is not a resistance to compulsory identification. It too is a damaging identity. It represents the success of the culture’s ability to reconstitute the body as a knowable object even if the body in question was not known before and is knowable now under a newly constructed label. It reaffirms the singularity and

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<sup>20</sup> Kath Albury has suggested the following texts for discussions on anonymous “sex” between women in public spaces: Pat Califia’s *Public Sex* (Cleis Press, 1994); Carol Queen’s *Real Live Nude Girl: Chronicles of Sex-Positive Culture* (Cleis Press, 1997); Dossie Easton and Catherine Liszt’s *The Ethical Slut: A Guide to Infinite Sexual Possibilities* (Greenery Press, 1998); and Anna Munster’s “Hatensness of Straightness” in Kerry Bashford et. al.’s *Kink* (Wicked Women Publications, 1993).

the wholeness of the body, and, therefore, the ability of the culture to control the corporeal form.

### **7.2.2 The Becoming Mateship of Bodies**

It is a common and popularised criticism of men that they have an inability to express emotion. Men are seen to engage in friendships devoid of intimacy (Messner 216). In particular, when it comes to articulating “love” for another male friend, it is argued that heterosexual men are less able and/or willing than gay men to address the topic “clearly” (Nardi, “Sex” 178). Formerly, men who showed signs of emotion were marginalised because of a homosexuality such sentimental displays were seen to reveal. Now, a traditional masculinity is blamed for the oppression of the man because it prohibits the experience of intense emotional connection between men, an experience that homosexual men are assumed capable of enjoying with ease. In response, there is a demand for the man to “get in touch” with his emotions and to verbalise them. According to this new age of a more appropriate and soft masculinity, if only the man were able and willing to speak and act out his emotions, his oppression would be lifted.

This is the approach of Steve Biddulph. His solution to the problem of restrained male emotionalism is to attack the enemy of “lifelong emotional timidity” (4). In his analysis, men do not have “friends”; they only have “mates” with whom they “share a straitjacket agreement” not to talk (176). Men are socially constructed to ignore intimacy and emotion as a part of self and in their relationships with other men. This is Biddulph’s understanding of the problem; his solution is equally simple: men must talk. He argues:

What pain would flow out if one was to say, “Listen, you’ve been the best mate a bloke could want” and looked the other straight in the eye as he said it. Or if they had spent a long evening together with their wives, full of “remember whens” punctuated with tears and easing laughter. If, instead of standing stiff-armed and

choked, they could have had a long strong hug, from which to draw strength and assurance, as they faced the hardship their futures would bring. (175-76)

The consequence for any man who fails to articulate his affection for other men is that he will be “a massive risk for suicide, alcoholism, cancer or accident, as he twists up inside to suppress the emotions his body feels” (176). Biddulph’s answer—and that of the Men’s Movement to which he subscribes—is to attack homophobia, competition and the “bullshit” sessions men squander their time on, when they could be having meaningful expression of emotion instead: “Stop trying to prove you’re a man. Just be one” (188). He points to the unfettered emotions of young boys as evidence of what the man could become if he did not exist in a culture that encourages him to hide his emotions (176). His position, therefore, is one that essentialises a connection between anatomical sex and gender behaviour. Furthermore, despite his attempt to adopt an anti-homophobic stance (177-78), his position also favours heterosexuality over homosexuality. His insistence that men should be accompanied by their wives in their non-bullshit bonding sessions offers mates an assurance that their emotional interaction will not slip into acts of homosexuality.

In my discussion on the role of a queerer silence in male-male “sex” in chapter five, I expressed a concern over how silence is not recognised to contain diverse meanings; how it is not seen to be deployed for a number of reasons beyond the subject’s inability to speak. The demand for talk suggests that all non-speaking men simply are repressed. Such knowledge emerges in a culture desperate to know what it claims to exist already inside the body: feelings and emotions. It seeks and encourages confession, therefore, of what lies hidden within. A man’s silence is read as a sign of his inability to articulate such feelings rather than as a rejection of this culturally imposed connection between essentialised feelings and the essentialised being of “I.” To iterate Saville-Troike’s understanding of such an essentialist reading of silence:

Stereotyping and misunderstanding occur when the patterned use of sounds and silence by members of one speech community are

interpreted according to the norms and rules held by members of another. (14)

As I further argued in this earlier chapter, however, a silencing of sexualised experiences avoids interpellation of the body into a system of classification that requires all sexualised contact and desires of the past (and future) to help in the construction of an immutable “I” through which the body can be regulated accordingly. Silence permits the *doing* of a queerer relationship in a way that highlights the importance to queerness of moving action as opposed to static being (Jakobsen 516-517). In the hybrid region of silence, the will to knowledge demanded by the discourse of sexuality, indeed, is displaced by a savouring of “unthinkability” (Butler, “Is Kinship” 18).<sup>21</sup> The unspoken becomes the unknowable, which in turn removes the body from the enforced position of a controllable subject in a highly sexualised culture.

In his analysis of the intimacy experienced between male athletes, Michael Messner argues that the observation of a lack of emotion is the result of misrecognition of the way men perform intimacy. Viewed from the position of a woman, male-male relationships might appear to be lacking in emotion, but viewed from the position of the men involved, these unions are emotional because men express their feelings through doing rather than through talking (216). While Messner’s argument clearly reaffirms stereotypical traits of sexed bodies both in terms of viewing and being, nevertheless his critique of the observation of lack rejects a popular approach to the discussion of male-male relationships and to men in general. Additionally, his critique helps refute the suggestion supported by Biddulph *and* the discourse of gay liberation that male-male intimacies need to be articulated because lack of articulation signifies oppression. If we view the silence not as lack but rather as evidence of the existence of the men and their mutually intimate relationships in different frameworks to those we know already, however, the suggestion of oppression is

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<sup>21</sup> Butler savours “the status of unthinkability” in her discussion on same-sex marriages. I refer to her article, “Is Kinship Always Already Heterosexual,” in more detail in my discussion on brother-brother sexualised relationships in the next section (7.3).

no longer valid. We can no longer demand that these men confess their emotions and desires. Moreover, we can no longer speak for them about such emotions and desires within a framework of understanding that enables the speaking “I” to maintain its own reality, knowledge and authority.

In Derridean terms, a friendship depends on memory: the ability of the men involved to be able to recall and reaffirm the deeds and words of the other. Such a memorisation is particularly important and intense after the death of a friend, for it is in the moment of mourning that one comes to understand the essence of the friendship. It is after the death of the other that the gap between self and other finally recedes (Brault and Naas 27). Indeed, as Jacques Derrida further argues, death is always central to any friendship because the expectation that one of the participants will outlive the other, and therefore be left to mourn and memorise, is present always in the friendship between living bodies (14). In Jody Greene’s assessment of Derrida’s approach, the problem is how to best articulate these memories without foreclosing the possibility that others might see the friend and his/her life differently. She writes:

It is in this transformation of mourning into the practice of thinking and writing and carrying on the friend’s work that, I believe, the slippage between friend and master can be seen to lie. The death of a friend whose work we take it on ourselves to continue changes what may have been a horizontal relationship into a vertical one as we begin to take account of what the friend gave us in life as a legacy left to us in his or her absence [...]. (328)

When speaking of a friend, we risk constructing a hierarchical divide between self and other, a divide not evident in the union of the friendship itself. Herein lies the problem.

The compulsion to speak of that which is unspeakable—the death of a friend, for example—is driven by the demand that every body should recognise its position as “I.” To exist, “I” must speak within established codes and language even if this means having to articulate what is unknown to the body:

In mourning we find ourselves at a loss, no longer ourselves, as if the singular shock of what we must bear had altered the very medium in which it was supposed to be registered. But even if the death of a friend appears unthinkable, unspeakable, we are nonetheless, says Derrida, called upon to speak, to break the silence, to participate in the codes and rites of mourning. (Brault and Naas 5)

This need to memorise the friend—whether this is a memorisation that comes post-mortem or in any articulation of the living friend's relation to self—(re)establishes an “I” separated from the friend to whom one claims one had/has a special bond. The Derridean understanding of friendship insists on such singularities. It demands the individualisation of bodies involved in a friendship and reads the relationship between these singularised bodies accordingly. Such a positioning of bodies does not constitute a mateship. Rather, the bond of mateship is denied because of the insistence on separating the body of self from the body of the friendly other. Indeed, to memorise a friend in death assumes the right of “I” to speak on behalf of the other in such a manner that the coloniser no longer needs the colonised to be present. The colonised body can be a dead body for all “I” care. All “I” care about is the security of the singular self.

To date, a focus on the body as a site of knowledge has resulted in the individualisation of the body. In Derridean terms, while a democracy must take into account the “community of friends,” there can be no democracy without “respect for irreducible singularity or alterity” (22). Such a demand for the individualisation of the body, even as these individualised bodies are involved in communities, encourages the construction of a public/private divide in which rights and citizenship are deemed the most appropriate and fair way of dealing with bodies. Such an approach is, as I have explored, flawed and failing in its attempt to know every body as equal, as worthy.<sup>22</sup> In contrast, the union of a

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<sup>22</sup> See chapter five (5.2.1).

mateship best provides the ability for bodies to be removed from compulsory sexualisation when the individual bodies involved no longer constitute the focus of surveillance. In focusing on the intensities bodies produce in unison, there exists a means through which the individualised body might avoid the surveillance of the pervasive discourse of sexuality. It is in the mateship itself—and not in the bodies involved—where the possibility of becoming a BwS resides.

In her essay “Odd Couples and Double Acts,” Jennifer Livett suggests such a revision of “the sense of self from Descartes onward” and an end to the “isolated, alienated subject position.” She does so through focusing on the emergence of male-male pairs. In the narratives of “odd couples” who do not remain as singular bodies in a hierarchical friendship, but who express “difference-within-similarity,” she sees the construction of

a kind of countering “schizo”-family, a “non-subject” or “group subject” of two, an anti-capitalist Deleuzoguattarian “fractal” pair who refuse to allow any space between them for the exchange of either goods, money, or women: the only exchange between them is words.

Having rejected a history focused on individual bodies, she emphasises instead a history of two: male friends joined in unions that reveal equity, intimacy and production. If we observe two male-d bodies conjoined in acts of “sex” and discern from this observation that we have evidence of the existence of two homosexual beings, we continue to insist on the separation of the bodies. We fail to see how the corporeal pleasures experienced in this union might not be about “I” and “I,” but might suggest the desire—and success—of these bodies to escape such compulsory singularisation.

Narrativising a relationship between mates with a starting point of assumed heterosexuality and a final awareness of homosexuality, therefore, merely reaffirms the singularity of the bodies involved. Such an analysis is interested only in knowing what these bodies are according to established systems of sexual knowledge, when, in fact, the transformations that occur for

these bodies may not be the result of changes in individuals, but the result of these bodies becoming other than “I,” becoming two-in-one, and then three, four...and molecularly more. In the Deleuzoguattarian sense, indeed, becoming does not engage with the discovery of past points of origin or future points of established being. The process of becoming is not interested in what might exist at either end of the journey. To repeat:

A becoming is always in the middle; one can only get it by the middle. A becoming is neither one nor two, nor the relation of the two; it is the in-between, the border or line of flight or descent running perpendicular to both. (Deleuze and Guattari, *Thousand* 293)

As this particular(ly) odd couple write: “What is real is the becoming itself, the block of becoming, not the supposedly fixed terms through which that which becomes passes” (238). The only addition—or rather omission—that is needed to Livett’s otherwise wonderfully anti-individualistic “strangeness” is her insistence on words. In the act of two becoming one, the need for communication between two bodies to sustain the individual “I” of both, too, is no longer required.

This dismissal of the individuality of the bodies involved in an intimate union instigates a challenge to the naturalised sexualisation of the same-sex desiring male-d body that has existed as a popular model of knowledge and control of the body since the nineteenth-century pathologisation of corporeal pleasures. In the silencing of the sexualised “I,” the body refutes its anticipated role as a signifier of an essentialised sexual orientation. It surpasses the normative discursive definitions of its own actions, and thereby denies the claimed right of the pervasive discourse of sexuality to name it as a sexualised subject (Dowsett, “Bodyplay” 32-34). The silence of the individual body produces a fracture in the binary on which the institutions of heterosexuality and the discourse of gay liberation equally depend. Rather than bringing the “radically discontinuous relation of male homosocial and homosexual bonds” (Sedgwick, *Between* 5) into closer harmony, the silent body constructs its

relationships with other bodies outside this discourse of compulsory sexualisation. The intimate pleasures and relationship are dependent on neither heterosexuality nor homosexuality. Rather, they are experienced within the context of a “mateship,” where the focus for the bodies involved is not any “sex” that might or might not occur, but a whole array of fleeting, momentary pleasures that result not from being individual bodies in isolation, but from becoming without the control of singularity, in union.

### **7.3 The Attack on the Silence of Becoming Brothers**

Discussions and research on incest tend to focus exclusively on sexualised relationships between males and females within the family. Same-sex sexualised incestuous unions are given little attention in the debate. In her study on sibling incest, for example, Nicole Owen gives only one sentence to the topic of brother-brother incest (17), concentrating instead on “sex” between brothers and sisters. Similarly, despite stating an intention to “stimulate discussion on this little written about topic—sibling interest” (12) and framing their discussion initially in gender-neutral terms (13), Flanagan and Patterson too reaffirm incest as a signifier of opposite-sex sexualised relationships by discussing only brother-sister “sex.” Even in reports that advocate greater recognition of the diversity of incestuous relationships (Bixler), brother-brother relationships continue to be ignored. In fact, as Jerome Neu notes, in the published reports of the clinical literature in particular, “homosexual incest” hardly ever gets a mention (35). In Butler’s analysis, this silencing of same-sex incestuous affairs signifies the erasure of homosexual desire in the taboo on heterosexual incest, which has supposed the regulation of homosexual incest to the extent that the former no longer needs to speak of the latter. The boy or girl who enters the Oedipal drama with incestuous desires for the parent of the opposite sex has been subjected already to prohibitions that seek to steer the construction of their sexual desires. Thus, as Butler writes, “the taboo against homosexuality must precede the heterosexual incest taboo” (*Gender* 64).

Given the importance of silence to becoming a BwS, therefore, one might assume that any brother-brother sexualised contact offers the body the chance of such a becoming. The brothing of bodies works to foreclose the possibility that these bodies will desire to engage in any mutual act of “sex” because of the sameness of their (re)production through the sex and “sex” of a shared daddy and mommy “I.” This biologically determined and demanded connection produces an unthinkability of brother-brother sexualised contact, thus offering a space in which such contact feasibly could occur but without notice. Nobody wants to talk about brother-brother “sex.” Nobody wants to think about it. The suggestion that it might occur and its actual occurrence exceed the realities of the everyday. Brother-brother “sex” is beyond the imagination of “I.” Brother-ed bodies, therefore, should be able to participate in sexualised contact without having to expose any such contact to wider familial and cultural interpretations of what it should mean. Any sexualised experiences between brothers should be able to remain in silence, thus avoiding the culture’s dictate to have any and all experiences of corporeal intimacy translated and articulated within the narrative of compulsory sexualisation.

I am not suggesting that brother-ed bodies might engage in any mutual sexualised contact with the intention of disrupting the prohibition against their involvement in such an act. Not all sexualised contact results from a conscious desire to resist a taboo. In the case of brothers specifically, “sex” may occur merely because the opportunity and the body of the other brother are close to hand, where such proximity of possibility is produced by certain demands placed on the familial body within Western culture. The emphasis this particular culture places on the production of the individual encourages the cultural practice of separating children from parents within the family home. While a scarcity of financial resources and space might mean that not every child can be offered a bedroom exclusively for self, still the incest taboo further commands the necessary separation of children from parents. This imperative is heightened during adolescence when the child’s sexual awareness is said to emerge. Any sexualised activity of the already legitimate sexualised adults

must be beyond the gaze of children. Similarly, the sexually developing child's body must be located in a space of privacy away from the eyes of adults, parents included. Any desire by the adult (parent) to enter the bedroom of the child not only suggests an intrusion into the individual's privacy, but also—and more drastically—risks positioning the adult as a perverted voyeur: the paedophile subject. To a certain extent, therefore, any sexualised activities on the part of the child—whether alone in masturbation or together with siblings—are protected from the certainty of detection and scrutiny.

The discourse of sexuality, however, has a habit of breaking silence. The naturalisation of this discourse—and its masked power over the body—relies on the culture's assurance that this discourse has the right to penetrate into the unknown to discover what the culture claims to exist there already in damaging silence: "sex." This discourse is forever on the hunt for new knowledge of "sex" to maintain its reality and its relevance to the culture's demand for control of the body. Increasingly, therefore, even intimate corporeal experiences between brother-ed bodies—intimacies that may occur before the bodies involved fully understand the culture's demanded knowledge of sex and "sex"—are being forced out of the closet and narrated as "sex" between two bodies sexed the same. Any possible silencing and reconfiguration of either the brothered-ed body or this body's experiences of intimate pleasures with its brother is being undermined by the culture's demand for "sex."

A recent example of this incitement to discourse can be seen in the way the debate over same-sex marriage has encouraged further talk of a connection between homosexuality and incest. For some, the demand by homosexuals for the right to marry pre-empts a similar demand by family members who wish to engage in consensual sexualised contact and/or marry (Saletan). The fear behind this claim is that once the institution of marriage has extended its borders to include same-sex couples, there will be nothing to prevent other deviant sexual types from seeking legitimacy for their unions within the sanctity of marriage. Any refusal to allow further expansion of the marriage law would constitute an invasion of the individual's right to privacy, the very argument the

gay lobby uses to seek approval for marriages between homosexual citizens. The response from those who work and write within the field of human rights and within a gay liberationist framework specifically aims to reject outright any connection between incestuous affairs and being gay (“Interview With”).<sup>23</sup> Those who support the rights of gays to marry—as William Saletan does—insist that homosexual unions should not be equated with other forms of non-normative sexualised relationships.

The fear that same-sex marriages will lead to a breakdown of the taboo on incest feeds off an already established, constructionist—albeit conservative—argument of a link between homosexuality and incest, namely, that participation in same-sex sexualised contact within the family leads to the development of homosexual desires. The “relationship between rates of reported incest and the occurrence of multiple homosexual siblings in the family” is allegedly so “apparent” that incest deserves to be investigated as “a possible alternative to genetic explanations” (Cameron and Cameron 617). The suggestion—a popular one within the gay community—that homosexuality is determined genetically is disputed by these authors on the grounds that, given the small percentage of homosexuals who have children, the genetic transmission of the homosexual trait “does not appear advantageous for survival and may instead be deleterious” (618). Their research, therefore, aims to correct what they perceive to be scarcity of attention given to incest as a possible “cause of homosexuality” (611).

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<sup>23</sup> Outside the public, political debate, certain gay porn and pulp fiction texts fantasise a connection between incest and homosexuality through their depictions of brother-brother “sex” in a way that aims to give pleasure to the viewing/reading subject. Here, bodies unaware of the blood bond they share may engage in sexualised pleasures for the voyeuristic pleasures of those in the know about the relationship. Alternatively, brother-ed bodies formerly isolated because of their closeted homosexuality are brought together in a joyous, communal release of outing and “sex.” Such representations permit the knowledgeable voyeur to experience the fantasy of brother-brother sexualised contact without forcing the acts that occur to be translated into a political demand for the right of any body to engage in such “sex” without legal or moral punishment. The fact that these representations occur within a framework of fiction, however, brings notions of fantasy and the carnivalesque into play. Thus, they may offer no more than a momentary release from the taboo on incest without disrupting in any significant way the power this taboo continues to have over the body, its pleasures and its desires.

The tone of this article is clear. The authors understand homosexuality as a form of “sexual identity confusion” (612, 616, 617), a “risk” and a “contagion” (618), and the result of “experimentation, seduction, or rape” (611). Additionally, they argue that self-identifying homosexuals too understand homosexuality as seductive through recognising their homosexual orientation to be the result of early homosexual experience or claiming to be able to seduce straight men (612). Any causality of heterosexuality is not discussed.<sup>24</sup> In contrast to the authors’ focus on why people become homosexuals, the underlying assumption is that this becoming emerges from a natural base of heterosexuality. If left untouched, the normative and natural heterosexual body will not be seduced into homosexuality. Incest, however, is a “subset of the ‘contagion’ hypothesis of how homosexuality may be propagated” (618). Additionally, this report—written with the sub-authorisation of the Family Research Institute—argues that homosexuality is more prevalent in “irreligious” homes and where there is an absence of a father (619).

One possible way of criticising the tone and the conclusions of this article would be to offer a response that attacks the assumption of damage caused to the subject by involvement in homosexualised acts. One could argue that there is nothing wrong in being seduced into homosexual desires and pleasures because such behaviours do not produce the kind of adverse effects on the body and the subject that the authors assume. Becoming a homosexual really is not such a bad thing. To the contrary, any damage caused to the body and the subject is due to the dominance of the kind of culture the authors of this article subscribe to and support. Alternatively, one might question why incest is seldom suggested as a cause of heterosexuality. If homosexuality is more prevalent in “irreligious homes,” does it not follow that a high level of heterosexual incest must be occurring within “devout Christian” homes to ensure the production of such a vast number of heterosexuals assumed to exist

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<sup>24</sup> In the sample of interviewees, those respondents who identify as bisexual are placed alongside those who identify as homosexual (613), thus emphasising the desires of the authors to separate heterosexuals from all others.

within? Such a claim would certainly comply with feminist readings of the necessity of incestuous relationships—particularly between fathers and daughters—to maintain the power relationships of the patriarchal system.<sup>25</sup>

However, these have not been the responses from those who seek to further the gay liberationist desire of establishing the homosexual as a well-behaved, compliant and, therefore, valid citizen in the culture. Andrew Sullivan's response ("Gay"), for example, argues that of course there are limits to the extent to which the borders of marriage can be extended because "we" are "morally serious people" who can make "rational decisions between what is arbitrary and what is essential." After all, when we talk about same-sex marriages, we are not advocating a complete eradication of the importance of moral judgements to the debate on the legitimacy of sexualised unions. We are not talking about the right of a man to marry his dog, for instance. Similarly, Dahlia Lithwick insists that most of us can agree

that all the shriekings about gay marriage opening the door to incest with children and pedophilia are inapposite. These things are illegal because they cause irreversible harms. Similarly, adultery, to the extent it's illegal anymore, produces a tangible victim. Let's also agree that we can probably also take the bestiality out of the mix.

While gay marriages are represented as fair, equitable and economically compatible with the current social system, other kinds of sexualised unions—polygamous and polyamorous relationships, prostitution, adultery and incest, for example—are not. Here, once again, gay relationships are disassociated from abnormal non-heteronormative unions and located firmly alongside the

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<sup>25</sup> Within a feminist framework, incest is no abnormality in a patriarchal culture. Rather, it is a means of maintaining normative patriarchal social hierarchies. Any incestuous relationship between the father and the daughter, for example, does not signify the father as deviant. Instead, it suggests his successful assimilation into a social structure that demands power of the male over the female (Bell 57). The visibility of sexist and patriarchal attitudes within the family, therefore, encourages incestuous relationships to occur, while encouraging those involved to view such sexualised interaction as normal, irrespective of the personal pain the individuals may experience (Flanagan and Patterson 14).

normality of heteronormative unions. The good citizen—whether gay or straight—is he/she who agrees to participate in the cultural marginalisation of those who engage in sexualised relationships outside the human, adult-adult, homosexual/heterosexual model. Indeed, Lithwick’s rhetoric speaks of “us” as already occupying this position, thus normalising her claim that what she believes and writes is commonsense for all.

In an attempt to address the issue of similarity in sexual orientation between brothers in less judgemental terms, Khytam Dawood et al. suggest two possible explanations. The first is the environmental influence of having a gay brother: the existence of a gay brother might make it easier to discover one’s hidden homosexual feelings (156). The second is homosexuality caused by incest (157). In conclusion, however, the authors argue that “knowledge that a brother is gay is unlikely to be a powerful cause of homosexuality” (161). In addition, despite twenty-one of the forty-nine participants admitting to an experience of “sex” with a brother, Dawood et. al. insist:

The fact that the majority of men who engaged in early sexual experimentation with their brothers knew about their own feelings before they knew about their brothers’ suggests that the sexual experimentation was more likely an indication of, rather than a determinant of, early homosexual feelings. (162)

Awareness of one’s homosexual orientation is said to precede any engagement in homosexualised behaviour. In such dismissals of an indisputable and strong causal link between early, sexualised activity among brothers and the production of a fixed homosexual orientation, there is the suggestion of some other reason for why brothers might share the same sexual orientation. The possibility of a genetic connection is implicit.

The claim that homosexuality is determined genetically seeks to reject the belief that homosexuality is the product of seduction and therefore seductive. Within such a framework of understanding sexualised desires and behaviours, the attempt to legitimise gay marriages can be supported by the claim that “we” are advocating the right of those with an “unchosen emotional

and sexual orientation” to be included in an institution that already validates the essentialism of heterosexuality (Sullivan, “Gay”). At Sullivan’s own admission, such a request “does not invite social anarchy.” Indeed, this counterattack of essentialism is devised as truth and seeks to become truth through appealing to the very normative and very conservative family system. The gay-gene argument disputes that homosexuality is caused by having “sex” with a same-sexed family member. Instead, this argument claims that homosexuality is passed on as a result of the body’s naturalised biological connection to the daddy/mommy “I.” The rebuttal to the suggestion of a causal link between incest and homosexuality thereby seeks to reaffirm the homosexual body as neither anti-family nor extra-family, but rather as existing within a framework of thinkability. The homosexual body is of the family and, therefore, normal.

In her discussion on the debate surrounding gay marriage (“Is Kinship”), Butler raises this issue of sexual legitimacy. In what can be taken as a direct attack on the current position of the gay lobby, she writes:

For a progressive sexual movement, even one that may want to produce marriage as an option for nonheterosexuals, the proposition that marriage should become the only way to sanction or legitimate sexuality is unacceptably conservative. (21)

While she recognises the necessary contradictions that emerge in any theoretical critique of gay marriages at the same time as offering personal support for the right of individuals to argue for such recognition of their intimate unions (20-21), nevertheless she suggests that a focus on marriage runs the risk of taming sexualised subjects within the current space of thinkability. If the debate focuses only on whether gay couples should be allowed to marry or not, the unthinkable—those unions that do not comply with current social structurings of intimacy and “sex”—remain always outside the debate. In Butler’s words, “We misunderstand the sexual field if we consider that the legitimate and the illegitimate appear to exhaust its immanent possibilities” (17).

Given the culture’s insistence on the construction and articulation of identities formed through memorisation of experiences of “sex,” it is likely that

attempts to expose the problems involved in incestuous affairs will result in the counter-resisting claim of the right of “I” to engage in incestuous “sex” if “I” so choose. Indeed, some people are talking about such matters and making such claims already. Demands for inclusion in the social sphere are broad and expanding, even if those who advocate the right to have legitimate sexualised relationships with animals, members of their family or plural bodies are not as audible as those who concentrate on unions between two adult human bodies with no immediate familial bond (Haidt and Hersh 215-16). Moreover, if privacy and individual choice are the prerequisites to constructing the legitimacy of same-sex marriages, the culture will have a hard time denying the same right of privacy and choice to any bodies—adults, at least—that desire to form consensual intimate unions within the family (Bellioiti 246; Saletan). However, a desired space of unthinkability is not accessed through any further articulation of different and other, non-normative kinds of sexualised unions. When “I” as “brother” demand others recognise the legitimacy of “I” and my right to have “sex” with my “brother,” for example, the silence is destroyed. When the body becomes a “brother” who knowingly has “sex” with its “brother,” the possibility of becoming a BwS disappears. In place of becoming a BwS—a body without the organisation of an identity based on sex and “sex”—there exists, at best, merely a whole(some), coherent being fully assimilated into a culture in which “sex” and freedom are perfect bedfellows, but where “sex” and freedom are naturalised forms of discipline on the body’s potential for becomings. When the body begins to speak of an “I” with memory of such acts, the silence is lost; the becoming is over.

### **7.3.1 Compulsory Incest: A Resisting Becoming**

It is a revelation of the extent to which fascistic desire for control of the body is naturalised in Western culture that no body can avoid the family system. Early inciters to a sexual discourse in the late nineteenth and early twentieth

centuries—Freud, for example—demanded the body speak of self as a product of the family structure:

Say that it's Oedipus, or you'll get a slap in the face. The psychoanalyst no longer says to the patient: "Tell me a little bit about your desiring-machines, won't you?" Instead, he screams: "Answer daddy-and-mommy when I speak to you!" (Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus* 45)

Today, the culture may not approve of all models of family life. Regardless, every body continues to be read as a product of the family. Bodies born into and existing within non-normative family structures are not displaced from the discourse of the family. On the contrary, their discipline and heavy punishment result from their being read within that discourse. Moreover, regardless of the structure of the family into which the body is born, the demand for the familial body is imposed on every body right from the moment of birth through the anticipated and then celebrated identification of the body as "boy" or "girl."

This immediate declaration of the sexed position of the body—and correspondingly the immediate reading of the body as "son" or "daughter" within the family system—is a form of discipline, but a discipline extremely well hidden. All evidence of the forcefulness of the corporeal regulation is erased by a focus on the joy of those bodies already sexed and sexualised—with evident success now—according to the rules of the family system. The compulsory sexing of the newborn body is welcomed with a smile of satisfaction and achievement by these bodies because such disciplining speaks the language of any body desiring to be daddy/mommy "I." It announces the triumph of the sex and "sex" of these bodies, and their performances as good, docile bodies. The son-ed or daughter-ed body is the reward for their compliance. There is no such joy for the newborn body crying now under the weight of its enforced entry into this culture of scrutiny and surveillance. "It" is not consulted nor has it given its consent to the identification(s) forcibly imposed. The body at birth has no right to dispute the language and the frameworks used to speak about it. It will be spoken for. Indeed, such a right is deemed unnecessary, given the culture's

extreme naturalisation of the sexing process and the kinship of family. It is assumed every body will welcome with equal pleasures its placement in and containment within the family system.

Despite how this disciplining of the body stands in stark contrast to Western culture's ideals of and insistence on free will and choice, few bodies subjected to the law of the family grow to question and/or reject this control. Most are obedient. Most learn how to answer to daddy/mommy "I." They learn how to speak of a self born and contained within the family environment, and how to identify this self in relation to the other bodies around them without dissent. "I am son" or "I am brother," for example, are spoken without any acknowledgement of pain. Furthermore, the most obedient body will learn how to reproduce the family through one day becoming a daddy/mommy "I" too. It will celebrate the success of its own disciplined position when it re-enacts the process of corporeal control on a newer body born and handed over as a reward for the mature docile body's unchallenged compliance. It too will assist in slapping the body into line: "Answer daddy-and-mommy when / now speak to *you!*" Such a transformation is not produced through any disorganisation of bodies and organs. Rather, it indicates a successful control of the body and its parts. Celebration of becoming daddy/mommy "I" reveals the culture's joy at being able to discipline fragmented schizo and multiple desires into a universal, knowable and regulable body to destroy the kind of polymorphous perversity available to the body at birth (Archer 85).

It has to be said, therefore, as it has been said (Foucault, *History 1* 108-09), that sexuality is incestuous from the start. It is with reference to the already sexed and sexualised daddy/mommy subjects that the body is expected to come to understand its sexed and sexualised position. The taboo on incest works to inscribe on the body a memory of who it is and where it belongs with eternal reference to its relationship with the other individualised bodies of its family. This taboo helps construct an "I" who recognises the body as a part of the family kinship (Godelier 75). Bodies may form intimate bonds that include sexualised desires and pleasures with bodies outside the same family, but the

bonds between family members must be formed out of “obligation and rule” (Durkheim 101). In order to ensure such an erasure of “sex” from the family clan, the discourse of sexuality must assume a strong and lasting presence in the organisation of the family’s bodies. The sex-ability of the body must be surveyed immediately and then constantly not from outside but from within the family. Such demanded organisation paradoxically infuses every body with thoughts of sex and “sex.” It implants in the body the very desires it seeks to eradicate. Thus, the family is not empty of sexualised desire. On the contrary, “its role is to anchor sexuality and provide it with a permanent support” (Foucault, *History 1* 108). The familialised body is incestuous from birth.

Simultaneously, however, the taboo on incest insists that the product of such discipline—a naturalised sexual desire for the body—appear as if it were constructed outside the borders of the family. Indeed, its power depends on such a displacement of “sex” and the desire for “sex” away from this unit, hence the need for the establishment and maintenance of the myth of the incest taboo. The most popular understanding of why this taboo emerged and why it must continue relates to the fear that any offspring resulting from such a union has a high chance of being born “defective.” Alternatively, the taboo is seen to reflect a natural repulsion to having “sex” with a member of one’s own family unit. The culture maintains the taboo because it is fundamentally wrong and unnatural for anybody to wish to engage in such behaviour. Incest goes against “common-sense moral thinking” (Spiecker and Steutel 284), while, in contrast, the taboo makes perfect sense. Additionally, when considered within the context of power, incestuous unions—like sexualised relationships between adults and children—are seen to cause unquestionable damage to those involved, especially to the younger and/or female participants. As such, within a culture wary of any sexual abuse of children and women in particular, incest can never be a positive experience. It is deemed particularly abhorrent because the relationship between the parent and the child is always “characterised by dependence and authority” (288).

The foundations of this myth, however, are questionable. Firstly, the assumption that incest necessarily produces a “defective” body has been disputed as biologically inaccurate (Bellioti 243; Justice and Justice 25-27; Neu 29; Pomeroy 8; Twitchell 8-9). Indeed, the fear that incestuous sexualised relationships will result in birth “defects” can be addressed easily by requiring those who wish to enter into such a relationship to prove their incapacity to procreate (Saletan). Moreover, any biological justification for the taboo on incest exposes the culture’s insistence on knowing all intimate unions with reference to reproduction. Such an approach fails to address the diverse reasons why bodies form intimate unions and further seeks to continue the enforced interpellation of all bodies into compulsory reproduction.<sup>26</sup> Next, if “sex” with a family member were naturally repugnant, why must we be subjected to laws that aim to uphold the abhorrence and criminality of incestuous affairs? Is it not, as Butler argues in her discussion on gay marriage, that the naturalisation of desires and sexualities results from the reliance that Western subjects place on the state as the controller of legitimate and illegitimate sexualised unions (“Is Kinship” 22-23)? Finally, the universal interpretation of incest as damaging limits the term to sexualised behaviours that occur predominantly between the abusive father and his non-consenting, non-adult daughter, when, in fact, not all incestuous affairs involve intergenerational bodies of the opposite sex and not all acts of incestuous “sex” occur through force (Bellioti 246).

In Freudian terms, incestuous desires exist in every body but must be repressed if the body is to avoid the kind of uncivilised madness attributed to Oedipus. All bodies must uphold filial and parental obligations to those bodies connected to them by blood, by DNA and by compulsory love, or else, as individuals and as a society, we run the risk of destroying what governs and protects us—the Father—and blinding ourselves into a perpetual state of

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<sup>26</sup> In the case of a same-sex incestuous relationship specifically, there are no biological imperatives that can deny the legitimacy of such a union because there are no fears of reproductive disasters.

darkness and misery. Within the Western context, the repression of incestuous desires is necessary to maintain social order and to ensure survival of the human species (Godelier 69-71). Even as we may recognise the presence of incestuous desires, therefore, it is better we “restore a little order” (Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus* 54) to the unruly, undisciplined body by (re)telling it tales of its historical and natural allegiance to the bedrock of Western democracy—the family of Greek theatre—than allow it the opportunity to consider what it might become if it were to step off this stage.

The “tragedy” of Oedipus, however, rests not in the events that occur but in the storying of these events and the manner in which this story is told. The narrative of Oedipus offers an example of how the culture encourages us to read any disruption to normative kinship relations as a disaster for all the bodies involved. In Jerome Neu’s assessment, one of the reasons for upholding the taboo on incest is to sustain stable identities:

Incest destroys difference: categories collapse, people cease to have clear and distinct sexual and social places [...] and with the destruction of difference people cease to have the possibility of shifting from one place to another as they develop. (35)

For this reason, he offers the opinion that any violation of the incest taboo would fail to establish “a stable, mature, independent identity” (35).<sup>27</sup> The Oedipal drama, therefore, is a “tragedy” because “sex” between family members and the death of the father foreclose the stability of the son-ed position of Oedipus, while also causing similar disruption to the identities of the daddy/mommy “I.” Oedipus’ blindness is an example of an appropriate form of self-punishment.

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<sup>27</sup> In Neu’s analysis, the construction of sexual desires allows the body to escape from the family system and to form its own “complex social structures and relationships; necessary conditions for civilization” (30). Thus, as he claims, the taboo on incest signifies the liberation of the body from the constraints of the family. In forming intimate sexualised relationships with non-familial bodies, the body proves itself capable of continuing the survival of the human species through its ability to engage in normatively constructed kinship models. The body’s successful sexualisation signifies its civilisation (30). Neu is misguided, however, in his claim that sexualisation signifies a release for the body from the family. In forming sexualised unions outside its family, the body is not “breaking out of the family” (30). On the contrary, it is using its naturalised sexualisation to help construct intimate unions that reproduce the family, thereby retaining its position as an object of control.

The removal of his eye(s) signifies the loss of his “I.” This loss of sight—and, therefore, his position of knowledge—serves as a warning to other bodies in the culture from whom is required a more vigilant, internalised self-surveillance: be wary of incestuous desires and pleasures, lest you too experience a loss of being. Any body that deviates from the family model—even if, like the deviation of Oedipus, this deviation is pursued unconsciously—will be punished. The deviating/deviant body must experience incestuous desires and pleasures as disruptive to the social, to self and to the natural corporeal form.

It is important to iterate here that the homosexualised body is not outside the family system. This particular kind of body is normative too. While it may cause pain to the daddies and mommies to hear their children’s articulations of “I am gay,” such a self-sexualisation offers no pain to the naturalised discourse of sexuality. Any pain experienced is cultural and judgemental, the fault of disciplined bodies that see a difference between heterosexualised and homosexualised bodies, where no real difference resides. In contrast to the disappointment and tears of the heterosexualised bodies desirous of further reproduction of self through the becoming daddy/mommy of their son and/or daughter, the discourse of sexuality finds immense joy in any counter-heterosexual declaration that sexualises the body otherwise. As I have argued earlier in this thesis (56-57), in the announcement of self as “homosexual,” this discourse’s demand for sexualisation of every body succeeds regardless. Similarly, compulsory sexing and sexualisation do not disappear with a pluralisation of family types in which the homosexual family may be one alternative form. The homosexual couple may have been rejected in the culture’s preferred definition of what constitutes a family, just as many homosexuals have experienced rejection by their families. However, these homosexualised bodies continue to remain within the family structure. They are sexed and sexualised still, even if not in a manner the culture deems appropriate. They have been Oedipalised, if still somewhat recognised as the failures of this process.

In his “A Gay Manifesto” (originally written in 1969), Carl Wittman declared:

To accept that happiness comes through finding a groovy spouse and settling down, showing the world that “we’re just the same as you” is avoiding the real issues, and is an expression of self-hatred. [...]

Liberation for gay people is defining for ourselves how and with whom we live, instead of measuring our relationship in comparison to straight ones, with straight values. (71)

In less aggressive terms, Altman later argued that the family is responsible for the repression of homosexuality and the tutoring of children in how to make “clear-cut role distinctions between the sexes” (*Homosexual* 85). Today, driven by the desire to establish the homosexual type as equal in normality to the already preferred heterosexual model, the gay liberation movement relies on the family system’s compulsory sexing and sexualisation of the body. It does not resist this disciplining of the body. Rather, it occupies a pro-family position not least because the survival of the homosexual type is predicated on the ability of the body to be disciplined within the comfort of arms of the daddy/mommy “I.” This movement too recognises that belonging to a family is one of the most powerful signifiers of normality in Western culture. Thus, there is no space in which to become a BwS in the desire to reinscribe the homosexualised body within the familia(r)/I sphere.

Within a queer framework, however, the need for stability and identity has long been disputed (Edelman 344; Halperin, *Saint* 66). To engage in a process of becoming queerer, the body must desire a space of unthinkability. It must desire to become beyond what the regulating discourses of sex and “sex” can offer. As Deleuze and Guattari ask:

Wouldn’t it be better to schizophrenize—to schizophrenize the domain of the unconscious as well as the sociohistorical domain, so as to shatter the iron collar of Oedipus and rediscover

everywhere the force of desiring-production; to renew, on the level of the Real, the tie between the analytic machine, desire and production? (*Anti-Oedipus* 53)

Becoming a BwS refutes an interest in known or knowable identities and relationships of stability. It is unconcerned with the necessities of successful or defective reproduction. It is a body without knowledge of sex and “sex,” and thus plays no part in the dramas of an arborescent culture dependent on any linear narrative aligned with the demand for procreation for the purpose of sustaining “I.”

Certainly, incest causes a disruption to the Oedipal triangle. For many, such disruption signals suffering (Neu 29). The becoming-queerer body desirous of becoming without sex/“sex,” however, does not read the dismantling of the family as a tragedy. It does not read incestuous desires and pleasures as disruptive. The pain caused to other members of the family due to the occurrence of any incestuous behaviour is the pain of the collapse of the identifications these members assume a right to maintain because of their belief in “I.” Within the space of becoming a BwS, however, the identifications deemed under threat from incest are unimaginable. They do not exist as sites to be desired or disrupted to begin with. Indeed, the very conceptualisation of sexualised contact between certain bodies as “incest” is an organisation of bodies and pleasures only the body with already familial identifications can know.<sup>28</sup> When a BwS engages in corporeal practices the culture insists on defining as “incest,” it does not participate in “sex” already mapped out as a possible experience for the sexualised “I” and already determined as an indicator of who this body is. Instead, in the moment of experiencing the sexualised contact, the body is in the process of becoming other. The erasure of the body’s sex and “sex” may be momentary; the body may be called back into the family at any moment. However, it is a moment long enough to provide a

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<sup>28</sup> Again, any further analysis of becoming a BwS will have to engage with the debate on ethics and, specifically, on the ethics of “sex,” in order to address issues of power and abuse that currently dominate the culture’s discussions regarding the sexual. (See p. 208, n. 11.)

plateau on which the body can experience what it feels like to be outside the framework into which it is born and through which it is expected to be known forever. Within the space of becoming a BwS, the body has never been “I” as “brother.” Accordingly, it can never be “brother” having “sex” with “brother.” All such knowledge of the body and its pleasures is irrelevant to the body becoming a BwS.

## **Chapter 8 Beyond Be(com)ing a BwS**

### 8.1 The Disgruntled Queer “I”

In analysing the disruption the “late modern” (postmodern) has brought to the stability of modern sexual identities (e.g., the homosexual), Plummer warns that this disruption is not the dominant culture, but, rather, is relevant only to an elite few (“Speaking” 13-15). In this, he seeks to emphasise how academic understandings of life experiences may differ from the realities of life.

Simultaneously, however, he manages to reinscribe academic thought—and the bodies that produce it—with a superior elitism through his insistence on the existence of a distance between such thought and the experiences of the everyday. Similarly, Stuart Hall makes an attempt to dispute any suggestion that the masses have been duped into docility, claiming that such a positioning of the masses results from attempts by “critical intellectuals” to speak on behalf of these others. He writes: “It is as if the masses have kept a secret to themselves whi[l]e the intellectuals keep running around in circles trying to make out what it is, what is going on” (“On Postmodernism” 140). Hall’s position too, however, is contradictory. In adding, “we have taken their speech away from them,” and suggesting that this is the reason why the masses have never been able to adopt the position of “subject-authors” (140), he further reaffirms the intellectualised view of history and culture—a view that sees the masses exist as inferior and less significant—as the true account. He ignores the possibility that the masses too might have knowledge and subject positions in which intellectuals and their thoughts are read as inferior, if considered worthy of any acknowledgement at all. He adopts a liberal stance towards the masses, but this stance is pitying and condescending. For what reason do we—the so-called intellectuals—assume we exist outside the group we so eagerly identify as “the masses”? What power does this pity afford us?

In my exploration of the disjuncture between the homosexual dictate and momentary, intimate corporeal experiences of the same-sex desiring body, I have emphasised how the superiority of knowledge resides only in the mind of the “I” who benefits from being with knowledge. Just because the everyday body does not understand the fragmentation of and the disruption to rigid

categories within a “postmodern” framework does not mean that this body is incapable of exploring and experimenting with such fragmentation and disruption at all. Just because this body is disinterested in the (postmodern) knowledge of “I” does not mean the body has no interests at all. At the risk of slipping into an act of confession through which I make myself visible, known and therefore controllable, my desire to become a BwS has never been merely theoretical. It has not always been about “I.” On the contrary, it is corporeal. My body is not of the traditions of the academy, nor was it born to be a part of this elitist world; and while I am involved now in the process of becoming an academic “I,” the everyday body remains important.

On many occasions, the body is involved in the process of becoming a BwS not when “I” am immersed in the luxury of texts and thought, but when it is immersed in moments of intimate, pleasurable interaction with other bodies. Mortgages, pension schemes and superannuations, children, job security, social lives, reading tastes, politics, religion, fashion sense, good and bad representations, equality, popularity, speech, laws, accessibility, prejudice, history, icons, pasts, presents and futures: all these things that matter so much to the “I” desirous of legitimate homo- (and hetero-) sexualisation are of no concern to the body engaged in the momentary act of intimate pleasure. The passion of this body (of work) emerges from smoky bars, steamy saunas, darkened parks, grubby toilets, drug-fucked nightclubs and, sometimes, even bedrooms. Here, with other bodies—sometimes so strange I have never bothered to discover what they look like, let alone interview them with the expectation of acquiring a name for the other that can produce and validate the “I” of self—the body has experienced multiple moments of pleasurable intimacy. The anger of this body (of work) results from the demand that the body should recognise its relationship to the “I” who desires to translate these experiences into organised, understandable narratives. This demand for translation comes from both the wider culture and the academy as they share an incitement for confession and a desire for the production of knowledge. For me, becoming an

academic “I” is a transition I find both exciting in its promises and repulsive in its organisation. I desire this becoming, while the body feels the discipline of “I.”

Paradoxically, therefore, even in the process of becoming a BwS, the act of sexualised contact with other bodies has been important. I have not gone without the pleasures of “sex.” There is what would appear to be a similar contradiction between Foucault’s theoretical stance against the use of “sex” to effect liberation and his apparent fondness for liberating sex. If, as Halperin has argued, “To have invented a genuinely new form of pleasure [fist-fucking] represented, in Foucault’s eyes, a major accomplishment” (*Saint* 92), this too suggests that the body of Foucault was not liberated from the dictates of “sex,” even as he attempted to theorise the possibility for such pleasure outside of compulsory sexuality. His pleased eyes sustain his position as an “I” knowledgeable of “sex,” thus reaffirming the continued discipline of his body albeit within a discourse of “sex” rewritten as pleasure. Seidman explains Foucault’s position as ambivalent:

It is reported that he valued the sexual freedom and inventiveness of gay life in America. He particularly admired the creation of new ways of experiencing the body as a medium of pleasure and the creation of new forms of group life. Foucault was troubled, though, by the anchoring of this culture in what he took to be a unitary notion of sexual and social identity. [...] Foucault was suspicious of a sexual liberation movement that was wedded to a rhetoric of authenticity and self-realization. (*Contested* 237)

Foucault wrote from the position of a gay-ly liberated subject, even if he did not believe in or support the approach taken by the gay liberation movement.

Living in a post-gay liberation Western context, I too have experienced the conflict of being both a “free” (homo)sexualised being and a body desirous of being other than what this false consciousness of freedom allows. I am both sexual and desirous of becoming other than the demands of this sexualisation. My theories and my practices too, therefore, are not always compatible or in agreement. I am not, nor do I aim to be so well behaved.

What has driven my contrasting and arguably contradictory desire to seek so much pleasure and solace in silence—both the silence of the moment of sexualised contact and the silence of non-articulation post-“sex”—is not that I am against proactive democracy *per se*. Like Foucault, I am certainly not apolitical. Rather, I am against the kind of democracy realised when publicity is demanded of arbitrary aspects of our lives so that the body can be controlled, tamed and granted the right to exist in a freshly reorganised and sterilised package. In such a system, there is no space for a silence that allows the body the chance to experience the unknowability of corporeal pleasures. There is no space in audible private/public debates for the celebration of the body’s potential for unlimited and unknowable becomings.

The irony of the Western democratic system is that all bodies must accept their discipline through predetermined knowledge of what every body should be. “It’s a boy” or “It’s a girl” is the beginning of this discipline. In this statement, we see the culture’s attempt to end all possibilities of becoming at the very start of the body’s existence. The named newborn body must learn to comply with what is known about it if it is to exist as a free individual. It must perform as it is expected to perform. The dissenting body—the body that does not know what it does and who it is according to prewritten narratives of the culture—will be punished. It will be ridiculed, incarcerated, disadvantaged, humiliated, scapegoated, even murdered. Such naturalised methods of punishment do not agree with the kind of internalised surveillance Foucault suggests has superseded the need for more visible and physical punishment in Western culture (*Discipline* 195-228). Indeed, the habitual practice of such methods of punishment in the everyday today suggests the re-emergence of a desire for punishment that is more visible and more physical, a desire that is becoming increasingly popular as Western culture plunges (once again) into a state of terror-filled paranoia over the dangers of the unseen, unknowable body.

I exist in such a culture. My body lives and finds pleasure while “I” research and write at the beginning of the twenty-first century within the borders of the Western world and, specifically, within the nation-state of Australia. In

this place today, we see an increasing interest in the sustainability of self at the expense of all others. If I had any former hope in the democratic system as it is constructed in the West to provide pleasurable and fulfilling lives for all of its citizens and, indeed, for those who do not exist within its borders, such hope has been destroyed rapidly over the past few years. The decision to invade a sovereign nation on the pretext of a possible future threat is an action I have never supported. Indeed, it is a decision against which I have argued and demonstrated vociferously. Such a decision has resulted in the ongoing slaughter of too many people and has (re)established a precedent for any nation that wishes to expand its sphere of economic, military and/or cultural influence. Even if the eventual outcome of this act of invasion is the establishment of one more democratic nation—to the joy and profits of the elite above all—the foundations of such a democracy will always be dubious, contestable and unjust. If democracy needs to rely on such an act of force in order to be born and survive, its usefulness and benefit must be questioned.

The extent to which bodies within established democratic systems are willing to raise such concerns and participate in such scrutiny, however, is seriously in doubt. The incarceration of people indefinitely without trial, without recourse to public law and without a great deal of public dissent suggests an acceptance of the right of any national government or state sanctioned security agency to have unquestioned control of all bodies irrespective of citizenship. Furthermore, the mandatory detainment of refugees—women, children *and* men—in detention camps surrounded by barbed wire and run by economically-focused private companies is an atrocity, the horrors of which will come back to haunt us, and soon, I hope. My view of the West and Australia in particular is not a happy one. I see this culture's and this nation's desire for military, economic and cultural power being acted out in the most damaging and cruel ways, while most of the population of this "free" world blissfully continues to soak up the sun on the golden beaches, under the blue skies of the "lucky country." We are not just becoming fascist; we already are.

I therefore share Kosofsky's dismay about the general state of the Western world (*Tendencies* 15-17) even as I do not have the "excuse" of any knowable or known illness to offer as a way of legitimising my vision of the bleakness and decay that surround and construct our lives. Centuries of democracy in post-Enlightenment Western cultures have revealed repeatedly the inadequacies of the private/public system and, indeed, the inadequacies of democracy itself. Harsh treatment of its own minorities, the construction of fearful others, the failure to include all within its own structures, the torture of its own people: all of these are claimed as exterior to the ideals of democracy and yet are evident in the history and in the present of every Western democratic system. These terrorising atrocities are not just elsewhere; they are here. I see them before my eyes. To me, in all my health and sanity (both arbitrarily determined, of course), Western cultures and its peoples are so undemocratic, so brutal and self-serving, that too often I am ashamed to be a subject of the desires of these cultures and a participant in their actualisation.

Parts of this thesis, therefore, indicate my ongoing passion to force this system to undergo the kind of scrutiny necessary to ensure that, as citizens of the West, we do not mistake our fascist ideals for democratic realities.<sup>1</sup> Conversely, other parts of this thesis reflect my angry desire to turn my back on the aims and intentions of democracy. At times, when I recognise the discipline that any democratic system is able to inflict on its citizens without uprising and complaint from the bodies affected, I give up on politics and look elsewhere for pleasures. Anger and passion are the realities of my everyday. While arguably inappropriate and out of place in the traditions of the academic world, both are

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<sup>1</sup> Such scrutiny and self-assessment demand a reconceptualisation of the world so that we no longer view nations in terms of their position in the West or with the rest. Indeed, in order to challenge the fascist ideals that are embedded in Western democracies, we need to question the very concept of the nation-state itself. We need to celebrate the nation as an imagined community rather than as an essentialist part of self-identity so that this organisation of bodies and territories can become molecular, even unimaginable. The nation state too needs to be viewed not as fact but as utopian fiction, so that its stability can be undermined sufficiently to allow for new becomings in relation to community and belonging. Such a move could help relieve citizens of established democracies of fear and thus of the pressure to protect "our" borders and systems under the pretext that what "we" have is much better, much more emancipated than the less civilised systems of others.

important to the way I work. They are the driving forces in my simultaneous but contradictory attempts to dismantle a system innately external and detrimental to my body and yet to effect less radical change within a system this body too is now a part of or, rather, that has become a part of “I.” In the process of becoming a legitimised, elitist academic “I” with a utopian desire for the possibility of a safe revolution, my body strives to ensure the survival and reproduction of a queerer species that is anything but academically tamed or trained. It is this becoming-queerer, unknowable body that will ensure that any revolution that might eventuate will be disruptive and unsafe for “I.”

## **8.2 The Hypocritical Queer “I”**

When it comes to the disciplining of the body and its pleasures, the culture’s required knowledge could not be simpler. If, for example, you know you are a man, and you know you are having sex with another man, then you must know you are a homosexual. A penis plus a penis equals a man plus a man equals a homosexual. In the simplicity of this equation rests the guarantee that every body can be trained to understand and know who and where the homosexual is, without any need to think beyond or challenge either the process of identification or the identity already provided. In their desire to maintain all same-sex desiring bodies as marginalised and deviant, those who abhor same-sex sexualised behaviours and the bodies that engage in such activities accept this equation and its findings without question. Similarly, those who desire to liberate the homosexual type from oppression accept the truth this equation purports to provide. The homosexualisation of all male-male sexualised contact survives because the anti-gay lobby and the pro-gay lobby make perfect bedfellows in their interpretations of the type of being that emerges in any experience of same-sex sexualised contact.

My main concern throughout this thesis—throughout this attempt to refute the dictate that I too must be a homosexual—has been this pervasive and prolific disciplining of same-sex desiring bodies in the culture. I have considered how “gay” participates in the marginalisation of non-normative

corporeal practices and intimate relationships between bodies through this signifier's attempt to construct a space of normalcy for those same-sex sexualised experiences the culture is most likely to tolerate. As homosexualised "gays" with the freedom to be out and proud, we are too concerned with trying to be normal citizens within a privatised/publicised democratic system that uses factualised fictions to understand, know and control all bodies that reside within its borders. We work too hard to secure our own acceptability and normality by participating in the condemnation of sexualised practices and relationships that do not conform to already established and socially desired models of sexual correctness. We are fascistic in our approach and selfishly jubilant in the outcome.

Such a position may be hypocritical, but it is no surprise. Given recognition within the discourse of gay liberation and declarations by gay-identifying people that homosexuals have suffered because of the culture's preference for and promotion of heteronormative practices and desires, one might expect this discourse and these people to understand the damage done to the body and the subject when the right to engage in desires and pleasures is denied. However, while an oppressed subject who recognises its oppression as the result of the existence of a more dominant force may succeed in challenging and dislodging this superior force, this method fails to offer any challenge to the culture's insistence on maintaining positions of dominant and oppressed. The insistence on the existence of a hierarchy of rights and wrongs, of good and bad sex, maintains the reality of such a hierarchy even when current definitions of "good" and "bad" are resisted and revised. The likely outcome of any such resistance is that once the challenges have been mounted successfully, the formerly oppressed subject will start to imitate the models of that which dominated it (Bersani, "Foucault" 22-23). Indeed, there is no radicalism, no attempt to disrupt the status quo in the desire to be recognised as gay. To the contrary, in agreeing to be gay, we are better than good; we are the perfectly docile, modern subjects.

I recognise the dangers I risk in completing a thesis that takes the homosexual type as the primary focus of its attack. Questioning homosexuality is a normalised practice in the culture. Homosexuals are scrutinised all the time, all their lives. Their desires, sexual activities, mental and physical wellbeing, morals and lifestyles are always under the microscope. Indeed, the popularisation of representations of homosexuals in the mainstream media means that homosexualised bodies are now always also in the spotlight. A heterosexualised culture, once concerned with seeking to eradicate the homosexual through imprisonment, treatment and legally sanctioned murder, is concerned now with how homosexuals can be accommodated into a liberal democratic framework without upsetting the institutions and ideologies that allow heteronormativity—and therefore normal heterosexuals—to survive.<sup>2</sup>

It is expected that those who wish to live outside the closet as homosexuals will agree to this scrutiny—masked as tolerance—by responding to questions deemed fundamentally important to the survival of the heterosexualised species. What kind of children will you (re)produce? What effects will your presence in the culture have on our ability to defend the nation-state against unwanted aggression and invasion? How will your intimate unions influence the sanctity of monogamy? How will your desires and your sexual practices influence the sanctity of the body? What are the economic benefits to us of you being here? Heterosexuals do not have to respond to such questions. For heterosexuals, reproduction, war, marriage, “sex” and economic worth are not rights to be enshrined in law; they are natural attributes.<sup>3</sup> Homosexuals, on

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<sup>2</sup> Even as tolerance of homosexuals increases in certain states and nations, it is important to keep in mind that legal and wider social changes do not translate necessarily into acceptance at the local level. Homosexuals are still imprisoned, subjected to psychological and clinical treatment, attacked and murdered, even in cultures where “positive” representations of homosexuals regularly appear in media texts. Additionally, in certain societies, the belief that homosexuals continue to threaten normal social values, mores and behaviours makes it possible to mount a defence for any act of violence committed against a homosexual, suspected or real.

<sup>3</sup> The rush by some governments to introduce an amendment to the marriage act—to define marriage as a union between one woman and one man—reveals the extent to which the

the other hand, must prove themselves worthy of such rights. They must respond to the scrutiny of their lifestyles in ways that support the institutions and ideologies of a heterosexualised culture, or else risk facing an eternal damnation of going without.

In my criticism of homosexuality, I too have placed the homosexual body under scrutiny while the heterosexual body has been allowed to roam free. To iterate a point I made towards the start of this thesis (20-21), however, my intention is not to condemn the homosexual person. It is neither my role nor my right to do so. Many bodies today are comfortable being homosexuals and they have every right to be so. Despite all the rhetoric of becoming a BwS, I would (and do) make a stand against any attempts to marginalise, condemn and/or harm those who identify as homosexuals. I willingly would risk any accusation of being contradictory and hypocritical in failing to comply with the disciplining of my theorisation if it meant offering comfort to isolated homosexual bodies in the here and now. In this sense, despite my earlier criticism of Jeffrey Weeks' approach<sup>4</sup>, perhaps it is possible that one day, once again, I could share the optimism and positive contentment to be found in his celebration of sexual possibilities, as they exist in current frameworks. Becoming a BwS, after all, is concerned with the moment. Its position is not in any future utopia where absolute freedom (of the sexual) might reside. It is about constructing a space in the current social structure for those bodies unable to experience corporeal pleasures without intrusion from compulsory systems of knowledge. Should the need arise, therefore, I can foresee my body becoming once again a homosexual "I." For me, however, "I am a homosexual" could only ever be a reluctant fiction.

In addition, it is important to recognise how my call for an end to compulsory sexualisation applies equally to the heterosexualised body. An exclusive focus on homosexuality while ignoring heterosexuality is an issue

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naturalness of heterosexuality is being undermined by the increasing visibility of homosexuals in the culture.

<sup>4</sup> See p. 40, n. 10.

Jonathan Ned Katz aims to correct as he dares to explore the construction of heterosexuality:

Questioning our belief in a universal heterosexuality goes against today's common sense. Still, I speak of heterosexuality's historical invention to contest head-on our usual assumption of an eternal heterosexuality, to suggest the unstable, relative, and historical status of an idea and a sexuality we usually assume were carved long ago in stone. (*Invention* 13)

While heterosexuality has not been the focus of my research and analysis, the death of the homosexual—and the end of gay—is coeval with the death of the heterosexual (Archer). In becoming a BwS—a body without knowledge of the sexual—both the heterosexual and the homosexual types cease to exist in consciousness. The death of the heterosexual in others, therefore, is as important as the burial of the homosexual in “I.” Indeed, this desire for the death of the heterosexual is evident already in the many bodies that participate in opposite-sex sexualised pleasures but do not support the discipline an institutionalised heterosexuality—and the culture's related heterosexualised institutions—places on their emotions and needs (Bronski 243).

More theoretically challenging and damaging to “I,” however, is the hypocrisy I reveal in advocating the need for silence while I express and act on a desire to know more about silence. Within the framework of an academic thesis, I am compelled to express the knowledge of “I” to prove self-worth. In compliance with the academy's demand for confession, I speak of silence and expose it to a culture desirous of knowledge and control. Thus, I participate in the disciplining of the silent bodies I claim to support and respect. I argue that the body is a victim of the culture's obsessive will to knowledge, and yet I too abuse the body for personal gain. I unveil the silence of the body with hope that this (re)production and circulation of knowledge will result in a reward for me: the awarding of a name and a position in the form of the academic “I.”

I could argue the impossibility of establishing a silence outside the current episteme of knowledge. The culture's will to knowledge is so intense

that there is no way I—or any other body—can avoid committing acts of arborescent terrorism. Every body needs to know something. Every body must talk. Alternatively, I could argue there is no silence outside knowledge. Silence is merely the binary opposite of sound. All silence is knowable. Such arguments, however, merely seek to relieve me of any responsibility for the organisation and control I enforce on the body as I request acknowledgement as an academic “I.” They hope to detract attention away from the benefits of this “I” through their suggestion that I just cannot help it. Moreover, these are myopic excuses that contradict criticisms I have made earlier in this thesis about the way most Western bodies have accepted willingly their Oedipalisation and some have accepted their ethnic homosexualisation, and about the fear the culture—and “I”—have of silence.<sup>5</sup> At least let me be honest in the final pages of this enforced confession. I have known all along what I was doing. I have never been duped. I have chosen to take this path towards becoming an academic “I” because I too aspire to the economic and intellectual capital such a position promises. I am not so queerly without eyes that I am unable to see beyond my desires to be a part of the construction of knowledge, to become one more branch on this intellectual tree. I recognise the benefits such a becoming can offer to me.

Thankfully, therefore, silence is always greater than knowledge. The subject of “I” can never know the totality of silence (Withers 351). There are always more spaces of possibilities for becoming beyond the gaze of any body that claims to be an “I” with knowledge. This is not an essentialist claim. On the contrary, the culture’s will to knowledge constructs such expansiveness for unknowability because of the former’s dependence on progress, expansion and greater knowledge. For the will to knowledge to survive and continue, there must always be more spaces of silence to be discovered and exposed. There must always be more hidden aspects of the human experience to justify the existence of this will and the search that follows. Without the existence of such

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<sup>5</sup> See p. 173, p. 37, n. 9 and p. 134-35 respectively.

spaces, the will to knowledge has nowhere to go and nothing to do. Its position in the culture is useless.

The inferiorised body—the masses beneath “I”—should take pleasure in the existence of such spaces beyond the gaze of the superiorised “I.” It is with pleasure that bodies assumed to be knowable to and known by “I” should recognise how they “always know more of what is above them than *vice versa*” (Altman, *Homosexual* 23). While Altman here refers specifically to the invisibility of gay culture to the straight world in the early 1970s—an invisibility that, to some extent, has disappeared, particularly in cultures where there is clear evidence of a gay community—nevertheless his comment reveals a power for the body that exists within silent, invisible frameworks. What is visible and known is attacked easily. In contrast, what is invisible and unknown cannot be located and, therefore, cannot be brought into systems of knowledge that desire to attack, discipline and control. Giving queer eyes to straight guys, for example, only makes the latter aware of who and what queers are, permitting the (re)establishment of stereotypes that constrain understandings of queerness in the minds of “straights” and “queers” alike. The body is much better situated to escape regulation and discipline when it remains unheard and unseen. Remaining unseen and unknowable allows queerness to be always in the process of becoming-queerer, but never quite here and queer. Thus, it is important that the body take whatever measures necessary to construct and protect spaces of silence, even as the culture insists that knowledge is necessary for the body’s liberation. The body of the masses must not be duped into the docility of freedom. It must be willing to lie, to put on a façade of mimicry and conformity, if such tactics can help divert attention away from it and its pleasures. The body must desire the construction of ever newer, ever queerer spaces of becoming. You must hide your moments of intimacy from gazing eyes, even from the gaze of this intellectualised “I.”

### 8.3 Beyond the Articulations of this Queer “I”

In his desire to move *Beyond Sexuality*, Tim Dean has argued that “At present queer theory is caught uncomfortably between its commitment to expanding identity categories [...] and its insistence on the specificity of genital contact [...]” (172). Such practices of queer theory allow the normalised discourses of sex and sexuality to continue to maintain power over the body, even as they seek to grant “I” more flexibility and control over the construction of the sexual self. Such a containment of queer theory also gets lost in compulsory articulation that ends up regulating the body and its pleasures. In being queer, we assume the existence of sex and “sex.” We are always talking about and doing sex and “sex.” As queers, we believe in the possibility of liberation from normality through the exposure of our anti-homonormative, anti-heteronormative, non-normative ways of being. We speak about our desires and pleasures in order to expose our knowledge of them with the hope that others—those who do not yet share our wonderfully queer position—will come to know us in the same way we wish to be known. Perhaps these others too will become as queer as “I.” We express our desire for normative non-normativity and thereby fail to deny the culture the right to know the body with reference to compulsory sexing and sexualisation. In agreeing to be queer, we diversify and enter the realm of being equally perfectly docile, but now postmodern subjects.

If we are to construct spaces of silent unknowability, there is a need to go beyond the institutionalisation of queer. Queered pluralisation of a singular culture and history can offer no liberation. On the contrary, this habit of the postmodern produces yet one more metanarrative of compulsory regulation. Within the multiplicities of the postmodern, everything is knowable; every momentary experience of the body is readable in relation to the personal, individual and wider history and culture of the body concerned. To avoid re-establishing the types of bodies the culture has established with such force and severity—man/woman, homosexual/heterosexual—silence should be welcomed as a disruption to the certainties of any body, the queer body included. Silence

offers the destruction of the possibility of both identity and resistance to identities already formed, thus disrupting the disciplining of the body that the cultures and histories of Western democracies demand. To become queerer than queer, we need to dismount from the bourgeois bandwagon of knowledge and enter a space of limitless ignorance. We need to celebrate the possibility of not knowing why this act of flesh on flesh feels so good, bad or otherwise. We need to care less.

In an attempt to sustain the process of becoming a BwS as an active and ongoing desire that can exceed the closure of this thesis, therefore, I suggest the unconscious as a possible space of becoming queerer still for a BwS I have established and, therefore, have started to make arborescent. An introduction of the notion of the unconscious into attempts to become a queerer body might help disrupt further the normalisation of “sex” and sexuality that occurs when “I” speak for the purpose of providing and proving knowledge. The concept of the unconscious might assist in creating the possibility of not knowing “sex” and sexuality because, as Dean argues: “Despite the abundance of cultural representations of difference between the sexes, the unconscious just doesn’t get it” (86).

Belief in the existence of an unconscious space is an important part of psychoanalytical theory. The discovery of what lurks within this space is a particular concern of the discourse of psychoanalysis and this discourse’s theoretical and practical attempts to decipher human subjectivity (Freud, “Note” 139-40). In Freud’s account, the human subject has two differing but connected states of awareness: the conscious and the unconscious. The former refers to those ideas and thoughts of which we are actively aware, whereas the latter denotes latent conceptions (135). I have explored already in this thesis Foucault’s wariness of psychoanalysis (171-72). In my attempt to construct a space of becoming that is beyond the knowledge of a BwS I have created, a belated turn to psychoanalytical theory might appear, therefore, somewhat strange. Dean is adamant, however, that “psychoanalysis *is* a queer thing” (215; emphasis in the original). In psychoanalysis, Dean sees the potential for

resistance rather than regulation. In particular, a Lacanian psychoanalysis provides a unique means of resisting the normalisation and regulation of sexuality that queer theorists have blamed on psychoanalysis (216-17). He denies any suggestion that psychoanalytical theory and Foucault are incompatible beings, arguing instead that both are united in their desire to move “beyond the couch” to a place where “sexuality” can be seen as a problem because of its unquestioned reality rather than as a problem in reality (2-4, 21).

In his attempts to bring Freud from the “wings” to the “center,” Leo Bersani has claimed that Foucault’s insistence on seeing psychoanalysis as but one more chapter in the disciplining of the body blinded him from considering on some level that it might have been able to offer the answers he sought (“Foucault” 23). Yet, in fact, Foucault did recognise the importance of psychoanalysis to the deconstruction of essentialist notions of sexuality that sought to construct and maintain strict categories of deviancy and normality (*History 1* 150). Indeed, his claim that sexuality was produced through an incitement to discourse owes much to the discourse of psychoanalysis that spoke so eagerly of sexuality in relation to repressed desires (Black 45-46). Foucault even developed a more agreeable understanding of and respect for Freud in the context of his anti-fascist stance, praising him for taking such a position (Fuss, “Pink” 3).

To suggest that a Foucauldian theorisation of bodies and pleasures necessarily dismisses the importance of psychoanalytical concepts also misreads Foucault’s understanding of power. Psychoanalysis does indeed imagine that

it gains access to the deep structures of individuality, whereas all it in fact does is ratify and reproduce the manner in which this individuality was created, at a given historical moment and by means of technologies of power and subjectivation. (Eribon 49)

However, the discourse of psychoanalysis does not control the body. Rather, the body exists in a power relationship with this discourse. Despite the popularity of certain psychoanalytical understandings of the sexual, the body is

able to reinterpret psychoanalytical concepts just as the discourse of psychoanalysis attempts to rewrite the body. Indeed, to dismiss psychoanalysis entirely might foreclose the construction of possibilities of becoming unavailable through the institutionalisation of “Foucault,” where such containment of Foucault’s theorisations works to locate all corporeal experiences within a regulatory narrative of the body engaging in pleasures known to offer different, new and alternative methods of “sex.” Certain aspects of psychoanalytical thought might encourage a focus on the excess of discourse, an excess Butler insists is a necessary part of the suggestion that all is contained within discourse, even if such an excess is ignored by those who rely on discourse to explain and contain all (*Bodies* 8). In exploring the excess, we might be able to imagine the unthinkable, thereby saving the body from the rules and regulations of thinkability. Moreover, any outright dismissal of psychoanalysis might be no more than an easy opt-out for someone who lives in a secularised world reliant upon empirical and verifiable data, especially when we consider that psychoanalytical thought offers us much of the unseen and the unknown (Dean 15).

The success psychoanalysis has had in explaining the non-material aspects of the human experience—those aspects that could not adequately be explained by using modernity’s emphasis on sensory empiricism (Seidman, *Difference* 72-74)—is important. As Seidman continues to explain:

Psychoanalysis offers a language of an intricate, dense, psychic and intersubjective life, a life of fantasies, wishes, fears, shame, desires, idealizations, identifications, that cannot be comprehended by a vocabulary of interests, mean-ends rationality, cost-benefit calculations, need dispositions, or values or by the surface psychologies of behaviorism, cognitivism, or symbolic interactionism. Only psychoanalytic theory posits an unconscious life that shapes and impels the willfulness of an ego-present-centered self, connecting selves to objects, roles, identities, people, relations, groups, and institutions in ways that

we are often unaware of yet mighty powerful in their operation and effect. (74)

Freud, after all, was instrumental in foregrounding the postmodern destabilisation of the Cartesian subject. In Freud is the subject that cannot know self fully (Grosz, *Jacques 2*). Indeed, as Grosz further claims, the shock with which his theories were met initially was caused by his suggestion that there was something unknowable to and about modernity's subject (11). In contrast to modernity's notion of an all-knowing subject, psychoanalytical theory posits the existence of an unconscious other. Within the Lacanian framework, such an unconscious comes to signify not something beneath the surface of the conscious, but rather "an entirely *other* form of reason, logic, and pleasure, one not reducible to those available to consciousness" (10; emphasis in the original).

Deleuze and Guattari have expressed a concern over how the unconscious has been singularised through the telling and repetition of narratives that speak of the body as of and from family:

No sooner does Freud discover the greatest art of the unconscious, this art of molecular multiplicities, then we find him tirelessly at work bringing back molar unities, reverting to his familiar themes of *the father*, *the penis*, *the vagina*, *Castration with a capital C*...(On the verge of discovering a rhizome, Freud always returns to mere roots.) (*Thousand 27*; emphasis in the original)

For Deleuze and Guattari, therefore, there is a difference between the way the unconscious is organised within psychoanalysis and the kind of unconscious the body might desire. In the former, the unconscious is the opposite of the conscious: the unknown in comparison to the known. Simultaneously, however, this unconscious exists already. It is an Unconscious with a capital *U*, "a plane of transcendence guaranteeing, justifying, the existence of psychoanalysis and

the necessity of the interpretations” (284).<sup>6</sup> In the latter focus on the body and its desires, the unconscious is a becoming constructed not through organisation but through desire. It is beyond organisation because it appears only in the course of its construction (284). A psychoanalytical understanding of the unconscious, therefore, is no threat to normative civilisation. It is knowable and therefore containable. In contrast, an unconscious freed from any organisation of knowledge—psychoanalytical or otherwise—denies any of the masters—psychoanalysis, Freud, homosexuality and heterosexuality, and “I”—the ability to penetrate its silences, work them out, expose and control them. It is too fluid, always becoming, never still enough for any body to know with any certainty what or where it is.

Given Deleuze and Guattari’s suggestion that any plateau has multiple points of entry and exit, I cannot deny that becoming a BwS may result in the production of other ways of understanding the body’s moments of intimate pleasure. The silence of a BwS may not last forever. Indeed, despite my desire to prolong the space of silence in which the BwS resides, I readily acknowledge the pervasiveness of the episteme of the knowing subject in the culture and the temptations of “I” to exist within this episteme. It is, therefore, highly likely that even a BwS will be compelled to seek out further and differing knowledges to explain the pleasures it experiences. The silent space of becoming molecular no doubt will become organised again through the insistence of “I” to cling on to one molecule with the hope of reaffirming the right of “I” to know what truth can be discovered there. New bodies will come up with new ways of knowing what corporeal pleasures mean; new identities will be formed as a result; and some

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<sup>6</sup> While Freud sought to clarify the unconscious as a container of more than what has been repressed (“Unconscious” 142), nevertheless the notion of repression is dominant in his discussion. Indeed, thoughts and acts displaced (temporarily) into the unconscious become part of Freud’s conceptualisation of the “preconscious,” a space in which forgotten thoughts can become conscious thoughts at any time (148-49). The unconscious, on the other hand, is distinguished from this more easily knowable preconscious in Freud’s suggestion that the former contains specific kinds of “uncivilised” thoughts kept apart from the conscious despite their intensity and despite the pressure they place on the conscious (“Note” 137-38). In Freud’s definition of the unconscious, we also find “instinctual impulses, emotions and feelings” that can be understood only through conscious ideas (“Unconscious” 151), thereby formulating the unconscious as an essentialist component of human existence.

of this knowledge will become canonised and moralised truth. I too have participated in this process in the completion of this thesis. The space of the unconscious might offer the body the possibility of experiencing intimacies beyond this. While psychoanalysis, in general, has been cast as the enemy of any attempt to speak of non-identities, Bersani argues that the psychoanalytical concept of the experience of *jouissance* is able to remove the subject from its normative position as observable object. In *jouissance*, the intensities of feelings are accepted as too great, too vast (“Foucault” 24-25; “Rectum” 323), and are therefore beyond comprehension. A journey into unconsciousness, therefore, is one path a BwS might choose to take.

For the moment, however, it matters not that a BwS is unable to provide a lasting silence for intimate corporeal desires and pleasures. Finality has never been the queer dream, nor has it been my dream. There is no new and more recent stone-wall over which the body must climb to free itself from the tyranny of the past. There is no pre- or post-, only now. As Foucault insists: “One must not look for a ‘philosophy’ amid the extraordinary profusion of new notions and surprise concepts” (Preface xii). Instead, one must consider that the notions and concepts formed are always somewhere in the middle of where the body needs to be. For the body in the process of becoming queerer, interest rests with the plateau of a BwS, with the confusion and crowded incomprehensibility of becoming molecular. The becoming-queerer body is saved from points of origin or completion. It is saved from a beginning and a conclusion. It is always searching, always questioning, never in one space long enough to allow “I” or any other to discipline it into a being. In this moment, therefore, to be able to wander in a space devoid of all knowledge satisfies the desire to become other than what I had always imagined the body to be. The body (of this thesis) happily lingers with anticipation of the and...and...and...as it falls headlong with exhaustion under the weight of knowledge, wilfully into a space of unknowable silence in which no memorisation and no “I” reside.

Becoming a BwS has never been the work of a singular body. I have not imagined what has been unimaginable to others. I do not claim it to be mine, as

if to suggest I have a right to own it, write about it and reproduce it to secure intellectual affluence that could make life comfortable for my body at least. It is free of "I," awaiting the construction of other becomings it desires to encourage. It belongs to others for the taking. Organise this body (of work) as you will to know it.

## Appendix

While it is difficult and precarious to admit to any relationship between man-boy love and adult male-male homosexuality, nevertheless a relationship exists. As Rictor Norton has argued, the assumption that modern homosexuality signifies co-generational relationships ignores the fact that pederasty was the dominant model for male-male sexual bonds up until the Second World War:

It is really not until the late 1960s, and specifically in America, that androphilia or egalitarian homosexuality came to be held up as the ideal model for a modern queer democracy and the pederastic model was characterized as being exploitative. (90)

David Thorstad adds: “The issue of love between men and boys has intersected the gay movement since the late nineteenth century [...]” (“Pederasty”). Indeed, in his investigation into the debate on man-boy intimacies at the beginning of the twentieth century, Thijs Maasen reveals the emergence of a struggle over the meaning of intimate physical contact between men and boys, and how this struggle resulted in the conclusion that such contact was both of a homosexual nature and exploitative. At the time of a scandal surrounding his physical contact with naked boys, Gustav Wyneken, leader of the Wickersdorf Free School Community in Germany, claimed it an offence to locate pedagogical eros as (homo)sexuality, for the two were altogether different (56-57). Fellow teachers and parents supported his position arguing that the defining of “pure friendships” as “homosexual” was the result of “urban perspectives” and indicated the kind of bourgeois education they sought to save their children from (54). Wyneken received no such support, however, from those working to promote the emerging medical notion of the homosexual as a natural and exclusive being. Instead, these “homophiles” argued he would do better to focus his attention on the establishment of legitimacy for the homosexual type, and await the disappearance of prejudice against eros in the post-equality era (61-62).

According to Maasen's analysis, the construction of the homosexual type is coeval with the construction of the man who loves boys. The notions of a man desiring boys and a man desiring other adult men are neither historically nor discursively separate. Rather, both "paedophilia" and "homosexuality" emerge from the same conscious effort to categorise bodies according to the sex of the body to whom a sexed body expresses desire or with whom it acts out such desire. Maasen writes:

The psychopathology of sex made possible a different view on pedagogical Eros. The emergence of this sexual perception in an era at the same time characterized by an anti-homosexual climate produced fertile soil for homosexual insinuations with, at times, political consequences. But the heated debates on man-boy friendships at that point reveal more: a shift in discourse on boy love. Views on boy love proved subject to change. The platonic model of pedagogical Eros [...] was forced to make way for the medico-psychiatric model of homosexuality and pedophilia. (65-66)

The "boy-lover" and the "homosexual," therefore, are products of modernity, and specifically of the culture's desire to see and know the body as sexed and sexualised. Both share the same taxonomy of sexuality that relies on an overemphasis of minute moments of the body's actions to identify specific types of sexualised beings. Both become permanent species through such an arbitrary act of scrutiny and are able to be regulated—socially, legally and discursively—accordingly.

In the wake of the Stonewall riots, the contemporary gay liberation movement boldly announced itself as an attack on the oppressiveness of dominant institutions (Adam 84). In his 1971 account of the oppression and liberation of the homosexual, Dennis Altman insisted that

in any talk of gay liberation we need a fuller examination of sexual mores, not merely discussion of the attitudes towards

homosexuality, for the liberation of the homosexual can only be achieved within the context of a much broader sexual liberation. (*Homosexual* 72)

Within such a new social ordering of the sexual, sexuality among children would not only cease to be frowned upon; it would be encouraged (100). Similarly, in 1973, in the now defunct Australian publication *Camp Ink*, Gary Baldi (sic) wrote:

If the Campaign Against Moral Persecution is to live up to its name, we must stand against discrimination on grounds of moral and sexual preference, rather than to merely become a vehicle for the redistribution of surplus discrimination to other minority groups. (5)

In addressing the specific issue of intergenerational sexual relationships, this writer further suggested: "If a child desires a sexual relationship with an adult (morally, if not legally) the child has at least the same entitlement to choose or refuse; to continue or to discontinue as does an adult" (5).

In the early days of the gay liberation movement, ages of consent were not considered sites of negotiation between an emerging demand for sexual freedom and the defenders of conservative morality. On the contrary, they were seen as barriers to sexual freedom for all, children included. The 1972 Gay Rights Platform, adopted at the National Coalition of Gay Organizations in February of that year, called for the repeal of all laws governing ages of consent. However, this demand was withdrawn only a few weeks later when it became evident that it had a lack of support even among "liberal politicians" (Humphreys, *Out* 167-68). In his analysis of the ongoing relationship between the gay movement and the issue of man-boy love in a post-Stonewall American context, Thorstad has highlighted the discrepancy between a teenage-led Stonewall rebellion that critiqued "outmoded moral norms" and the rising conformity of "an upwardly mobile adult gay middle class" to the demands of a straight society ("Man/Boy" 252). Elsewhere, he accuses the "middle-class gay movement" of turning its back on the demands for sexual liberation that inspired

the movement in favour of assimilation. In its refusal to speak out on behalf of those who are imprisoned and persecuted for their consensual sexual relationships, this movement is, he claims, “virtually indistinguishable from the heterosexist dictatorship itself” (“Pederasty”).

Given the discourse of gay liberation’s acceptance and approval of the interpretation of all sexualised contact between same-sexed bodies as acts of homosexuality, “sex” between a man and a boy, indeed, is a homosexual activity. The bodies that engage in such “sex” are performing homosexuality even if they are not willing or able to take on board the identity of “I am homosexual.” However, any connection between man-boy “sex” and the kind of sexualised contact that might occur between two adult men is denied by a movement intent on furthering the power and right of “gay” to signify legitimate and socially acceptable same-sex desiring sexualised beings and their unions. The denial of any relationship between man-boy love and male-male adult homosexuality, therefore, is a political tactic. It is part of the shift within the discourse of gay liberation away from a focus on freedom from the restraints of sexuality towards a demand for equality for all bodies understood within a naturalised and compulsory discourse of sexuality. Attempts to disassociate “gay” from representations and understandings of same-sex desire as deviant and dirty now underpin the drive by the discourse of gay liberation/rights to establish a homonormativity that can be distinguished from the kind of abnormal desire located in man-boy love.<sup>1</sup> “Gay” seeks to foreclose any consideration of man-boy love as a legitimate kind of love.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> This desire to distinguish a “gay” homonormativity from the deviant desire of boys (and girls) is made clear in current publications aimed at the gay population. In an account of the legal status of same-sex sexual activity in the ten nation-states recently accepted into the European Union, for example, Scott Craig states that the age of consent for all in Malta is twelve. He then adds: “but, *thankfully*, there are strict laws on sexual relations with those under 18” (61; emphasis added). Such a comment is out of place in a British gay magazine that supported the now successful bid to reduce the age of consent for homosexualised sex to *sixteen* in British law.

<sup>2</sup> The discourse of queer is not immune from similar attempts to confirm its own legitimacy through denying any connection between queer and man-boy love (Bruhm and Hurley xxii; Jagose 113; Tierney 52).

There are contradictions in the position adopted by the discourse of gay liberation towards the issue of man-boy sexualised unions. In agreement with the dominant understanding of how sexualised desire functions, this discourse asserts that homosexuality is not learned, produced or created. It cannot be changed or cured. Rather, it is an essentialist personal trait on account of which bodies should be afforded equal rights. According to this logic, there can be no corruption involved when a boy consents to having “sex” with a man, regardless of the age of the boy. There can be no suggestion that the boy involved is in danger of becoming a homosexual (Thorstad, “Pederasty”). When it comes to discussing ages of consent, however, the discourse of gay liberation cannot address the underlying assumption of these laws that all “sex” is corrupting for the child. It can protest against the inequality evident in the existence of higher ages of consent for same-sex sexualised contact on the grounds that such discrepancies reveal the culture’s unfair positioning of homosexuality as more corrupting than heterosexuality. It can ask that sixteen-year-old boys, for example, have the right to do with other male-d bodies what they already have the right to do with female-d bodies at that age. However, it cannot question the culture’s continuing insistence that “sex” corrupts, that children need protecting from it and that all forms of adult-child relationships are damaging to the child involved. It cannot ask for more than its bid for equality permits (Durber, “Oppressed” 119).

While the “incest model”—with its assumptions of “intimidation, violence, and pathogenicity”—continues to be a popular way of reading sexualised contact between an adult and a child (particularly in clinical case studies), Bruce Rind has disputed the appropriateness of applying such a model to all boys who experience “age-discrepant sexual relations” with men (346). In Rind’s assessment, this model, used to understand and interpret sexual relationships between men and girls, is not applicable when analysing sexual relationships between men and boys who later develop (or already have) a positive gay identity (346-47). In contrast to the timeline of seduction that insists on a connection between a boy’s involvement in man-boy “sex” and his becoming a

homosexual, Rind also concludes that most of the subjects in his study (of gay and bisexual adolescent boys' sexual experiences with men) first become aware of their attraction to same-sexed bodies, label this as "gay" and then experience "sex" with an older man (358). There is, therefore, a vast difference between situations in which gay-identifying boys engage in sexualised contact with a man and other forms of intergenerational "sex." The result of restrictions imposed by the dominant incest model on the debate and practice of man-boy "sex," however, is that such boys are denied access to information that could help them come to a comfortable and positive understanding of what it means to be gay in a way that the discourse of gay liberation claims to want for all its constituents (Bronski 132-37).<sup>3</sup>

The issue of boys being capable of desiring or experiencing sexualised contact with objects of the same-sex (adult men or other boys) also has a strong relationship with the gay liberation movement not least because the coming out tales of many gay-identifying adults tell of the restrictions imposed on their homosexuality during childhood (134). Many gay-identifying people recognise their experiences of same-sex sexualised desire and pleasure to have occurred before their emergence into full and legitimate adulthood. As Pat Califia insists,

Lesbians and gay men don't magically spring into existence at some arbitrary age of consent. Many of us know from the time that we are small children that we are attracted to members of our own sex. (135)

In their introduction to *Curiouser: On the Queerness of Children*, Steven Bruhm and Natasha Hurley further reveal how the desexualisation of the child also assumes their pre-heterosexual state:

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<sup>3</sup> While there are contributions to the debate that seek possible ways of revising age-of-consent laws to pay closer attention to actual consent and abuse rather than homosexual/heterosexual equality (West 266-67), the discourse of gay liberation cannot ask for the label of corruption to be removed from all sexualised acts, particularly when these acts involve boys. Indeed, in efforts to deal with the contradiction that emerges in a culture in which gay teens exist but in which any suggestion of a (homo)sexualised non-adult subject is abhorrent, the gay lobby often ignores the actual act of "sex," even when it does address the issue (Bronski 134-35).

Cute boy-girl romance reads as evidence for the mature sexuality that awaits them, and any homoerotic behavior reads as harmless play among friends or as a mistake that can later be corrected by marriage. (ix)

For queer children, their first point of contact with non-heteronormativity is often “sex” with older members of the same sex. While the culture demands that such “sex” is read retrospectively as evidence of past abuse and present trauma (xxv), queers do not necessarily reflect on their early sexualised experiences in the same way (xxvi). It therefore exposes the hypocrisy of gay men who recognise the oppression of their homosexuality in childhood, but who refuse to speak out on behalf of the oppression they know is being inflicted now on younger (br)others. In Califia’s words: “To leave that repression unchallenged is to leave a major bastion of gay oppression untouched” (135).<sup>4</sup>

The gay liberation movement began its claim for a legitimate homosexual subjectivity at a time when all same-sex sexualised activities were deemed criminal by the culture, and at a time when exposure of a person’s participation in such activities left them vulnerable to political and social attack. The fear of imprisonment, loss of one’s home, job and family, and the risk of being forced to undergo clinical treatment may now be a part of the homosexual’s past (on the whole). However, these threats remain a real part of the present for anyone involved in the discussion or practice of consensual sexualised affairs between men and boys (Plummer, “Pedophilia” 234). In adopting an oppositional stance to all sexualised relationships between men and boys, the discourse of gay liberation perpetuates the construction of normal sexual acts and relationships through condemnation and criminalisation of demonised others. It thereby

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<sup>4</sup> In his article “Together, United?” Michelangelo Signorile argues that the threat of being identified as a “recruiter” and thereby being tainted with the label of “paedophile” is only one reason why many adult homosexuals avoid entering the debate on youth and sex. He seeks to excuse the reluctance of gay men to speak out about this particular topic, however, by positing that the gay liberation movement has become so diverse that what affects one gay person is not necessarily of interest to another. It is not that homosexuals today are politically apathetic, therefore, but rather that they are more fragmented through the emergence of diverse gay lifestyles unimaginable at the time of the Stonewall riots.

participates in the same process deployed to marginalise and cause suffering to its own homosexual constituency (Durber, "Oppressed"). The additional irony is that the history of homosexuality promoted by the discourse of gay liberation claims ownership of past celebrities (e.g. Oscar Wilde, William Burroughs, E. M. Forster) more rightly associated with man-boy love than with the contemporary preference for same-sex unions based on egalitarianism of and through age (Reeves 26; Thorstad, "Man/Boy" 266).

Furthermore, the discourse of gay liberation is mistaken when it assumes boy-love to be the biggest threat to its hope of establishing a legitimate homonormative model. In the response by the discourse of gay liberation to the discourse of man-boy love, there is an over-exaggeration of differences where differences do not exist. In order to highlight the oppressed status of the bodies involved, those who advocate their right to engage in sexualised relationships with children deploy the same "rhetoric" used by the gay liberation movement (Angelides, "Feminism" 146). The homosexual sought recognition of autonomy through articulating loudly "I am gay." The paedophile too seeks to create an ethnic model of "boy-lover" in order to appeal for social toleration based on the immutability of his natural state of being. He accepts the pathologisation of the corporeal pleasures he wishes to participate in or already enjoys. He too desires the right to begin his tale of oppression with the declaration "I am."

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