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# Playing and Passing: Expressions of Identity and the Destabilization of Gender Construction

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## Dedication

*For my mother, who never really came to terms with who I am;*
*For my son Robbie, who never needed to;*
*For without them, I could never have achieved such a grand dream as this.*

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Playing and Passing: Expressions of Identity and the Destabilization of Gender Construction

by

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In this dissertation, I demonstrate that non-traditional gender expression by women has significantly developed and expanded ranges of acceptable gender performance for all people. The gender deviancy these women communicate functions not only to promote gender fluidity but to undermine compliance with constructed images of originality.

"Playing and Passing: Expressions of Identity and the Destabilization of Gender Construction" addresses women who resist gender conformity. Notions of how women should express gender, either in deference to or in rebellion against the social construct, work against the free production of gender identity. In the first five chapters of this dissertation, I use literature to examine butch/femme identities, bois, female-to-male transsexuals, transgender, and other less traditional genderqueers. I look at both mandates about the rights to gender and the ways lesbian and genderqueer women have confronted and subverted the heterosexual construction of gender. In the sixth and final chapter, I

analyze the non-fictional space of the Michigan Women's Music Festival thus showing the real-world applicability of my analyses.

My broader goal is to show how gender rebels in all of their forms ultimately work to liberate all people from restrictive formulas for behavior and identity. Both inside and outside of queer culture, lesbians rail against the social restrictions that disallow the celebration of the female body in all its options of gender presentation, from high femme to stone butch, from androgyny to versatile gender dynamism. Ultimately, I highlight the past, the progress, and the goals of women working to emancipate gender and to disrupt the congruency of biological sex, gender identity, and sexual orientation as a fundamental truth.

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# Introduction

## Playing and Passing: Expressions of Identity and the Destabilization of Gender Construction

In "Imitation and Gender Insubordination" Judith Butler problematizes the constructed nature of identity categories; nevertheless, these categories remain fixed and serve both as indictors of social position and as controls for both mainstream and minoritized groups. Yet, a common desire to end identity categories, and ostensibly identity politics, also surfaces via multiple means—the option to choose to identify as mixed race is just one example of the efforts to expand the limits of identity categories. Yet, in spite of these measures to accommodate growing resistance to identity categories, neither government forms nor institutional applications attempt to provide opportunity for queer identity flexibility. There is no box to check about "orientation," much less several boxes that would provide an opportunity to indicate multiple choices of queer identity. Heterosexuality is assumed, and queers remain invisible and uncounted. Likewise, sex and gender remain fixed, so much in fact, that the two terms are still used interchangeably. Two boxes stand behind either "Sex" or "Gender": male and female. The two are used to mean the same (male or female genitalia) because the larger society still assumes gender and sex are fixed. I would suggest that these terms are significantly different. Sex is a biological determination based on the body. Gender is an assessment of identity that refers to the behaviors and characteristics of a person. Neither sex nor gender exists in a static binary. Intersexed people push against the idea of the legitimacy of just two sexes. Genderqueer people likewise challenge the gender binary. Undoing gender

from its necessary congruency with sex would undo another identity category, one that would emancipate people from performing mandatory social roles.

The struggle to extend the free expression of gender beyond the polarizing traditional models of the masculine male and the feminine female includes centuries of both unconscious behaviors and conscious experiments. Gender-variant women stand on the vanguard of the resistance to gender conformity, yet they have been policed not only by the larger patriarchal social construction, but also by out-groups that succumb to the pressure of acceptable deviance limits. The lesbian community, the feminist movement, the greater queer community, and the at-large communities and political systems all hold, and have held, particular expectations concerning the gender behavior, expression, and appearance of female genderqueers. Those notions of how women should express gender, either in deference to, or in rebellion against the social construct, work, and have worked, against the free production of gender identity. At the same time, many of those women have continued to forge paths to gender liberation by living in the margins of multiple spaces. From tomboy to trans-boi, from high-femme to stone butch, gender extraordinary women have forged a space in which to seek the self in spite of the pressures to conform to various ideas of "acceptable."

This dissertation focuses on the evolution of gender and manifestations of gender in these gender-queer women. It consists of literature from Shakespeare—including *As You Like It,* 1598 and *Twelfth Night,* 1600, for example—to show early manifestations of gender expression and queering of behaviors, to works from the 18th and 19th centuries that illustrate fears about the emergence of genderqueers. I emphasize more 20th century

literature when the lesbian emerges in a clearer presentation. Of course, novels like *The Well of Loneliness* and *Stone Butch Blues* figure prominently in my discussion, as do characters like the masculine Beebo Brinker from the pulp fiction genre, but I also depend on women from modern literature, for example, Joanna Burden, from William Faulkner's *A Light in August*, to trace the ways gender-different women express sexual characteristics in literature. Transgender characters, like Woolf's Orlando and gender fluid characters like Cather's Ántonia Shimerda demonstrate the changing dynamic of gender behavior in different periods of social revolution; furthermore, they reflect how that expression affects both the queer and feminist movements.

While I investigate the larger social influence on gender, and conversely, the effects of genderqueerness on those broad social groups, I also address how the ongoing expression of gender in genderqueer lesbians has influenced the larger lesbian community. Judith Halberstam points to the issue of both feminists and lesbians who view butch or masculine lesbians as traitors to femininity. And, it is here that her work lends support to the notion that these same marginalized masculine women can be seen as contributing to the emancipation of the queer community rather than reinforcing gender stereotypes. The predominately working-class butch-femme expression has been a source of discomfort in terms of its perceived re-creation of heterosexual roles inside of the lesbian movement—consider for example the attitude of Rita Mae Brown's *Ruby Fruit Jungle*—yet it seems to have ultimately carved out a space for new kinds of gender expression, including the boi of the 21st century. Outside of the lesbian and queer communities, these gender-rebels experiment with their own gender fluidity, choosing to

pass full or part time, and put themselves both at risk in terms of discovery and at privilege in terms of their treatment by the larger social community. The rift between the trans bois, who can choose to pass as male and ostensibly assume that privilege, and the radical lesbians who rail against this "passing" trend, presents instances that reflect the earlier conflict between butch-femme and the androgynous genderqueer lesbian. Both the butch and the boi have been relegated to similar but separate marginal spaces in the lesbian community, and both superficially seem to reinforce either ideas of heterosexual roles or of the male entitlement to masculinity, but both also disrupt constructed ideas about the necessary congruency between biological sex and natural gender expression by subverting traditional assumptions and mandates about the rights to gender. A further investigation into how alternative gender expression fuels change may be seen in the women who are attracted to these two different manifestations of masculinity. The femme, who often performs lesbian femininity, is often not the same genderqueer woman who loves the boi.

As gender approximates a more flexible form of expression, disparaging and restrictive attitudes about necessary congruency in previously fixed sets of characteristics, such as those often posed in a binary—sex, gender, and sexual orientation—recede. The fixity of gender has been, and is being, destabilized by women who engage in non-traditional, non-heterosexual, gender behavior, often at great risk to themselves, and at times without the support of even the larger lesbian, gay, and queer communities. These marginalized communities seemingly continue to resist behavior that exists outside of their own vision of moral, ethical, appropriate expression. The conversation inside of

queer communities often still operates in dialogue, or at least in concert, with the established parameters of acceptable and unacceptable behavior. For example, while some critics now maintain that the butch-femme dynamic of the 1940s and 1950s was disruptive to the patriarchal binary system of identity, the manifestations of those identities continue to exist in relationships of anxiety for those who proctor for the heterosexual patriarchy in determining what is indeed original and what is imitation. Seemingly, while butch-femme was too genderqueer during the seventies, eighties and nineties, it now too lacks the imagination required to fit into the new queer community: witness the homonormative[1] disdain of the queer center. Moreover, both the butch and the butch-femme dyad were perceived as disrupting the progress of the feminist movement by subverting the effort to show feminist women as "normal" in their pursuit of equality. This presentation of gender is also clearly tied to class, and while an upwardly mobile middle-class spearheaded a movement ostensibly for all women, class and race fed much of the exclusion of some women, often those who were willing to reveal their genderqueer desires. While these working-class women were excluded from the cohort of lesbians allowed to participate in the effort to emancipate women from the demands of social constructivism, they do seem to have had an impact on the idea of gender as fluid and unattached to a biological identity. In this same vein, I would point to the tension between the trans men/boi community, the more traditional butches, who often resent what they see as the appropriation of privilege, and the lesbian separatists who vilify masculinity in many forms. While many of the lesbian community decry the

[1] Lisa Duggan defines *homonormativity* as a neoliberal sexual politics that "that does not contest dominant heteronormative assumptions and institutions but upholds and sustains them."

transgender movement within the women's community, they often overlook the potentially disrupting emergence of masculinity in women in terms of the larger social paradigm. While the presentation or expression of masculinity is often interpreted as seeking of status or opportunity, it can also be read as a disruption of the male ownership of masculinity.

These conversations about the role of appropriate gender expression often trail away from productive discussion of dislocating compulsory heterosexuality and binary-based congruencies because of the external pressures exerted on minority and marginalized cultures by a still powerful, yet certainly residual, patriarchal system with a stake in preserving its way of life. The investment then, by these marginalized subcultures to define themselves as part of a viable, master culture, includes the need to present themselves as communally appropriate and therefore candidates for inclusion in the social canon. This pressure to find acceptable ground often results in rents in the very fabric the subculture endeavors to weave. The feminist movement found itself at odds with a diverse set of factions inside of women's communities, and as a result, we still lack a constitutional amendment granting equal rights to women. Instead, we have an instance of people divided by their own limits: women alienated from one another by race, class, sexual orientation, and gender expression. Often, marginalized people do not engage in dialogue with each other; they argue for their own validation by endeavoring to convince the patriarchy that they belong, comparing themselves to those they see as farther outside of the acceptable range, asserting that they are part of the majority culture. Lesbians have long held radical values, yet they often find themselves disenfranchised by

the queer movement, outside of a queer movement that often lacks feminist values; likewise, they find themselves still working inside of feminist movements that limit sexual freedom: The lesbian is still marginal, and as such, she still functions as disruptive to systems that reflect acceptance.

In chapter one of this project**,** I trace the trajectory of butch-femme in both literature and in contemporary critical analysis. I start this chapter with a review of some of the more significant opinions regarding both the butch-femme dyad and the ultimate outcomes of this binary. I then turn to a brief history of representations of butch-femme in literature. I look at both butch and femme expression and the dynamic of those roles and how they have evolved over time, isolating as I do, instances of gender-role destabilization. Certainly, the ongoing presence of genderqueer women has stimulated the discussion of gender expression in the larger social community. Even though these women have been met with contempt and at times even violence, they have maintained their visibility in an effort to experience themselves in a manner congruent with their own vision of their identities. This dedication to self has forced people to acknowledge some disparity in terms of gender category, and as a result, the acceptable presentation of gender has been expanded. Butch-femme is a subversive act in its ability to challenge gender and sex roles both by displaying non-traditional behaviors and by parodying traditional ones.

In chapter two, I pair Shakespeare's *12th Night* and *As You Like It* with Woolf's *Orlando* to examine time, gender, and other social organizers. I use decrees on dress and behavior from the renaissance period to illustrate gender expression limits. In the next

section, I rely on time theorists like McTaggart and Einstein to present an argument for the unreality of time, and I connect their theories to those of Judith Halberstam and Judith Butler about gender to illustrate the parallels in the constructedness of both. Once the construction of these two concepts is established, I read Shakespeare and Woolf in terms of their commentary on how social constructions may affect individual identity development. By reading resistance to constructions in these texts, I conclude that both Shakespeare and Woolf subvert the heteronormative assertion that traditional masculine male and feminine female congruence is an "original" truth and therefore the only natural condition of expression.

In chapter three, I employ Judith Halberstam's insights in *Female Masculinity* concerning the traditional conflation of maleness and masculinity to point to practices of the social re-gendering of queer people in novels by Willa Cather and William Faulkner. Re-gendering unifies the social field by imposing sanctions upon those who exhibit non-traditional gender and sex combinations. Cather's Ántonia Shimerda and Jim Burden and Faulkner's Joe Christmas and Joanna Burden are subject to this practice. Organizers of compulsive heterosexuality, including behavior, attitudes, and clothing, work to align biological sex, gender expression, and sexual orientation. By fortifying behavior patterns that force male and female people to assume roles based on sex, heterosexual norms are fixed and gender is constructed. By undoing the connection between sex and gender, we permit the fall of compulsory heterosexuality. Exposing gender as constructed subverts the assertion that gender/sex congruence is an original and therefore natural condition. By

exposing re-gendering as contrived, Cather and Faulkner, I conclude, broaden acceptable ranges of gender and complicate gender identity.

In chapter four, I consider the effects of the diagnosis of Gender Identity Disorder as pathologized in the current version of the *DSM*. With this "disorder" properly placed in the social and medical contexts, I frame two of Sarah Kane's plays with texts that feature women who some argue are transgender, Radclyffe Hall's Stephen Gordon and Leslie Feinberg's Jess Goldberg. I examine the practice of cutting the body in both Kane's plays and in the novels, arguing that the act temporarily relieves the dissonance caused between identity and social expectation. I probe the idea of the "wrong" body and the surgical solutions that sometimes accompany that idea, comparing self-maiming to medical-mutilation, and I suggest that realigning sex and gender through surgery reinforces heteronormativity. I maintain that the social "support" for "correcting" this "dissonance" is no more than resisting queerness. Still, at the same time, the idea that gender and sex can be aligned by a surgical act suggests that gender identity is a discrete identity characteristic, one that can be detached from a sexed body; this opposing view of surgical appropriateness, then, also suggests the subversive possibilities of transgender identity. The solution to gender/sex dissonance through surgical reassignment illustrates the subversive possibilities of trans (and in this instance I mean "across") gender behavior in that it disrupts the heteronormative expectation of gender compliance, thus destabilizing the perception that gender is an original rather than constructed state of being.

In chapter five, I use Diana Fuss's discussion of strategic essentialism in examining three fictional women's spaces from three different eras— Sarah Scott's *Millennium Hall,* Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *Herland,* and Joanna Russ's *The Female Man*. I assert that communities in which lesbianism, either social or sexual, is central rather than marginal suggest that society need not be based on heterosexuality and the structure that implies that it is compulsory. These fictional communities show the advantages of strategic essentialism, even in the midst of a 21st century queer movement that often calls to eliminate such separatism, and these spaces destabilize gender conformity by creating imagined social and political relationships based on feminine and feminist ideals. They both illustrate experiments with and examine ideas about gender expression without the expectations created by heteronormativity.

Bonnie Morris's 2001 pulp fiction novel *The Question of Sabotage* provides the transition from these fictional female utopian spaces to contemporary women's spaces. In my final chapter, I draw connections between the theoretical and literary discussions of gender, gender queerness, and gender destabilization and an actual essentialist space in contemporary America: The Michigan Women's Music Festival. My focus in this section is on both the political and critical stances, with regard to gender, that are confronted and developed within this space, including physical and behavioral expressions, and how strategic essentialism contributes to creating an environment that fosters these discussions.

Manifestations of the gender evolution in lesbians and other gender-different women have influenced the lesbian community, the women's movement, the larger queer

community, and the social construction of gender expression. In spite of rhetoric from lesbians, feminists, the queer movement, and the larger social establishment about unacceptable, and in some cases even detrimental, manifestations of gender expression in women, non-traditional gender expression has both significantly influenced and substantially encouraged the development and expansion of the definition and perceptions of acceptable ranges of gender for all people. This gender deviancy functions not only as a catalyst for the promotion of gender fluidity but also as a factor in the unleashing of multiple contrivances that uphold the rigid constraints of compliance to constructed images of originality. My broader goal is an analysis of how gender deviations ultimately affect restrictive formulas for behavior and identity. I demonstrate that non-traditional gender expression by women has significantly developed and expanded ranges of what is considered acceptable gender performance for all people. The gender deviancy these women express functions not only to promote gender fluidity but also to undermine compliance with constructed images of originality

## Chapter One

### Butch-Femme: Identities, Dynamics, and the Destabilization of Gender

One of the most significant locations of gender destabilization lies in gay and lesbian relationships. Eliminating a sex binary purges at least one established hierarchical marker used in stabilizing heteronormativity. As a result, gender shifts: multiple expectations and experiences are relocated or dismissed entirely because they no longer operate in opposition to one another. Gender identity is no longer necessarily expressed based solely on external apparatuses but conceivably on an internal determinism, one not locked into a schema based on biological sex. Alternatively, this freedom from the gender/sex binary may result in a gender fluidity based entirely on free will. What gender identity escapes in a gay and lesbian relationship is the *social* determinism of sex, gender, and orientation. Of course, because most people are still raised in a social system that supports gender and sex congruency, eliminating a sex binary in adulthood does not provide results based on complete freedom from sex and gender expectation but rather manifestations of what would undoubtedly be much more complicated outcomes.

I begin this project with a discussion of butch-femme[2] dyads because that dynamic aptly illustrates this fundamental shift in gender identity in same-sex relationships. As single identities butch and femme are the most visible and most well-known expressions of lesbian gender; both singularly and as a relational dynamic, butch-femme is one of the most destabilizing forces to heteronormativity. And though butch-

[2] The word "butch" meaning masculine in appearance and often applied to masculine lesbians was coined in 1941. Femme, from the French meaning woman, was not used with femme lesbians until some 20 years later in 1961.

femme has been talked about much by many, the conversation about how genderqueer women have fostered the expansion of gender expression needs to start here, for this is where it begins in both the social and critical histories of lesbians and other genderqueer women.

Butch-femme is, and has been, expressed in multiple ways: Gertrude Stein and Alice B. Toklas were an institution of butch-femme. Stein, who often dressed in skirts as female codes of the time demanded, was clearly butch. She was the more public of the two women and, in fact, wrote her lover's autobiography.[3] Willa Cather, too, in partnership with Edith Lewis for 40 years, expressed herself in masculine ways, in masculine attire, calling herself William at a young age.[4] Radclyffe Hall went by John, dressed in tailored suits, and courted Una Troubridge. Virginia Woolf, though married, as many lesbians were, had a long affair with a masculine Vita Sacville-West.[5] Of course, this is not meant as an exhaustive list of literary butch-femme couples, but rather a reminder of the different ways this identity has been expressed in the real world by real women. Each of these relationships was unique, but each operated inside of a butch-femme dynamic.

Feminist discourse often presents butch-femme role-playing as a replication of the patriarchal construct, and as such, puts it forth as a pattern that limits the emergence of true female identity. Further claims have been made that suggest the imitation has been

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[3] Stein, Gertrude. *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*. New York, The Literary Guild; Harcourt, Brace and co., 1933.

[4] For more on Willa Cather, see chapter 3 "Aligning Sex, Gender, and Orientation: Whose Plan Is It Anyway?"

[5] West was also married.

done out of ignorance about patriarchal oppression. In spite of the overwhelming power of this discourse, a counter-revolution of lesbian scholars has challenged the limiting identity politics of the 1970's and early 1980's with their own assertions that butch-femme lesbians, rather than imitating heterosexual patterns, subvert traditional gender and sexual roles.

As a historian of lesbian life and culture over the past several centuries, Lillian Faderman works to recover the stories of those who identify as butch, femme, or even kiki. Faderman seems to share with others the critique of butch-femme roles as replicas of heterosexuality. Unlike some contemporary lesbian scholars, including Judith Halberstam, she does not see these pairs as potentially subversive:

> Several lesbian historians, such as Joan Nestle and Judy Grahn [. . .] have suggested that butch and femme roles and relationships were not imitations of heterosexuality, but unique in themselves [. . .] Yet butch/femme style of dress was not much different from working-class male and female style; descriptive terms in relationships were often modeled on heterosexual language [. . .] the role expectations [. . .] looked for all the world like heterosexuality. (169)

Instead she cites cultural necessity, rather than nature or ignorance as the force that initially drove the adoption of role-playing. To illustrate her theory of necessity, she recounts the lives of several nineteenth-century women whose "romantic friendships" developed into subtle butch-femme patterns; for example, she emphasizes a scenario in which one woman assumes the role of the more submissive supporter of the more active

or well-known partner. Women who achieved popularity in literature or art, Faderman says, took a role similar to the "husband" with their partners performing as the "wife." Faderman suggests that before Freud and the sexologists invented the concept of "masculine" and "feminine" lesbians, there were socio-economic reasons for the evolution of relationships between women that reflected the roles of heterosexuality.

Faderman's theories about gender expression fade from the forefront as we consider Butler's problematizing of the constructed nature of identity categories in "Imitation and Gender Insubordination." Butler broaches the question of what it means to identify as lesbian. Her well-known argument poses dominant ideology as the creator of heterosexuality as the "original," the natural and expected expression of human sexuality. As such, lesbianism is relegated to a position as a virtual pretense of heterosexuality, as but a weak simulation of the norm, This perceived replication of heterosexuality is often a criticism directed at lesbians who express typically butch or femme identities. Butler, however, argues that the assumption that this lesbian model is a replication of a heterosexual model is flawed because it is based on the contention that there is some "original" model (heterosexuality) to be imitated. Butler asserts that, in fact, all gender roles are an imitation for which there is no original. Heterosexuality has an undeniable interest in promoting itself as original by constructing an illusion that there is an essential gendered or sexual identity in order to maintain the privileges associated with its status. Lesbian identity threatens this illusion by exposing it as "an incessant and panicked imitation of its own naturalized idealization" (Butler "Imitation" 314) Homosexuality necessarily shows gender roles as the product of social performance, suggesting that

butch-femme role playing is not only **not** an imitation of a heterosexuality, it is perhaps the ultimate expression of gender in its "parodic replication and resignification of heterosexual constructs within non-heterosexual frames" (Butler "Imitation" 314). Thus, Butler establishes a discourse on the importance of lesbian gender fluidity[6] in ultimately framing a discussion of the contribution of butch-femme to the dismantling of assigned gender roles based on sex.

Madeline Davis and E. L. Kennedy likewise support butch-femme as subversive. In the article "'They was no one to mess with': The Construction of the Butch Role in the Lesbian Community of the 1940s and 1950s," they focus on the function of the butch role among working class lesbians in Buffalo, N.Y. At a time when "gender-appropriate" fashions and behaviors were strictly enforced to maintain a clear distinction between the sexes, butch women's choice to reject traditional femininity and actively adopt masculinity was perceived as a threat to the order of society. Davis and Kennedy maintain that despite the threats and harassment by both police and non-queer men, butches claimed their identities and blazed the path that eventually allowed other lesbians to resist the constraints of constructed femininity. Davis and Kennedy also insist, however, that these butches assumed their masculine roles to validate who they were as women and to signal their desire to be with other women, not because they desired to be men. Lesbians in the 1940s often exhibited masculinity only in the safety of the bars, but by the 1950s there was pressure to be a "real" butch by performing masculinity

[6] By fluidity, I do not suggest that gender identity changes arbitrarily, though this is a possible scenario for some people, but rather that gender is fluid around masculinity and femininity. I suggest that gender can be located anywhere in the gender spectrum, can be expressed by anyone, and has little or nothing to do with biological sex.

continuously. This led to butch women who began to "pass" to avoid conflict. Like Butler, Davis and Kennedy argue that while the butch-femme dynamic may seem parallel to working-class heterosexual relationships, it actually both imitated and subverted the pattern. Butch-femme relationships did not necessarily follow conventional gender divisions, but rather usurped traditional ideas about women's sexuality and sexual pleasure.

Like Davis and Kennedy, Sue-Ellen Case also theorizes about the outcomes of butch-femme identities, suggesting that butch-femme dyads are among the most obvious outlaw groups of women. In her article, "Towards a Butch-Femme Aesthetic" she also confronts the popular feminist argument that butch-femme role-playing replicates a pattern of heterosexual behavior that should be relinquished in favor of a new feminist identity. The feminist argument, based on the idea that the oppressiveness in heterosexuality is established through difference, which necessarily implies hierarchy, suggests that equality requires likeness, including in appearance and sexual roles. Case answers by both pointing out the devaluation of butch-femme by lesbians and feminists and the resulting consequences of not only neglecting the importance of these roles for working-class women, but also of failing to see in such performance the subversive potential of exposing gender roles as masquerade. Like Butler, Case claims both that dominant culture has essentialized heterosexual roles and that butch-femme role-playing exposes those roles as constructed:

> The artifice of butch-femme role playing is its insistence on roles as roles, as a masquerade which, in its excess of "genderedness," unmasks the

> performative nature of roles which have their origin in social constructions rather than nature. As a result, these roles lend agency and self-determination to the historically passive subject, providing her with at least two options for gender identification and with the aid of camp, an irony that allows her perception to be constructed from outside ideology, with a gender role that makes her appear as if she is inside it. (Case "Towards" 301)

Ultimately, her arguments lend agency to those women who choose to actively engage in roles rather than accept those assigned by the cultural paradigm. Case firmly asserts that butch-femme roles deny replication of the heterosexual pattern; they are in fact, she maintains, anti-heterosexual because they empower women in both roles by allowing them to occupy a subject position (295). This argument supports the idea that the gender flexibility of lesbians, that is that either masculine, feminine, or a mix of the two genders can be connected to the female sex, has contributed to the flexibility of gender in the larger community. This outcome exists in spite of the fact that role-playing has been identified by feminists and feminist lesbians as detrimental to the liberation of women.

Joan Nestle's evaluation of femme identity and performance adds depth to the argument against butch-femme role-playing as a mediocre replication of heterosexual gender roles. In "The Femme Question," Nestle writes,

> Butch-femme relationships, as I experienced them, were complex erotic and social statements, ***not phony heterosexual replicas***. They were filled with deeply lesbian language of stance, dress, gesture, love, courage, and

> autonomy. In the 1950s particularly, butch-femme couples were the front-line warriors against sexual bigotry. (138, my emphasis).

In this same article, Nestle asks for a re-evaluation of the social function of butch-femme roles. Because it is perceived that butch women visibly disrupt the dominant ideology of gender roles with their appropriation of masculinity, scholarly attention focuses on "butchness" when considering identity. Both the identity and subversive value of the femme are overlooked or undervalued because she is seen as engaging in the dominant culture's idea of femininity. Nestle further points out that some people assume that the femme passes, claiming she is neither at risk nor exposed as a lesbian. Yet, Nestle suggests that the femme role threatens to disrupt social order in the same way the butch role does: The femme chooses the conventional female role in order to signal her desire for butch women. This is, of course, counter to the social construction of femininity, which is to attract men.

Femmes may indeed be less exposed than butches, and we must acknowledge that some femmes do pass in their public lives; still others live outside of the binary of butch-femme, dating only other femmes, and this surely protects their sexual identities. When a woman appears feminine, she is less likely to be challenged by heterosexuals or even heteronormativity, so she may have less motivation to be out. This ability to pass can be read as a desire to conform to heterosexual standards. Yet the perception that femme lesbians are hiding, or can hide, their sexual identities is not necessarily true. Femme women are often subject to the unwanted advances of men, particularly when they are inadvertently passing. Men believe that these women express their gender to attract them,

which is certainly not the case with the femme lesbian. This constant subjection to compulsory heterosexuality may be enough to force the femme woman to come out. And of course, the femme woman is easily identified as a lesbian when she hangs on the arm of a butch woman. However, Nestle asserts that more importantly, the femme role has a more dynamic part in revealing the performative nature in all roles, as she shows it is possible for a biological female to "play at" being a woman by exaggerating what has been defined as "womaness." This exaggeration is, in effect, women doing drag to expose the construction of women.

Nestle's analysis of butch-femme role playing in the 1950s is particularly daring in its claim that such role-playing, because it made lesbian communities so visible, actually paved the way for the subsequent women's and gay liberation movements. Contrary to the assertions of 1970s lesbian feminists, Nestle maintains that these women in role-playing relationships were feminist, that they embodied the social and sexual identities that feminism claimed to want for women. The perception that femme women attempt to pass as straight is, according to Nestle, a popular misconception based on the belief that these women accept the dominant culture's construct of femininity and consciously dress and behave in accordance with that cultural inscription. These women have been accused of not being feminist enough to be either resistant to, or transgressive of, mainstream politics. Yet, according to Nestle, femmes also subvert gender roles by situating themselves in taboo roles. She further argues that though the styles of both butch and femme women ostensibly replicated heteronormativity, these women actually revised gender binaries associated with compulsory sex and gender congruency by

intimating desire to one another. Nestle says that the butch woman "signaled to other women what she was capable of doing—taking erotic responsibility" (141). Moreover, Nestle points out that the femme was subverting convention in a more subtle but potentially more subversive way by using traditional heterosexual tools to attract women.

Nestle challenges academics to reread butch-femme and to make new meaning from an ignored dynamic. She insists that feminists have disregarded the potential power inherent in this butch-femme dynamic, so much, she says, that the erotic conversation between these women is not only silenced but relegated to the lesbian history closet. Nestle marks both butch-femme oppression and the neglect that ensued in terms of finding value in those relationships as precedents that we should consider in assessing contemporary or future incidents that mirror this kind of self-oppression. Using Nestle, Butler, Davis and Kennedy and others to review butch-femme literature and to revise the historical importance of the roles these women play, not only allows us to see the changes spurred by the risks they took, but also to understand the potential subversive power of the 21st century gender identities that I will examine more closely in the ensuing chapters. These arguments presented here are the foundation of butch-femme as subversive and destabilizing to heteronormative culture.

The heterogendered pairing of butch-femme is a long-lived dynamic. The relationships clearly existed before the critical eye of Havelock Ellis identified the "invert" who often desired the feminine woman (118). Sexologists like Ellis and Richard von Krafft-Ebing said the behavior of these "mannish lesbians' " was the result of a congenital defect known as "inversion." It was in the late 1800's, according to Lillian

Faderman, that these "mannish lesbians" dressed in tuxedos attended homosexual balls intent on dancing with femmes (*Odd Girls* 66).

The early romantic friendships between women were generally possible because women were not seen as naturally sexual beings. Havelock Ellis lists in *Sexual Inversion* several reasons for knowing little about same-sex desire in women. Among them he notes that, "for the most part men seem to have been indifferent toward it; when it has been made a crime or a cause for divorce in men, it has usually been considered as no offense at all in women." He goes on to acknowledge that there is a "much greater familiarity and intimacy between women than between men" and therefore women are less suspected of inversion. Finally, he asserts that a woman suffers such ignorance about her own sexual life that she may "feel a high degree of sexual attraction for another woman without realizing that her affection is sexual and when she does realize it she is nearly always very unwilling to reveal the nature (121). Part of the reason same-sex attraction in women passed so long unnoticed is the belief that their sexuality existed only in relationship to men. Mary Wilkins Freeman's short story "Two Friends" illustrates the ease with which women of the late 19th century formed intimate relationships in society without the suspicion, and eventual stigma, of overt sexual relations. A touching story of love and loss, "Two Friends" demonstrates the butch-femme dynamic in this early period.

Sarah, the protagonist of the story, is "a little light woman of fifty" who sews, cooks, and generally keeps house for her "friend" of many years. She knows, for example, "how many times a week Abby likes mince pie" (Freeman 81). At the story's opening, she is home, in traditionally feminine, private space, awaiting the daily return of Abby

from the more masculine, public sphere. Freeman describes "Abby [as] a large, well-formed woman," who does "the rough work, the man's work of the establishment […] She [rises] first in the morning and [makes] the fire and she [pumps] the water and [brings] the tubs for washing" (81). Even when she is sick with the consumption that will soon kill her, she climbs the ladder to pick cherries for Sarah. This story establishes both the gendered division of roles and the gender-specific appearances and expressions of butch-femme partners.

Freeman's short story about Sarah and Abby takes a subtle but apparent jab at heteronormativity. When Abby's impending death becomes undeniable, Sarah confesses what she believes to be a horrible secret she has kept from Abby. Years earlier, a young man had made himself known to Abby as an admirer. Her mother had forbade her to keep his company when she was alive, but on her death bed she had told Sarah to tell Abby that she consented to their marriage. Sarah kept the secret, fearing Abby would leave her for the man, but when she finally confesses to her, Abby laughs and says she would not have married him "if he'd come on his knees after [her] all the way from Mexico" (88). This final anecdote validates the relationship of the women and shows it as one of choice rather than one of necessity. Abby chose Sarah as her partner, not because she could not find a man to marry, but because she wanted Sarah. Likewise, Sarah chose Abby, not because she had to settle for an imitation of masculinity, but because she wanted her, so much that she held a secret that tormented her for years. That the story ends on such a note emphasizes the value of its point. Women choosing women, femme women

choosing butch women, destabilizes both the idea of heterosexuality and the construction of masculine gender as specific to men.

After the sexual inversion declaration that "It is certain that homosexuality is by no means less common in women than in men" became popular (Ellis 118), those who had ostensibly been seeking only economic independence came under attack for wanting sexual privilege as well, a much more serious threat to the social order than the economic independence that these women had originally been thought to have desired (Smith-Rosenberg 265). This, according to Smith Rosenberg, is the birth of the fear of women who publicly adopted a male role. Ellis had already connected violence to the female invert in his initial publication when he wrote, "It is noteworthy that a considerable proportion of the number of cases in which inversion has led to crimes of violence, or otherwise acquired medico-legal importance, has been among women" (119). A reflection of the change from the tolerated romantic friendships to the disdain for the sexual lesbians is illustrated in Freeman's later story "The Long Arm," which documents society's increasing mistrust of women's relationships, gives voice to those who felt their romantic friendships were under attack, and illustrates the onset of the demonization of the "mannish lesbian."

Sarah Fairbanks, the protagonist of "The Long Arm," wakes one morning to find both her father, Martin Fairbanks, stabbed to death in his bed and a bloody dress hanging in her own closet. After all other suspects are exonerated, the police arrest her for the crime, but the grand jury finds insufficient evidence to try the case. Sarah dedicates herself to solving the murder. Eventually, she hires a detective who exposes Sarah's

lesbian neighbor Phoebe as the murderer. Phoebe's motivation is the fear of the loss of her long-time partner Maria, who wants to marry the murdered man. The key to the crime is cached in the lesbian body: it is Phoebe's abnormally long arms that confirm her guilt. Her "inversion" is manifest in both her body and in her behavior.

Phoebe, a seamstress, is strong; the garments that she makes are "visible proof of her force of will" (380). Maria tells the story of "her long subordination to Phoebe Dole," and the narrator describes Maria as a "child-like woman" in contrast to Phoebe's "stronger nature" (395). Phoebe is likewise described as "advancing with rapid strides like a man." Phoebe has lived with Maria for "over forty years" and she claims "there are other ties as strong as the marriage one, that are just as sacred" (396). These are the bonds she endeavors to maintain when she murders Martin Fairbanks before he can lure Maria away.

Phoebe's confession to the murder finally frees Sarah from both suspicion and the task of finding her father's killer; Phoebe is sentenced to life and dies in prison. The masculine lesbian is demonized as a predator and shown as an aggressive, oppressor of the more feminine Maria, as she keeps her from creating a heterosexual bond with Sarah's father, Martin. Sarah tells the reader that this experience has convinced her of the reality of "demoniacal possession" (397). The mannish, controlling Phoebe is shown to be both an outcast and dangerous pervert in her willingness to keep the feminine woman against her will, to kill to keep her. This story emphasizes the heterosexual response to the realization that these women in close "friend" relationships might be sexually active. With that, comes the determination that it is the masculine woman who is keeping the

feminine woman from pursuing a "real" man. A feminine woman, of course, would not choose an inferior imitation unless she were damaged or coerced, as rings true in the case of Maria and Phoebe. This demonization of the masculine lesbian clearly reflects the change from the romantic friendships that had been tolerated to the disdain for the sexual lesbians. "The Long Arm," symbolizes the new fear of the power of the butch woman.

Compulsory heterosexuality depends on the necessary congruency of biological sex, gender, and sexual orientation. Therefore, early sexologists came to the conclusion that masculine women must be possessed by a masculine self. They diagnosed women who acted contrary to traditional or common gender behavior as being biological males born into female bodies. Instead of suggesting that masculine behavior might be natural to some women, it was determined that they suffered a congenital defect. Both the dominant culture and lesbian feminist groups have resisted the idea of the mannish woman, largely because of the failure to see the potential of such a figure as a challenge to stereotypes rather than an imitation of them. Esther Newton argues that Radclyffe Hall resisted the construction of the invert as a passive victim of nature in the creation of Stephen Gordon, the heroine of *The Well of Loneliness.* This same argument can be applied to Freeman's Phoebe: because she is female and takes on masculine distinctiveness, she uncovers masculinity as a constructed social function. Instead of succumbing to a feminine role that does not fit her, she asserts her dominance and chooses a female partner. She appropriates masculinity while remaining fully female. Phoebe challenges the stereotypes of masculinity as necessarily reflective of men precisely by existing as a masculine woman.

Radclyffe Hall's novel, *The Well of Loneliness*, offers one of the first and most famous representations of a self-proclaimed butch lesbian in Stephen Gordon. I discuss this novel at length in a later chapter, but I am compelled to also include it in this conversation about the evolution of butch- femme identity. From birth, Stephen is physically unusual, narrow-hipped and wide-shouldered (Hall 10). She is strong and tall, and like Sarah from "The Long Arm," Stephen's deviance shows in her body. Stephen is easily identified as masculine through both her physical traits and preferred, masculine, activities. Her father seeks to understand her through the books of Karl Heinrich Ulrichs,[7] who in 1863 published two of the first books in modern history to deal with "same-sex" love in a positive way. Stephen's mother, Lady Anna, on the other hand, is cold and distant, seeing Stephen as a "blemished, unworthy, maimed reproduction" (Hall 13), an undeserving imitation of Sir Phillip. After the death of her father, Stephen finds a locked bookcase that hides a book by Krafft-Ebing, which is assumed by critics to be *Psychopathia Sexualis*. Reading it, she learns that she is an invert (238).

Stephen eventually falls in love with Mary Llewellyn, and together they form an early butch-femme couple. The two live happily at first, but when Mary seems to harden in the lesbian world, Stephen worries it is her fault. An old friend of Stephen's, Martin Hallam, falls in love with Mary, so in order to give Mary a "normal" life, Stephen pretends to have an affair with another woman and drives Mary to him. The evolution in

[7] 1825-1895. In 1864 in Aurich, Hanover, he wrote and later published Vindicta [Rod of Freedom], Formatrix [She (Nature) Who Creates]. His books were confiscated and banned by Saxony police, but the ban was lifted six days later by a court order, an event which Ulrichs marks as the beginning of a modern-day movement. Ulrichs was a self-proclaimed homosexual/transgender person. He was the first to speak publicly for gay rights. He published 12 books on homosexuality in his lifetime. The collection can be found in Ulrichs, Karl Heinrich. *The Riddle of "Man-Manly" Love: The Pioneering Work on Male Homosexuality.* Translated by Michael. A Lombardi-Nash. New York: Prometheus, 1994.

butch identity with the advent of the sexual invert theories leads Stephen to believe she suffers from this congenital disorder; because of this, she relinquishes her love relationship to a "real" man (502), not an imitation or one trapped in the "wrong" body.[8] Stephen has, though it seems, internalized the same harsh judgments about butch women that were thrust upon Phoebe. Both lost the women they loved to "real" men, and the social fear of sexualized female couples is usurped by a combination of the social domination of heterosexuality and the assumption of those beliefs by a minoritized group, lesbians in this case. In both instances, the femme lesbian is shown as being able to move between two worlds, able to love both the butch woman and a man, a characterization of femmes that will later be queried and denied by lesbian critics, in particular Joan Nestle.

Stephen Gordon's dramatic descent into despair fuels a common opinion that Hall's book reaffirms the theory of the invert, and it seemingly does in reading Stephen's walls as crumbling when she cannot defend herself, her psyche, her ego against the conflicting desires of her multiple allegiances. Yet, Esther Newton, in "The Mythic Mannish Lesbian: Radclyffe Hall and the New Woman" asserts that Radclyffe Hall resisted the construction of the invert as a passive victim of nature in the creation of the heroine of *The Well of Loneliness.* And this reading, too, can be textually sustained, and it furthermore supports the destabilization of gender by Stephen Gordon.

According to Newton, the figure of Stephen Gordon "was and remains an important symbol of rebellion against male hegemony" because of the way she challenges the "natural" relationship between sex and gender (281). As Newton explains,

[8] One I argue is suffering from a psychological dissonance brought on by social codes and constructions as I detail in my chapter on "Transsexual Identities and Gender Destabilization."

the "mannish lesbian should not exist if gender is natural" (291). Essentially, Newton argues that Hall, rather than yielding to the idea that the construction of lesbian identity is a defect of nature, destabilizes gender categories by exposing them as constructed by showing her own fixed masculine identity. Because Stephen Gordon is female, and because she exhibits inherently masculine characteristics, she exposes masculinity as an expression of maleness as a constructed social role. Instead of embracing the submissive role of femininity, she appropriates codes and symbols of masculinity. Stephen Gordon supports the idea that the masculine woman challenges heterosexuality instead of imitating it.

By the middle of the 1900s, working class lesbians began to be visible precisely because of their role-playing. The main critique of this period has centered around the "imitation" of heterosexuality. Some contend that role-playing was done out of ignorance or a misguided desire to be men. In their effort to retrain working class lesbians to a higher consciousness, lesbian feminists overlook role-playing as a potential tool with which to deconstruct patriarchal ideology. Faderman describes the evolution of butch-femme in the 1950s and 1960s as reaching more delineated roles than ever before. The hetero-gendered pattern for relationships seemed the only possible model for both men and women of this period. Given the visual prevalence of butch-femme couples, it is hardly surprising that much of the literature of this period dwells on the dynamic of butch-femme relationships.

. Pulp was one of the few genres in which lesbianism could be explored in the 1950s and early 1960s. These books had lurid cover art and could be found for fifty cents

at a drug store. Ann Bannon's *Beebo Brinker* illustrates both the popularity of and difficulty in, maintaining a butch-femme relationship during the 1950s. It is from the closed down, sexual repressiveness of the period that seventeen year old Beebo is running. Scared and outcast from her world, she arrives in Greenwich Village from a small town in Wisconsin. Fortunately for Beebo, the youngster is almost immediately saved from homelessness in New York by Jack Mann, a gay war veteran in his thirties who opens his home and his world to her. As Beebo relaxes into her life in the big city, Jack introduces her to the gay clubs. Beebo discovers that the differences that complicated her life in Wisconsin, including her lack of femininity, give her appeal to certain women in the clubs of New York. Beebo meets women of many types, all conspicuously feminine—Mona Petry, the local bi-sexual bad girl, Paula Ash, the femme next door, and Hollywood actress Venus Bogardus—to serve as her potential partners. Beebo battles husbands, society, and her own fears for the sake of her femmes. Thus, Beebo marks the life of the 1950s butch woman. Like Stephen Gordon, she struggles to fit into mainstream society until it becomes clear that there is no room for her. When her father dies, much like in Stephen's case, she has lost the only protection she had from the cruel judgments of those around her. And as Stephen does thirty years earlier, she leaves for the city, where she is suddenly ensconced into this a small, but comfortable space where people find her not only acceptable, but attractive, even sexy.

While there is certainly a greater availability of gay culture during this period than ever before, this is still no lesbian utopia[9]. Gays and lesbians of this time were considered

[9] See chapters five and six for more information about lesbian utopias and their role in gender evolution.

on a par with criminals and degenerates. Beebo Brinker faces harsh challenges in both the gay and straight worlds. Beebo is lured in by the sexy but dangerous Mona, but recovers quickly enough to save herself, at least momentarily, from her wrath. She eventually falls for Paula, but not with the speed the older femme latches on to the young butch. But, it is her relationship with Venus Bogardus that really reveals the kinds of stresses butch women suffer in a society that will not tolerate their masculinity. Beebo struggles to find a relationship that allows her masculine expression without repercussion. She is beaten, chastised, and forced to suppress her gender identity in order to maintain her relationship with Venus.

However, the American fiction about the 1950s deviates from its English predecessors: Beebo differs from Stephen Gordon in that she comes from the working class, and many of the trials she faces are based on her class status. These kinds of struggles are not unusual in novels depicting butch-femme relationships, as the working class birthed the visible culture of butch-femme. Many of the struggles of butch women lie in employment opportunity, which generally makes them subservient in multiple capacities. They are generally only able to find labor jobs, and they often work with all men. Because they are women in men's occupations, they are expendable. Their economic, social, and personal securities are fragile. Of course, many of these problems are specific to working class groups in general, not just butch-femme communities of the

time, but these women's issues are complicated by their failure to fit into a mainstream social group, even the working class.[10]

This lesbian fiction set in the 1950s and 1960s shows vast gender expression differences and assumed responsibilities between working class butches and femmes. Faderman maintains that the relaxation of the dress codes allowed for more distinction between butch and femme women; Faderman also stresses that in the 1950s, lesbians were given some additional attention when the opinions of medical experts that lesbians were "men trapped in women's bodies" actually met the larger population in general. She claims that these ideas filtered into lesbian consciousness and reinforced the idea of butch-femme as natural. These novels set in the1950s give readers and historians a look into the butch-femme communities as they evolve, but they still present a heteronormative society that will not tolerate female masculinity. *Beebo Brinker* is a clear example of this society. This novel shows the effort to silence butches by both society and the very women who loved them. And, it is this ongoing effort to push butches into the background of society that shows their threat to heteronormative gender and sex identities.

In order to pursue a relationship with Venus, who is married to protect her reputation and movie star status, Beebo quits her job as a pizza delivery person and casts herself into a role, passing as a stable hand and helper for Venus's young son. She is sworn to secrecy if she wants to be in a relationship with Venus. This silencing of

[10] Faderman says that for or middle-class women during the same period, butch-femme meant little. For most, the idea was incomprehensible. Middle-class women instead replicated the supposedly more egalitarian roles of the heterosexual middle-class, making social acceptability more important than social change (*Odd Girls* 175).

masculine women is perpetrated not only by the heterosexual social construct, but at times by the femmes who seek to protect them and themselves from the world. Both Venus and her husband insist that Beebo be silent and stay away from Venus in public. They are adamant that their heteronormative pretense be preserved. The result of not hiding her love for Venus, they both assure her, will be the end of the relationship. One day, Beebo and her charge spontaneously decide to pick Venus up from work. The result is a public disaster and a private fiasco. Beebo is chastised and threatened for merely driving Venus's son to see her (180). At the same time, the jealous and mean spirited opportunist Mona adds to the spreading gossip by confirming Beebo's identity to the local rags, further damaging Beebo and her relationship (213). Ultimately, it is Beebo's refusal to be silenced that causes the disruption of heteronormativity. When she appears at a party to tell Venus her son has been hospitalized, she inadvertently queers the heterosexual relationship of Venus and her husband. Venus's husband beats Beebo publicly in an effort to restore the appearance of appropriate relationships (198-200). Beebo is ultimately cast from the house to restore the private institution of heterosexuality (205). Venus does not have the strength to face the world as a lesbian—a choice Beebo does not have. Beebo's appearance has, however, already destabilized heteronormativity by upsetting the fantasy that all women are feminine.

The butch lesbian as seen through characters like Freeman's Phoebe, Hall's Stephen Gordon, or Bannon's Beebo Brinker, is an exile from heterosexual society. She continues to be described in lesbian literature as she represents the lesbian's alienation from the patriarchy and the opportunities that stem from that cultural construction. These

novels, beyond their depictions of butch-femme roles from a 1950s and 1960s writer also reconstructs a lesbian past, a tricky undertaking given the hidden stories of their lives and relationships. Imagining what came before, then, becomes a way to recreate a reality for people otherwise stranded in time.

The overt butch-femme roles in books like Hall's and Bannon's were not the only indications of role-playing, even during a time when women were beginning to abandon those roles because of social pressure. Valerie Taylor's 1963 pulp novel *A World without Men*, the second novel in the Erika Frohmann series, features Erika and Kate, women who fit into butch-femme roles but not so clearly as Phoebe Dole, Stephen Gordon, or Beebo Brinker and their respective femme partners. Erika is "a girl who looked like a boy" but is more responsible for domestic chores than is Kate (77). Kate falls into calling Erika the more masculine name, Erik, to which Erika easily responds (84), yet both women recoil from the women they encounter who perform blatant butch-femme roles. They insist that they do not "have to be like those people" as they recall the woman in the "men's clothes" and the "fluffy little creature" who adored her (83). Rather, despite her nature to be attracted to the masculinity in Erika, she chooses the path of hiding her lesbianism by denying her desire for a masculine woman. While the two seem to naturally fall into patterns of butch-femme behavior, they resist so as to avoid the wrath of social condemnation. They mitigate gender expression to conform to social standards.

The feminists of the 1970s movement generally avoided lesbians because they worried that putting forth lesbian rights with the woman agenda would slow the process of liberation. One of the consequences of this concern was the movement that encouraged

lesbians to "pass" as straight women. Both the straight and lesbian feminists rallied around the idea that lesbians needed to avoid offending the visual sensibilities of the straight world, particularly straight men. Many radical feminists of the 1970s called for an androgynous persona, and many lesbians trumpeted the cry, citing their reason as separating from the oppressive culture of the patriarchy. This put butch and femme lesbians in the margins of both the feminist and lesbian movements. Because the predominating criticism of the time called role-playing an imitation of heterosexual roles, those who engaged in that dynamic were relegated to a lower status. They became an embarrassment to the movement, and those same women who had used their visibility as a way to carve out the small space of understanding created in the late 1960s were eliminated from the new movement.

In Rita Mae Brown's *Rubyfruit Jungle* there is new, more overt evidence of the lesbian rejection of the butch-femme couple. The trend toward androgyny apparent in Taylor's novel becomes even more evident in the lesbian novels of the 1970s. The protagonist of the story, Molly, has relationships that are undefined by roles, and it is not until she encounters a very butch lesbian in a New York gay bar that she realizes that some lesbians blatantly express masculine gender. This suggests that the political action plan of feminists to eliminate butch-femme was indeed working. Up to the point in the novel when Molly encounters masculine gender expression, Molly's role-playing status has been ambiguous: at times she seems marginally butch, at others marginally femme. In actuality, she functions in androgynous space, but might be referred to as "kiki" by the butch-femme community. But when she is wooed by a rather assertive butch lesbian in

the bar, she learns that in order to put off her advances all she must do is identify as butch, which she quickly does (Brown 147). In this way, she demonstrates that the playing of roles is enough to turn her away from anyone, not only as a potential partner, but even as a potential friend. Her revulsion at butch/femme roles, an outward disgust that echoes the feminist rhetoric of the time, shows in the conversation she has with her gay male friend right after her encounter with the butch lesbian, Mo. Calvin tries to alleviate her confusion by explaining the bar culture:

> "A Lot of these chicks divide up into butch and femme, male-female. Some people don't, but this bar is into heavy roles, and it's the only bar I know for women. I thought you knew about that stuff or I wouldn't have sprung it on you."
>
> "That's the craziest, dumbass thing I ever heard tell of. What's the point of being a lesbian if a woman is going to look and act like an imitation man? Hell, if I want a man, I'll get the real thing not one of these chippies. I mean, Calvin, the whole point of being gay is because you love women" (147-48)

The negativity surrounding butch-femme roles in this decade illustrates a movement that would eventually even lead some radical mainstream lesbian feminists to suggest the idea that penetration was representational of heterosexual sex and therefore an enemy of the movement. In this phase of the butch-femme evolution, larger groups of political lesbians, often middle and upper class, police their own fringe groups to make sure they conform as much as possible to heteronormative expectations. Lesbians see their own sexuality as

legitimate, but suggest that gender presentation should not advocate for the male sex. Androgynous gender expression is preferable to the imitation of either traditional masculine or feminine gender roles. .

By the time *Rubyfruit Jungle* was written, the feminist movement to invalidate butch-femme was fully engaged. Molly's encounter with the New York butch clearly shows that. Her desire for androgyny is a reflection of the feminist critique that butch-femme role-playing is an inferior imitation of male-female heterosexual roles. Nestle, like others, argues against this assertion of imitation, suggesting butch women are simply "willing to identify their passion for other women by wearing clothes that symbolized the taking of responsibility" (Nestle "Butch-Femme" 100). Contrary to claims made by feminist scholars in the 1970s, Nestle insists that the butches and femmes of the fifties, were in fact feminist, that they exercised the very autonomy of sexual and social identities that feminism claimed to want for all women. But they did so in a way that "made lesbians visible in a terrifyingly clear way" (108), which thus provoked the anger of the dominant culture as well as of those lesbians who preferred the safety of invisibility.

By the 1980s, though butch-femme is not popular, lesbians are becoming aware of their own participation in supporting the patriarchy by refusing to give legitimacy to butch-femme identities. Lee Lynch's *Toothpick House* shows some in-group acceptance of, and at least a nod toward tolerance for butch-femme in the feminist movement. Annie Heaphy, the protagonist of *Toothpick House,* is a bright, working class lesbian who drives a cab for a living. She is obviously butch, made clear in that she suffers embarrassment

when being mistaken for a male. This novel depicts the struggle of Annie and her butch and femme friends as they try to fit into a feminist, lesbian movement in which their gender identifications and their class backgrounds often make them feel unaccepted. Like Stephen Gordon, Annie is unwilling to compromise her gender identity in order to blend into either a heterosexual or lesbian world that does not accept her. As such, she becomes a hero of sorts to readers who cling to their identities in the face of a rigid social construction. With this classed butch-femme dynamic, Lynch juxtaposes the "Yalies," young, fairly privileged women who are coming both out and into themselves politically. Finally the two groups find the common ground that allows them to support each other in the straight world when Annie finds herself in a long-term relationship with a Yalie girl. The literature shows the ways these women essentially fit together; it is here in the 1980s, 100 years after Mary Wilkins Freeman's short story "Two Friends," that we see a conscious development in terms of acceptance in variant gender expression. Authors once again portrayed butch-femme roles in more affirming ways. And butch-femme is destabilizing not only heterosexual values, but reaffirming its place in the feminist movement. Lynch's Annie Heaphy models this return to valuing multiple identities.

For over a century, writers have included butch and femme roles in novels, endeavoring to write about such roles and the complexities of multifaceted identity. By continuing to both engage in and write about butch-femme, lesbian writers have shown that engaging in butch-femme relationships is not merely a reproduction of heterosexual values, but a viable and legitimate way to express oneself in the world. These works of fiction attempt to build a lesbian history, a difficult task given the invisibility of both

lesbians and the histories of their lives and relationships. A history lends credibility to a people and validates their existence. Butch and femme lesbians need a past to give them a future. The last 30 years have seen the benefits of the butch-femme expression, both in terms of gender liberation and the ongoing acceptance of gays and lesbians. Now, relationships far beyond what seems almost conventional butch-femme pairings dot the literature. Femme-femme, butch-butch, and a seemingly endless array of differently identifying partners find themselves living in a world that is increasingly queer. Much of this freedom, we owe to the tenacity of those who lived as butches and femmes, together and apart.

In "Imitation and Gender Insubordination," Judith Butler writes that she is troubled by identity categories. She refers to them as "stumbling blocks" and promotes them as "sites of necessary trouble" (308). Because these issues of identity pose problems, those problems are exponentially increased when identity comes in excess, Butler says. But she asserts that identity in excess is also foundational to lesbian identity. The butch stereotype both makes lesbianism visible and yet seems to make it visible in a non-lesbian way. Butler says that it both makes lesbianism readable through masculinity and collaborates with the mainstream notion that lesbians cannot be feminine. Yet, the idea of the absence of butch-femme identities or the paired dynamic in a recreated history would lead the gay movement down a very different path. Butch-femme meets the criteria as a subversive act in its ability to undermine gender and sex roles both by assuming and displaying non-traditional behaviors and by parodying traditional ones. Clearly, both

butch and femme presentations of gender have greatly contributed to the expansion of acceptable gender expression today.

## Chapter Two

## Social Constructions: Time, Gender, and other Ultimate Realities that Ought Better be Dismantled

Fantasies of ultimate "truths" organize societies, and that which is habitually reproduced is frequently classified as normal rather than as merely common. In fact, these ideas we accept as truth are often illusions, seemingly real in constancy, in dependability, and their keen ability to keep actions and interactions coordinated. Constructions, such as Time, work for us; they help us know where to be, how to dress, and how to act. They provide frameworks for actions, but also guidelines for interactions. Time structures our choices: when to rise, when to sleep, when to work, and even when to vacation. We have a cocktail in the afternoon or evening, but certainly not before noon. We play in our early years, but are "squandering time" if we do so in our later ones. We often delay the pursuit goals because we "don't have time"; we repeatedly interrupt ourselves because it is "time to go." We do not want to "waste our time." We do not reflect on our behaviors, our worries, our choices because "time and tide wait for no man."[11] Time keeps us organized, helps us work together as a community, a country, a world, but it also limits our expressions of individuality.

While Time and Gender each have discrete identity markers, some quite basic—for example, consider time's ability to organize and maintain a community's schedule versus gender's facility to organize a family's division of labor—in surprisingly many ways, they are reflections of one another. The construction of gender, particularly as it

[11]The origin of this phrase is uncertain, but it appears about 1395 in Chaucer's Prologue to the Clerk's Tale: "For thogh we slepe, or wake, or rome, or ryde, Ay fleeth the tyme; it nyl no man abyde."

supports sexual orientation in forced congruency between sex and behavior, functions in much the same way as time. Maybe we have naturalized the most common manifestations of gender. Or, maybe we have accepted the most convenient strategies for using gender, but in doing so we have restricted the options of individuality. Gender, like time, arranges our society; we know not only that we fit but also where and how we fit into the larger picture, into the grand plan; the assumption of gender roles both telegraphs our identity to others in our system and teaches us who we are. Gender trains us how to act, explains our roles and responsibilities to us. It is likely that early in our evolution, it was important that gender helped us with these divisions, important to the survival of the group. Gender roles make it easy to understand responsibility, to care for a house and family, and to fuel and maintain a community. Gender, like time, is an organizing strategy, and clearly, a very convenient one. But, as time both establishes order and limits freedom so does gender—and both tear at equality. Social justice is eclipsed by freedom. Personal justice is eclipsed by order. The space where order meets freedom determines a level of equal opportunity, of justice for both societies and individuals. Literature points at boundaries between abstract ideas like order, freedom, equality, and justice. Likewise, literature pushes at constructions like time and gender. In this chapter, I examine the parallels between time, gender, and other social organizers to illustrate assumptions about them and to suggest that those impositions of the abstract might be better located in a more fluid field, outside of constructed realities. Revealing both the construction of time and the ramifications of obedient reliance upon it initiates conversations about the dichotomous results of blindly employing such constructions. Exposing gender as

constructed permits a parallel investigation of the limits set by this framework for behavior, ultimately subverting the heteronormative assertion that traditional masculine male and feminine female congruence is an "original" truth and therefore the only natural condition of expression.

Apparel is an aspect of gender that factors into the social construction as an organizer, and the appropriateness of dress has become a truth of sorts, an identifier of both sex and class. Both legal and social reinforcement of dress contribute to the acceptance of proper (gender appropriate) clothing as a natural state of normal evolution. Clothing both reflects time and asserts gender. We are casual at lunchtime, but more formal at dinnertime. We wear white in the springtime, but not in the fall. We attend special events in gender appropriate wear: dresses and suits; Time helps us be socially productive, clothing, to be socially appropriate, but they confine us too.

In 1597, Elizabeth the First issued "A Proclamation" clearly defining the allowable dress of men and women from each class (Smith 249). While these laws were ostensibly meant to control the expenses related to dress, Bruce Smith says that "[such laws] had the effect of [. . .] attempting to maintain—the existing social order" (248) Since the sumptuary laws linked social position to clothing, the duties associated with those positions were linked to apparel as well. The Elizabethan state's effort to reinforce the dress codes intensified the social emphasis placed on gender behavior appropriate to position and presented it as a natural phenomenon. The long-term implications of beliefs like those that sponsored the sumptuary laws are profound. Linking clothing to class and sex not only adds a dimension in determining identity, but ascribes particular

characteristics to both women and men. This idea of appropriate clothing fortifies the idea of gender.

Efforts to reinforce the requirements determining social acceptability came in many forms. "Hic Mulier or, The Man-Woman" refers to women who keep their feminine qualities (their submissiveness) intact as, "good [. . .] modest [. . .] true women" leaving those who stray from sex appropriate behavior to be cast as "all odious, all devil" (267). The order to police this conduct extends to the "fathers, husbands or sustainers of these new hermaphrodites" (271). The church likewise presented dress codes as God's will. The homily "Of Excess of Apparel" emphasizes the value placed on clothing in early modern England, saying: "inasmuch as God hath appointed everyman his degree and office[. . . ] all may not look to wear like apparel, but everyone according to his degree, as God hath placed him" (240). Comparing inappropriately dressed women to "strumpets" and calling unsuitably appareled men "effeminate" profoundly links clothing to sex, gender, and morality. People cling to the rules of proper attire to avoid social condemnation, consenting to live in the space where sex and gender overlap. Once religious morality proclaims the precise connection between sex and gender, men and women are limited to this narrow corridor of acceptable behavior. Clothing reinforces the implied connection between sex and gender. Moreover, these ideas of clothing as sex appropriate define heterosexuality as yet another construction posed as truth.

In *Twelfth Night* Shakespeare not only links clothing to sex and gender roles but also experiments with the idea that sexuality is not limited to a paradigm locked within heterosexual norms: instead, he suggests, given a broader range of possibilities, it might

be alternately expressed. His manipulation of sex, gender, and attraction illustrates the ways heterosexual relationships may be superimposed onto the interplay of dominant/submissive relationships. Viola's cross-dressing reveals a possible variation in desire that suggests attraction to gender-different individuals as opposed to sexual opposites. This, in turn, insinuates that the social insistence on the conflation of sex and gender has confused perceptions of the stimulus for attraction. Shakespeare's deliberate removal of the sex line by disguising Viola as Cesario clears the way for the other less prominent but no less valid attractions to find a stage. Hence, in *Twelfth Night* Shakespeare not only exposes the socially constructed idea of gender and the enforced link between sex and gender, but also identifies clothing as fortifying that bond. Finally, he subtly reveals dominant/ submissive relationships as valid hetero-gendered sources for physical attraction by exposing heterosexuality as a construction.

Perhaps spurred on by unique insights developed through his constant exposure to the possibility of role shifting by merely altering costume, Shakespeare takes advantage of the stage to play out the potential of unrestricted social roles in *Twelfth Night* by using the combination of Viola's cross-dressing and the confusion of differently sexed look-alike twins. In order to more simply see the step-by-step process Shakespeare uses to confound and show identity as a product of the social construct through his mixed-sex twins, it is helpful to look at his earlier experiments with a set of truly identical twins.

In *A Comedy of Errors,* identity is simply reduced to a construction by its exposure as superficial. Douglas Lanier emphasizes the performativity inherent in the use of costume as an identifier of class and rights in his essay "'Stigmatical in the Making':

The Material Character of *The Comedy of Errors*." There he pursues the questions that surround the external and material conditions that define a character's identity, particularly as those conditions reflect how those "identities are physically produced and displayed within Renaissance culture" (84). His exploration of *Errors* distinguishes the serial confusions of identity as a springboard into interpretations of "Renaissance self-presentation," but it also gives rise to several considerations of application to Shakespeare's other plays, which were of course born from the same culture, including *Twelfth Night* and *As You Like It*.

Lanier directs attention to the Renaissance hierarchy's means of maintaining distance from the commoners through external methods, including clothing and behavior. By presenting each "player" in society in the "costume" that represented his or her social position, order was maintained both culturally and economically. Lanier says, "[i]n theory, a stable presentational rhetoric of clothing, gesture, mode of address, and style of speech charted one's place in the social matrix" (85). Combining Lanier's research with Renaissance texts makes it possible to see how and why the population at large internalized and invariably policed clothing rules. Called for by the Church, this homily from "Of Excess Apparel" emphasizes the value placed on clothing as mainstay in upholding order and structure in early modern England, and it enforces the idea of *proper* attire, focusing not only on appropriate clothing for people of varying social status, but defining people's dress according to sex as well:

> The fourth and last rule is, that every man behold and consider his own vocation, inasmuch as God hath appointed everyman his degree and

> office, within the limits whereof it behoveth him to keep himself. Therefore all may not look to wear like apparel, but everyone according to his degree, as God hath placed him. (qtd in Smith 240).

Its position on women refers to the moral issues of chastity and sexuality, declaring that because they lack care in wearing the uniform assigned to them, "there is left no difference in apparel between an honest matron and a common strumpet" (242). The reference to men connects masculinity (or lack of it) to clothing: "many men are become so effeminate, that they care not what they spend in disguising themselves" (242). The strength of the statement lies in tying rules of dress to God. Clothing becomes inextricably linked both to religious morality and sexuality, which in turn become intertwined. People, forced to cling to the regulations of appropriate attire in order to avoid social condemnation linked to immorality, embrace the external identification system so that appropriate partners can be easily identified thus quelling the fear of social or religious reprisal. Kings court queens, commoners, commoners and men, women.

Lanier emphasizes that "*Errors* stresses the marks and rituals—faces, clothing, beatings, warts and moles, meals, rings and gold chains—that make characters recognizable, and it demonstrates in copious variety how reliance upon this material evidence leads to unpredictable identity-effects" (90). *Errors*, then, looks at the thin difference between a person of means and one without, essentially proving the artificiality of the hierarchy. Because the Antipholys twins have the same external value, their society readily replaces one with the other**.** His twin, because of the expectations attached to identity, unintentionally usurps Antipholus of Ephesus. The people who

encounter Antipholus of Syracuse expect he will behave in a certain way because he is visually perceived to be his brother. By merely responding to the people around him, Antipholus of Syracuse assumes his brother's life.

In addition to discussing the use of physical determiners as the primary method of identifying a person, Lanier also points to some results of identity confusion caused by this method. Lanier maintains that, "because the twins do not own exclusive rights to the marks of their characters, or to the proliferating interpretations that become attached to those identical yet differing marks, they find themselves again and again self-dispossessed" (96). However, while the twins are equally mistaken for each other, it does seem that the ramifications of that misidentification more profoundly affect the twin who holds the higher social station. Clearly the older twin finds himself consistently in a worsening position. The younger twin, or the twin that occupies the subordinate position in this case, has for the most part assumed a social advancement because of the identity confusion. It is clear here that the younger twin can easily fill the social expectations of the community, and the artificiality of the older twin's position in the system is exposed. His position is linked only to the body he occupies.

Along with the dispossession comes the older twin's anger and frustration of seemingly having lost his social situation—a by-product of his self-dispossession. Within this response to suffering from his lack of privilege lies the heart of the power structure's insistence on maintaining differing external appearances. With the absence of identifiable markers, it would be difficult to hold a specific hierarchical position open for the qualifying hosts. For example, if race or sex were truly not an issue, not immediately

recognizable by outward appearance, including specifically, clothing, there would not be a way to protect the benefits offered to the privileged. Particularly for women, clothing then, becomes inseparable from performativity and is at least partially responsible for the limitations still in place because women are identified by their common appearance. If they could not be easily identified, those occupying the masculinized position in society (symbolized by Antipholus of Ephesus) would or could potentially be usurped by anyone, particularly someone occupying a subordinate role in society, whose appearance mimicked the external masculine identifiers (symbolized by Antipholus of Syracuse).

Lanier's exposure of outward appearance, including costume, as an identifier of class and rights mirrors theories of clothing as performative—that is "the means by which the norms of sex are naturalized and substantiated simply by their continual pronouncement as foundational and ideal" (Charles 123)—and is essential in establishing privilege in regard to cultural expectations and limitations. In other words, Lanier's conclusions about clothing identifying class in a way that orders society can simply be extended to include Judith Butler's theory of clothing as a "natural" organizer and limiter of sex roles. This resulting connection between sex and gender requires that the female sexed person be aligned with the femininely-gendered self. Efforts to reinforce this social requirement came in many forms. "Hic Mulier or, The Man-Woman" and "Haec-Vir: or The Womanish-Man are examples of social enforcers. In the first, women who keep their feminine qualities (their submissiveness) intact are called "good women, modest women, true women" (Smith 267), leaving those who stray from the feminine gender to be cast as "all odious, all devil, that have cast off the ornaments of [their] sexes, to put on the

garments of shame" (268). The order to end this "plague" extends to the "fathers, husbands or sustainers of these new hermaphrodites" [. . . ] charging them with "[giving] fuel to the flames of their wild indiscretion" (271). No one connected to the offender is free from the social pressure to conform.

A major component of the alignment between sex and gender is clothing. By outfitting a girl or woman in a certain style of apparel, society is assured that she will be treated in a way that demands particular responses from her. For example, if she is limited physically by restrictive clothing or footwear, men will automatically help her complete tasks that require more flexibility or speed in movement. This behavior stresses the weakness of women, and after a time women believe they are weak. By enforcing this weakness, women are relegated to a more submissive position in both the social and sexual hierarchies. Likewise, men are thrust into a dominant position and certain expectations are placed upon them; the masculinely-gendered self is attached to the male body as well. By fortifying the tendency of relationship between a dominant and submissive partner, and by aligning those tendencies through clothing and behavior patterns that force male and female sexed people to assume those roles based on sex, heterosexual norms are fixed.

In *Gender Trouble,* Judith Butler asserts that "acts and gestures, articulated and enacted desires create the illusion of an interior and organizing gender core, an illusion discursively maintained for the purposes of the regulation of sexuality within the obligatory frame of reproductive heterosexuality" (136). Butler further asserts that the internalization of the belief of gender appropriateness can help prevent the construct from

being identified and escaped: "If the 'cause' of desire, gesture, and act can be localized within the 'self' of the actor, then the political regulations and disciplinary practices which produce that ostensibly coherent gender are effectively displaced from view (136). Butler tells us that clothing acts as a "natural" organizer and limiter of sex roles. Simply, Butler says that we imitate ideas about behavior and dress based on a structure of compulsive heterosexuality, and that those aspects of identity are internalized by us so that we cannot escape their influence. By referring to Butler's theories, we can explain how the organizers of compulsive heterosexuality, including behavior, attitudes, and clothing, work to align biological sex, gender expression, and sexual orientation. By fortifying behavior patterns that force male and female sexed people to assume roles based on sex, heterosexual norms are fixed and gender is constructed. By undoing the connection between sex and gender, by releasing our grasp on ultimate "truths," we release the commitment to compulsory heterosexuality.

Sexual orientation, a third, discrete category of identity, becomes intertwined with sex because of the insistence on coordinating sex and gender. Clothing is also a signifier of this union. Costume rules, entrenched in social and religious dogma, keep sex identifiable and sex and gender fused so that heterosexuality can be represented as the norm. Constant reinforcement and enactment of the behavior initiates habit, which is eventually identified as "normal" based on its wide spread practice. Shakespeare flirts with ideas about the conditions that support the heterosexual paradigm as the normative model. In *Twelfth Night*, he plays with the tying of sex (the biological determiner of identity) and gender (the emotional, spiritual, or mental determiner of identity) through

costume to induce his audience to look at the limitations of this structural habit. By dressing Viola as a boy, Shakespeare can experiment with homoerotic incidents on two fronts: her relationship with Orsino and her relationship with Olivia. Because Viola has transcended the norm by cross-dressing, she has entered the realm of the unimaginable and both relationships seem awkward; yet both are full of passion. Viola has flirtatious scenes with both Orsino and Olivia that produce an air of uncomfortability for the contemporary audience. By being forced to assess Viola as a person instead of a woman who is sexed, gendered, and dressed in the traditionally female manner, and being exposed to the possibility of same-sex attractions based on her performance in drag, the audience has to face the possibility that the accepted norm for women, men, and heterosexuality has been constructed by hegemonic forces. Because that power-base has been aligned with God, the questions that Viola poses extend to even deeper theological interrogations. But Shakespeare's manipulation of clothing and flirtatious behavior has done much more than prompt discussions and theories about the "constructed nature of gender" and "[challenging] the symbolic hegemony of heterosexuality" (Charles123) in *Twelfth Night*. It reveals a human predisposition toward dominant/submissive relationships irrespective of heterosexuality. It in fact suggests and defines five erotic relationships based on a hetero-gendered model of dominant/submissive relationships, ultimately discarding those that lack the proper dynamic or are socially unacceptable. Furthermore, it both destabilizes gender behavior and personifies time as an active participant in the social interaction of people.

> *Disguise, I see, thou art a wickedness,/ Wherein the pregnant enemy does much./ How easy is it for the proper-false/ In women's waxen hearts to set their forms!/ Alas, our frailty is the cause, not we!/ For such as we are made of, such we be./ How will this fade? my master loves her dearly;/ And I, poor monster, fond as much on him;/ And she, mistaken, seems to dote on me./ What will become of this? As I am man,/ My state is desperate for my master's love;/ As I am woman,—now alas the day!—/What thriftless sighs shall poor Olivia breathe!/O time! thou must untangle this, not I;/ It is too hard a knot for me to untie!*
>
> Viola, *Twelfth Night:* (2.2.37-40).

*Twelfth Night* opens with traditional male and female characters ostensibly defined by appropriate social roles. Orsino's effeminate, or submissive, behaviors appear in his first words. He orders an "excess" (1.1.2) of music to feed his desires, but moments later cries, "Enough, no more" (1.1.8). This dramatic indecisiveness is traditionally associated with the feminine; it is definitely not the behavior one would expect from a Duke. Twelve lines later, we find that Orsino's melancholy mood stems from his desire for Olivia. But it is not the usual male entreaty, but a pining plea for freedom from the pain of his love. Orsino says, "O, when mine eyes did see Olivia first/ Methought she purged the air of pestilence;/ That instant was I turned into a hart" (1.1.18-21). Orsino virtually begs for release from the emotions that control him.

Scene 2 shifts to the ocean shore where Viola, her captain, and several sailors have been cast ashore after a violent storm that Viola from her brother, Sebastian. It is here, in this alternate realm, destabilized by time and space, that Viola recreates herself by engaging the Captain in her plan for survival in this unknown to her, alternate world of Illyria:

> I prithee, and I'll pay thee bounteously,
>
> Conceal me what I am, and be my aid

For such disguise as haply shall become
The form of my intent. I'll serve this duke:
Thou shall present me as an eunuch to him:
It may be worth thy pains; for I can sing
And speak to him in many sorts of music
That will allow me very worth his service.
What else may hap to time I will commit;
Only shape thou thy silence to my wit. (1.2. 52-61)

With the Captain's help, Viola changes herself into an image of her brother, calling herself Cesario. She makes her way to Illyria to find the Duke and begin a life destabilized by time, space, and a gender transition. When she arrives, she finds the Duke torn by his emotions.

Unable to escape his feelings, Orsino seeks remedy for his pain, yet he does not venture outside of the safety of his private power structure to go to Olivia himself, but sends Cesario beyond the walls to, "unfold the passion of [his] love" (1.5.23). This reversal of roles places Orsino in the feminine domain of private space while Cesario ventures into the masculine domain: the public sphere. Orsino is unhappily trapped in his constructed male role, while Cesario has assumed her new gender position with little problem.

In contrast to Olivia, who has sworn seven years of mourning, Viola spends only a few moments grieving the loss of her brother before she decides to embrace her new freedom as an emancipated woman and seek her fortune in Illyria. Dressed as a man, she

quickly finds success in her new position, becoming a favorite of Orsino. Clearly in contrast with Olivia and Orsino who operate in the private sphere, Cesario can only be associated with the masculine domain of the public world. In the short time she is in Illyria, she has contact with virtually everyone from both houses as well as those, like Antonio, who originate from elsewhere.

While wooing Olivia for Orsino, Cesario finds that the woman, instead of considering Orsino, has designs on her. Olivia succumbs not only to Cesario's wit and charm, but also to her masculine ability to control their conversations: After only a few moments of "gentlemanly" politeness, Cesario charges that Olivia has treated her discourteously and that she encourages rude behavior in return, saying, "The rudeness that hath appeared in me have I learned/ from my entertainment" (1.5.188-89). Finding attraction in Ceasario's willingness to control the meeting, Olivia empties the room so they can be alone (1.5.193). Olivia, instantaneously captured by the power dynamic, complies with Cesario's request to see her face (1.5.202). Olivia flirts with some aggressiveness, believing she has affected Cesario with her beauty, but again Cesario easily regains control of the conversation in her own dominating but flirtatious way: "I see you what you are, you are too proud,/ But if you were the devil, you are fair" (1.5.219-220). The power dynamic fuels the interaction of the two women emphasizing the heterogendered attraction instead of the heterosexual.

The affection and attraction these two have for each other shows through the attempts Cesario makes at wooing Olivia for Orsino. Olivia does not resist her words, but encourages them. When Cesario tells Olivia that if she were her master she could not

make sense of her denial of love, Olivia asks her: "Why, what would you?" (1.5.236). Cesario responds with a long courting call far from the part she plays for Orsino telling Olivia she would: "Make [. . .] a willow cabin at [her] gate/ And call upon [her] soul within the house,/ Write loyal cantons of contemned love,/And sing them loud even in the dead of night" (1.5.237-40). Charles refers to these lines as Cesario "[becoming]—a more eloquent, persuasive—man than the man she represents," because it is here that Olivia "catches the plague of lovesickness" (131). This is indeed a moment of affection played between them, but it is not persuasion that seduces Olivia but the dominant qualities of Cesario's character, the decisive claims of her seductive power. Here, Shakespeare exposes heterosexuality as a construct, asserting that the lure might as easily be based on a non-heterosexual dynamic. The heterogendered tension between Cesario and Olivia flourishes because with the sex confusion and the gender fluidity, they are free from the restrictions of compulsory heterosexuality.

Cesario's relationship with Orsino is also based on her dominance over the naturally submissive Orsino. Cesario, willing to embrace the world, moves about freely while Orsino stays house bound waiting for word on his future. Because they establish their relationship as two men, the natural hierarchical positioning between sexes is suspended. They have only the class issue to negotiate. Throughout the play, Cesario advises Orsino, causing him to note that "Thou [Cesario] dost speak masterly"(2.4.31). Cesario is most obviously Orsino's counselor when Orsino insists that Cesario return to Olivia's house. Cesario responds by trying to teach him that he must accept that she cannot love him. When Orsino says he cannot abide by that answer, Cesario says firmly:

"Sooth, but you must" (2.4.87). Even the one scene that begins to look like Orsino has taken control twists toward the dominant personality traits of Cesario. In act 5 Orsino, Olivia and Cesario find themselves together on the day of the wedding between the perceived Cesario, Sebastian, and Olivia. When Olivia comes to fetch Cesario and professes her love for him (Cesario), Orsino becomes enraged, threatening to "Kill what I love" (5.1.115), meaning Cesario. It is indeed Cesario who maintains control and offers the traditionally masculine deed of dying for one she loves: "And I most jocund, apt, and willingly/ To do you rest a thousand deaths would die" (5.1.128-29).

Because of the social stigma attached to homoeroticism[12], Orsino's desire for Cesario is outside of the bounds of acceptable. Orsino, even as he sends Cesario to woo Olivia, verbalizes his attraction to her. As Charles asserts, many critics including "Bruce Smith and Pequigney have commented upon the homoerotic overtones of Orsino's sudden infatuation with his new domestic servant to whom he 'unclasps . . . the book even of [his] secret soul,' delighting in Cesario's 'smooth and rubious' lips (1.4.31)" (Charles 134). The sexual dynamic in the relationship between Orsino and Cesario mirrors the one between Cesario and Olivia in that the sex of Cesario is masked, but it

[12] Evidence of homoeroticism within the early modern domestic sphere has been provided by several methodologically diverse studies: Alan Bray, Homosexuality in Renaissance England (London: Gay Men's Press, 1982), 44-51; Bruce R. Smith, Homosexual Desire in Shakespeare's England: A Cultural Poetics (Chicago and London: U of Chicago P, 1991), 82-88; Gregory W. Bredbeck, Sodomy and Interpretation: Marlowe to Milton (Ithaca, NY, and London: Cornell UP, 1991), 115-34; Bredbeck, "Sodomesticity," lecture delivered at the 1992 annual meeting of the Modern Language Association, New York City; Richard Rambuss, "The Secretary's Study: The Secret Designs of The Shepheardes Calender," ELH 59 (1992): 313-35, esp. 318-21; Jonathan Goldberg, Sodometries: Renaissance Texts, Modern Sexualities (Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 1992), 123-43. See also the following essays in Erotic Politics: Desire on the Renaissance stage, Susan Zimmerman, ed. (New York and London: Routledge, 1992): Valerie Traub, "The (in)significance of 'lesbian' desire in early modern England," 150-69, esp. 158-65; Lisa Jardine, "Twins and travesties: Gender, dependency and sexual availability in Twelfth Night," 27-38; and Jean E. Howard, "Sex and social conflict: The erotics of The Roaring Girl," 170-90, esp. 174-79. (Di Gangi 269)

differs in that it is not supported by the heterosexual construct; therefore, their relationship proceeds in a much more subversive way. While Cesario is obviously always aware that she is female, even the pretense of being male seems to hold her into the construct of what is at that point only a perceived heterosexual dynamic. She seems more willing to engage in flirtatious behavior with Olivia than with Orsino because of the way others will perceive those relationships, including Olivia and Orsino and, seemingly, herself.

Sebastian and Antonio represent a third combination through which to explore the D/s attraction. Unlike the lesbian but perceived heterosexual pairing from which Olivia and Cesario benefit, or the seemingly homosexual but actually heterosexual match of Orsino and Cesario, Sebastian and Antonio represent the possibility of a true homosexual encounter. Shakespeare has not missed the opportunity to add the homoerotic component paired with the hetero-gendered factor. Antonio clearly has intense feelings for Sebastian. By referring once again to Casey Charles this point can be substantially supported. Charles points to the "Metaphors of adoration, devotion, and passionate oblation [that] saturate the heated but highly stylized rhetorical interactions between Sebastian [. . . ] and Antonio" (136). Additionally, Charles uses several specific quotations to support the homosexual attraction, citing Antonio's rescue of Sebastian from the sea and his declared "love without retention or restraint/ All his in dedication" (5.1.75-76). Charles also stresses that after three months alone with Sebastian, Antonio is prepared to follow him into Illyria even though he knows his life and liberty will be in danger, give Sebastian all his money, and to intervene in the conflict between the perceived Sebastian (Cesario) and

his attacker (136). But, Charles also points to Antonio as the most traditionally masculine character in the play because, as she says, he is, "aggressive, bold, eloquent, faithful, [and] uncompromising" (137), which should point to a dominant force; Yet, while Antonio displays characteristics of masculinity, it is through his relational dynamic with Sebastian that his submissive gender is exposed.

Beginning with Sebastian's rescue from the sea, Antonio plays a submissive second to Sebastian who comes to Illyria as a traveler, the more public figure of the two, while Antonio occupies his comparatively private space. And while it is true that Antonio pulls Sebastian from the "sea's enrag'd and foamy mouth" (5.1.71), Sebastian has already saved himself from the wreck, the storm and the sea. The captain reports that he saw Sebastian "Most provident in peril, bind himself—/[. . .]To a strong mast that lived upon the sea,/ Where [. . . ] [he] saw him hold acquaintance with the waves/ so long as [he] could see" (1.2.11-16). Surely then Antonio has not saved him but rather pulled him from the water and then spent three months nurturing him—a trait most often associated with the feminine or submissive role. Antonio also occupies the subordinate role in two other major aspects of the relationship: first he turns over control of the finances to Sebastian—a sure sign of his willingness to be dependent on him, and secondly, he follows Sebastian into the town of Illyria, once again choosing the submissive role. While Charles points to proof of Antonio's masculinity in his willingness to risk himself in an effort to save Sebastian in the conflict with Sir Andrew Aguecheek and Toby Belch, the audience later sees Sebastian successfully dispatch them with ease, even causing them to run to Olivia and complain of the wounds he had caused them. While Antonio exhibits strong traits

and evidences courage, in his relationship with Sebastian, he clearly relaxes into a subordinate position.

When Sebastian comes upon Olivia, she is as taken with him as she is with Cesario because the twins not only resemble each other exactly, but both possess the dominant gender trait. The relational dynamic is quickly thrust into the D/s model because it is that standard on which the relationship between Cesario and Olivia is built. Sebastian, instantly satisfied that Olivia is the type of woman with whom he can relate, finds immediate sexual tension based on his assumption of his sister's role and Olivia's responses to him. Even in his confusion over the mistaken identity, Sebastian has wit enough to wait and see what transpires. Once at Olivia's, he ponders his situation and his luck, but importantly notes that all must be aligned or "She could not sway her house" (4.3.17). Olivia is once again cast as the ruler of only her private world. Sebastian is satisfied that she will balance the scale for him as he will for her. Hence, the partnership becomes stable.

After all of the possible combinations are assessed, Shakespeare casts aside Orsino and Olivia as inappropriate partners even though they are heterosexual because the dominant/ submissive model is not in effect. In fact, Olivia is so sure that they are not fit for each other that she says twice in a row: "I cannot love him" (1.5.226,231) She does not say she does not love him, but that she *cannot*—that in effect this love is not possible as it is not a hetero-gendered model. Cesario and Olivia, despite the hetero-gendered component, are discarded because their homoeroticism is unacceptable; the same happens to the Sebastian/Antonio model. Although both could work within the D/s

paradigm, they cannot survive the compulsory heterosexuality edict put in force by social expectation. The surviving pairs are the only options that fit both the visible criteria of heterosexuality and the invisible criteria of the D/s gender dynamic. Cesario and Orsino, although paired as heterosexuals, have the potential of operating in a gender different relationship. Because of social pressure however, it is likely that when Cesario reclaims her "woman's weeds" she shall be cast back into at least a superficial role of submissiveness, yet the couple's sexual energy may well include some exchange of power in the relationship. Finally, Olivia and Sebastian model the traditional "norm" of a heterosexual couple with dominant and submissive tendencies attached to the coordinating masculine and feminine genders.

Shakespeare's presentation of sex, gender and orientation chaos in *Twelfth Night* generates many questions about attractions, sex, gender and appearance. Clearly, because of the social and religious implications of immorality, people fear that if there is not a clear definition of sex, they will suffer some inappropriate sexual stimuli and fall from grace. Clothing is a major component of this support system and has been reinforced as a social definer of acceptable presentation throughout history. Fortunately, in contemporary society clothing styles and appropriations more regularly reflect personality or experimentation with personality, although it cannot be denied that the same stereotypes about sex, gender, orientation, and clothing still exist. It may be that, without restrictions, clothing would be the extension of the mind's perception of the self and might more accurately reflect the gender of a person—masculine, feminine; dominant, submissive; butch, femme or whichever form it takes—than sex does.

*And then he drew a dial from his poke,/ And, looking on it with lack-lustre eye,/ Says very wisely, 'It is ten o'clock:/ Thus we may see,' quoth he, 'how the world wags:/ 'Tis but an hour ago since it was nine,/ And after one hour more 'twill be eleven;/ And so, from hour to hour, we ripe and ripe,/ And then, from hour to hour, we rot and rot;/ And thereby hangs a tale.' When I did hear/ The motley fool thus moral on the time,/ My lungs began to crow like chanticleer,/ That fools should be so deep-contemplative,/ And I did laugh sans intermission/An hour by his dial. O noble fool!/ A worthy fool! Motley's the only wear.*

Jaques, *As You Like It*: Act 2 Scene 7

Shakespeare enjoyed the opportunity to consider gender roles as performance, knowing that men would assume women's roles in his works. He experienced gender transformation with each female character he created; moreover, he seemed to delight in creating characters where this gender transformation would find multiple manifestations. In *As You Like It,* Rosalind, the daughter of a recently banished duke, chooses to join her father in his exile. While she ventures into the unknown with both her cousin, Celia, and the court fool, Touchstone, she elects to disguise herself as a young man to ensure the safety of the group. Though Rosalind's male disguise is initially a means of survival, it later serves more interesting functions. Dressed as Ganymede[13], Rosalind stumbles upon her own suitor, Orlando, and offers him counsel in his love affairs. She acts the part of his "Rosalind" by playing herself as a woman. As Ganymede/ Rosalind leads Orlando through his love lessons, she is approached by a young woman who professes her love to her. Like Cesario is caught between Orsino and Olivia, Ganymede/Rosalind stands between the man who says he loves her but cannot recognize her even as she stands in for her female self, and a woman who professes heterosexual desire, but who is irresistibly

[13] Much has been said of the connections between *AYLI* and mythological story of Jupiter and Ganymede, Jupiter's young male lover. For my purpose here, I point to the homoerotic implications in Rosalind's choice of the name Ganymede. For a more complete discussion of myth in *AYLI,* see DiGangi.

drawn to a woman posing as a man. Of course, like *Twelfth Night*, *As You Like It* ends with Ganymede/Rosalind's reveal and all partnerships appropriately reconciled; Orlando and Rosalind are reunited; Phoebe, having learned of her mistake, runs back to her heterosexual option, Sylvius; and the Duke and his brother reclaim their relationship and their kingdom. All is right with the world. But, is it unchanged?

In *As You Like It,* Shakespeare illustrates how easily a woman, Rosalind, can pass as a man, Ganymede, and, like in *Twelfth Night*, he also shows how flimsy the construction of heterosexual attraction is by having the gender queer woman be the object of another woman's passion. He alludes to same-sex love with both Rosalind and Celia and Ganymede and Orlando. Moreover, Shakespeare shows how much people depend on classifications like the binaries in sexual orientation and gender to choose and organize relationships by revealing a space that divulges a dimension that belongs to gender, sex, and orientation fluidity. Finally, he destabilizes gender by exposing it as constructed and allowing an exploration of the confines set by this system of classifying people, ultimately undermining the contention that gender and sex correspondence is the only normal expression of identity.

Early in the play Shakespeare introduces the cousins Rosalind and Celia as one in "the love / Which teacheth thee that thou and I am one" (1.3.92-93). Their love seemingly surpasses Renaissance friendship; Celia speaks to Rosalind as a lover: "I pray thee, Rosalind, sweet my coz, be merry" (1.2.1). She defends Rosalind to her father. Celia says of herself and Rosalind, "We still have slept together, / Rose at an instant, learned, played, eat together, / And whereso'er we went, like Juno's swans, / Still we went

coupled and inseparable" (1.3.69-72). But she sees that her love may not be as passionate from Rosalind: "Herein I see thou lovest me not with the full weight that I love thee"; (1.2.6-7.). But the love of Celia for Rosalind is not confined to Celia's perspective. The courtier Le Beau proclaims that their "loves / Are dearer than the natural bond of sisters" (1.2.253-54). These remarks remand their love to a space beyond the traditionally "sisterly" love and into the realm of the romantic.

The allusion to same sex attraction extends to the homosexual when Orlando meets Rosalind disguised as Ganymede—a "pretty youth" (3.2.306), a "Fair youth" (3.2.351)—and tells him/her of his incurable love for Rosalind (3.2.335). Rosalind/Ganymede tells a story in which the boy Ganymede was once loved by a man who treated him as his mistress:

> He was to imagine me
> his love, his mistress, and I set him every day to
> woo me. At which time would I, being but a moonish
> youth, grieve, be effeminate, changeable, longing
> and liking, proud, fantastical, apish, shallow,
> inconstant, full of tears, full of smiles, for every
> passion something and for no passion truly any
> thing, as boys and women are for the most part
> cattle of his color. Would now like him, now loathe
> him; then entertain him, then forswear him; now weep
> for him, then spit at him; that I drave my suitor

> from his mad humor of love to a living humor of
> madness, which was to foswear the full stream of
> the world and to live in a nook merely monastic. (3.2. 371-83)

Shakespeare has set the scene with a male actor, disguised as girl and passing as a boy, telling of a past, seemingly homosexual, adventure. He then solicits the favors of Orlando, saying "I would cure you if you would but call me Rosalind and come every day to my cote and woo me" (3.2.388-89). Orlando consents; the partners in the queer couple each play their parts, blending genders and merging sexual desires.

The construction of gender is exposed because Orlando simply believes that Rosalind/Ganymede is male, even though he knows Rosalind as a woman. He sees only the masculinity that Rosalind/Ganymede offers as herself. Without the layers of constructed femininity, Rosalind is so believable as a male, that Orlando cannot imagine her as a woman even when she poses as herself. This simple trope of cross-dressing a character illustrates the dependence people have on what they perceive as the fixedness of gender and sex. Orlando does not consider that he could be fooled into believing that the stable traits of biological sex could be manipulated to blind him to the truth. Orlando is unable to determine not only the biological sex of a person, but of a person he has known to be female. Shakespeare shows the fluidity of traits commonly attributed to sex and gender. By assuming the dress and manners of a male person, Rosalind/Ganymede is able to secure safety, find opportunity, and enjoy the ruse of fooling Orlando.

Beyond presenting the fluidity of sex and gender, Shakespeare uses Rosalind's transformation to show the construction of heterosexuality. Posed as the man Ganymede,

Rosalind not only lures Orlando into a superficially homosexual relationship, but attracts Phebe into what can now be acknowledged literally as s lesbian attraction. Phebe falls so instantly in love that she swears love even as she is "chid." In a letter to Ganymede/Rosalind carried by Sylvius, the man who loves her, she says,

> If the scorn of your bright eyne
> Have power to raise such love in mine,
> Alack, in me what strange effect
> Would they work in mild aspect!
> Whiles you chid me, I did love;
> How then might your prayers move!
> He that brings this love to thee
> Little knows this love in me:
> And by him seal up thy mind;
> Whether that thy youth and kind
> Will the faithful offer take
> Of me and all that I can make;
> Or else by him my love deny,
> And then I'll study how to die. (4.3. 50-63)

The man who loves her, she says, has never known love like this from her. She claims that death is her only choice if Ganymede does not want her. Sylvius, Phebe's suitor, defines love: "It is to be all made of sighs and tears (5.2.78); [. . .] It is to be all made of faith and service (5.2.83); [. . .] It is to be all made of fantasy,/ All made of passion and

all made of wishes,/ All adoration, duty, and observance,/ All humbleness, all patience and impatience,/ All purity, all trial, all observance;" (5.2.88-92). He claims that this is how he feels about Phebe, but Phebe claims these as her feelings for Ganymede/Rosalind.

Even though Ganymede/Rosalind works to dissuade her from her quest, Phebe is undaunted. That magic that creates love at first sight has spilled onto Phebe, and she is ready to commit to the masculinely gendered and disguised Rosalind. But, attraction, it seems, is not based on character or personality or even looks, Shakespeare shows, as he has Ganymede declare to Phoebe, "I would love you, if I could. [. . .] I will marry you, if ever I marry woman." The next day when Ganymede reveals herself as Rosalind, all of the magic of love disappears and Phebe, like Olivia in *Twelfth Night,* consents to marry a man for whom she has no feelings. As is the case with Sebastian and Olivia, Shakespeare shows the superficiality of compulsory heterosexuality.

Both of these Shakespearian dramas reveal the construction of those aspects of life many still assume to be ultimate truths. Organizers of compulsive heterosexuality, including behavior, attitudes, and clothing, work to align biological sex, gender expression, and sexual orientation. By fortifying behavior patterns that force male and female sexed people to assume roles based on sex, heterosexual norms are fixed and gender is constructed. By undoing the connection between sex and gender, we permit identity to find its own level in its own time. Gender was built from social roles and lawful edicts about behavior and clothing of the Renaissance era, and gender, in turn, helps hold together the system that presses order on our world. And that belief has not

significantly changed by the time that Virginia Woolf comes to write her own four-hundred-year-long, biographical account of a Renaissance fellow named Orlando.

> *An hour, once it lodges in the queer element of the human spirit, may be stretched to fifty or a hundred times its clock length; on the other hand, an hour may be accurately represented on the timepiece of the mind by one second. This extraordinary discrepancy between time on the clock and time in the mind is less known than it should be and deserves fuller investigation.*
>
> --Virginia Woolf *Orlando*

In Shakespeare's *As You Like It*, the play from which Virginia Woolf draws inspiration for her character Orlando, the clown Touchstone tells Jaques and Duke Senior that there is "much virtue in If" (5.4.102). Anatomizing dueling, the clown concludes that "If is the only peacemaker," the only word able to make sworn brothers of engaged enemies. "If" is the only peacemaker because "if" is hypothetical. "If" expands the boundaries of the real into the conditional and by extension, broadens the promise of maintaining personal virtue, thus reducing the need for confrontation. "If" functions similarly in other situations, too, if only to calm the dissonance between perceived and potential realities. For example, a common trope in popular cinema (and narrative) is to wonder, with respect to the past, "what if?" The film *Back to the Future* indulges the desire to change the past, the present, and the future. The protagonist wonders what would have changed if his intelligent but nerdy father had been able to stand up to the bullies in high school. A different twist on this trope occurs in *Peggy Sue Got Married,* where the heroine is offered the chance to redo her life but chooses not to do so. Yet another variation of the trope occurs in the German film, *Run Lola Run*, in which plot

veers violently in three directions depending on the smallest of actions, choices, and obfuscations. Space and life both change by reworking one moment in time, by having better timing.

While indulging our fantasies about fate, chance, and control, these films do not significantly undermine our conventional understandings of the potentiality of time. Surely, they suggest time as convertible and support an achievable space outside of our traditional experience; still, they function within a fantasy that allows us to understand and accept these structures of time as feasible under certain conditions. But, let us consider yet another situation that reorganizes the concept of time: you meet a woman at a high school reunion 35 years after last seeing her. Sharing drinks, you begin to talk; later, you agree to meet. Some weeks later, over dinner and wine, a peculiar feeling arises during the conversation, a pleasurable one, that runs beyond "what if." You see her young body beneath her softer and falling skin; you see her youthful walk inside a stronger more confident walk; you talk excitedly in ways that instantly recall conversations three decades old. You are, and she is, in that moment, not in conventional time. You are then *and* you are now, and she is too; and time is neither then nor now but real: the experience of this moment is simultaneously both a conflation of all time and outside of all time. This rupture of linear time, this creation of a conflated reality, is what Woolf achieves in *Orlando* when she merges moments and experiences to extend time, when she folds it, in essence, like a wormhole in space, undoing ideas of time as an organizer of the world and using it instead to illustrate how collapsing time liberates people from the restrictions of society, including those targeting hierarchy, gender roles,

and sexual orientation. Through creating an historical narrative, Woolf uses the concept of time to resist an image of "ultimate truth," and she ruptures time to create a fantasy space where readers can suspend their obligation to what is "normal," to see that absolute acceptance of social constructs, both past and present, limits both physical and conceptual opportunity and reality.

Several theoretical arguments in physics and philosophy support Woolf's insight into the social construction of time. John Ellis McTaggart, in his 1908 essay "The Unreality of Time," acknowledges the seeming paradox in calling time unreal (456); nevertheless, he argues that time is indeed only illusory. To establish the constructedness of time, McTaggart analyzes its traditional arrangements, working through three generally recognized systems: one of order, one of events, and one of direction.[14] McTaggart concludes that we tend to assume as real a system of time based on order, one that arises from distinctions in our personal experiences. Perceptions of the moment, reflections of past perceptions, and anticipation of future perceptions work together to form different personal views of time even among people experiencing virtually the same reality; this is what McTaggart calls a "specious present," and it illustrates how moments of separation between past and present vary from individual to individual.[15]

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[14] McTaggart presents two general arrangements of time. In one, series A, he offers a system in which moments are categorized as either earlier or later. In the second system, series B, he offers a temporary condition of events defined as happening in the Past, Present, or Future. Because the first arrangement, series A, offers change, at least in terms of distance from the present, it is "essential to the nature of time." McTaggart also identifies a Series C, which involves order but not direction. Series C has no temporal indications and suggests no change; however, if direction is added (series A) to a list of ordered events, the "change that belongs to the series itself" emerges.

[15] McTaggart says that his conclusions about the unreality of time might be overturned by suggesting that Time, like truth or goodness, is ultimate, but he points out that the contradiction inherent in the definition of time demands its rejection from an ultimate position .

Other theoretical proposals support Mctaggart's claim. As early as 1905, Albert Einstein suggested that time be defined as "judgments of simultaneous events," and he asserted "that we cannot attach any absolute signification to the concept of simultaneity, but that two events which, viewed from a system of co-ordinates, are simultaneous, can no longer be looked upon as simultaneous events when envisaged from a system which is in motion relatively to that system" (**"**On the Electrondynamics of Moving Bodies"). Addressing the nature of time, Einstein soon after proposes 'eternalism,'[16] and establishes a tenseless theory and therefore an untensed reality.[17] The theory of eternalism avows, "that there are no significant ontological differences among present, past, and future because the differences are merely subjective" (Dowden). Consequently, according to Einstein, multiple experiences can be conflated to create a single event, and people can exist simultaneously within several realms. Various other arguments of which Woolf was most certainly aware, speak to the constructed nature of time. The presentist theory[18] avows that only the present is real, while the 'Block Universe Theory'[19], a term coined by

[16] "Eternalism […] says that objects from both the past and the future exist just as much as present objects. According to Eternalism, non-present objects like Socrates and future Martian outposts exist right now, even though they are not currently present. We may not be able to see them at the moment, on this view, and they may not be in the same space-time vicinity that we find ourselves in right now, but they should nevertheless be on the list of all existing things." See "Time." *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy.*

[17] Einstein's belief in the conflation of time was expressed in a letter to the family of his friend Michel Besso after his death (1955). Einstein wrote that it was inconsequential that Besso died before him, "for us physicists believe the separation between past, present, and future is only an illusion, although a convincing one." See Einstein, A. Letter to Michel Besso's Family.

[18] According to Bourne, multiple versions of the presentist theory were advocated as early as 1915. See Craig Bourne's *A Future for Presentism.* Oxford: Oxford UP, 2006.

[19] "The Growing Universe Theory," [suggests] the universe is always increasing in size, as more and more [events] are added on to the front end (temporally speaking)." See "Time." *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy.*

William James[20] (Dowden), claims that the past and present are both real, but the future is not yet real. All of these notions of time make apparent that it is more than a clicking clock hand: Time functions as an organizing agent. It serves to establish systems, assure coordination of events, and plan life.

These theories of time as a constructed reality influenced the society of Virginia Woolf., a society that was collapsing under the stresses of a dynamic world: Einstein's ideas of relativity and Darwin's *Origin of the Species*, the sophisticated savagery of WWI, Freud's ideas of the subconscious, and changing manners and morals all pushed away from traditional Victorian thoughts and beliefs. Innovative strategies in Woolf's writing style suggested an end to both the idea of the conventional narrative and ultimate, fixed truths concerning rules of essential behavior and norms. Using an internal and subjective presentation of personal experience, Virginia Woolf flourished in refining and employing the stream of consciousness style that Henry James, Marcel Proust, and James Joyce had introduced to the literary world. Particularly, Woolf championed a technique she discovered as she planned for her novel *Mrs. Dalloway*, 1925. She says in her *Writer's Diary* that she "digs out beautiful caves behind [her] characters" (59), a process she calls "tunnelling," wherein she tells the past by installments, interspersing those moments with the present to create a scenario that brings a greater understanding to an experience that is informed by past connections or relations. This is her "prime discovery" in seeking new modern ways to narrate stories. This tunneling brings Woolf closer to personal "truths" by connecting her to her character's memories as they manifest in the present. But more

[20] William James was Henry James's brother. Henry James, as a close personal friend of Leslie Stephen, was an influence on Virginia Woolf.

than that, this technique echoes contemporary ideas about time. Her conflation of time through connecting moments in a "tunnel" reflects in particular Einstein's ideas about both the plausibility of integrating multiple experiences to create complex, single events and people existing simultaneously within several realms

In *Orlando*, the manor itself reflects Woolf's effort to establish a relationship with both traditional time and conventionality. Carefully constructed, Orlando's home, to which s/he regularly retreats throughout his/her adventures, is layered with time-evoking images that subconsciously link conventional time to security. Its 365 bedrooms and 52 sets of stairs provide a form of objective time measurement, a calendarian structure parallel to clock time, for both Orlando and the reader[21], yet, though Woolf relies on these standard time structures to soothe a largely traditionalist audience, she alternatively illustrates how such conventions are flawed and limited in their construction:

> Orlando [. . .] noticed a small cloud gathered behind the dome of St. Paul's. As the stroke sounded, the cloud increased, and she saw it darken and spread with extraordinary speed. [. . .] With the twelfth stroke of midnight, the darkness was complete. All was dark; all was doubt; all was confusion. The Eighteenth century was over; the Nineteenth century had begun. (144)

Her description of the cloudy darkness covering the sky suggests the insidious nature of those constructions, like time, that hold society and culture in place and, likewise, orient Orlando's reality. And, while in a strictly calendarian sense, of course, the eighteenth

[21] Orlando's house is based on the Knole estate where Vita Sackville-West grew up: it does indeed have 365 bedrooms and 52 sets of stairs. Yet, I maintain that Woolf capitalizes on this organizer of time by including it in the description of the manor.

century does indeed change into the nineteenth from one second to the next, the cultural constellations that are allied with these eras respectively quite obviously do not change in an instant. Woolf's parody of date-fetishising historiography works by conflating cultural and date-time changes. Her instant transition from one century to the next subverts the notion that given, separate moments delineate eras, centuries, and even behaviors.

Here, perhaps it would be helpful to briefly recount the queer history of Woolf's protagonist. Orlando is born an English nobleman during Elizabeth I's reign. He is a descendant of fighting men, but is himself a poet. He becomes a courtier, is caressed and loved by a queen, abandoned by a gender-ambiguous lover, and made an ambassador to Constantinople by Charles II. He falls asleep for a week to awaken as a woman, one who soon seeks respite from society by living with the relatively androgynous gypsies. Eventually, she returns to England to attempt her feminine gender role in Queen Anne's court. Failing to find personal satisfaction, she cross-dresses, engages with prostitutes, and finally, at the age of 36, falls in love, and finds peace in mutual androgyny, with Shel. Unconventionality invades Orlando's biography, most obviously in the changing of sexes, but also notable is that unlike in Judith Halberstam's list of heterosexual makers,[22] neither birth nor death, which are part of a usual biography, are part of this text. Orlando seems to have always been and be destined to always be.

By offering a temporal variation of Orlando's 400-year long life, conflating past, present, and future to do so, Woolf determines a reality outside of conventional time. She clearly expresses this more fluid concept of time near the end of the novel when she

[22] See Halberstam, Judith. *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives*. New York: New York UP, 2005.

collapses it into a single moment, showing Orlando composed of all of the events s/he has experienced, "for [Orlando] had a great variety of selves to call upon, far more than [Woolf is] able to find room for, since a biography is considered complete if it merely accounts for six or seven selves, whereas a person may well have as many thousand" (200-01). The relationship between Time and individuality is reflected in both the movement away from Time as an ultimate concept, that is an "ultimate generality whence proceed all determinate forms of conceptual being [in which every] term of every definition presupposes this ultimate summum genus"[23] (Gibson), and in the need for individuality to be pursued and developed outside of perceived fixed and ordered life stations. Woolf thus extends possibilities for transformation to more obscure breeds of non-conformity, allowing the individual to slip through new rents in a shifting social fabric.

Woolf renders the construct of time, then, as a concept to be interpreted in multiple ways: It can mark specific events, like those Halberstam[24] identifies as aligning a series of moments that traditionally mark and support heterosexual life, namely, birth, marriage, reproduction, and death. [25] While there are moments of traditional markers of time— Orlando's son is "safely delivered [. . .] on Thursday, March the 20th, at three o'clock in the morning" (192)—more often Woolf's queer construct of time pushes against these invented boundaries. To illustrate this unconventional temporal design, she

[23] Summum genus [L.] (Logic), the highest genus; a genus which can not be classed as a species, as being.

[24] See Halberstam, Judith. *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives*. New York: New York UP, 2005.

[25] For a more detailed explanation of this idea, see Halberstam, Judith. *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives*. New York: New York UP, 2005.

allows the biographer to refer to a future Orlando has not yet experienced. The future is conflated with its past as in this comparison where Woolf claims that "[Orlando's] arms sang and twanged as the telegraph wires *would be* singing and twanging in twenty years or so" (153 my emphasis).

With this non-traditional ordering of time, Woolf not only challenges our customary understanding of it but also reveals our passive compliance to the norms that time reinforces. For example, Orlando's failed relationship with Sasha is characterized in terms of multiple clocks:

> Suddenly, with an awful and ominous voice, a voice full of horror and alarm which raised every hair of anguish in Orlando's soul, St. Paul's struck, the first stroke of midnight. Four times more it struck remorselessly, With the superstition of a lover, Orlando had made out that it was on the sixth stroke that she would come. But the sixth stroke echoed away, and the seventh came and the eighth, and to his apprehensive mind they seemed notes first heralding and then proclaiming death and disaster. When the twelfth struck he knew that his doom was sealed. It was useless for the rational part of him to reason; she might be prevented; she might have missed her way. The passionate and feeling heart of Orlando knew the truth. Other clocks struck, jangling one after another. The whole world seemed to ring with the news of her deceit and his derision. (32-33)

The failure of the relationship, one that is surely queer in that Sasha is both foreign and androgynous, is juxtaposed with the constancy of time and compared to the rhythmic,

accepted patterns of English culture and society. The striking of the clock is a public marker of a socially constructed organization of time, and Orlando reads the striking of the clock as a sign pertaining to his personal relationship with Sasha. The heterosexual, Christian (the bells are St Paul's) construct vindicates the failure of the relationship with each stroke of the clock, a sound that both marks the obeisance to social hierarchy and makes the public announcement of Sasha's "deceit and [Orlando's] derision" (33). This public degradation is the price paid for non-conformity.

Woolf challenges other constructs like Time in much the same way. She manages Orlando's sex-change as a tool to present gender as disconnected from biological sex. By reframing that space with unpredictable temporalities, Woolf undermines the construct of necessary congruencies, particularly in terms of biological sex, gender expression, and sexual orientation. The most obvious example of this destabilization of sex as an absolute determiner of gender happens when the male Orlando falls into a deep sleep that lasts seven days, and when he awakens, he is female. This long sleep ruptures the ideas of both time and gender as fixed by making them both indefinable in the traditional sense. The rupture is a dissonance caused by the presumed reality of time, which is absent during sleep, and the realization that the absence of time has birthed a new self, a conflation of the past Orlando, the present Orlando, and the future Orlando. In this instance, this collapse of time mirrors the collapse of gender, in fact, actuates the collapse of gender, and establishes a parallel between them, reinforced when Orlando awakens in a female

body. Orlando's sex change allows her the Tiresean[26] wisdom to identify injustice, oppression, inequality, and constructed perceptions of what is "original." Her "moments of being" male, female, masculine, feminine, androgynous, and bisexual are folded into this rupture of time and revealed through its disintegration into an untensed reality.

Unmistakably, Woolf, like McTaggart, Einstein, and others, believed that Time was unreal in many of its traditional senses; moreover, during this era when most people did not question the assumed "naturalness" of particular gender traits being automatically affixed to biologically sexed bodies, she suggests that gender, too, is a social construction. In *Orlando,* Woolf creates a character that, by virtue of a dual-sexed life, can sensibly present the ways in which gender, like Time, has been constructed and the ways in which that construction is based on compulsory heterosexuality. In addition to exposing gender as constructed, Woolf underscores the marginalization of non-heterosexuals caused by a persistent belief in a gender and sex alignment based on the imitation of a perceived original of those roles. Just as Woolf demonstrates the artificiality of time through her exploitation of it throughout the text, she shows gender construction as artificial through both the transition of Orlando from male to female and the parody of drag.[27] Judith Butler's theories of gender construction and sexuality are useful in thinking about Woolf's exposure of gender roles as an oppressive, limiting construct of society. Butler argues that the construction of gender is based on a repeated social imitation of "a

[26] Tiresias was presented as both male and female in Eliot's *The Waste Land*, and as such had special insight into the thoughts and feelings of those of both sexes: "I Tiresias, though blind, throbbing between two lives /Old man with wrinkled female breasts, can see" (218-19).

[27] The movie version of *Orlando* features prominent gay icon Quentin Crisp as Queen Elizabeth I. Certainly, director Sally Potter saw the themes of drag and parody as a powerful part of the book's message.

phantasmatic ideal of heterosexual identity" ("Imitation" 313). In other words, she maintains that particular gender attributes are tied to biologically sexed bodies based on an imitation of the fantasized idea of what that behavior would model in a perfect heterosexual dynamic.[28] This same kind of internalization serves as an aspect of Orlando's character. For instance, even though "Orlando had become a woman […] in ever other respect [she] remained precisely as he had been" (Woolf 85); nevertheless, Orlando believes that she must locate female attributes in her new body, and she begins acquiring clothes, mannerisms and gestures that indicate she is a part of the femininely gendered. Woolf posits that even though gender is a construct, that construct is nonetheless reinforced by society and is therefore generally internalized as real.

The need to re-gender based on her transsexual experience sends Orlando first to spend a transition period with the Gypsies, "and the gipsy women, except in one or two important particulars, differ very little from the gipsy men"[29] (Woolf 96). But when she seeks passage back to England, Orlando considers "the penalties and the privileges of her position" (96) based on her new sex assignment. Forced to sacrifice first her male attire and then the "Turkish trousers" (98) worn by all gypsies, her costume changes again, and "for the probity of breeches she [exchanges] the seductiveness of petticoats" (141). In

[28] Specifically, Butler says, "acts and gestures, articulated and enacted desires create the illusion of an interior and organizing gender core, an illusion discursively maintained for the purposes of the regulation of sexuality within the obligatory frame of reproductive heterosexuality." Butler further asserts that the internalization of the belief of gender appropriateness can help prevent the construct from being identified and escaped: "If the 'cause' of desire, gesture, and act can be localized within the 'self' of the actor, then the political regulations and disciplinary practices which produce that ostensibly coherent gender are effectively displaced from view." For a more detailed explanation, see *Gender Trouble* 173-74.

[29] It would be an easy task here to use Orlando's interaction with the Gypsies to show how Woolf is also disrupting ideas of European civilization as necessarily more progressive than the communities of people who have values that differ from those exposed in capitalism and other Western ideals.

addition to donning her new clothes, she discovers that she must dote over her latest body in feminine ways: "[t]here's the hairdressing, [. . . ] the looking glass, [and] there's staying and lacing" (98). She also discovers that she must now embrace behavior reflective of her female status, including new rules of chastity. Butler's idea of internalized gender "naturalness," combined with the threat of social punishment reinforcing the continued "phantasmatic imitation" of heterosexualized roles encourages Orlando to welcome her new destiny[30], and she submits to the ostensible reality of the construct.

Living in English society forces Orlando to acknowledge the disparity in sex and gender differences. Simply endeavoring to walk in the "Mall," she finds herself accosted by a "little knot of vulgar people" (124). The event is disconcerting to her—"she had forgotten that ladies are not supposed to walk in public places alone" (121). Musing on the limitations of living as a woman, Orlando asks herself if it is "impossible then to go for a walk without being half-suffocated" by men seeking her attention (122). Still, she repeatedly attempts to embrace her sex and its coordinating gender by attending social events. Her last endeavor to embrace heterosexuality, encouraging Mr. Pope, finds another unhappy end (124-25). Finally, she detests it all, throwing her stockings off and forswearing a society that waits to accept her as an appropriately gendered woman. Tired of the limitations of her new identity, she chooses to cross-dress: "she opened a cupboard in which hung still many of the clothes she had worn as a young man of fashion, and

[30] Butler maintains that "the tacit collective agreement to perform, produce, and sustain discrete and polar genders as cultural fictions is obscured by the credibility of those productions—and the punishments that attend not agreeing to believe in then; the construction 'compels' our belief in its necessity and naturalness" (*Gender* 178).

from among them she chose a black velvet suit richly trimmed with Venetian lace." Orlando mitigates her sex/gender dissonance by cross-dressing, "and then she [lets] herself secretly out of doors" (137).

Obviously, the heterosexualization of gender presents problems for Orlando. While Orlando is a man, he loves women; his relationships are posed as heterosexual and are therefore acceptable. But Orlando does not remain a man, and by changing his physical body, Woolf illustrates that society expects Orlando's gender performance and sexual preferences to reflect her current biological state. In order to meet this demand, Orlando's masculine traits must be suppressed while she is costumed as a female. Moreover, her original masculine gender and sexual preference must be concealed as well, even though Orlando the woman still has the same tastes, desires, and skills that Orlando the man had cultivated: she still loves women, and "[enjoys] the love of both sexes" (141). Because, as Butler points out, the construct of gender hinges on an imitation of the heterosexual fantasy,[31] Orlando is forced to hide her physical sex under men's clothing in order to pursue female company, company that gives her sexual pleasure: the narrator says, "to feel her hanging lightly yet like a supplicant on her arm, roused in Orlando all the feelings which became a man" (Woolf 138). Orlando must embrace, or at least imitate, the social demand for gender and sex to be paired characteristics even though that means that she must mask her desire and perform

[31] "The heterosexualization of desire requires and institutes the production of discrete and asymmetrical oppositions between 'feminine' and 'masculine,' where these are understood as expressive attributes of 'male' and 'female.' The cultural matrix through which gender identity has become intelligible requires that certain kinds of 'identities' cannot 'exist'—that is, those in which gender does not follow from sex and those in which the practices of desire do not 'follow' from either sex or gender. 'Follow' in this contest is a political relation of entailment instituted by the cultural laws that establish and regulate the shape and meaning of sexuality." (Butler *Gender* 23-24)

heterosexuality. Woolf and Butler seem to work hand in hand generations apart in revealing the ways in which the construct of gender is used as an internalized philosophy that compels people to embrace it as a natural and unavoidable connection to biological sex.

Woolf's use of Orlando's transvestism satirizes social constructions. Working with Butler's theory of gender performativity, Talia Schaffer describes the destabilization of gender through excessive performance—"by parodying it." Through over-performance, a role can be exposed as an "unnatural, learned behavior" (Schaffer 35). Woolf destabilizes the supposed naturalness of gender by both overemphasizing the restrictions of gender construction and by continually assigning and underscoring which of those behaviors is appropriate based on Orlando's public persona. To this end, once Orlando finds refuge in her masculine clothes, she immediately seeks the company of the young woman. Orlando is pleased to meet her and "[sweeps] her hat off to her in the manner of a gallant paying his addresses to a lady of fashion in a public place" (Woolf 138). Schaffer uses this scene to illustrate the ways in which Orlando sees both masculinity and femininity as performances: "In a black velvet suit Orlando recollects and utilizes the performances of a nobleman [. . .] Yet, with a strange sense of disappointment, Orlando finds he can only see women's actions as performances too" (37). Here Schaffer refers to the insights generated by the narrator who says, "[h]aving been so lately a woman herself, she suspected that the girl's timidity and her hesitating answers and the very fumbling with the key in the latch were all put on to gratify her masculinity" (Woolf 138).

Butler argues that "[i]f the anatomy of the performer is already distinct from the gender of the performer, and both of those are distinct from the gender of the performance, then the performance suggests a dissonance not only between sex and performance, but sex and gender, and gender, and performance" (*Gender Trouble* 175). The female body is distinct from the gender of Orlando, and both of these, once Orlando has opted for drag, are now distinct from the gender of the performance; therefore, Orlando suggests dissonance within the concept of gender as natural. In Orlando's desire for homosocial, homoerotic, or homosexual contact, it seems as though Woolf has anticipated Butler's insight about the construction of gender: the insistence of the heterosexual binary in establishing sexual preferences. After Orlando's initial breakthrough in using drag as a tool, she becomes more fluid in establishing her own gender via clothing, finding "it convenient at this time to change frequently from one set of clothes to another" (141). Hence, Woolf's use of drag as a tool not only offers the more obvious conclusion that cross-dressing allows a person to behave as differently gendered, but she also anticipates Butler's theory that drag and gender performance supports the idea of exposing gender behavior as constructed by the imitation of "compulsory heterosexual identities" ("Imitation" 313).

Outside of the ways in which Woolf uses homosexuality to extend the gender construct as a limit to same-sex sexual freedom, and beyond the ways she demonstrates clothing as performative in maintaining that construct, is her method of caching her messages in and around a heterosexual plot. Based on her illustration of the construction of Time, Woolf establishes the contrivance of orientation through her development of

erotic attractions, the construction of a non-queer reality, and her mockery of heterosexuality. Woolf manipulates the idea of compulsory heterosexuality to create an illusion within which she can articulate intricate perceptions about the social norm. Woolf criticizes the heterosexual construct she pretends to privilege by defining those relationships as either superficial or distasteful or by illustrating them as having some component of homosexual erotica; yet her superficial definition of heterosexuality is not a comment about that sexual preference but rather a clue to the presence of a more intricately woven subtext of gender construction and same-sex relationships.

Orlando's first engagements—"[t]he names of three at least were freely coupled with his in marriage" (13)—are examples of shallow heterosexual relationships and are referred to as "of wood, of sackcloth, and of cinders" (22). Orlando the man easily recovers from all of his attractions, separating from the first so completely that he "did not much regret it when she died soon after" (13). To rid himself of the second and third, he finds trivial reasons with no more substance than "crooked teeth" (14) or boredom. Woolf's mockery of the heterosexual dynamic extends to Orlando's relationship with Sasha, which is wrought with hints of homoeroticism, indicating the flux of gender and sexual preference early in the text, before a reader is conditioned to be on the lookout for qualities that fall beyond the immediate gender classification. Orlando's first look at Sasha yields no clue to her sex as the "loose tunic and the trousers of the Russian fashion served to disguise [it]" (17); his second impression is that Sasha is a "boy" (17). Even Sasha's given name is ambiguous in that it is used for both males and females in Russia, as the diminutive of either Aleksandr or Aleksandra. Woolf's inclusion of conflicting

gender attributes in describing people with whom Orlando courts a fascination both emphasizes same sex attractions under the guise of heterosexual behavior and illustrates the cultural constraints on sexual attraction and its appropriateness in a way that is comparable to Butler's assertions. Orlando's initial response to Sasha provides additional evidence of an attraction to a masculine aspect of a female character. Orlando does not consider Sasha's sex until he remembers that if Sasha is male "all embraces [will be] out of the question." It is clear that Orlando has a romantic attraction by his response to "the extraordinary seductiveness which issued from the whole person" (17). Certainly Orlando's attraction is not colored by what Woolf seems to be emphasizing is a social construct, inherent heterosexuality. Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar support the idea that Woolf did not believe that gender and sexual preference were determined by biology: "[u]nlike Freud who [. . . ] wavered [. . .] between [. . . ] a kind of biological essentialism about gender and sexuality and [. . . ] a commitment to the idea that sex roles are basically sociocultural constructs, Woolf forthrightly declared herself on the side of cultural determinism" (325).

Beyond this innuendo of the perceived homoerotic attraction between Orlando and Sasha perches the idea of the foreigner, like the gypsy, as a different sort of "other," which both emphasizes Woolf's intention to explode social limitations and reflects the homosexual "othering" in the text. Schaffer stresses that Sasha is "a figure marked by doubleness, as she is a Russian living in England, speaking French" (31). Sasha's Russian citizenship alone disqualifies her as an acceptable partner: "Very little was known of the Muscovites. In their great beards and furred hats they sat almost silent; drinking some

black liquid which they spat out now and then upon the ice" (18). Orlando's pursuit of Sasha "outraged the Court" (21), and even Orlando worries that Sasha is "ashamed of the savage ways of her people, for he had heard that the women in Muscovy wear beards and the men are covered with fur from the waist down; that both sexes are smeared with tallow to keep the cold out, tear meat with their fingers and live in huts where an English noble would scruple to keep his cattle." (24); a relationship with her would parallel, almost, the impossible homosexual encounter to which Orlando seems to be drawn. Orlando realizes the kinds of "hardships [needing] to be overcome," and while the thought of giving up his comforts is not pleasant for him, he is so driven to have this "other" relationship that he would give up "all this and more" (Woolf 25). The attraction compels Orlando to pursue the affiliation even with the complications caused by the inherent conflict with social norms. Their relationship pushes the idea of gender construction versus natural development early in the text; this forbidden liaison, as shown in both the homoerotic and the foreign, is unmistakably outside of the social construct and therefore establishes itself as taboo. In many cases, the taboo causes social dissonance and provokes the cultural definition of appropriateness, revealing the matrix of constructed acceptability.

Orlando, in both his male and female presentations, finds himself repeatedly attracted to sexual ambiguity. He meets the transvestite Archduke, Archduchess Harriet Griselda, who, though nearly six feet tall, much older, and with "a face a yard long and staring eyes," overwhelms Orlando, who is "suddenly overcome by passion" (Woolf 70); and thus Woolf suggests the eroticism of gender fluidity for a second time. The Archduke,

like Sasha, embodies both the masculine and feminine, traits upon which Orlando seems to insist. The desire Orlando feels for the Archduchess is so powerful—"he blushed and trembled; and he was moved as he had never thought to be moved again"—that it drives him to leave the country lest he should fall prey to the Archduchess's seductiveness. This is, of course, a successful if temporary retreat from desire, as the Archduke is not the end of androgynous attraction for Orlando, and when she finally finds love as a woman, it is with another androgynous person, albeit a man, Shel. Their relationship, although technically heterosexual, is gender ambiguous. Orlando has, it seems, found a way to integrate the aspects of biological body with the characteristics of gender. Happily, both seem satisfied by the androgynous features of the other even though neither seems to want to admit to his or her own. On the heels of "'You're a woman Shel!' she cried" and "'You're a man!' he cried," comes "such a scene of protestation and demonstration as then took place since the world began" (161). Woolf suggests that even though each recognized the unconventional gender qualities they treasured in the other, neither wants to be classified outside of the definition of normal, a state of being defined and enforced by the notice Orlando receives when she is delivered "a legal document of some very impressive sort, judging by the blobs of sealing-wax, the ribbons, the oaths, and the signatures, which were all of the highest importance," which determines "indisputably, and beyond the shadow of a doubt" her sex as fixed and female (163). And, even though both Shel and Orlando have conceded to some extent to the social construct by engaging in a heterosexual relationship, Woolf makes it clear to the reader that neither partner is trapped in a socially constructed gender that completely subscribes to the rules as they

apply to matching the biologically sexed body: the narrator remarks, "and it was to each such a revelation that a woman could be as tolerant and free-spoken as a man, and a man as strange and subtle as a woman" (166).

And so ends Woolf's story of the particular, of Orlando, but here we can begin the story of the general with a reflection on Aristotle's assertions about poetry and history, about the application of this queer history of one to the queer history of many. In *Poetics*, Aristotle writes,

> poetry is a more philosophical and more serious thing than history; poetry tends to speak of universals, history of particulars. A universal is the sort of thing that a certain kind of person may well say or so in accordance with probability or necessity—this is what poetry aims at, although it assigns names [to the people]. (51b6-12)

Woolf's "poetry" serves as more than a queer biography of a single protagonist; it likewise attends to a universal queer history established by attaching to the "personage" of Orlando, probable or necessary scenarios that achieve socially accurate outcomes. Chronicles of these words and actions are otherwise unavailable to people because the history of the particular was either neglected or marginalized by the "historians" of the time. Woolf recreates the space in time for this "history" to be acknowledged through the narrative of Orlando's life. And while we surely question both the accuracy of the writer and the suggested outcomes of such a biography, this kind of merging of fiction with history to create a narrative is hardly new. The Greek writer Herodotus (484 BCE-425 BCE), generally considered "the father of history," has equally been called "the father of

lies" because his historical narratives were clearly influenced by fiction, in particular by Homer's epic poems. Herodotus extends his dependence on Homer to quoting, but he was not trying to disguise the work as his own: "he uses words that any Greek would have recognized as Homeric" (Lendering). Using narrative and narrative fiction to relay both facts and events that convey a sense of the facts has long been a technique of historians. In fact, American philosopher of history, Hayden White, goes so far as to conceptulize history as narrative, as a literary genre, and questions the claims of truth and objectivity in historical work. According to White, "historical narratives," are "manifestly [. . . ] verbal fictions, the contents of which are as much invented as found and the forms of which have more in common with their counterparts in literature than they have with those in the sciences" (82). White argues that

> histories gain part of their explanatory effect by their success in making stories out of mere chronicles; and stories in turn are made out of chronicles by an operation which [he has] elsewhere called "emplotment." And by emplotment [he means] simply the encodation of the facts contained in the chronicle as components of specific kinds of plot structures, in precisely the same way that [Northrup] Frye has suggested is the case with "fictions" in general (83).

White identifies historians as using techniques similar to Herodotus's: that is, adding a narrative voice that provides a story to hold the "facts." And, while these historical narratives explain why events happened, they are influenced by the views or assumptions of the historian. These persepectives naturally influence the "nature of causality," which

could "include individual or combined elements like race, gender, class, culture" or orientation (Munslow 10). Perspective alters "facts" in terms of how they are interpreted and conveyed, thus affecting how the truth is told and leaving out potential perspectives that both present a more accurate picture of truth and a body of people who have been denied validation and position in society.

Of course, the biography of Orlando is not a single life history but rather a conflation of fictional characters' life stories. And to achieve her role as biographer and historian, Woolf uses "narrative constructionism," a technique that philosopher of history Michael E. Hobart describes as the role of narrative writing in history. Hobart points to Jack W. Meiland as the originator of the term "constructionism" when he used it in his book *Scepticism and Historical Knowledge*, a text which examines and defends history as basically "a fable agreed upon." Meiland argues that historians **"**must be regarded as constructing or creating the past rather than as reporting the past." He endeavors to show that "objective knowledge of the past is impossible," and that history should be understood as a product of the perspective-laden conventions of historians"[32] (Hobart 43). It is within this philosophical doctrine of perspectives that Woolf creates an underrepresented queer history of a protagonist, a hero if you will, representative of the non-heterosexual minority. With her "emplotment" of fictional historical voices, those that had not been previously chronicled in either traditional accounts of events or as experiences of people or their actions, Woolf, in keeping with an historical tradition of presenting "facts," not only creates queer space in the past and therefore in the present,

[32] For more on narrative constructionism, "History and Theory 12 (1973), 290-306; for "reconstructionism," see Alan Donagan, "Realism and Historical Instrumentalism," Revue international de philosophic 111-112 (1975), 78-89.

but also ruptures history and, by extension, Time. By using this method, Woolf reveals a disconnect between the presumed reality of time and the realization that time can be reconfigured to create a moment that includes the past, present, and future. By writing a narrative biography, Woolf inserts moments of queerness into a historical past that ultimately influence both the present and the future. The inability of queer people to know a cultural history deprives them of the stability that traditional constructions of time provide for the non-queer majority; the re-creation of this cultural history stabilizes queer history and offers a legitimizing account of queer people's stations in society. Woolf includes the voices of the marginalized, disrupting percieved realities of the traditional, normal, and original. By revising the past to include these heretofore absent voices, Woolf changes the future, and by using narrative constructionism—as both a tool to eliminate oversight and as a way to include the voices of minoritized people—she opens a door to understanding the growth of cultures.

In *In a Queer Time and Place*, Halberstam writes, "Queer subcultures produce alternative temporalities by allowing their participants to believe that their futures can be imagined according to logics that lie outside of those paradigmatic markers of life experience—namely, birth, marriage, reproduction, and death" (2). In *Orlando*, Virginia Woolf illustrates these "alternative temporalities" in a series of queer events that represent the biography of Orlando, whose unnaturally long life includes atypical changes in biology, geography, culture, and desire. The ruptures in time and the sequence of queer events create new identities, new ways of being for Orlando, and though, just as we lack the details of the sleep-producing sex change, we lack the details of the process of

history, we know the results of both; by working backward we can recreate a queer history, a queer sleep, that produces a different "original," one that allows a history of genderqueers[33] to interact in the chronicle of the world.

Orlando is composed of all of the events s/he has undergone in her near 400 year life span, and she experiences them as montage rather than a chronologically organized memory; her thoughts are not limited to a single lifetime, but rather are the product of her own queer cultural history:

> "Time has passed over me," she thought, trying to collect herself; "this is the oncome of middle age. How strange it is! Nothing is any longer one thing. I take up a handbag and I think of an old bumboat woman frozen in the ice. Someone lights a pink candle and I see a girl in Russian trousers. When I step out of doors—as I do now," here she steps onto the pavement of Oxford Street, "what is that I taste? Little herbs. I hear goat bells. I see mountains. Turkey? India? Persia?" Her eyes filled with tears. (198)

Orlando's experiences are not separated by time but rather collected to be reflected upon in a single moment; they represent both the denial of time as an absolute and a collaborated history of queer knowledge: Orlando loving Sasha, Orlando living with gypsies, Orlando cross-dressing, Orlando courting women and being courted by the Archduke/Archduchess, and finally, Orlando marrying Shel: all these lives are the lives of Orlando, and they can all be remembered as Orlando's own experience. Orlando thus

[33] I would suggest this includes all of those people who do not identify within the traditional parameters of gender as it is commonly aligned with biological sex, that is femininity and masculinity as they are reflected in strictly biologically female and male bodies respectively.

embodies a queer tradition and memory that spans many single lives and individual experiences, and all these experiences are present in this one moment of stepping out onto Oxford Street. This ability to realize a queer history transcends the traditional, in which non-heterosexuals are denied a public past, and it provides, not only for Orlando but for the reader as well, a way to synthesize a culture that is not passed from mother to daughter or from father to son, but through a series of experiences that must often be relived by each member of the community. Orlando's rich queer space not only eliminates the issue of the lack of public history, but also helps build queer temporality by dismissing the demand for those heterosexual life delineators of birth, marriage, reproduction, and death.

In *Orlando*, as well as in many of her other novels, Woolf questions the status of social norms and embraces fluidity rather than fixity in nature: she wants to be male and female, hetero- and homosexual; she wants to be masculine and feminine, and she wants to employ time when it suits her but deny it when it limits her. She writes of Orlando, "beaming placidly in a light which—she pulled her watch out of her fob—was, of course, the light of twelve o'clock mid-day. None other could be so prosaic, so matter of fact, so impervious to any hint of dawn or sunset" (149). The time is, "of course" mid-day to reflect Orlando's position between the binary poles of social constructions. For just one moment, noon allows the sun to suspend its obligations to east or west, to be faithful only to its own center. It is not rising or setting, but rather just being. Orlando is noon. She leans neither toward morning nor night, male nor female, masculine nor feminine. She is unique in her expression, her experience, her liberation of sex and gender binaries. Woolf

clearly looked at other constructs in this same manner: they existed for her to use, not to force her into an existence she rejected as static and limiting. Woolf anticipated a future of possibilities that we have clearly begun to explore.

Woolf, like Touchstone the clown, says "if."; and like Touchstone does to dueling, she "anatomizes" identity, presenting aspects of Orlando's "thousand selves," revealing multiple aspects of identity that are not obvious because of socially imposed suggestions of "truth" in essential being. Like Touchstone, Woolf uses "if" as a peacemaker. She poses the "ifs" of identity in an obviously fictional character in order to lure the reader into Orlando's world. And it is within this world that she introduces new ideas for consideration, ideas that push fixed limits of constructions of time, gender, orientation. She uses foolishness to expose ignorance; she, through the presentation of a farcical biography, educates an audience that positions itself above a "fool," an audience, like Jaques and Duke Senior, which must be led into possibilities that require reflection and ultimately new insights. The hypothetical of "if," of Orlando's life, makes real the queer temporalities that have been made difficult by a lack of public history through which queer people can build space for themselves. Woolf helpfully creates a 400-year history that supports queer existence, and Orlando's "thousand selves" work to create the queer cultural history that the non-heterosexual community lacks; these selves that are traditionally ignored reveal the person who wishes to explore the opportunities beyond that established by cultural norming, and these selves reflect the marginalized people who fight to exist in a world that denies them. In this biography, Woolf shows how textures of resistance at a point of rupture of time and gender conflate content and structure to work

as a catalyst for reshaping moments that extend beyond time. In so doing, she dismantles social constructions and relocates identity in a fluid sphere, denying a binary system and instead suggests the compelling possibility of freedom of expression.

## Chapter Three

### Aligning Sex, Gender, and Orientation: Whose Plan Is It Anyway?

This chapter is a reflection on the social expectation for gender, sex, and orientation congruency. It may seem that I deviate slightly from my thesis of gender-queer women and their affect on the acceptable ranges of gender for all people, but I believe there are important aspects of female gender construction cached in the diverse characters in both Willa Cather's *My Ántonia* and William Faulkner's *Light in August.* Both novels feature alternate expressions of masculinity and femininity, and both novels feature characters that are feminized through various acts of social pressure. This kind of re-gendering is the result of both influential consortiums and established constructions that work to instill appropriate gender behavior into people who resist gender conformity, that is, those who resist a fundamental congruence between biological sex and gender expression. This need to reform identity is often connected to perceived deviations in sexual orientation, as well. Re-gendering works to reclaim into the social fold those who exhibit uncommon gender and sex combinations. By reading and acknowledging re-gendering, in this case feminization, as contrived, acceptable ranges of gender are broadened, and gender identity is complicated.

Female masculinity moved forward as a valid academic discussion with Judith Halberstam's book *Female Masculinity.* There, she both exposes the social conflation of maleness and masculinity as an original model and confirms the long existence of multiple forms of female masculinity. By sorting and classifying multiple gender behaviors from a large cross section of queer women, she is able to explore the ways that

definitions of masculinity can be reevaluated and reapplied inside of a queer community of masculine women, including, among others, those who identify as butch, transgender, or transsexual. In chapter one, "An Introduction to Female Masculinity: Masculinity without Men," Halberstam offers an overview of the construction of masculinity, maintaining that "female masculinities are framed as the rejected scraps of dominant masculinity in order that male masculinity may appear to be the real thing" (1). Halberstam asserts that the "widespread indifference to female masculinity has ideological motivations and has sustained the complex social structures that wed masculinity to maleness and to power and domination." She argues that a "sustained examination of female masculinity can make crucial interventions within gender studies, cultural studies, queer studies, and mainstream discussions of gender in general" (2). Halberstam's theories and insights are necessary tools with which to examine the work of bisexual, lesbian, and transgendered authors. In the case of Willa Cather and, interestingly, William Faulkner, Halberstam seems virtually indispensable in probing aspects of both gender identity and the feminization of masculinity not directly associated with the white male.

Cather's protagonists in *My Ántonia*, Ántonia Shimerda and Jim Burden, exemplify a process of feminization, a re-gendering of masculine expression. The former goes through phases of gender that suggest both the possibility of both gender and sex incongruence and gender flexibility. Ántonia Shimerda is re-gendered, that is "feminized," when she leaves the countryside, where mandatory gender expression is enforced less stringently and by fewer people, and enters the social system of the

American city. There she meets a series of people and systems that push her toward compliance with the female-feminine model. Jim Burden, the male protagonist of Cather's novel and the storyteller, is distanced from Ántonia's biography by an unnamed narrator who relates Jim's tale of Ántonia's life. Jim, I maintain, is a surrogate, a masculinely gendered version of Cather herself, who often identified as "William." In the novel, Jim falls short of meeting heterosexual standards of male masculinity, much as Cather herself likely did, and is re-gendered by the text through his failure to do so. My second selection for this chapter features Faulkner's protagonists, Joe Christmas and Joanna Burden. Christmas complicates ideas about both racial and gender identity. His uncertainty over his racial make-up contributes to his anxiety over his social position; his reclusive behavior is at least partially the result of his own perception of himself as an outsider: a result of an internalized, traditional social construction much like the one that polices gender expression. He is eventually feminized, both literally and figuratively, by society because of social insiders' perceptions of his race, which eventually also complicate judgments about his sexual orientation. In this same novel appears Joanna Burden, a masculine woman who likewise faces a socially scripted re-gendering. Joanna Burden's chosen identity roles conflict with those of society's ideal feminine female. The community fails to influence Burden the way Ántonia's townsfolk do her, perhaps because she maintains a residence beyond the center of the town, but upon Burden's death, her community reclaims her as a model feminine female. This external imposition of traditional, common gender expression onto these two characters pushes identity into a

different sphere, but one still quite relevant to the conversation about gender, gender construction, and evolving gender norms.

The social tendency to force the congruency of expected sex, gender, and orientation is not uncommon in American fiction, as it is not in American life. These texts demonstrate both the tendency to expect traditional gender behavior and the different manifestations of social pressure asserted to achieve that behavior. More importantly, these novels illustrate avenues of resistance to these pressures. All four of the main characters in these novels are feminized via social criticism even though they each exert masculine forms of gender expression. Through both their successes and failures, these characters contribute to the emancipation of gender identity by unraveling these three discrete aspects of individuality. Resistance to this social inclination to enforce traditional gender and sex roles has significantly encouraged the expansion of ideas about acceptable expressions of gender for all people, ultimately subverting conservative positions concerning gender and sex role behavior.

According to June Cummins, Willa "Cather was a tall, 'sturdy,' 'mannish,' imposing figure" (20). From a very young age Willa Cather asserted her defiance of gender rules and regulations. James Woodress claims that "before she was thirteen she had cut her hair shorter than most boys and was signing her name William Cather [. . .] She expressed a vast contempt for skirts and dresses, wore boys' clothes, a derby, and carried a cane" (55). Cummins points out that in her later life, she was "So fearfully protective [. . .] of her privacy that she destroyed most of her letters and forbade scholars and others to quote directly from any that remained." Her lesbian world, however, is not

a secret, and her love relationships are well documented in spite of Cather's efforts to maintain her privacy. Cummins writes, "After living with Isabelle McClung in her family's house in Pittsburgh from 1901 to 1906, Cather shared a home with Edith Lewis in Greenwich Village for almost 40 years" (19).

Cather's novel *My Àntonia* likely echoes Cather's own life story, (like Jim Burden, she moved to Nebraska), and the characters in it are surely at least muddy reflections of those people she knew. One of those most likely portrayed in the story is her lifelong friend Dorothy Canfield, who she met in Lincoln Nebraska while Cather was in college there. Canfield, six years younger than Cather, was in high-school, but the two became good friends. Cather was genuinely attracted to Dorothy; in fact, Woodress says that Cather "loved her very, very dearly." The two remained friends for the rest of their lives "except for sixteen years between 1905 and 1921, when Fisher did not write to Cather at all" (qtd in Cummins 19). In 1990, Mark Madigan attributed this disruption of their relationship to a short story that Cather had published, "The Profile." It featured a character that resembled a friend of Canfield (then Fisher) in an unflattering way. Fisher asked Cather to refrain from publishing the story, but Cather ignored her request (Cummins 20). The motivation for Cather publishing the piece in spite of her good friend's wishes falls into a large range of possibilities. One to consider among them is jealousy. Did Fisher prefer the company of her new friend? Was Cather resentful of that relationship? Whatever the motive, the long separation is mirrored by the twenty years of silence between Jim and Àntonia in *My Ántonia*. It is clear that the resemblances do not stop there, but the text speaks for itself in ways that biographical history cannot address.

Cather's own presentation in terms of her female masculinity and sexuality included an early, queer expression of her gender and sexual orientation, but as she aged and realized the constraints of society, she recoiled into a more closeted, a more private existence (Cummins 19). Essentially, her own life is a model of the way gender, sex, and orientation is forced by society into a single facet. Clearly, before she realized the penalties for behaving outside of the construct, she had pushed the gender binary aside in favor of a more personal and unique expression; as an adult, she withdrew into her private life. In *My Ántonia*, Cather's emphasis of the fluctuations in the gender, sex, and orientation binaries suggests she, like Virginia Woolf, realized that the three are not naturally congruent, but instead are obligated to overlap as a condition of social tradition. Yet, Cather's biological femaleness and her more masculine gender clearly stirred a dissonance in her own mind about her identity. Willa Cather knew that she was limited by society's insistence on what Adrienne Rich later called "compulsory heterosexuality."[34] In *My "Ántonia,* Cather cloaks her identity with the male character Jim Burden in order to express herself in terms that satisfied both her sense of her masculinity and her feelings of sexual attraction to women. As Cather illustrates, and as Halberstam has noted, "masculinity and maleness are profoundly difficult to pry apart" (2). Cather was not allowed to find women attractive, much less write of their seductiveness; choosing a male narrator allowed her to tell a story of love that was otherwise inaccessible. Hence, her original narrative voice was abandoned for one in

[34] Rich, Adrienne. "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence." 1980.

which harmony can be located. Cather presses against the acceptable limits of gender by assuming the constructed male body of Jim Burden.

Halberstam claims that "[m]asculinity in this society inevitably conjures up notions of power and legitimacy and privilege; it often symbolically refers to the power of the state and to uneven distributions of wealth" (2). The story of Jim and Àntonia told by a masculine woman would become a story of unrequited lesbian love instead of the deep, thoughtful tale of early American life on the plains, which *includes* a love story or two. By turning the story over to Jim, it not only becomes normalized but also legitimized because of the authority of power manifest in the white, male body. The transition from the female author, to the nameless narrator in the train, and then to the true biographer, Jim, also conjures the idea of Halberstam's "name change," which "confers the power to reimagine identity, place, relation, and even gender" (8). This "reimagining" allows Cather to create the story in a world where she, even though disguised, is validated as normal, as natural, as original. She must wear a male body to assert her masculinity. While some might argue that Cather's choice to use a male narrator was simply a rhetorical device, her use of other "queer" strategies, terms, and people supports her assumption of the male body and voice as a way to tell her experience of life.

One of the first indications of Cather's intentional insertion of queer consciousness in *My Àntonia* is her use of the word "queer" itself, which she employs in various ways no fewer than ten times in the narration. Marilee Lindemann, author of *Willa Cather: Queering America*, identifies the emergence of the word "queer" as being

specific to homosexuals around 1890 (2). Furthermore, George Chauncy, historian, identifies the 1910's as the time period that produced the term as the *preferred* way to refer to both lesbians and gay men, "particularly in the middle-class culture of Greenwich Village (Where Cather lived from 1906-1927)" (qtd in Cummins 20-21). Cather refers to "queer little red bugs" (14), bugs that are colorfully variant from the norm; "a queer piece [gun] with a stag's head on the cock" (29), a "queer" phallic image; the "queer noises" that Marek wants to make but does "not dare in the presence of his elders" (51), an extension of both the already marginalized Marek, who is physically queer, and a suggestion that queer behavior is not acceptable in front of "elders," or the social regulators; "dried meat from some queer beast" (52), referring to the unfamiliar dried mushrooms that Jim's family refuses to accept; queer acting "oxen" that "blistered" Ambrosch's hands (63), suggesting the fear of queers as a disease, injury, or mark upon society; the "queer" suicide of Mr. Shimerda (63), a common end for homosexuals who could not find acceptance; "the queer fancies of dying men" (71), a hope for a future less oppressive than the present; the queerness of the narrator "who [shows] no interest in girls of his own age, but who [is] lively enough when he [is] with Tony and Lena or the three Marys (138), women either marked with lesbian or homosocial tendencies or who function as non-threatening social group; Àntonia's singing of "them queer Bohemian songs, like she was the happiest thing in the world" (198), holding onto an aspect of her life outside of the social structure that provided happiness, and "a sailor [Ole Benson, who has been] on an English boat and [has] seen lots of queer places" (181), the

homosocial, homoerotic world of the navy,[35] "for the sailor on shore is symbolically the innocent god from the sea who is not bound by the law of the land and can therefore do anything without guilt*"(* Auden 149).

But language, while indicative of the queer subtext, is not the crux of the queer tales buried in the saga of Àntonia. Here, I would like to point particularly to Cather's borrowed identity, Jim Burden, and his gender masculine and gender feminine behaviors and attitudes, many that reflect those Cather herself likely had. With this assertion, I am neither suggesting that Cather's gender identity was fluid nor that most gender identity is fluid as it manifests in the individual. Rather, I posit that gender is fixed, in terms of many or even most individuals, at points or ranges that lie outside of the traditional binary models of masculine and feminine. Cather's use of gender, however, to demonstrate a dynamic of masculine and feminine in order to define appropriate partners reveals how the construction of gender marginalizes people and perpetuates compulsory heterosexuality. Positioning Jim as four years Ántonia's junior (a replication of the age relationship between Cather and Canfield) instantly places an obstacle between them, less

[35] In queer art, sailors in particular are associated with homosexuality. **"**The image of the sexually available, morally capricious [. . .] serviceman emerged in the early 1900s during a time when the identity "homosexual" was determined greatly by a man's role in sexual encounters with other men, not necessarily his attraction to them in the first place; only the "feminine" or receptive partner qualified socially as gay.

This ruling social code, known commonly as "trade," allowed soldiers and sailors to occupy a complex place in the gay worlds of World War I-era America; they were at once common players in gay urban culture—enjoying countless romps with civilian men during shore leaves and weekend passes—and patently detached from that culture and the social ramifications membership within it otherwise held. Thus began what would become a long romance between gay culture and not only the servicemen themselves, but also the allure of their uncompromising hetero-masculinity.

While configurations of sexual identity have changed over the years, the precocious in-between-ness of the swarthy serviceman is central even in contemporary representations" (Goldman. "Subjects of the Visual Arts: Sailors and Soldiers." 2002).

severe but nevertheless not unlike the social restrictions placed on same-sex desire[36]. Moreover it effectively feminizes Jim while it masculinizes Ántonia. Age is only one token of separation poised to illustrate the queerness of this relationship. Another is the failed masculinity of Jim Burden.

An instance of Jim's gender queerness reveals itself in his killing of the rattle snake while he and Àntonia are alone on the plains. The story itself invokes the myth of Adam and Eve. It is romantic in that Jim protects Àntonia, yet it fails as the perfect hero story because snake is old and not the threat a younger, more vital snake might be. Jim is afraid of the snake, and he admits that the only reason he does not "run [is] because [he doesn't] think of it." He feels "cornered" (31), yet because he has "Ántonia beside [him], to appreciate and admire," he manages the kill (34). Nevertheless, he "petulantly" chides Ántonia for not warning him of the snake (32). While Jim's killing of the serpent situates him as Àntonia's protector, because it is an "old" snake, he is kept from being a truly masculine hero. And, even though people credit him with the killing of "the biggest rattler ever killed in those parts," Jim feels or imagines the patronizing tone that defeats his conquest: He identifies the snake as having "led too easy a life," explaining "there was not much fight in him," and calling it "a mock adventure" (34). This failed attempt at filling the roles devised by society reflects the frustration of the masculine woman who desires that role; yet she is not seen as a valid participant but as a failed substitute for a man. Even though Cather positions Jim as a potential suitor, her own perception of the relationship as others see it is projected into this scene where Jim becomes less than

[36] This is similar to the strategy Virginia Woolf uses in *Orlando* when she makes Sasha an inappropriate partner for Orlando because she is Russian.

Adam. This demonstration of interwoven feminine and masculine traits combined with the failure to become the true "hero" suggests an infusion of her female self into her male narrator. Cather, because she has been enculturated into a society that will not accept heroism, strength, or any other "masculine" trait from women, dilutes Jim's success as she can only credit him with that she herself would have garnered in the same situation.

Jim, like the woman he represents, cannot achieve an intimate relationship with Àntonia. As much as he loves and desires her, his advances are rare and tentative, and even then she rebukes his passion although she clearly values his friendship. When Jim asks for a kiss goodnight after walking Àntonia home, she happily assents, but when he pushes his affection past that of friendship, she responds by saying, "You know it ain't right to kiss me like that" (143). Whether Àntonia actually desires intimacy with Jim remains a mystery; whether her refusals are based on genuine heterosexual desire, that is desire for a "real" man, which Àntonia never finds Jim appropriate to, or just heterosexual compliance, is never clear, but what is obvious is that Jim is overcome with his love for Àntonia from beginning to end. This unrequited love mimics forbidden queer love.

Jim displays both his love for Àntonia and his failed masculinity in multiple scenes. When Àntonia is left alone to care for the iniquitous Wick Cutter's house, Jim agrees to sleep there in her place because "Tony [looks] so troubled" (157). His continued desire to protect her is obvious. And indeed, it turns out that Cutter does have a plan for Àntonia, but when he returns to exert his sexual will on Àntonia, he finds Jim in her place, which enrages him. This scene simultaneously reveals multiple, subtle behaviors that shed light

on Jim's masculinity: his merging of the male body with the internalizations of female behavior expectations and his frustration in terms of loving Àntonia. First, attacked while in bed, he is cast into a sexually submissive role in a potentially violent sexual encounter, which immediately emasculates him. Secondly, Jim fights back with less than manly attacks, pulling "a handful of whiskers," "shouting," bending Cutter's "thumb" back, and then running away (158). When Cutter is later seen, "his face [is] stripped with court-plaster," which suggests he has been scratched. Even though Jim is a youthful, healthy man and Cutter is old enough to be relatively weaker, there is no narrative of the punches one would expect from the younger man, and when Jim finally sees himself in the mirror, his "lip [is] cut" and swollen, his "nose [looks] like a big blue plum, and one eye [is] swollen shut and hideously discoloured. [There are] bruises on [his] chest and shoulders" (158-59). Jim is clearly beaten by Cutter, but he never raises his fist to defend himself. Instead, he escapes to the "parlour" and covers himself with a "shawl" (158). When his grandmother finds him, Jim begs her, "as [he] had never begged for anything before" not to send for a doctor, nor to tell anyone what had happened to him, not even his own grandfather (159). Jim responds to the attack much in the way one might expect a woman from this period to react to rape. Instead of confronting his attacker, he chooses to recover privately, hoping to salvage his reputation. His relatively feminized behavior here demonstrates his gender struggle.

Jim's response to Àntonia, who is "sobbing outside [his] door" (159) is another enlightening aspect of the scene of his recovery. He feels as if he "never [wants] to see her again," and in fact states that "[he hates] her almost as much as [he hates] Cutter"

(159). Here once more, the reader is gifted with new insights. This is Jim's first evidence of Àntonia being desired by a man. His pain may be a reflection of his realization that he cannot have her. Neither can he protect Àntonia from men, which angers and embarrasses him. Jim is unable to assert himself as Àntonia's partner because even though he has been masculinzed by the assumption of the male body, he suffers feminization through or by Cather's own hand. Her own internalized beliefs about her right to claim masculinity, which has, according to Halberstam, been appropriated by men, seemingly keeps her from accepting even the masculinity that she has appropriated through the male body. Eventually, Jim Burden relinquishes his attachment to Àntonia in what seems to be a very bizarre twist to the story, as he deserts her for many chapters and many years before he rekindles his relationship with her. It could be argued that like Stephen in *The Well of Loneliness*[37], Jim leaves Àntonia to free her from love that can never be honest in a world that can accept neither lesbian love nor female masculinity.

Ántonia presents her own version of gender and sex incongruity, thereby adding to the queer dimension of the novel. Immediately, the spelling of her shortened name draws attention to both itself and Halberstam's "naming," as it is presented in the masculinized version "Tony," not a more traditional "Toni," the feminized form. She moves through periods of femininity and masculinity, demonstrating her own rebellion against the social construct. As a young girl, Ántonia is presented as feminine, but after her father's death when she is needed to work outside of the house, she embraces her masculine abilities. During this phase of her masculine gender expression, she brags that

[37] In a desperate move to save her lover from the torment of the lesbian world, Stephen pushes Mary into the arms of a man. See more about "The Well of Loneliness" in chapter 6.

she "[likes] to be like a man" (89) and focuses her conversations on "prices of things, or how much she [can] lift or endure" (81). She competes with her hyper-masculine brother Ambrosch to see who can do the most plowing in a day and seemingly often outworks him (80). She prods Jim "to feel the muscles swell in her brown arm" (89), which not only emphasizes her masculine role but also Jim's feminine one. The work does not overwhelm her, but instead instills in her a sense of independence. But the emergence of her masculine identity is not the only change that is visible. The judgment of others surrounding her gender deviant behavior peppers the text. While it is Jim's grandmother who warns that "heavy field work'll spoil that girl [and that] she'll lose all her nice ways and get rough ones," it is Jim who notices that "She had lost them already" (81). Through this masculinization of Ántonia, Cather identifies her as at least a prospective partner for Jim, even if that potentiality springs merely from Jim's, or even a reader's, wish for it, and the third component of identity, orientation, is subtly introduced into the text. A queer audience might find hope for a relationship between the two, coded in their gender queer expressions.

Ántonia's re-gendering begins with the influence of Jim's grandmother who suggests her for more traditional work to her new town neighbor. This effort to normalize Ántonia's gender behavior, to align it with her sex, and to ostensibly change a potentially queer orientation, clues the reader to the dwindling possibility of even imagined lesbianism. Grandmother cautions that "she'll be awkward and rough at first" (99). Ántonia endeavors to re-ingratiate herself with society, saying not to Jim, but to his grandmother, "Maybe I be the kind of girl you like better, now I come to town" (100).

Conformity becomes her goal, and compulsory heterosexuality, described through the role of the "Black Hawk fathers—who [have] no personal habits outside their domestic ones; they [pay] the bills, [push] the baby-carriage after office hours, [move] the sprinklers about over the lawn, and [take] the family driving on Sunday" (102)—will be a necessary aspect of that goal. That social environment will work to reinforce traditional gender expression and to bring a wild and boyish Ántonia back into line.

Ántonia's re-gendering process is not without issue, however. Her integration into the more formal society is as a cook and babysitter for the Harling family, one of the best in Black Hawk. After a family trip to the Shimerda homestead, where the Harlings determine Ántonia's fitness for domestication—they assess both her looks and her "fine brown legs and arms, and splendid color in her cheeks"—they negotiate a price for her with her brother. On the way home from this visit, they stop at the Burden farm, and Mrs. Harling assures Mrs. Burden that she "can bring something out of that girl. [She] is not too old to learn new ways" (99). Ántonia is simply subsumed by the larger culture and taught to function within those parameters. Yet this presumably simple opportunity to learn both the systems of Black Hawk and compulsory heterosexuality through immersion into a perfect example of traditional family life, cannot alone take the boyishness from Ántonia. When the dancing tent makes its way to town, Ántonia finds an outlet for her independent behavior. She resists domestication, and often "[flings] off her apron and [shoots] out of the kitchen door" to get to the tent. Eventually, despite the Harlings' efforts to contain her, she earns herself a "reputation for being free and easy" (132). She leaves the Harlings under tension that demands conformity and takes a job

with a man of questionable ethics, Wick Cutter, and his wife. She moves outward from the social center and back to a marginal space on the very edge of social acceptability. This freer space gives Ántonia the opportunity to express herself in less guarded ways than the feminization process had allowed her at the Harlings, and for awhile she "[seems] to care about nothing but picnics and parties and having a good time" (137). Her clothing changes to reflect her recently embraced feminine gender: "Tony wore gloves now, and high-heeled shoes and feathered bonnets" (137), yet she engages in socialization more like a boy, dancing with and kissing who she wants. It is not until she suffers the fate destined for her under the supervision of Wick Cutter that she realizes she cannot express herself without regard for her sex and still be safe from unwanted advances by men. After Cutter's attack on Jim, she returns to the city, finding employment as a housekeeper at the hotel. The Harlings overlook her transgressions and she is re-ingratiated with the community. She takes a steady boyfriend, Larry Donavan, and "talks about him like he was President of the Railroad. Everybody laughs about it, because she was never a girl to be so soft" (172). Ultimately, she performs the femininity that the community desires while she endeavors to accept it as her own.

Àntonia's failed relationship with her first beau, Donavan, trumpets her effort to embrace both her heterosexuality and her re-imagined gender role. She returns home from being with him at a distant work location without a wedding ring but with proof of her heterosexual endeavor: pregnancy; She arrives at her family's farm and assumes her role in the fields and talks "about the grain and the weather as if she had never had another interest," but she is no longer masculinized by it, as she is soon thrust into

motherhood and effectively into a female gender role with the assumption of that duty (202). It is twenty years later, and only after she is safely ensconced inside of the construct, that Jim dares to return to see her and finds that two years after her defeat at the hands of the social representative, Donovan, she married Anton, a gentle man. She has embraced her role of mother, and together they have had many more children. She has become a part of the society that claimed her and endeavored to feminize her, and while she has lost the freedom she had as a girl, likely symbolized by her lost teeth, she "had not lost the fire of life" (216). She participates in the system, but she has resisted complete conformity in proudly raising her first daughter, who is born out of wedlock, both by returning to the country where she avoids some social demands and by marrying Anton, an androgynous character who, in sharing a masculinized version of her name, promotes her own masculine identity. Halberstam's "name change" operates in an obscured but complicated fashion here in connecting these two people in matrimony. Like Orlando and Shel, who identify shared gender traits when they proclaim, "'You're a woman Shel!'" and "'You're a man!'" (Woolf 161) respectively, Ántonia and Anton, are reflections of one another, connected in some deeper way based on this naming. In creating the character of Ántonia Shimerda and her masculine reflection, Anton, Cather illustrates a refusal to accept a complete gender revision, and while Ántonia has clearly sacrificed some of her identity, she has ultimately found a way to accept her lot in life.

Jim, convinced Ántonia is safely entrenched in heteronormativity, freely plans a future around Àntonia and her family. Clearly his love is Àntonia, and she would have been his partner in different circumstances—"[he'd] have like to have [her] for a

sweetheart, or a wife" (206)—but he is forced to settle for less than he wanted with her, and so many years later, still lacks the traditional family that he has never really had. He has a wife with whom he shares little, and they have no children. His parents are dead, and he has no siblings. The unusual title of the last section of *My Àntonia* continues to emphasize Jim's frustration at not being able to achieve a life and family with Àntonia. Jim's focus on the surname of Àntonia's husband marks his obsession with not being able to occupy that space; his reference to her sons is both a comment on their inability to reproduce both children and the family unit insisted upon by heterosexual standards. The boys represent the gender Cather felt inside and Jim endeavors to embody; Jim's dedication to them is his effort to experience their young, free, male joy.

Jim's lack of a "normal" family is likewise echoed through other characters' narratives in the text. Cather employs a remarkable range of marginalized characters to tell this story of non-traditional families, and Jim's perceptions of each contribute to the building of both the conventional and the queer narratives. From the children of immigrants, Lena and Tiny, to the non-English speaking foreigners Peter and Pavel, through Ántonia's weak-minded brother Marek, to the talented Blind d'Arnault, characters in *My Ántonia* lend themselves both to representative aspects of queer literature and to variant structures of deviant families. They push against the boundaries of both gender and social expectations. They change the conception of acceptable identity.

One such character is Lena Lingard, a country girl and immigrant. Jim's relationship with Lena Lingard is much more substantial and realistic than his love affair with Ántonia. Lena allows him to kiss her while Ántonia refuses him (143). As a boy, he

dreams of her "in a short skirt" coming to "kiss [him] as much as [she] liked" (144). Later, in college, he falls in love with her (184), and is distraught that he must leave her to finish his education. In fact, to fortify his decision to go, he tries to persuade himself that he is doing Lena a service by leaving her alone, as he says, "if she had not had me to play with, she would probably marry and secure her future" (185). This is reminiscent of Jim's seemingly similar abandonment of Ántonia.[38] Jim, even though he admits that he is in love with her, does not consider himself a suitable partner for her either. Yet, their relationship has legitimacy because Lena and Jim both operate outside of the heterosexual construct. As a young woman, Lena Lingard announces her intention to stay single when she says, "'I don't want to marry Nick, or any other man,'" (105). She reiterates this later after admitting that she has turned down other marriage proposals. She says, "I'm not going to marry anybody," and then "I don't want a husband" (186). Lena is clear that compulsory heterosexuality is not in her future. It is this frame of reference that connects Lena to Jim and allows the two to flirt with romance in a way that Jim cannot approach Ántonia.

Lena stays good to her promise of avoiding the marriage bed; in fact, her only serious commitment seems to be to the other woman who strikes out on her own and finds success—Tiny Soderball (192). Jim says, "the only two human beings of whom [Tiny] spoke of with any feeling were the Swede, Johnson, who had given her his claim, and Lena Lingard" (194). Tiny urges Lena to move close to her in San Francisco, where she will not be "gossiped about" (194). Years later when Jim sees them, they are still

[38] And , again, of Stephen's abandonment of Mary in *The Well of Loneliness*. Ref. chapter 6 of this dissertation.

together, inextricably entwined in each other's lives. Tiny invests Lena's money, and Lena makes sure Tiny doesn't get "shabby" (212). Moreover, because they choose San Francisco as their home, more than a hint of the homoerotic is suggested. Nancy Warren marks San Francisco's birth as a gay haven "even before Oscar Wilde first set foot in [the] town in 1882." In fact, many sources place the birth of the gay capital in the 1800's when "it was called "Sodom by the Sea, [and] rich gold miners indulged in every vice imaginable." Some attribute the gay "hankie signals" of homosexual men and lesbians as originating from these same miners. By the turn of the century, San Francisco had become a major queer port (Warren). Certainly, Willa Cather chose San Francisco as the final home of Tiny and Lena precisely because of the association with lesbians and gay men. That Tiny made her fortune during the same event that spearheaded the queer migration to the west coast city defies coincidence as well. Cather methodically chose these coded details to emphasize the queer qualities in *My Àntonia*.

The queer Russians, Peter and Pavel are the most isolated of the foreigners. Jim says, "of all the strange, uprooted among the first settlers, those two men were the strangest and the most aloof." They never manage to learn to speak English even though they "make signs to people," and Peter is friendly and smiles at everyone (24). They are virtually unable to communicate with the other community members, yet they have been in America much longer than the Shimerdas. This denial of their participation in society is one aspect of them that speaks to their isolation and by extension, their queerness. Yet, the men, Jim refers to them as "companions," create a home together: Peter goes nightly to "milk his cow" even though other single men just use "canned milk" (24), Peter cares

for Pavel (fresh milk is good for Pavel) who is often sick (25), they sleep in a double bed, "made up with blue gingham sheets and pillows"(25), and when Jim first visits their house, Peter is busily attending the household chores of laundry and gardening while Pavel is out "helping to dig a well" (25). All of these details set a scene of queer domesticity, but it is Pavel's death-bed confession to Mr. Shimerda that he left "his country because of a 'great trouble'" (26) that cements the queer theme of their narrative. Pavel's story of the violent incident that drove the "companions" out of Russia is easily construed as a coded tale of homosexual escape. In the telling of the story, Peter and Pavel are the lead wagon drivers of a wedding party (the celebration that still epitomizes heterosexuality) and are pursued by a large pack of wolves. The wolves take down wagons one after another, killing and presumably eating the occupants. In order to achieve their survival, Pavel, in desperation, finally throws the young married couple to the snarling animals. This allegory is reflective of the queer Russians' inability to find peace; they are chased by heterosexuality and stalked by the wolves that police it. This story tells of a frantic escape from a terrifying and oppressive situation. This refusal to sacrifice themselves to the burden of compulsory heterosexuality symbolizes their escape from the construct; they find momentary quiet in throwing out the bride and groom (40). Of course, when the locals work out what happened in the forest, Pavel and Peter are run out of town, and the rumor attached to this event follows them from village to village. This situation, of course, mirrors the fate of those discovered as lovers of same-sex partners. From the attempt to force them to accept a heterosexual fate, through the fight for liberation, and to the future filled with gossip and rumor, gays and lesbians of this

time period suffered from heterosexual oppression. Peter and Pavel choose to immigrate to America and to some measure of freedom, yet still, Pavel is haunted by the dissonance that does not allow him to accept himself fully and feels compelled to seek absolution for his sins. The final confession on the death bed of Pavel drives Peter from his home once again, and he takes a job as a "cook in a railway construction camp" (40), a job very similar to the one Tiny secures for herself as a caretaker of miners. They are both solitary characters catering to a majority, queer people operating in a heterosexual environment.

Pavel and Peter's allegorical transgression is not the only aspect of their role in the novel that marks them as queer. Eve Sedgwick identifies queer characters that she refers to as Avunculate: those relatives, not parents or heterosexual, who provide the sexual role model beyond heteronormativity. Sedgwick notes that not all of these relatives are of blood, but often are just older people who are friends of the family. Sedgwick writes, "Because aunts and uncles (in either narrow or extended meanings) are adults whose intimate access to children needn't depend on their own pairing or procreation, it's very common, of course, for some of them to have the office of representing nonconforming or non-reproductive sexualities to children" (63). The Shimerdas are the only intimate connection Peter and Pavel have with the outside world, and that signification connects them in a way that transcends blood and cements a relationship of sorts. Pavel's confession within hearing range of the children marks their relationship as intimate. Pavel and Peter function as Avunculate in that they become queer role models for both Àntonia and Jim *and the reader*. Their refusal to assume

traditional gender roles illustrates the ways in which queer people have resisted conforming.

Like Pavel and Peter, Marek, Ántonia's younger, mentally disabled brother, figures as a queer character. While his queerness does not manifest itself as sexual, his intimacy in connection with the narrative, positions him as a main character marginalized by a construct in which he can never participate. He has fingers "webbed to the first knuckle" and makes "uncouth noises" (18), which Jim says are "queer." Although he wants to "bark like a dog or whinny like a horse," Jim says he tries "to be agreeable" as if he were trying "to make up for his deficiencies" (51). His struggle to conform illustrates the strength with which "normalcy" endeavors to control all living beings. His failure to be included in the narrative, his absence from stories in which he must be present, show the isolation he suffers as equal to that of Peter and Pavel.

Likewise, people of color have long been used as symbols for gays and lesbians. They were the unaccepted before homosexuals: they were denied their rights and suffered miscegenation. Race, as we shall see in the case of Joe Christmas, complicates both queerness and identity. Cather's Blind d'Arnault is the product of an interracial marriage (118), an affront to social regulations as it is. He exemplifies that which comes of defying the social construct. Not only blind but ugly, he has to be hidden from society. He represents the shame of his mother and stigmatizes her as reproductively aberrant. Like the blisters on Ambroche's hands, he is the mark of perversion. He signifies not only the oppression of people of color, but of all marginalized people. His isolation as a child mimics the torment of the other marginalized people in this novel. Cather, however,

gives him the redeeming feature of musical talent. It is here that Cather complicates society's idea of substandard and unacceptable by adding positive dimension to this character. By using such a collection of stigmatized people to represent early America, Cather manages to cache queerness in the folds of diversity. In an effort to reveal other minoritized people, Cather makes some small space for the coming of the queer liberation movement.

Willa Cather's choice to occupy the male body to legitimate the story of her life and love is a dilemma that complicates the lives of masculine women. Halberstam says that in spite of the many role models of masculine women now visible in contemporary society, there is still a "collective failure to imagine and ratify the masculinity produced by, for, and within women" (*Female Masculinity* 15). The practice of aligning biological sex and gender is rooted so deeply that people have internalized it as natural; as a result, both heterosexuals and non-heterosexuals struggle with the dissonance caused by the incongruity of sex, gender, and orientation. At a time when gays and lesbians are finding themselves increasingly accepted by mainstream America, a non-traditional sex and gender relationship still stirs negative reactions in the majority of people. This inability to accept people who do not naturally fall into line, or who are unable to feign compliance with society's idea of the norm, may be a leading motivator in sex reassignment surgery, a topic I address in chapter six. Cather reveals the complications of gender through her ability to illustrate both the efforts to transcend the mechanisms that fortify ideas about gender appropriateness and both the internal and external pressures to conform to a social standard often claimed as normal. In a similar way, Faulkner's *Light in August* illustrates

the effort of those who seek to escape or broaden ideas about gender expression, particularly that which is internalized as normal and complicated by a personal dissonance between body and character. Faulkner demonstrates that gender behavior, whether internally generated or externally imposed, is influenced by social factors, including race hierarchies and social position; furthermore, he offers insight into the ways external factors stimulate conflict between gender performance and biological sex, which, because of their socially constructed congruence, unavoidably results in suspicions about and connections to sexual orientation. Finally, he shows the complications of masculinity being appropriated as essential maleness as it is related to the power and legitimacy of white males.

Several characters in *Light in August* experience conflicting aspects of gender and sex based on an idea of illegitimate masculinity. One of the most profound of these is Joe Christmas. In order to speak about this conflation of gender and sex as it applies to an African American male, it might be helpful to add Butler's ideas about gender as "a copy with no original" to Halberstam's assertion that "white masculinity has obscured all other masculinities" (16), which I used in examining the characters in *My Ántonia.*. Simply put, Judith Butler, sees the masculine as that which society deems "original," and the feminine as behavior that is layered over the "naturalness" of the masculine (*Gender* 134). In other words, the "Adam" model that we discussed earlier in this chapter indeed becomes the model for the original being: the white male. All other people are variations of this ostensibly original model. Applying Butler's theory to deviations in social interaction patterns allows the idea of an "original" to be scrutinized from a perspective

of equalities and inequalities within that structure. In terms of the majority culture, male masculinity can be seen as "original" by considering the breadth and depth of the freedom aligned with it; male masculinity's few limitations reflect less social interference and therefore yield a less constructed model. Restrictions begin to surface when we consider groups as they spiral outside of that privileged culture's nucleus. Women are layered with expectations of behaviors different from those of men: sensitivity, weakness, motherhood, intuition, and emotion just to name a few. If this is not convincing evidence in and of itself, consider the use of cosmetics. The literal layering of makeup onto the face works to enhance the difference between the male and the female, and while this is not an example that applies to every woman in every society, it works well to demonstrate the kinds of constructed differences in men and women.[39] Because society perceives white men as original, and puts social restrictions on men, women, and groups of people outside of this center, there is another kind of layering influencing their expected and accepted behavior. In substituting race for gender, Butler's theory can still be applied, and race can be seen as complicating gender and gender roles.

Beyond her ideas of the "original," Butler further asserts, as I pointed out in chapter one, that the internalization of the belief of gender appropriateness can help prevent the construct from being identified and escaped[40]. In the same ways that men and women have internalized and accepted gender roles that reflect biological sex as

[39] I do not suggest that men and women are indeed the same model of original. I suggest only that social constructions tend to suggest the differences in women by stressing that they are not original models at all, but are instead an imitation of man. The idea of Eve as formed from Adam also supports this idea.

[40] She writes, "If the 'cause' of desire, gesture, and act can be localized within the 'self' of the actor, then the political regulations and disciplinary practices which produce that ostensibly coherent gender are effectively displaced from view" (*Gender* 136). See page …..chapter one for preliminary discussion.

"normal," the specific qualities defining race behavior have been established and "localized within the self" of people of color, too. This is manifest in the character of Joe Christmas, who experiences conflicting aspects of gender, sex, and orientation; yet the conflict that drives his dissonance is not primarily based on his sex but rather on his race. His experiences as both a white man *and* a black man show the constructedness of race, and by extension, the constructedness of gender. By this, I mean we can reasonably compare Joe Christmas and his race identity challenges to a masculine woman like Stephen Gordon, Jess Goldberg, or Beebo Brinker and any one of their gender challenges. "Race" functions as a layer in the same way "femininity" does. Ironically, both adding and removing indicators of race or femininity result in an "imitation" of the original, Adam. Joe's social re-gendering emphasizes the insidious nature of constructed gender and gender identities. .

Joe Christmas is biologically male and by all appearances, white; therefore, he is allowed behaviors located in the traditional definition of masculine and the privileges that accompany that white masculinity. Christmas's three aspects of sex, gender, and orientation, by all appearances, operate in conjunction with one another. He poses no threat to society from this position. Yet, once Christmas suspects that he is black, he finds his sex and gender contradictory because of the socially constructed notions about identity performance; he has internalized the idea that he should have certain restrictions on his behaviors because of his race, yet because he looks white, they have not so far been socially obligatory. The demand to internalize those behaviors—that socially

determined gender that aligns itself with the black male body—so prevails that Christmas constantly feels out of synchronization with himself.

Laura Doyle, in "The Body against Itself in Faulkner's Phenomenology of Race," points to the scene at the orphanage[41] in which young Joe Christmas encounters the dietitian and the intern making love, as the moment "he is discovered and named" (345). The dietician screams at Joe, "[Y]ou little rat! Spying on me! You little nigger bastard!" (345) as he vomits the toothpaste he is eating to satisfy his incessant hunger. Doyle identifies this instant as transitional in Christmas's life, saying that this is "moment in which Joe 'turn[s] in upon' himself [and] gets dramatically and bewilderingly colonized" (345). Christmas's colonization includes the invasion of the black layers of identity. He feels his feminization at eight years old, even if he cannot articulate its full meaning. Joe's realization that his conduct should be aligned with the layers superimposed on his new minority status reflects Butler's ideas about the localization of behavior in the self. The external expectation transfers to an internal belief as quickly as Joe identifies as "black." Doyle finishes making this point by saying, "Thus, long before and long after conscious knowing directs his idea of himself, Joe 'believes' in the sign 'nigger bastard.' His very intimacy with his body has been woven into that sign. In the dietitian's naming of him, his body is brought in by being cast out" (345). To establish a parallel here, I point to the same situation for the masculine woman who is likewise named based on her body. Because of specific social standards, accusations of queerness function as destabilizing in the same ways accusations of racial inferiority do. Once she internalizes

[41] Joe is left at an orphanage by his grandfather because he suspects Joe is mixed race. He lives there until the McEacherns adopt him.

the naming of "queer," or "butch," or even "masculine," her bodily intimacy is likewise connected to that sign, and the queerness layers her expressions of masculinity, which is now hindered by the naming. She becomes an imitation of the male original, just as in this scene the young, black Joe becomes an imitation of the white original.

Society insists a masculine gender accompany Joe Christmas's white, male body, yet because of the black blood he might bear, that he thinks he bears, *he* believes he must occupy a submissive or feminized space in the social hierarchy. The compelling cultural connections between biology and gender oblige him to accept this feminine role, yet because he appears white, he feels an internal battle concerning the expectations white society has of him. The discord between the expectations he has for himself and those that society has for him creates tension for both: Christmas suffers an internal dissonance he cannot transcend and spends his life torn between over-performing his masculine role and fearing he will be revealed as an imitation unworthy of full, social privilege.

While Faulkner exposes Christmas's feminization through race, he genders him by means of his social relationships as well. I referred to Talia Schaffer in the last chapter to show how parody exposes roles as "unnatural, learned behavior[s]" (35) in order to discuss the destabilization of the "naturalness" of gender in Woolf's *Orlando*[42]. Halberstam points out that "excessive masculinities tend to focus on black bodies (male and female), latino/a bodies, or working class bodies [. . .]; these stereotypical constructions of variable masculinity mark the process by which masculinity becomes dominant in the sphere of white middle-class maleness" (2). With these ideas about

[42] See Chapter 2, "Social Constructions: Time, Gender, and other Ultimate Realities that Ought Better be Dismantled" page 82.

"parody" and "excessive performance" in mind, I would like to point to Joe's consistent and excessive masculinity via interactions with various people in his life. These moments offer another example of the kind of destabilization parody achieves. For example, while he lives with his adopted family, the McEacherns, he is regularly beaten for his transgressions, yet he does not cry, or even ask to be excused from the punishment. Instead, Faulkner writes, "When the strap fell he did not flinch, no quiver passed over his face" (110). Faulkner goes so far as to compare the young boy to the man McEachern: "It would be hard to say which face was the more rapt, more calm, more convinced" (110). This scene compares the masculine traits of strength and resolve of young Joe and McEachern, the "ruthless man who had never known either pity or doubt" (112). Yet the over-performance of masculinity ultimately makes each seem almost inhuman, almost impossible to believe is an inherent characteristic.

By applying this same idea of over-performance to Christmas's behavior in his first sexual encounter, a parallel result emerges. He and his friends wait for an opportunity to have sex with a young black girl.

> When "[h]is turn [comes, there is] something in him trying to get out, like when he had used to think of toothpaste. But he could not move at once, standing there, smelling the woman, smelling the negro all at once; enclosed by the womanshenegro and the haste, driven, *having to wait until she [speaks.]*" (My emphasis, Faulkner 115)

Christmas is thrown into a dynamic that stimulates his internalized status as a black male. The memory of toothpaste incident signifies the moment he began to fear his real identity

and fell into a gender role in conflict with his appearance. So frightened by the idea of an intimate situation, a memory also tied to that same incident, in which he is expected to perform masculinely, young Joe cannot move. He literally feels compelled to wait until she gives him permission by speaking. This fear incites a desperation in Christmas, and unwilling to risk being exposed, he resorts to violence in his effort to mimic the gender behavior dictated by the construct. Christmas, because of his fear of being recognized as black, and therefore feminized in the white construct, asserts his masculinity in a venue that is hierarchically more aggressive than sexual contact: physical force[43]. Therefore, Christmas moves his performance out of a sexual venue, where he feels threatened in his competition with white males, and into a more masculine arena, physical aggression, where he feels sure he can out "masculine" the others' performances. By refusing to compete in a sexual forum, Christmas thinks he can keep from exposing himself to the outside world as relatively feminized in comparison to his white male counterparts. The change of venue from sexual to violent guarantees his ability to dominate the girl. This blatant need to demonstrate his masculinity, combined with Schafer's theory of over-performance, evidences the unnaturalness of Christmas's "original" masculine behavior and emphasizes his fear of being marginalized by a society that will not accept him as he is. This makes clear that Christmas, because of his apprehension about being black, feels like original masculinity is white masculinity and is therefore not inherent to his male body, but must rather be, in his case, a learned behavior that he must constantly monitor

[43] I assert here that in the same way that masculinity is relatively privileged over femininity, and that white is privileged over black, physical force can be privileged as a masculine endeavor over a sexual intimacy.

and perform. Over-emphasizing the masculine behavior of Christmas divulges the artificiality of it.

In addition to exposing the instability of Christmas's masculine behavior through Butler and Schafer's theories of performance and Halberstam's idea of dominant white masculinity, it is also possible to determine multiple levels of his feminization through his intimate sexual relationships. In the first instance of his sexual experience, the white boys have no trouble assuming their masculine roles and dominating the young black girl because in the social hierarchy they occupy a position far above her; young Joe, fearing that he cannot perform sufficiently well uses violence to assert his masculinity, which ultimately reinforces his own doubts about himself. His second sexual experience is with the prostitute Bobbie Allen. While initially Christmas seems ignorant of her work, when Bobbie tells him she is a prostitute, he sees that "what he discovered [. . .] he had known all the time" (Faulkner 146). While she is white, her occupation adds layers to her place in the social hierarchy, dispatching her to a relatively low position. Although Christmas may not initially acknowledge her profession, he does know, via her treatment by others and her own sense of self-worth[44], that she occupies the social space equivalent to it; therefore, he feels secure enough about his social masculinity to attempt a relationship with her. However, one evening, he goes to her house, expecting it to be dark and sleepy, but it is alive with activity. He realizes that "there [is] a man in the room with her" (146), which, of course, makes him feel threatened in the relationship. When he next sees her, "He [strikes] her, without warning [. . .] He [strikes] her again" (Faulkner 146). At this

[44] He says of his first date with her: "[I]t was like she was waiting for me to hit her" (Faulkner 137).

threat to his masculinity, Christmas reverts to over-performance as a safety valve and switches from intended intimacy to violence. His fear of failure because of his inherent belief in his re-gendering will not allow him to pursue more equal relationships.

Joanna Burden occupies a unique position in the social hierarchy, and because of this, Christmas's relationship with her is riddled with conflict in terms of both expectation and performance. In the social structure, a white woman occupies a different, but virtually equal space with a black man, each layered similarly, yet Christmas and Burden each suffer social distancing from the positions they should own. Christmas endures the conflict between his white skin and his internalized black role; Burden faces social marginalization because of her race politics. And, they both suffer gender dissonance: Christmas bears the masculinization of white skin and the feminization of internalized black behaviors; Burden is masculinized because of her race and the position she holds in the black society she serves, but feminized by both her sex and her social ostracization. Faulkner writes, "she had been born and lived and died a foreigner, an outlander" (214). This combination results in a shifting dynamic, causing Christmas to muse, "'[sex] was like I was the woman and she was the man.' [And the narrator to point out], [b]ut that was not right, either. Because she had resisted to the very last" (174)]. The two struggle, trying to find a relational balance within an internalized system that limits the acceptability and behaviors of each of them.

The lack of intimacy permeates the scenes of Burden and Christmas: "[Burden] would never stay while he ate" (Faulkner 172). She merely prepares his food, and he enters the kitchen and "[finds] his supper waiting on the table and he [sits] and [eats] it,

still without [seeing] her at all" (190). They not only lack intimacy in shared bread, but rarely share words: "They talked very little, and that casually, even after he was the lover of her spinster's bed. Sometimes he could almost believe that they did not talk at all, that he didn't know her at all" (172). Even during the "second phase" of their relationship, when "she [insists] on telling him in tedious detail the trivial matters of her day" (191), Christmas is passive in his participation. This lack of intimacy extends to their sexual relationship, and "[e]ven after a year it was as though he entered [the house proper] by stealth to despoil her virginity each time anew" (174). This indication of every sexual encounter being the first emphasizes that he never knows her well. The sex evolves into angrier and more aggressive acts as they spend time together but cannot connect: "[Christmas] [begins] to tear at her [Joanna's] clothes. [. . . ] [T]hough his hands [are] hard and urgent it [is] with rage alone" (175). As soon as Burden begins to act like "a woman in love" (192), Christmas thinks "I better get away from here" (193). And, when she tries to lure him into intimacy with "talk about a child" (195), he begins to "[betray] her with other women, women bought for a price" (195). Christmas takes every opportunity to maintain distance between Burden and himself. He fears any slip might expose his contradictory identity aspects. Denied an intimate relationship, Christmas is once again thrust outside of the social construct and deprived of the benefits extended to those who conform to traditional expectations of congruent identity.

Finally, Christmas's fear of his own discordant behavior, reinforced by the socially constructed perspective of identity roles, forces him to see Burden as trying to feminize or emasculate him by forcing him into a minoritized black society. In the latter

phase of their relationship, Joanna encourages Joe to pursue a degree from a black school to which she is connected. He is stunned that she suggest the he go to a "nigger college," that he be a "nigger lawyer," and he asks her if she expects that he will "Tell niggers that [he is] a nigger too" (205). He resists this institutional framing that she pushes onto him. He withdraws from her and the relationship, telling her that she is "old" (205) and therefore "no good any more" (206). He answers her "flat hand[ed]" slap with a "blow [. . .] "struck with his fist" (205), followed by more blows. He resorts to the same violent tactics he has used in the past to assert his masculinity, to control his environment. Three months later, when Joe refuses to pray with Joanna, she pulls a revolver and threatens to kill them both. Joe takes the gun from her and slices her throat with a razor. Joanna Burden knows Joe's secret, and so he is unable to reclaim his privileged identity as a white male as long as she is alive. His inability to organize his identity into a socially acceptable combination, even though his disorientation is spurred by external factors, ultimately contributes to him murdering Joanna Burden.

Christmas's relationship with Lucas Burch exemplifies a different aspect of the sex, gender, orientation trio. That the two live together is not seen as problematic until Burch[45] reveals that Christmas is black when the authorities interrogate him about Joanna Burden's death: "'That's right,' he says. 'Go on. Accuse me. Accuse the white man that's trying to help you with what he knows. Accuse the white man and let the nigger go free. Accuse the white and let the nigger run'" (Faulkner 71). This is precisely the time that the incongruence of Christmas's sex and gender is determined by the people in

[45] Burch is an alias for Brown, who is on the run from Lena, who is pregnant with his child and looking for him.

Jefferson. Byron Bunch, in relating the events of the incident to Hightower says it was, "[l]ike he [Burch] had knowed that if it come to a pinch, this would save him [revealing Christmas's race], even if it was almost worse for a white man to admit what he would have to admit than to be accused of the murder itself" (Faulkner 71). While this comment about "[admitting] what he would have to admit" is certainly ambiguous, at least one faction of the ambiguity lies in a comment about the nature of Burch and Christmas's relationship.

Leslie Fiedler's 1977 essay "Come Back to the Raft Ag'in, Huck Honey!" in which Fiedler argues for the homosexuality of Huck and Jim based on their interracial relationship, identifies a tendency to associate interracial relationships with homosexuality. The person of color is feminized by the race layer, which has been imposed upon him by society. It is not only that they are a black man and a white man living together, but that they disrupt the necessary congruency of the sex, gender, orientation set. When an "original" enters into a relationship with a layered "copy," with a feminized version of himself, it establishes an unequal power dynamic. This power dynamic is perceived as translating into a sexual relationship. In *Light in August,*, Christmas's layered identity, his gendered role, necessarily assigns him a sexual role in his relationship with Burch. Take, for example, the comments of the marshal upon learning of Christmas's race; he immediately says, "'I always thought there was something funny about that fellow'" (72). Here the word *funny* is also used ambiguously, but can most certainly be tied to his social behavior lacking congruence with his ostensible physical determiners: white and male. Finally, the sheriff makes a blatant

statement about the perceived sexuality of Christmas when he says, "[w]hat I am interested in is the husband he seems to have had since he come to Jefferson" (239). The deputy laughs loudly in response to this remark. According to Robert Parker,

> For the town, therefore, racial difference can mark a gender difference, since they see one man in the couple as husband and—implicitly—the other as wife, and the gender difference they impose on racial difference so threatens them that it fragments their response, or Faulkner's, leading one time to horror and another time to laughter. (82)

The suppositions made concerning Christmas's sexual preference are based on the conflict between his perceived sex as a white male and his newly determined, gendered role as a feminized black male. The incongruity drives the social system to assume the third component of his make-up must be abnormal as well, and they label him both a gender deviant and a homosexual.

Christmas's final moments of life reflect not only his feminization and marginalization, but the social insistence that his sex and gender be paired appropriately When Joe escapes from the deputy bringing him in, patriotic zealot, Percy Grimm is adamant about taking a lead role in recapturing Joe, and he persuades the sheriff to deputize him (Faulkner 339). As a captain in the "new civilian military" 336), Grimm represents cultural and social order. Too young to serve in World War I and still blaming "his parents for that fact" (335), he believes is now the keeper of the order and the ideals. He holds "a sublime and implicit faith in physical courage and blind obedience," and along with his ethnocentrism, he is convinced that "the white race is superior to any and

all other races" (336) According to John Duvall, "Christmas becomes doubly threatening to Grimm; in addition to violating the taboo against miscegenation, Christmas [. . . ] is perceived as a pervert" (63). Grimm's fanatical beliefs cause him to think he has the *right* to kill him. Grimm chases a handcuffed Christmas through the streets, hunting him mercilessly, and finally shoots him, "[emptying] the automatic's magazine" into his body (345). But, Duvall continues, "Grimm's passion is not yet spent. His castration of Joe completes a certain symbolic logic. The 'black blood' that flows from Christmas's hips and loins is metaphorically and metonymically menstrual blood; Joe bleeds where women (and only women) bleed" (64). Sex and gender are restored before death when Grimm realigns Joe's race and gender role with his body by cutting away at his groin, by violently and completely removing his genitalia before Joe dies. Joe is re-gendered in his last moments of life.

The Reverend Gail Hightower represents a variation of the gender/sex conflict. Unlike Christmas and Burden, his position in the race structure does not define him, but his failure to dominate, control, or manipulate his wife—"he was not a natural husband, a natural man" (Faulkner 51)—sets the married couple in a dichotomy that exposes him as feminized. That he fails to care for his wife the way a husband should, casts light on his masculinity in terms of his sexuality and sets him up in a series of relationships that society questions based merely on the fact that his gender behavior has been determined to be an inappropriate reflection of his biological sex. His relationship with his female cook is established as unacceptable, and while some men from Jefferson encourage her to leave the employment, it is rumored that the female cook "quit herself because

[Hightower] asked her to engage in behavior which she said was against God and nature," likely anal sex (Faulkner 51). Because of the race hierarchy, it is obvious to society that, "if a nigger woman considered it against God and nature, it must be pretty bad" (Faulkner 52). Once identified as having a sex and gender that do not measure up to social expectation, Hightower is identified as a sexual deviant. This relationship with a black woman, though apparently heterosexual, reflects and reinforces his feminization in that it supports his inability to maintain a "normal" or masculine relationship with a white woman. His seeming desire for anal sex marks him as deviant.

After cooking for himself for a while, Hightower hires "a negro man to cook for him. And that finished him, sure enough" (Faulkner 52). His relationship with his black male cook is clearly perceived as connected to the assumed deviancy between his sex and gender[46]. According to Parker, "when Hightower hires his male cook, the town has more than racial difference to provoke its reading, since it already has a history of reading Hightower as sexually different" (Parker 83). This cements Hightower's place outside of society; the three aspects of sex, gender, and orientation have all been observed as "queer," and that all suspicions regarding him have been built around supposition does not bother the townsfolk.

In addition to the public's determination that Hightower functions in a feminized role because of his sex/gender performance troubles, Parker points out that,

[46] Refer here again to Leslie Fiedler's 1977 essay "Come Back to the Raft Ag'in, Huck Honey!" in which Fiedler argues for the homosexuality of Huck and Jim based on their interracial relationship as discussed on page 34 of this chapter.

> Hightower colludes in his own feminization. Jealous of Byron's newfound heterosexual masculinity, Hightower warns him: '[w]hat woman, good or bad has ever suffered from any brute as men have suffered from good women?' Here he self-servingly denies the actual relations between genders, feminizing himself by inverting which gender most abuses which. (85)

It seems that he further participates in both his feminization and his marginalization when, "[I]n a desperate effort to give Christmas an alibi, [he] falsely [claims]—[. . .] that Christmas was with him the night of Joanna Burden's death" (Parker 86), yelling to the lynch mob led by Grimm, " He was here that night. He was with me the night of the murder" (Faulkner 345). Grimm interprets this as an admission of intimacy and retorts, "Has every preacher and old maid in Jefferson taken their pants down to the yellowbellied son of a bitch?" (345). Two issues certainly provoke Grimm's response: an interracial relationship, which cannot be understood except in sexualized terms, and Hightower's personal history of noncompliance to social sex/gender demands. As Duvall puts it, "Hightower is perceived as a pervert" (63). If any doubt remains that Hightower's sexual preference is questioned, it is erased with the question of "why [Christmas] had fled to Hightower's house at the last. 'Like to like,' the immediate ones said, remembering the old tales about the minister" (Faulkner 330). Clearly, the aspect Christmas and Hightower share is the social dissonance caused by misaligned sex and gender; however, the one they are convicted of, and that is necessarily connected to the sex and gender disparity, is homosexual activity. Butler explains this connection: "The

cultural matrix through which gender identity has become intelligible requires that certain kinds of 'identities' cannot 'exist'—that is, those in which gender does not follow from sex and those in which the practices of desire do not 'follow' from either sex or gender" (Butler *Gender* 17). Christmas and Hightower express gender identities that cannot be read or understood by the community. Neither can be allowed to exist with genders that do not follow sex.

Robert Parker notes that "Christmas and Brown are like Hightower and his cook, and like Hightower and Christmas, in that none of them is actually a couple; people only think or pretend to think they are a couple" (82). The reason each one of these pairs is identified as homosexual is based not only on the interracial theme, but also on the failure of one or both of them to fit into the social construct because of observed or perceived deviation from the norm. Hightower is likewise a victim of social manipulation because he is viewed as a failure in terms of filling his gender role. His victimization parallels that of both Joe Christmas, with his conflicting white body and black blood, and Joanna Burden, with her inherent masculine behavior.

Joanna Burden, though both her identity and re-gendering are less radical than those of Joe Christmas, experiences her share of dissonance. She emerges as a product of two different gendering phenomena. First, because of her work with the African American community, she receives social privilege for being white in a black, oppressed social arena. This externally motivated gendering is caused by the way society perceives her relative to her surroundings. While this one impetus would be enough to cause the kind of gender conflict that would deem her unacceptable to the majority culture, Joanna

Burden is also presented as having tendencies toward an inherent masculine gender—she works and thinks like a man (Gilbert and Gubar 41). Moreover, her body betrays even her attempts at performing femininity in refusing to conceive, though she actively tries to get pregnant. This combination, a sexed female working in a racially feminized society that puts her in a masculine position, having inherent masculine tendencies, and failing to reproduce, situates her well outside of the acceptable combination of sex, gender, and orientation. Her refusal to comply with social pressure marks her as a force of resistance, yet her inability to rectify her internal feeling of sex and gender incongruity illustrates the power of internalized social structures.

Joanna Burden's gender is at least partially defined by her association with the African American population and the social response to that work. She clearly occupies a position of power in her career structure: she sent "replies—advice, business, financial, and religious" to many people seeking her help. She also takes trips, visiting schools and talking to teachers and students in person (Faulkner 173). As a white woman, she has privilege and authority in the black community, but still the white community of Jefferson is suspicious of her public position of authority because of her female body. In short, they censure her for assuming the right to work outside of her home and for doing so inside of an African American community. Burden's intimate relationship with Christmas mimics this masculinization for the same racially-based reason. Even before he tells her that he is black, he realizes the institutionalized power imbalance in their relationship, yet he is uncontrollably drawn into this hierarchicalized, socially constructed, dynamic. This relational problem is compounded after she realizes his racial make-up,

and encourages him to attend the Negro school. She plays an ever increasing masculine and controlling role in her efforts to push him into the lower, black social system. This compounds the gender stress they already endure and propels their relationship to further disaster.

Because Burden's sex and gender are non-traditional, and even though she attempts heterosexual relations, she never quite achieves a conventional femininity. Gilbert and Gubar say, "Joe experiences intercourse with her as combat, musing that 'It was as if he struggled physically with another man'" (41). Christmas also muses: "'it [sex] was like I was the woman and she was the man'" (174). Making her sexually more aggressive than Christmas helps to illustrate and reinforce the ways that the sex and gender misalignment create a sexual deviant as well. Even though Burden's sex partner is male, Faulkner hints at queerness when he puts her in an aggressive role and her partner into a sexually submissive role as "the woman." She eventually moves to performing sexual submissiveness with Christmas, but the masculine behaviors that are inherent to Burden's personality ultimately drive her to suffer conflict with her perception of who she is versus who she should be. Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar identify both her own dissonance and that that Christmas may suffer in his attempt to rectify his relationship with her.

> Joanna Burden, the mannish spinster of *Light in August,* is shown to want and to deserve the phallic retribution exacted by her black lover Joe Christmas, who first despoils her virginity, then arouses her desire, and finally murders her after a long sexual struggle. Perhaps because she is

> unnatural—she has the "strength and fortitude of a man" and "man trained muscles and . . . mantrained habits of thinking. (41)

This conflict of strength, muscles, and man-trained habits of thinking all housed in a female body relegates Burden to the outer edges of society, but it also creates for her a dissonance that destabilizes her sense of self. Yet, even though Burden's characteristic behavior hints at her sexual aggressiveness and her dissatisfaction with the incomplete affiliation she has with Christmas, she continues to maintain a relationship with him. She begs him to participate in the construct with her, sending him to fetch notes and letters from "a hollow fence post" (192), and trying to lure him to her with the promise[47] of a child. Eventually, she submits passively to rape, not resisting at all (175), endeavoring to assume a feminine sexual role. As time goes on, she turns more and more to traditional feminine wiles to attract him, "shifting from one to another of such formally erotic attitudes" (193). Burden ultimately over-performs her role as vehemently as Christmas does his in her desperate effort to blend her discrete identities. But her attempt to imitate femininity foreign to her gender identity only puts her more in disharmony with her "self." Her desire yet inability to participate in the community, to fit with social expectation, oblige her to accept violent, aggressive sex from her lover, a man who eventually murders her. Judith Butler refers to the kind of desire Burden demonstrates in her effort to achieve gender harmony when she writes,

> Gender is [. . . ] a construction that regularly conceals its genesis; the tacit collective agreement to perform, produce, and sustain discrete and polar

[47] Alternatively, pregnancy functions as a threat.

> genders as cultural fictions is obscured by the credibility of those productions—and the punishments that attend not agreeing to believe in them; the construction 'compels' our belief in its necessity and naturalness. (*Gender* 140)

Butler's idea of internalized gender "naturalness," combined with the threat of social punishment reinforcing the continued "phantasmatic imitation" of heterosexualized roles reflects Joanna Burden's effort to become a part of the social construct as a heterosexual partnered female, even if it is only as a fringe member.

While Joanna Burden lives, she is denied the opportunity to develop the three aspects of her being—sex, gender, and sexual orientation—individually, and is instead marginalized by society because of her manifest behavior. Certainly, her relationship with the African American community thrusts her into a powerful and therefore masculine role because of contemporary ideas about miscegenation and constructions of racial identity. Her inherent masculine behaviors are likewise perceived as inappropriate, and she is castigated by the community, both as punishment for her behavior and as an effort to force her into conformity: "She had been born and lived and died a foreigner" (214) Faulkner writes, and "[w]hile she was alive they [men of Jefferson] would not have allowed their wives to call on her" (216). It is only with her death that she is reclaimed into the communal womb. The town requires her social reinstatement and proclaims her feminine identity as fuel for unleashing their anger and exacting revenge upon the man who killed her. When the sheriff questions the first African American about her death, the air is filled with "sourceless" voices: "*By God, if that's him, what are we doing, standing*

*around here? Murdering a white woman, the black son of a* None of them had ever entered the house" (216). Joanna Burden, like Joe Christmas, is re-gendered in death, and, as in the case of Joe Christmas, that re-gendering serves nothing more than to meet the community's need to reinstate the "natural" order.

All of these characters show how the range of gender has been expanded through feminine queerness and the assumption of masculinity to varying degrees. The two women in this chapter show the ways that biological females resist gender conformity. Joanna Burden and Ántonia Shimerda are queer in their relationships to society, and both struggle to maintain their identities even under social pressure to conform. Joanna Burden so effectively clings to her gender expression, partially due to her inability to conceive, that the townspeople cannot re-gender her until her death, when they gather around her body to reclaim her into the social fold, to use her to motivate their anger toward Joe Christmas for violating the rules of race and society. Antonia Shimerda succumbs to efforts to change her when she tries to be the kind of girl Jim's grandmother will like, yet after her initial heterosexual experience, she resists conforming by physically distancing herself from the social environment that wants her changed, the city culture. Furthermore, when she marries Anton, she reclaims her masculinity by appropriating a sense of herself in him. However, unlike Joanna Burden, assuming the role of motherhood entrenches her in the feminine construct in ways she cannot overcome. Joe Christmas and Jim Burden also function as instances of gender resistance. Both defy the construct by assuming white maleness, Jim from the position of genderqueer, I believe, and Joe from the position of person of color. While both eventually fail to achieve the lives they desire,

Jim to have Antonia and Joe to fit into society, they do illustrate resistance in their varying performances of masculinity. All of the characters discussed in this chapter add to the complexity of gender and its expression. All of these characters push the boundaries of acceptable queerness. And while Jim, Joe, and several other characters I have discussed in this chapter are not female, they struggle against constructed layers of feminine identity. Their resistance clarifies ways more abstract layers of feminization function. Moreover, Jim Burden and Joe Christmas show the insidious nature of internalized social expectation, a condition that demands individuals judge even themselves in terms of acceptability.

That many endeavor to show the ranges of gender and orientation as unfixed to sex, the social insistence that sex, gender and orientation are connected still dominates the ideas of the majority culture today. Both Cather and Faulkner expose aspects of the kind of marginalization caused by a constructed insistence that does not reflect a natural condition. Forcing people to align sex, gender, and orientation in order to avoid social marginalization causes a schizophrenic existence for a population, as these authors show us, often not even at choice in trying to mimic gender. Ántonia Shimerda, Jim Burden, Joe Christmas, Joanna Burden, and the host of minor characters I have explored here are all denied a chance to participate in the social system because of gender or gender related conflicts. They are excluded from society simply because they do not fit the socially prescribed model of "natural." Isolated and separated from society, Joe Christmas stands at the curb and looks at people seated around a card table on a lighted veranda and says, "'That's all I wanted, [. . . ] That don't seem like a whole lot to ask'" (85). Yet, these

characters are deprived of components of life as basic as Christmas's solitary desire to belong. Because society prefers to embrace people whose aspects of sex, gender and orientation are congruent, those who do not comply with, or are even perceived as not fulfilling this social expectation, are thrust from mainstream society. Until this notion of unity and disunity between these components is acknowledged as constructed, racial minorities, gays and lesbians, differently-abled people and a host of others will never be able to successfully join the construct because their sex, gender and sexuality do not align themselves in a way that is acceptable to society. While those non-heterosexuals whose gender and biological sex align themselves with the expectations of society are more tolerated, people whose gender and biological sex are in conflict with the norm are marginalized and/or seen as socially and sexually perverted.

# Chapter Four

## Transsexual Identities and Gender Destabilization: Or, What the Heck Does Cutting Mean?

Gender identity is a complicated aspect of human identity, and it manifests itself in so many different ways that multiple and diverse complications occur when we try to reckon it with sex. I have, in the previous chapters, looked at the construction of gender and the struggle to resist that construction. I have discussed tomboys and the question of conformity that is asserted at puberty. Likewise, I have explored both butch and femme identities, yet another manifestation of gender that both pushes at the limits of society's tolerance and illustrates the impossibility of gender as congruent with sex or reflective of orientation. I have investigated how the act of passing both reinforces and destabilizes gender roles, and in that discussion, I suggested that passing, among other things, allows for a certain peace by relieving the pressure of difference. In this chapter, I discuss the internal struggle related to gender dissonance. I point out that external pressures to conform seem to suggest to some women that they are trapped in a body that is not theirs, one that does not reflect what they see as their proper gender. Here, I probe the idea of the "wrong" body and the surgical solutions that sometimes accompany that idea.

The solution to gender/sex dissonance through surgical reassignment illustrates the subversive possibilities of transgender behavior in its disruption of the heteronormative expectation of gender compliance because it destabilizes the perception that gender is an original rather than constructed state of being. The dissonance driven by the conflict between the externally imposed or expected identity and the implicit, fixed

gender identity stirs instability in some trans-identified people, which ultimately leads to a focus either on the health of the mind or on the suitability of the body. Gender is destabilized every time someone either chooses to have surgery, proving gender and sex are not always congruent, and every time someone resists surgery, ironically proving the same.

Straightening queerness by remaking the body provides access to multiple avenues of investigation in terms of both gender expression and biological sex and the ways they work singly and in concert. For one, the desire to seek surgical relief from the body emphasizes a kind of desperation based on the pairing of biological sex and gender expression. The driving force behind gender expression obviously emanates from within the self, but there is still room to speculate about how that force comes to exist. Is it compelled by the mind? By the body? Or is it both? Does gender identity arise from an accident of nature, is it a genetic trait, or is it created through social custom? Secondly, and maybe more intriguing, is what the attempt toward surgical "righting" says about the fear of the destabilization of society because of transsexual and transgender behaviors. Finally, transgender expression in general, particularly coupled with the conditioned belief of the congruency of masculinity and men and femininity and women, has fueled the anxiety about female masculinity in both straight and lesbian feminist communities. Masculinity in women is often vilified. All three of the outcomes from efforts to straighten queerness—the desperation to establish gender/sex congruency, the destabilization of society because of gender queerness, and the anxiety over female

masculinity in multiple communities—show how queer women have encouraged the expansion of the definition and perceptions of acceptable ranges of gender.

Judith Halberstam's work in *Female Masculinity* marks the impact of masculine lesbian gender expression. Halberstam suggests that because white men have been granted the ownership of masculinity, other, possibly more progressive, alternate versions of the masculine have been elided, including renderings of inherent, original masculinity in women. Halberstam asserts that it is possible to explore ideas of masculinity without consideration of the male model to do so. She claims masculinity is most complex and transgressive when it is applied to the female body. Halberstam presents female masculinity not as a perversion of male masculinity but rather as a legitimate expression in and of itself. And, it is here that her work lends support to the notion that these masculine women might be seen as contributing to the evolution of the queer community rather than reinforcing gender stereotypes as has been asserted by Lillian Faderman, and others who seem to share the critique of butch-femme roles, and therefore masculine and feminine performance, as being simply replicas of heterosexuality rather than seeing them as unique and potentially subversive. Halberstam, on the other hand, challenges readers to look at female masculinity in new ways.

One major issue that confronts society is the desire to straighten the queerness that results from female expressions of masculinity by reorganizing the body, surgically changing the body, to reflect the masculine gender. This desire manifests itself internally in both those who desire that straightening in order to conform or to fit into society and in those who would impose that straightening as a solution to deviancy. This remolding of

the body to quiet social dissonance asserts that the body left in a female form with a male gender is somehow wrong, somehow less. We see the effects of this internalization of gender congruity in masculine, female literary characters. Stephen Gordon, from Radclyffe Hall's critical queer novel, *The Well of Loneliness* (1928), offers an early look at the way the masculine female character struggles to find peace with a body that does not reflect the inner self. Leslie Feinberg's *Stone Butch Blues* (1993), offers a 1950's story of a masculine woman who cannot find a suitable place in the world; finally the brilliant but troubled Sarah Kane created two dramas, *Cleansed* (1998) and *Psychosis 4.48* (2000), that record the dissonance of gender queers through powerful performances that illustrate the anguish that accompanies fitting outside of normal gender/sex parameters. All four of these works refer to the pain of ostensible mental illness that often accompanies this perceived gender/sex incompatibility. All four of these works address the desire to cut, maim, or reshape the body into a form that would rectify the internal struggle to feel whole and accepted. All of the protagonists address the desire to change the body to eliminate the pain of queerness, to satisfy either an internal drive or an external expectation, or both. And all four of these texts reflect the desperation that accompanies masculinity forced inside of the female body; moreover, all four show the anxiety that this queerness causes the non-gender queer population, and all four show the transgressive power of gender rebels.

Naked, a fully developed Stephen Gordon stands in front of the mirror and shudders at her body—not male, not female—a body that occupies a queer space, a body

that reflects an idea of gender ambiguity, of sexual fluidity. Radclyffe Hall's melancholy protagonist in *The Well of Loneliness,*

> stared at herself in the glass. Even as she did so she hated her body [. . .]. All her life she must drag this body of hers like a monstrous fetter imposed on her spirit. [. . .] *She longed to maim it*, for it made her feel cruel; it was [. . .] so poor and unhappy a thing that her eyes filled with tears and her hate turned to pity. She began to grieve over it, touching her breasts with pitiful fingers [. . .] Oh, poor and most desolate body! (217, my emphasis)

Teresa de Lauretis reads Stephen in this scene of discord as expressly lesbian, claiming her grief lies in the lost female body (213); Jay Prosser offers Stephen as transsexual, mourning her lack of the male body and identity she so craves (Prosser 135); Judith Halberstam sees Stephen as desiring masculinity, as performing masculinity, but suffering, not as Prosser suggests as a result of coveting the male body, but rather from "social disapproval" (*Female Masculinity* 85). Where the roots of this angst lie, whether in a desire to achieve either femaleness or maleness in body, or from a blocked attempt at expressing masculinity, remains a mystery bedded in the interstices of biology and culture; nevertheless, Stephen Gordon does suffer. And, that which drives gender dissonance can be neither isolated nor remediated until the social proscriptions against gender variance have been eliminated.

Hall's novel surely offers the most famous representation of a butch lesbian in the Victorian character of Stephen Gordon. From birth she is physically unusual, a "narrow-hipped, wide-shouldered little tadpole of a baby" (10). She is marked by "the curious

suggestion of strength in her movements; the long line of her limbs—she was tall for her age—and the pose of her head on her over-broad shoulders" (26). Stephen's deviance is easily recognizable through her body, a body that supports a claim to female masculinity as natural, if not common, yet one that undermines her legitimacy in society. As a child, Stephen shies away from feminine expression and style: she disdains dresses and frills, and she wants her hair short. Her longing to be a boy is blatant: She says, "Yes, of course I'm a boy" (18), [. . .] I must be a boy, 'cause I feel exactly like one" (19). Her mother mocks even the very young Stephen's masculinity, seeing her as a "blemished, unworthy, maimed reproduction" (13) of Sir Phillip, a failed imitation. Because her masculinity is housed in the female body, it is inadequate and unacceptable. There is no forum in which Stephen might present her integrated identity successfully. In order to find acceptance, Stephen must either appropriate the male body or suffer an unending alienation from society and doubt about herself.

Stephen's assessment that she "[feels] like a boy" implies that her gender is both innate and fixed; initially, it may also seem to suggest that she is trapped in the "wrong" body—that *she knows* that her body is wrong—but the idea that the body is "wrong" may not necessarily issue from an internal source. Instead, that feeling could, and I would argue likely does, indicate the unconscious internalization of a constitutionalized social schema for being a boy. Stephen has learned the organizational and conceptual patterns that identify the category of "boy" as discrete from the category of "girl." The dissonance between the physical body and the gendered mind begins here, and when she later asks her father if he "'[thinks] that [she] *could* be a man'" (26), we see her again

endeavor to balance her mental and physical discord, trying to figure how she fits in a world full of people who exemplify and enforce gender and sex congruity. Stephen feels "wrong" because her concept of herself matches the schema for "boy," one that is, but need not be, aligned with a male body. Her female body, then, necessarily becomes the "wrong" body. This is the only logical way Stephen can make sense of herself.

Stephen's first love, Angela Crossby, a married neighbor, uses Stephen for entertainment against the boredom of her life. She allows Stephen only to kiss her, but these kisses drive Stephen to realize that her desires are those that are traditionally claimed by men. Her body both claims and betrays her passion: As her sexual identity emerges, her beliefs that she is "wrong," intensify. In a world of compulsory heterosexuality, her attraction to a woman fortifies her concept of herself as male. When her mother discovers her relationship with Angela, she denounces Stephen for the "unnatural cravings of [her] unbalanced mind and undisciplined body" (234). The perceived conflict between Stephen's body, gender identity, and sexual orientation drives Stephen's mother to rail against Stephen's unintegrated, incongruous presentation of self. Stephen was the "invert" of the early 20th century, what Krafft-Ebing called "a male soul in a female body" (276). But this suggestion of Stephen's "unbalanced mind" mirrors the dissonance that is still diagnosed as a 21st century mental illness: gender identity disorder.

From early in her life, alienation and doubt fuel Stephen's growing disconnect between her mind and body. Those around her pressure her to conform by pointing out her difference. Collins calls her "queer" and Mrs. Wilson complains that she is "quite different from other young ladies—she's got none of their pretty little ways" (19). Violet

Antrim makes her condemnation clear to Stephen when she says, "'It's a terrible pity you dress as you do,'[. . .] 'a young girl's so much more attractive when she's soft—[. . .]I mean you do want to get married, don't you! No woman's complete unitl she is married" (200). Violet's commentary on Stephen's dress is likewise a comment on her body. Stephen dresses to reflect her identity, one that Violet believes should issue from her body. Violet finds the tailored lines of Stephen's suits inappropriate for a woman. She suggests that Stephen can expect no marriage, no intimacy in other words, because she is housed in a body that does not correlate with her mind according to social expectation. Finally, the words of society are echoed when she tells Stephen that "no woman can really stand alone, she always needs a man to protect her" (200). Stephen believes, however, that she has stood "alone." If woman is defined by the inability to stand alone, Stephen must not be a "woman." Furthermore, Stephen neither needs nor desires protecting; in fact, her preference for becoming a protector surfaces when Stephen tries to convince Angela to come away with her, telling her that she will "take care of her always." When she asks why Angela will not trust her, Angela "[says] just five words: 'Could you marry me Stephen?'"(172). And here Stephen's dissonance becomes unbearable. Stephen can either accept her gender identity, in which case she is at odds with her body, or her physical identity, in which case she is at odds with her mind. The idea of social validation for her birth identity, her female body and masculine gender, vanishes with the realization that she cannot fulfill the duties of a man because of her body. Yet she knows that she desires this role. Once again. she is lead to believe that she must be trapped in the wrong body. Her dissonance is not driven by an internal desire but

rather by both an external expectation for her feminine behavior and a social refusal to acknowledge her identity through social ritual and legitimization.

This kind of forced compliance is not limited to the social policing of only women. For example, Roger Antrim repeatedly accuses Stephen of imitating masculinity. He says Stephen would be "quite a womanly woman if [she would] stop trying to ape what [she is] not" (201). Her masculine identity is devalued because of her body; this cheapening of her identity reinforces both her dissonance and her frustration at having no place in society. Roger uses humiliation to try to force Stephen into her "place," by telling Angela Crossby that "he used to tease [her] when [they] were children. He says that [she] wanted to fight him one day—that made [Angela] laugh awfully" (187). Stephen not only suffers from being the butt of men's jokes, but she is humilitated because the woman she loves laughs at her exertion of masculinity. Angela's willingness to tell this story to Stephen demonstrates the expectation for her to behave in non-masculine ways. Angela believes Stephen will see the humor in her own performance because she assumes Stephen too understands femininity as natural with the female body. Stephen has no choice but to believe that somehow she is wrong, that masculinity associated with femaleness is not only impossible but also ridiculous.

While those who are not sensitive to Stephen's queerness abuse her, those who do understand the dilemna of "inversion" fail to support her: Stephen's father reads her deviance through her body and gender expression and seeks to appreciate her via the

books of Karl Heinrich Ulrichs,[48] yet her father never tells her of his suspicions, nor does he give her the books he has hidden in his library, and though he struggles to share his knowledge about Stephen with his wife, even refusing drugs to ease the pain of death so that he might do so (Hall 135), he never tells Stephen that she is not the monster her mother believes her to be. So, Stephen suffers a new fate when her father dies in an accident: "Sir Phillip's death [deprives] his child of three things; of companionship of mind born of real understanding, of a stalwart barrier between her and the real world, and above all of love"(138). Without these, Stephen is adrift in uncertainty. Even Puddle, Stephen's long-time tutor, fails to share with Stephen her own lesbian identity and experience. Though she knows she could alleviate Stephen's pain and feels "almost desperate" at times to "give courage" to Stephen (178), she remains remarkably quiet about her own life, likely fearing the retribution if someone were to find out either about her support for Stephen or her own lesbianism. In this way a social system silences marginalized people, isolating and minoritizing them, allowing them to accept diagnoses like gender identity disorder as an answer to gender, sex, and orientaton deviances.

Puddle's imagained speech to Stephen never has the impact on her that it might—

> "You're neither unnatural, nor abominable, nor mad; you're as much a part of what people call nature as anyone else—only you're unexplained as yet—you've not got your niche in creation. But some day that will come, and meanwhile don't shrink from yourself, but just face yourself

48 Ulrichs, in 1863 published Vindex [Vindicator], and Inclusa [Inclusive], two of the first books in modern history to deal with "same-sex" love in a positive way. In 1864 in Aurich, Hanover, he wrote and later published Vindicta [Rod of Freedom], Formatrix [She (Nature) Who Creates]. His books were confiscated and banned by Saxony police, but the ban was lifted six days later by a court order, an event which Ulrichs marks as the beginning of a modern-day queer movement.

> calmly and bravely. Have courage; do the best you can with your burden. But above all be honourable. Cling to your honour for the sake of those others who share the same burden. For their sakes show the world that people like you and they can be quite as selfless and fine as the rest of mankind. Let your life go to prove this." (178)

—but it does serve to illustrate Hall's philosophy about dealing with her own queerness. Her call to "face yourself" and "be honourable" foreshadow Stephen's behavior. And from her decision to pursue her life away from Morton to her decision to give up Mary, Stephen acts with what she believes to be both honor and honesty, even though her society has no respect or honor for her. She sacrifices her one opportunity to have happiness to allow Mary a chance at social acceptance, a chance that she believes that she will never have because of her struggle to reckon her sex and gender. There are multiple textual examples of Stephen's acknowledgment of both her body and her position in society as sites of conflict, several that I have already pointed to, but no where is this battle clearer than in Hall's closing words of the novel. After Stephen "voluntarily [relinquishes] Mary to a male suitor," she is described as a "city under seige" (Gilbert and Gubar Volume 2, *Sexchanges* 220). Hall writes,

> The room seemed to be throning with people. Who were they, these strangers with the miserable eyes? And yet, were they all strangers? Surely that was Wanda? And someone with a neat little hole in her side—Jaime clasping Barbara by the hand; Barbara with the white flowers of death on her bosom. Oh, but they were many, these unbidden guests, and they

> called very softly at first and then louder. They were calling her by name, saying: 'Stephen, Stephen!' The quick, the dead and the yet unborn—all calling her, softly at first and then louder. [. . . ] She could see their marred and reproachful faces with the haunted, melancholy eyes of the invert—eyes that had looked too long on a world that lacked all pity and all understanding. (509)

Stephen literally becomes a second site of conflict, a mediator between these voices and faces calling to her: an emerging queer identity and the social and religious constructions of identity. By internalizing the social agenda for identity despite her queerness, she functions as both an intrinsic proponent of the construct and an extrinsic, potentially destabilizing force of it. Hall writes, "Rockets of pain, burning rockets of pain—their pain, her pain, all welded together into one great consuming agony. Rockets of pain that shot up and burst, dropping scorching tears of fire on the spirit—her pain, their pain [. . .] In their madness to become articluate through her, they were tearing her to pieces" (510). Stephen sees the pain, feels the pain of queerness: both the trans-identified and the gay and lesbian. Their "madness" becomes her madness. Embracing both the hegemonic forces of the social construct and the desire for unrestrained sex and gender expression creates a dissonance for her that imitates, if not finally creates, mental instability. She is overwhelmed by the intensity of the conflict she suffers: "They were everywhere now, cutting off her retreat; neither bolts nor bars would avail to save her. The walls fell down and bled before them; at the cry of their suffering the walls fell and crumbled" (Hall 510). Stephen's world collapses, and she realizes that she cannot tolerate the dissonance

between self-expression and community-expectation. With the queer community demanding her voice on one side, and the straight community demanding her conformity on the other, Stephen falls victim to this second, external pressure that mimics her own internal discord. The voices warn her:"'We are coming, Stephen—we are still coming on, and our name is legion—you dare not disown us!' She raised her arms, trying to ward them off, but they closed in and in: 'You dare not disown us!' / They possessed her" (510). Stephen faces the dissonance on two metaphorical planes: as an artist, she must lead a struggle for queer liberation from a prison that has become unbearable. As an individual, she fights her for her own release from the pressures of society:

> And now there was only one voice, one demand; her own voice into which those millions had entered. A voice like the awful deep rolling of thunder; a demand like the gathering together of great waters. A terrifying voice that made her ears throb, that made her brain throb, that shook her very entrails, until she must stagger and all but fall beneath this appalling burden of sound that strangled her in its will to be uttered. (510)

And still Stephen Gordon cannot extricate herself from the powers that control her. She appeals to God to change society rather than to society to change their god. She begs for the right to "exist," the right to claim sanity, righteousness, godliness. But throughout, her steadfast alligiance to the christian god illustrates both her susceptiblility to hegemonic power and her inability to find balance in her identities: 'God' she gasped, 'we believe; we have told You we believe…We haven not denied You, then rise up and defend us.

Acknowledge us, oh God, before the whole world. Give us also the right to our existence!' (510).

This multiple-level dissonance alludes to mental illness as potentially part of trans-identity. The "madness," the haunting, the hearing the voices of "the unborn," the "one great consuming agony," her crumbling and bleeding walls, her collapsing identity, her inability to ward off the voices,her ultimate "possession," and the "terrifying voice that made her ears throb, that made her brain throb, that shook her very entrails," all demonstrate her descent into a socially imposed mental instability, an instability that demonstrates sex and gender as discrete components of identity. Moreover, and maybe more importantly, this parallel of conflict that Hall creates in pairing Stephen's sense of heteronormative superiority with the social pressure enacted by the queer forces, their demand that she save them from that which God failed to save them (510), suggests that Hall did indeed understand the kind of dissonance Stephen suffered at the hands of society, that Hall imagined gender identity disorder as an externally manipulated condition.

Whether we claim this condition of anxiety is innate or contrived, whether we believe it is social condemnation or biological malfunction, matters not to the one who suffers. One or both fuels the dissonance between the body and gender. Yet eliminating the disapproval of a society that embraces social constructions as truth and that drives Stephan to want to "maim" her body, will eliminate the cultural demand for gender and sex alignment, which in turn might eliminate the diagnosis of Gender Identity Disorder—GID. GID remains pathologized in the revised 2000 version of the *DSM*, the *Diagnostic*

*and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, a handbook for mental health professionals. GID, is defined in the *DSM* as "A persistent aversion toward some or all of those physical characteristics or social roles that connote one's own biological sex" (American Psychiatric Association 823) and is often diagnosed when gender roles and sex appear to be incongruent. GID is classified as a mental disorder: this means sufferers "have prominent emotional, behavioral, and psychological symptoms. [Yet] physical causes have not been demonstrated or are poorly understood, even though biological treatments may be effective" ("Mental Disorder")

Most medical personnel see GID as a psycholgical problem, as an abnormality, and treatable through surgery, drugs, and other therapies. Yet research "supports the hypothesis that gender identity disorders may develop as a result of an altered interaction between the development of the brain and sex hormones"(Zhou), and if this is the case, manifestations of the disorder are likely linked to a socially imposed condition: the proscription of gender/sex incongruity. If there were not a directive for gender behavior, the interaction of the brain and sex hormones would not create a perceived dysfunction, and the condition would not exist. It would be neither a mental nor physical abnormality, but rather just a difference manifested in a minority of people—one much like red hair. Further complicating the diagnosis of GID is that it is used both to identify people who believe they are in the wrong bodies: that is, those who do not reconcile their biological sex with their internal identification as the opposite sex, and those who simply do not comply with the gender expectations of their biological sex. Forcing these two very different sorts of people into a single diagnosis reinscribes the compulsory gender/sex

binary reflected in the heterosexual paradigm. Such a reinscription of this binary is clearly one of playwright Sarah Kane's themes.

Kane lays bare the constructed ideas of reality as they work against the free expression of gender identity. She both confronts the demand for conformity and exposes the suffering of those who live in the margins of political, religious, cultural, and academic institutions. Her plays do not restrict themselves to expression on a single issue, but work to expose ignorance, injustice, and intolerance in their many forms. Yet, the theme of transgender dysphoria in both *4.48 Psychosis* and *Cleansed* delivers a patent proclamation about issues of gender identity, emphasizing the pain of the transgender dysphoric, the pain clear in the reflection of Stephen Gordon. Kane shows the futility of addressing transgender issues as mental illness while at the same time making a plea for the general dissolution of constructs that insist upon the traditional correlation between gender and sex; she calls for freedom **from** gender roles sanctioned by the social construct rather than freedom **to** seek surgery as a way to eliminate the dissonance thrust upon those forced to reckon gender and sex identities. Kane refers to self-injury, drug therapies, and both behavioral and body modifications to suggest that both psychiatric care and sex-reassignment surgery are strategies to maintain current constructed ideas about gender norms.

*4.48 Psychosis* engages in monologues and dialogues about grief, mental anguish, and psychological distress. The title refers to the "darkest hour before dawn," 4:48 am, the time when, according to Kane, those who pose as sane throughout the day live in reality. Though this poetic drama is written without character or stage directions, the

setting suggests a mental hospital; the dialogue implies a doctor and patient. The parts can be played by anyone as the lines are gender ambiguous. Both transgender identity and gender fluidity flood the opening scene with allusions to Kafka's "Metamorphosis" and intersexuality.[49] Ambiguous words like "person" are paired with vague terms, for instance, "genitals," keeping gender fluid and sex a mystery. Yet, lines like "My hips are too big," "I dislike my genitals" (207), and questions as plain as "Do you think it's possible for a person to be born in the wrong body?" (215). emphasize the emotional discord associated with transgender identity.

The unnamed protagonist of Kane's drama defines her dissonance for the "doctor": "I need to become who I already am" she[50] says "and will bellow forever at this incongruity which has committed me to hell" (212). She identifies both her challenge and her oppressor: "I have reached the end of this dreary and repugnant tale of a sense interned in an alien carcass and lumpen[51] by the malignant spirit of the moral majority" (214). Here Kane proposes that the mind and body conciliation is denied not because the gendered mind is trapped in a differently sexed body, but because society will not allow a gendered mind and sexed body to operate fluidly. Her character says, "In accident time where there are no accidents/ you have no choice/ the choice comes after" (230). She alludes to living in a time when an unacceptable relationship between gender and sex forces her out of traditional reality as she "cannot touch [her] essential self" in this world

49 Kane uses the word "hermaphrodite."

50 I arbitrarily use the pronoun "she" for ease of discussion.

51 Cut off from the socioeconomic class with which they would ordinarily be identified: lumpen intellectuals are unable to find work in their fields.

(229). She begs people to "Stop judging by appearances and make a right judgment" (229). Kane's protagonist says, "I am deadlocked by that smooth psychiatric voice of reason which tells me there is an objective reality in which my body and mind are one. But I am not here and never have been" (209).

Self-injury references in the play attach "cutting" to the reconnection of mind and body, ostensibly implying that surgical removal or reconstruction of genitalia, surgical "cutting," will likewise normalize the relationship between gender expression and biological sex. Yet Kane alternatively demonstrates that cutting as a solution to gender dysphoria is fueled by a society that will not allow genderqueers, that the cutting is forced because of society's refusal to accept a range of gender expression. Kane writes this dialogue implying conversation between a doctor and her protagonist, a cutter:

> Oh dear, what's happened to your arm? / — I cut it./ [. . .] / —Did it give you relief?/ (*silence*)/[. . .] — NO. /— I don't understand why you did that/ —Then ask. / —Did it relieve the tension? / (*A long silence).* [. . .] / — "I thought you might do this. Lots of people do. It relieves the tension./ —[. . .] I don't know where you read that, but it does not relieve the tension. / (*silence*). / — Why don't you ask me *why*? / *Why* did I cut my *arm?* / —Would you like to tell me? / — Yes. / —Then tell me/ —ASK/ ME/ WHY. / — *(A long silence)* / — Why did you cut your arm? / — Because it feels fucking great. Because it feels fucking amazing. (216-18)

Psychological authorities indicate that cutting is frequently a result of growing up in "invalidating environments," those in which "the expression of private experiences is

not validated; instead it is often punished or trivialized"(Linehan qtd in Sutton and Martinson). These circumstances tell individuals they are "wrong in both [their] description and [their] analyses of [their] own experiences, particularly in [their] views of what is causing [their] own emotions, beliefs, and actions." Authorities also "attribute [invalidating] experiences to socially unacceptable characteristics or personality traits" (Linehan qtd in Sutton and Martinson). Transgender identity results in a social invalidation, which can be linked to self-injury in some trans-identified people (Farmer) who look to alleviate the dissonance caused by the socially constructed and imposed binary of gender and sex. Cutting "feels [. . .] great" because it returns the body to equilibrium after a dissociative break. It interrupts the spell of dissonance that transgender people with unresolved issues suffer, and here is why.

When body and mind are discrete, as Kane suggests is true for her protagonist who says "Body and soul can never be married" (Kane *Psychosis* 212) and "Here I am / and there is my body" (240), repercussions follow. As we saw was true for Stephen Gordon, the mind has only two choices: one is to make peace with the birth body—which Kane's protagonist cannot do because of the pressure to conform—or two, to separate the mind from the body. Kane pursues this second option, writing, "a dotted line on the throat/ CUT HERE" (226). This separation renders the gendered mind bodiless. Needless to say, this non-corporeal existence has serious drawbacks. For one, it labels the protagonist as ill. For another, it makes her invisible: She has no one to acknowledge the person the mind believes she is. Much of identity comes through this external validation: "our sense of ourselves emerges from the ways in which we see ourselves regarded by

others" (Stockholder 367). Without this social feedback, the gendered mind finds itself not only isolated but unable to hold onto a sense of identity, unable to assure itself of its existence. Kane writes, "Validate me/ Witness me/ See me" but all to no avail, and marks this moment one of "submission [and] defeat"(Kane *Psychosis* 243).

Living in gender dysphoria generates an existential void of sorts—a gender purgatory. Kane's character cannot exist wholly in either form, male or female, masculine or feminine, because society insists that her sex and gender remain congruent. She must recreate her mind to meet her body or vice-versa; otherwise, self-acceptance is not possible. The protagonist is a self without either a body or a mirror image, without authority or legitimacy. It is but a projected self that lacks form and flesh. Without support, the gendered, bodiless mind finds itself alone and lonely. The self fears death, and so in desperation reaches back to reground itself in the physical. Kane lists the steps of separation: "dislike/dislocate/disembody/deconstruct" (222). To avoid "deconstructing," or death, the mind must reconnect with the body; it must guarantee itself it is real. It is through cutting, which the protagonist refers to as "The beautiful pain that says [she] exists" (232) that she is reunited with the body and finds temporary relief from the strain of separation. The trans-identified individual must work back and forth between the insanity of functioning in a world that limits people to behaviors that reflect biologically sexed bodies and the insanity of living a bodiless existence to achieve an inner world of gender peace.

*Cleansed*, Kane's third play, is set "just inside the perimeter fence of a university" (109), in an institution created to house social outcasts. Both homosexual and transgender

characters play central roles in the play. Student-patients are either reeducated by drastic measures or, failing that, eliminated. Like *Psychosis 4.48*, *Cleansed* suggests the tragedy of transgender dissonance. It emphasizes the violence incurred by the transgender person who seeks medical solutions in hopes of being validated as whole and right by the social system. In *Cleansed* the student-patients are male (115).[52] Grace is the exception and becomes the only female inmate after she convinces Tinker, the cruel doctor-guard-professor, that she must be committed, she must be "fixed." Grace's male double, Graham, a drug addict who has been murdered by Tinker, is her brother and the object she initially desires to find and ultimately desires to become when she learns he is dead. She does not mourn him, but rather seeks solace by wearing his clothes (113). Her gender dysphoria is announced through her initial inclination toward transvestism, also often seen as a version of GID.

The most compelling evidence of GID in *Cleansed* occurs when Grace is asked, "If [she] could change one thing in [her] life what [she would] change" (125). Grace answers "My body. So it looked like it feels./Graham outside like Graham inside" (126). But there are many clear references to Grace's gender dysphoria. She says, "I'm not like that, a girl no" (127) and later she complains that her "balls hurt." Grace's desire to be Graham is evident when asked if she would bring Graham back to life if she could; she says "I don't think of Graham as dead" (125). If she did, she could not be him: she would lack a masculine identity goal. It is easier for her to think of Grace as dead and herself as Graham. Grace's fantasy of, or the ghost of, Graham supports her in assuming a male

52 They "don't have girls [there]."

identity. He shows his sister how to look, move, and talk like a man. If she thought of him as dead, he could not teach her how to be him.

Her desire to be male is challenged both by Tinker, who repeatedly tells her she is a woman, and a chorus of voices chanting "Lunatic Grace" (134). Attempts to align her gender and sex are written in stage notes that include *Grace [. . .] being beaten by an unseen group of men* (130), and *Grace [being] raped by one of the voices* (132). These repeated efforts to prove to Grace that she is a woman fail, and so Tinker promises he can make Grace "better," and gives her electric shock therapy: *"Grace's body is thrown into rigid shock as bits of her brain are burnt out"* (135). After forced sex, the beatings, the shock, and the drugs all fail to reeducate her, Tinker resorts to reintegrating Grace into the system by changing her body to match her gendered spirit. Grace awakens, surgically reconstructed, redone physically to reflect her gender. Grace "*touches her stitched on genitals*," and Tinker reminds her that the surgery was her choice (145).

At the end of the play, Grace sits with Carl, another body-modified patient-student. "Grace *now looks and sounds exactly like* Graham. *She is wearing his clothes. Carl wears [. . .] Grace's (women's) clothes* (149). Grace feels "it" now. "Here now./ Safe on the other side" (150). Grace smiles as Carl cries. Yet her happiness is as contrived as her new-found body. "*The sun comes out*," Kane writes, but as "*the sun gets brighter and brighter, the squeaking of the rats* [that are chewing at the wounds of both Grace and Carl gets] *louder and louder, until the light is blinding and the sound deafening"* (151). The blackout leaves both Grace and Carl still locked inside the perimeter fence. The surgery does not satisfy Grace's need. She remains locked outside

of society and inside of an institution. The wounds of her sex-reassignment surgery will never heal as the rats continue to gnaw at them. Kane advises us that choosing surgery works like cutting; it aligns the mind and body— temporarily. It straightens queerness—interrupts the feeling of queerness by shifting the focus to the physical, the body. Kane points out that surgery does little more than reinforce a gender binary that obliges people to behave in scripted patterns.

Sixty-five years after Stephen Gordon mourns her body in a mirror, Jess Goldberg, dressed in her father's suit and tie, stands in front of another mirror, straining to "catch a glimpse of the woman [she] would become" (Feinberg 20). In this mirror, the reader sees the "scared and sad" reflection of a child who can find herself in neither "the Sears catalogue" nor "on television" (20) but who reads the unacceptability of who she is in the pools of discontent in her parents' eyes.

*Stone Butch Blues* chronicles the life of this genderqueer female whose parents, like Stephen's, almost immediately identify her as different. They endeavor to normalize her masculine gender and biological femaleness through several strategies. They strip her of her cowboy outfit and buy her an Annie Oakley skirt and vest. When that fails to make her into a traditional girl they try charm school. Eventually, like Sarah Kane's protagonists, Jess finds herself institutionalized, victimized by a system that demands her compliance. And Jess's own "Tinker" puts her in a dress on the ward and teaches her to "sit with [her] knees crossed, be polite, and smile when [she is] spoken to" (21). She is given medication that makes her "feel like [she is] moving through glue" (22). The mirrors of the world, the mental hospital, the charm school she is next sent to, the

community in which she lives, train her: She says, "Whatever the world thought was wrong with me, I finally began to agree they were right" (23). And Jess falls victim to the same self-loathing that makes Stephen and Grace want to maim their bodies, want to straighten queerness.

Mental hospitals and mental illness remain a theme in this novel about genderqueerness, just as they remain constant in Kane's plays, and Jess's friends, like Edwin, who commits suicide, and Butch Al, who is committed to an institution, display symptoms that could ostensibly be caused by mental illness. The outward manifestation of the identity dissonance likely driven by social conditioning, is read as a mental abnormality and treated as such. These women are diagnosed as "wrong" and are forced out of society through institutionalization or death. The only choice that seems to lead to peace is that of aligning sex and gender: a surgical straightening of queerness. Jess's own gender dysphoria stems from how she is perceived by other people. Like Stephen Gordon, her physical body serves as a primary concern. This is demonstrated by her complaints about her growing breasts, yet she seems indifferent to her menstruation. Her aversion to her breasts, and likely Stephen's too, is based largely on the reaction of those around her—boys and men who stared or "yelled vulgar things" (23) at her about her body. Even though her menstruation marks her femaleness as prominently as breasts do, Jess is not preoccupied with it because it is not public; no one can see menstruation. People witness her difference in her masculine expression of the female body. In other words, her breasts betray her as female, and they bring awareness to the lack of congruency between her body and gender expression. When Jess walks through her high school, girls ask if she is

"animal, mineral, or vegetable." They refer to her as an "it" (24) Jess's performance of identity is confusing to those who embrace the construction of gender and sex as inseparable. Jess's identity is not understandable to the high-school students, who ultimately move her identity beyond male or female because it cannot be rectified as she presents herself.

The social tendency to reinforce appropriate gender behavior shows not only in family and peer groups, but in public pressure as well, often by those who represent social authority. In *Stone Butch Blues*, when the police see a woman express herself masculinely, they use her body to teach her (and others) that she is not a man and therefore not allowed to exhibit those traits that Judith Halberstam tells us are still reserved for men. During instances of arrest, the breasts are attacked as proof of sex and therefore gender. For example, during one arrest, a police officer yells in the face of one of the butch women as the young Jess looks on: "You think you're a guy? Can you take it like a guy? What are these?"(56). The cop exposes her breasts and then grabs and squeezes them until she gasps. The breast becomes a marker of femaleness and therefore, necessarily of femininity. To have them is to surrender the right to masculine expression. To get rid of them, then, is to save the self the humiliation of being exposed. But this cutting, this need to remove the breasts, is based on the social demand to conform to the gender/sex binary.

Jess, who has difficulty finding a job because she is genderqueer, finally gets one loading trucks in freezing weather. She notices that the men with whom she works are missing pieces of their ears, and she, in a moment of foreshadowing wonders what she

will be forced to sacrifice in order to survive (76). Predictably it is her breasts. And later, when the difficulty of finding work intrudes on her survival, Jess and her friends realize they must embrace convention or starve. One friend suggests wigs and make-up as a conformist strategy so the butch women might get hired in more traditional jobs, but Jess cannot perform femininity well enough to pass as a straight woman. The group discussion of the recourse to the social pressure by taking male hormones illustrates compliance based on external pressure, not internal drive.

Jess's decision to start on testosterone and try to pass as male demonstrates the pressure she feels to obey the rules of society: she hopes that aligning her body with her behavior will assure her both safety and work. "I've got to do something," she says. "I have been fighting to defend who I am all my life" (Feinberg 148). What will happen if I don't take the hormones?"(153). Her partner, who ultimately leaves her for the decision to begin the transition, tells her that if she does not do it she will likely be killed or end up taking her own life. The choice to transition—to cross to the other sex as Jay Prosser puts it—is here clearly based on external pressure. The other road to Jess's future leads to death. And while the hormones do provide some relief in terms of unifying her for the outside world, that altering of her chemistry continues to push at Jess's ability to find peace. Shortly after she has assumed her male identity, women begin to flirt with her, but she does not find respite in that heterosexual sanctuary. Instead she is angry. She is upset by the judgment of society of her as "cute" as a man, but a pariah as a genderqueer. Acceptance of her as male makes her realize even more her unfair treatment as a "he she."

Jess is excluded by society on multiple fronts. She is ostracized by her family, teased, taunted, and even raped by her peers, beaten and humiliated by the police, and punished by social demands for gender/sex conformity in the work place. She hopes to find a space in society where she can disappear, but the transition to male does not bring that to her. After a painful and insensitive breast surgery, Jess faces the world alone. She lacks the support of even her lesbian community and must try to survive without intimacy. One day, Jess realizes that for her the benefits of living as male do not outweigh the problems that arise from not being herself. Jess stops the hormones and works to settle into the world as a genderqueer individual. It is here that she eventually finds what peace there is for her, first in the arms of other transgender people and then in the larger queer community. It is here, that Jess resists the external pressure to align her body and gender and accepts herself as genderqueer. She is not in the wrong body for herself. Her internal identity is not altered by an external remedy.

While both Butler and Halberstam offer transgender as more of a state of beyond gender, in fact, that many queer people move into this trans space by moving past traditional sex and gender order, Jay Prosser retains the more traditional definition of across gender. Prosser who maintains that many transsexed people are not queer, in any sense, suggests they do not aspire to be transgressive. What they want is to be themselves and for other people to recognize them as such. This requires, asserts Prosser, that they straighten, not queer, their relationships between their sex and their gender ("Bodies"). Yet it seems that neither Butler and Halberstam's or Prosser's theories can be pursued further until the psychological factors that drive desires and identity are controlled. When

are people at choice? What social conditions drive our choices? How do we know if the feelings we have are truly driven by the internal?

Gender dysphoria is a personal issue, yet there is a public responsibility to eliminate the social contributions that work to cause both public and private dissonance; Hall brought to light the struggle of the gender dysphoric; Kane made her reflections about gender dysphoria public by suggesting that the construct is responsible for the popularity of sex-reassignment surgery. She implies that we cannot be sure of which gender choices are made from freewill and which are made based on internalized beliefs; Feinberg demonstrates an evolution of gender and sex relativity that suggests there are acceptable identities beyond the traditional, that perhaps gender dysphoria can be eliminated through acceptance. Still, in this day, persons struggling with GID may well desire surgery in order to fit in the world, yet we will not know what is socially imposed and what is driven solely by an internal desire until we surrender the comfort of mandatory gender/sex behaviors in favor of gender freedom.

So many of the choices we make are informed by our socialization, by our language, and by our culture, that determining real choice is very difficult. Certainly neither Jess nor Stephen deliberately choose a masculine gender identity to go with their female bodies. That seems manifest with their natural development, but when they begin to agree with society that something is wrong with them, they begin to make choices based on that belief. Surely, neither have Kane's characters chosen the kind of dissonance they suffer nor the cutting and surgery that ostensibly offers relief from it. Gender/sex realignment surgery is a tool of soiety designed to make people fit into a

paradigm that is comfortable for the majority. Surely, with the 2008 public response to California's proposition 8 and the struggle that has followed it, we see that people still cling to the idea of straightening queerness, of forcing conformity to traditional models of originality. Those who are willing to sacrifice difference may indeed participate in socially validating rituals such as marriage, while those who choose to try to balance their differences are denied full citizenship in a country that has elected its first person of color to its highest office. I am not implying that transexual people pass into society, nor am I suggesting that they live easy lives because of this choice. What I am suggesting is that we cannot know if people are born living in the "wrong" bodies until we have disconnected biological sex, sexual orientation, and gender identity from the congruency it still demands. Expressing masculinity or feminity should be able to happen from any physical form. Respect for gender expression will lead to that end.

## Chapter Five

## Strategic Essentialism in Feminist Utopias: Living in Women's Worlds

Virginia Woolf wrote "A woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction" (*A Room* 2) These words echo a long-standing cry from women: women simply need space, and Woolf recognized this need when she wrote about the potential marginalization of Shakespeare's imagined sister, Judith (*A Room* 50-51). The space that women writers found sometimes resulted in fictionalized women's worlds, sites of fantasy that demonstrate or develop Woolf's assertion that women need space, and both the function and influence of these women's communities can be known to us through careful perusal of this literature. Likewise, many different kinds of feminist, separatist communities have been built by women; yet the parameters and outcomes of existing sites of feminist separatist communities, for the most part, elude us. They are more difficult to analyze as they are often secret, hidden, or open to only a few. While some profess that a women's community situates the idea of order within a broad scope of freedom, and while many insist that the equality so aptly demonstrated in the utopian fiction of these women's worlds is a goal that women reach in separatism, the practical expression of this has thus far been mysterious. The depth and breadth of identity development inside of these real but often cloistered communities remains a mystery to all but the smallest groups of women, and for the most part, the feminist dream of order, freedom, and equality operating in tandem, in perfect balance, is still lived only within the pages of novels, poetry, and short stories. Yet, I believe both the fictional and factual sites of female essentialism offer a unique opportunity to explore gender development as

it might happen outside of a traditional society. Naturally, the very concept of gender changes in both real and fictional worlds when community is represented by a single sex. In this penultimate chapter, I explore those fictional worlds in which women have provided space that serves as Woolf's "room," a haven for self-expression and self-development meant to allow them to function outside of the confines of a social construct that has fixed roles and assignments for women.

As I have pointed to in these few previous chapters, it seems likely that the same strands of social convention, heteronormativity for one, that work to uphold society and strengthen community both fuel and maintain the kinds of social, cultural, and political rigidity that keeps gender fixed and expression narrow. Separatist communities, where women are central rather than marginal, directly suggest that society need not be based on two sexes, or by extension, on compulsory heterosexuality. Moreover, once the sex binary is eliminated, gender is loosed from the regulatory powers of sex. Gender can be expressed based simply on desires, regardless of the impetus.

To frame this inquiry into gender expression in essentialist communities, I would like to first refer to Diana Fuss, who outlines her argument for a particular kind of separatism in her book *Speaking Essentially*. She maintains that, "there is an important distinction to be made [. . .] between 'deploying' or 'activating' essentialism and 'falling into' or 'lapsing into' essentialism." Fuss argues that the latter implies that "essentialism is inherently reactionary" and can be identified as a "problem or mistake." The former terms, 'deploying' or 'activating,' indicate an essentialism that utilizes a "strategic or interventionary value." She strongly suggests that it depends on who invokes

essentialism for which reason that determines the validity of the sign (20). According to Fuss, "the stronger lesbian endorsement of identity and identity politics may well indicate that lesbians inhabit a more precarious and less secure subject position than gay men. Lesbians, in other words, simply may have more to lose by failing to subscribe to an essentialist philosophy" (98-99). Fuss, however, is not the first to assert the importance of essential space for women or lesbians. Luce Irigaray establishes her support for essential space in 1985 in *This Sex Which is not One* where she writes that that women must "keep themselves apart from men long enough to learn to defend their desire" for them to "undertake tactical strikes." They must, she argues, create for themselves a respect based on an equitable social status. They must guard essentialism to escape "from their proletarization on the exchange market" (33). These ideas about essentialism work both to support the strategic essentialism theory of Fuss and to point to the potential negative outcomes of submitting to mainstreaming before lesbians secure both personal and group agency, particularly in their own queer communities. Monique Wittig, too, argues for strategic essentialism, asserting that heterosexual discourse produces sexual categories in order to ensure the domination of women by men. Feminists must therefore challenge the idea that 'woman' and 'man' are natural categories, and reveal that they are instead two culturally and historically constructed classes. In other words, the class 'woman' only has meaning in opposition to the class 'man.' Lesbianism, however, according to Wittig, offers a way out of this forced identity. Wittig maintains that lesbianism is beyond the categories of sex: man or woman. She asserts that "the designated subject (lesbian) is *not* a woman, either economically, or politically, or ideologically" ("One is not Born" 108).

This release from the traditional definition of "woman" allows the establishment of an essentialist base, an opportunity to diminish cultural norms and expectations, which should, in turn, support the ability to choose gender flexibility[53]. I would like to acknowledge that other prominent theorists like Judith Butler, Kathleen Weiler, and Teresa de Lauretis believe that feminists should work from within the androcentric dialectic, to deconstruct and transform it, a position I often support, yet here I assert that strategic essentialism can provide particular, distinctive insights into gender development and its expressions as well as function in the capacities suggested by Fuss, Irigaray, and Wittig.

To support my claim, I point first to novels promoting and defining female only space, arguably, generally lesbian space. Many contend that the lesbian experience cannot legitimately be recreated inside of the context of a patriarchal society and have, therefore, redesigned matriarchal societies of the past, present, or future in their fiction; still others use reality-based woman's space on which to design their single-sexed worlds. Sarah Scott's *Millenium Hall* (1762), a female utopia created by a small group of husbandless women, offers a revised vision of the traditional economy; members live in communities where neighbors thrive on reciprocal relationships. Similarly, the central message of Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *Herland* (1915), a feminine utopia that exists for

[53] Wittig also confirms the evolution in the formation of men and women when she says, "Even if [a woman] would like to, with all her strength, she cannot become a man. For becoming a man would demand from a woman not only a man's external appearance but his consciousness as well." Wittig's discourse speaks not only to original and natural gender categories, but also to the idea of "straightening queerness" by appropriating gender characteristics, a tactic that would be not only futile, but impossible based on her ideas of constructed sex identities.

2000 years before men come upon it, is that of social reform. Joanna Russ's *The Female Man* (1975) depicts four alternative realities, describing worlds that range from lesbian utopia to a sex-warring dystopic future. Bonnie Morris's 2001 pulp fiction novel *The Question of Sabotage* explores the world of lesbian separatist reality that lives via existing music festivals around the United States. This last piece of fiction will serve primarily as a springboard into the next chapter where I analyze the content of the annual Michigan Women's Music Festival, the largest and most controversial of all music festivals, and a strategically essentialist space that has flourished in spite of the call for the end of identity politics. All of these pieces provide fodder for an examination of gender development and expression.

The eighteenth century, if we acknowledge the arguments of Michel Foucault and others,[54] is when our current beliefs about gender were largely established. This period was fundamentally responsible for the model that superimposed biological sex, gender, and heterosexuality, forcing them into a congruency that projects an idea of normal. The eighteenth century work *Millenium Hall*, then, is a good place to begin discussing sex and gender roles. The story takes the form of a frame tale, a narrative structure containing or connecting a series of otherwise unrelated stories. This frame is presented in the form of two male travelers who are waylaid when their "chaise [breaks] down" (Scott 56) and who fall upon the women's community the narrator calls Millenium Hall. The adventure stories contained within the frame are also prompted by the male narrator who is "curious to know by what steps women thus qualified both by nature and fortune to have the world

[54] For examples of others, see Nancy Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987).

almost at command, were brought thus to seclude themselves from it, and make as it were a new one for themselves constituted on such very different principles from that [he] had hithreto lived in" (24). This particular narrator strategically serves two important roles in the telling of his story. The first is that he is an outsider and therefore telling of the Hall from an objective perspective. The second is in the legitimizing of the tale by using the privilige of the male sex. In designating this male narrator who stumbles upon the community, Scott adds an authority to the story of Millenium Hall that would be absent if told by one or even several female insiders. The adventures of the female founders of Millenium Hall are based on the histories that led them to seek essentialist asylum and create and support this Utopia.

Sarah Scott's sister, Elizabeth Montagu, led a group of reform-minded women, commonly referred to as the bluestockings, who believed in female equality, education, and limited economic justice. They were also active in prison and health care reform. *Millenium Hall* is a fictional embodiment of bluestocking ideals. "The Hall" in which the novel characters live is a model of the bluestockings' reform ideas. The economic structure leads to the reduction of poverty and the betterment of the community. Property is held in common, and education is the primary pastime. These attributes are put forward as feminine aspects of creating community, yet they express the stirrings of gender role resistance in that they supplant the male masculine tradition of governing: Women take on positions of political authority, assuming power in the public venue of Millenium Hall. Yet, of the utmost importance within the community is the creation of connections, the bringing together of community, a typically feminine strategy for creating both intimacy

and social interdependency. Their society "is a state of mutual confidence, reciprocal services, and correspondent affections; where numbers are thus united, there will be a free communication of sentiments, and [women] shall then find speech, that peculiar blessing given to man" (Scott 64). Voice, and with it, agency, then becomes one of the primary "masculine" traits that women must assume and exhibit to manage their own space. This agency or power, in turn, allows women to choose their relational states. The social fabric of the Hall does not demand heterosexual socialization. Unmarried or widowed women are not merely drains on society, relegated to the back rooms of a brother or cousin who then becomes responsible for a spinster relative. Women are productive outside of the patriarchal role generally relegated to them. It is through these Utopian ideals that the women of Millenium Hall live in harmony.

The feminist inquiry into *Millenium Hall* has been broad but not deep, at least according to Sally O'Driscoll, who argues in her 2003 essay "Lesbian Criticism and Feminist Criticism: Readings of 'Millenium Hall,'" for "a reconsideration of the ways in which the study of gender and the study of sexuality can productively be pursued in tandem" (O'Driscoll 59). She writes, "While the available feminist readings of Millenium Hall tend to be brief commentaries rather than extended interpretations, they share some common assumptions" (66). O'Driscoll continues by outlining her objection to the assertion "that the women at Millenium Hall are celibate and that Millenium Hall provides a place of refuge for women who are victims of the gender system—the system that creates separate, unequal spheres for men and women and damages women in the process" (66-67). She carefully identifies how each of the six main characters of the story

comes to the Hall. In doing so she denies Jean B Kern's assertion "that all five of the principal members of the Millenium Hall commune 'have been disappointed by men.'" (qtd in O'Driscoll 67; Kern 206). Instead, O'Driscoll points out the liberating quality of Millenium Hall, one that I would like to use to begin my own discussion of how gender development is effected in the absence of a sex binary. She says that

> What springs to mind in these life stories is not so much disappointment with men as a remarkable lack of parental or social coercion: Mrs. Selvyn, Mrs. Mancel, Mrs. Trentham, and Lady Mary Jones all lack any parental figure who would try to persuade them that marriage is their proper course; the fathers, mothers, grandmothers, and other guardians either die or simply leave them free to choose not to marry—a striking and quite unusual scenario in fiction of this period. The need for money is explicitly discussed, but the need to marry is oddly ignored. It is as if the enormous weight of that particular social pressure had simply rolled off this novel. To see these women as victims, therefore, ignores the way they are given more choice in their lives than most novels would offer. (O'Driscoll 67-68).

The particular and forthright discussion of the need for money emphasizes independence, for economic independence is at the heart of not only economic but social and emotional freedom. Moreover, the failure, or refusal actually, to stress marriage relieves the demand for women to operate in a sex binary. Instead of becoming "woman" in opposition to "man," the females of Millenium Hall become entities defined by their own value and

existence. According to Monique Wittig, this emancipation from a binary frees women from gender regulations. She claims, "there are not two genders. There is only one: the feminine, the 'masculine' not being a gender. For the masculine is not the masculine but the general" (*The Straight Mind* 60). When women are taken out of the binary with men, they become "the general" in their own right. The women of Millenium Hall, then, do achieve some realization of "the general," partially because they are not trained in obligatory marriage and partially because they live in a space that values women as central rather than marginal. These women do not serve men; they serve each other. In these ways, *Millenium Hall* pushes at the boundaries of traditional gender roles and expression.

Yet, both gender expression and sex emancipation at the Hall is in its early evolution, and the Utopia is often still guided by a patriarchal form of divine grace, where God's will becomes both the prime motivator and protector of the community. God's punishment of sinners is direct and undeniable. For instance, Louisa Mancel is saved from Mr. Hintman's improper "caresses" (Scott 46) when he dies suddenly "in a fit of an apoplexy" (49). The religious patriarchy, represented in terms of heterosexual sexual activity, is portrayed, however, as only either rape or sin. Moreover, the characters in the novel that would be actively engaging in heterosexual activity, those married or with children, lack any indication of romantic love. Heterosexuality seemingly has no particular binding or beneficial purpose in the novel. Yet, in spite of the negativity surrounding religion, other patriarchal institutions are still promoted at Millenium Hall; for example, the women often endorse marriage even though the founders have not been

influenced by it. Women are still, at least superficially, judged by standards the reinforce suitability for marriage: "delicacy" and "grace" (89), for example. In spite of these conformist aspects of the Utopia, this novel posits female friendship as a valid form of intimate satisfaction, and it suggests masculine (or original, as Wittig might say) gender performance through the agency these women exhibit in the creation and legislation of the community.

Designing a Utopia for women in the 18th Century, particularly one in which members are educated and self-sufficient, pushed at the lines of social appropriateness for Sarah Scott. Suggesting that the women conform to patriarchal ideals perhaps works to disguise her Utopia and ground it in a framework that men could both accept and admire. It is difficult if not impossible to determine if Scott is genuinely guided by the force of the patriarchy or if she hides behind it in an effort to maintain essentialist space that would surely be spoiled if men, in this case the narrator and his friend, suspected female intimacy outside of that which is sanctioned by the standard religious tenets of the time. The women of Millenium Hall must pass as socially appropriate in order to be free from the threat of social condemnation should they be identified as deviant.

Whether or not it is accepted that the patriarchal structure of the Hall is a superficial ruse to pacify traditionalists, the lesbian subtext of the novel can still be read as another gender destabilizing aspect of it. George Haggerty calls "*Millenium Hall* a lesbian narrative because it insists on intimate relations between women as an alternative to the male-centered experience of marriage" (102). Mrs. Morgan and Miss Mancel clearly share an intimate form of love as evidenced when Mrs. Maynard tells the reader,

"Mrs. Morgan and Miss. Mancel, who from their childhood have been so connected, that I could not if I would, disunite them in my relation, and it would be almost a sin to endeavour to separate them even in idea" (Scott 76). Upon the two young women's (Mancel and Morgan) forced separation, Scott writes, "This was the severest affliction they had ever yet experienced, or indeed were capable of feeling. United from their childhood, the connection of soul and body did not seem more indissoluble, nor were they ever divided with greater pain" (131). These words indeed echo the language commonly used of lovers separated, but other specific language use points more squarely at nearly explicit lesbianism within the text.

The primary sexual suggestion in *Millenium Hall* is "caressing," the word Scott uses to describe Mr. Hintman's improper heterosexual touching of Louisa Mancel. This is the same word Scott uses in describing the physical intimacy of Miss. Mancel and Mrs. Morgan: "that she gave her as many *caresses* as the other had lavished upon her" (Scott 92, my emphasis). This slight suggestion may be as overt as Scott dared, but it makes the insinuation of lesbian sex at least comparable to that of the heterosexual kind. But more importantly here is that though the two acts of intimacy share equal legitimacy, the female-female relationship lacks the associated revulsion the heterosexual sex brings. The primary bonds of intimacy are described as between women, which suggest same-sex eroticism, if not sex, in the 18$^{th}$ century.

The space Scott created for the separatism of these female intimates illustrates the power of strategic essentialism. Scott allows women to live in a time and a space that would otherwise deny their relationships (consider the day shortly after marriage that

Mrs. Morgan asks her new husband's permission to invite Miss Mancel to his house. He denies the request and says she shall have no intimate friends but him [130]). Despite assertions that essentialism is limiting and reductive, some separatist endeavors are clearly valid attempts to achieve an end that works to promote and establish equality. This is the case in *Millenium Hall*, where Scott illustrates the need to create essential space in which to nurture and celebrate an existence denied inside of a male dominated domain. She provides at least the fantasy of a place where women might nurture and develop their own gender desires, to exhibit strength, makes choices, and be economically productive. These masculine gender traits can begin to emerge in an essential space for women.

150 years later and on the other side of the world, Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *Herland* was published serially in Gilman's own magazine, *The Forerunner.*[55] The utopian nation, born at the height of American women's struggle for both suffrage and equal rights in general, is a symbol of the strengths and abilities of women, particularly in building a matriarchy focused on the values of women. Like *Millenium Hall*, *Herland* is narrated by a man. Gilman's strategy of using the male voice to convince readers that a female-centered society would exhibit qualities superior to that of a male-built civilization echoes Scott's scheme to present her idea through the socially more validating male narrative. Moreover, using a man with his seemingly different

[55] "In print from 1909 to 1916, *The Forerunner* was self-published by Charlotte Perkins Gilman after American author and editor Theodore Dreiser advised her to "consider more what the editors want" since her social reform writing did not appeal to the masses. Rejecting Dreiser's advice, Gilman instead decided to write what she pleased by publishing her own twenty-eight-page monthly magazine. Written entirely by Gilman, *The Forerunner* sold for ten cents an issue or a dollar a year and featured short fiction, serialized novels, essays, articles, book reviews, and poems. At its apex, *The Forerunner* had nearly 1,500 subscribers from all of the United States and from Europe, India, and Australia."

perspective of how to achieve results allows for a grey area in Gilman's presentation of various aspects of Herland; that is, she can both describe Herland's beliefs and policies and, at the same time, explain away vagueness through the inability of the men to truly understand these ways of women. For example, the narrator, Van, tells the reader that "as a man, a foreigner, and a species of Christian" it was difficult "to get any clear understanding of the Religion of Herland" (Gilman 110). This layer of misunderstanding—the incapacity to understand—by the men, compensates for Gilman's inaccessibility to anything other than imagined information about the cultural composition of a genuine, long-lived, separatist community. This permits Gilman to assert that the resulting structure of a community created by women would deviate from the patriarchal pattern without having to know explicitly what all those differences might be, clearly results she could only envision.

Herland, though, is very different from Millenium Hall in that it is a country separated from men by both space and time rather than an estate easily accessible by road. The male sex has been gone for so long (extinguished by a disease that attacked only them) that the women of Herland perceive themselves as an entire race rather than the half of a race the visiting men see them as. The three male characters that find and explore Herland are initially inspired by local stories of "a strange and terrible Woman Land in the high distance" that they hear during an expedition. Intrigued by the rumors, they engage a guide who explains to them talk of "a land of women—no men—babies, but all girls." They are cautioned that it is "[n]o place for men—dangerous," and told that "[s]ome had gone to see—none had come back." (7). Herland is consistently described as

"dangerous" and "deadly" by the local, indigenous people, but the more the three American men hear, the more they plan to find, and of course enjoy, this world of all women. They speculate and joke about the condition of a matriarchal society. Terry suggests that "[t]hey would fight among themselves [because] women always do" (10). He warns the others not to expect "any sort of order and organization." Jeff, on the other hand, claims that the place "will be like a nunnery under an abbess—a peaceful, harmonious sisterhood" (10). While they cannot agree on whether it will be a serene, passive world or one full of chaos and argument, they do seem content that "inventions and progress" are not part of the female domain, but rather the whole community will "be awfully primitive" (10).

Jeff, Van, and Terry are three men of varying degrees and types of masculinity, and they reflect specific, diverse perspectives of men about women at the turn of the century. Jeff and Van have differing attitudes but of fairly traditional masculinity, and neither is as difficult to tolerate as Terry, who objectifies and minimizes women at every opportunity. He is presented as the womanizing patriarch from the onset of the excursion to find this women's country. Terry, according to Van, "in his secret heart, had visions of a sort of sublimated summer resort - just Girls and Girls and Girls—[. . .] and it's not to be wondered at that he had pleasant dreams of what might happen" (9). His desire to pursue Herland clearly comes from carnal motivations. Yet, when the three finally reach Herland, even Terry knows this is not the simple world they had believed it would be. They are immediately cautious, suspicious of both it and the women they encounter. They realize these are not the backward girls they thought they would find; instead, the

women are characterized as "athletic—light and powerful." They are similar in intelligence to "[c]ollege professors, teachers, [and] writers," yet they are "calm as cows" (24). The women confound all three men, who have difficulty resolving why the women do not fall victim to their charms and trinkets. These women are not filled with the delicacy and graces of those of Millenium Hall. They are neither helpless nor passive. They do not meet the expected gender criteria of women. It is through their time in Herland that both the men and the readers come to understand the constructedness of femininity, the falseness of female behavior that is wrought from masculine desire. They learn that gender behavior is not inherent to biology but rather a conditioned response to masculine social imposition. The women of Herland are free of gender expectation because they have been able to pursue independence in thought, actions, and desire. These women have had time to develop themselves both physically, they are faster than the three men (19); mentally, they have eliminated a series of social and political problems—poverty (63), war, and even garbage (71)—that plague the rest of the world; and spiritually, as their Religion is a gentle, progressive set of beliefs (Gilman 68). Their agency and autonomy is indicative of the possibilities of gender development, or even gender fluidity or fluctuation, in unrestricted, and in this case, strategically essential, space.

Ultimately, the three male visitors are afforded the opportunity to present the achievements of the patriarchal American civilization to the female elders of Herland, to defend their own world, yet they find themselves constantly at odds with what they must either admit to or hide from these women. Virtually every aspect of Herland seems

superior to their male-dominated culture, and by the end of the novel, Jeff and Van choose to stay in the Utopia of Herland. The uber-masculine Terry is asked to leave because of his attempted rape of his wife. Because the first two men choose to stay, preferring the women-centered space to their own, they imply that the qualities that women bring to social development have value that may have been overlooked in the construction of their own patriarchal world. This message, that men can live with women in this changed society, as Gilman surely intended, works to encourage social change that would allow women to become a more significant part of the social system—not to reverse the discrimination and oppression that have already been shown to fail. Gilman does not seem to suggest the "substitut[ing] women for men (the Other for the One)" that Wittig warns against (*The Straight Mind* 54-55). The condition of separatism has allowed the women to develop as complete people, without the limitations of gender behavior brought on by the conventional binary reinforced by biological sex.

Like Millenium Hall, heterosexual sex and eroticism are largely ignored by the women in Herland. They do not understand the point of heterosexual sex beyond the act of procreation, and it is an activity they seem willing to participate in only to add to their limited gene pool. The women of Herland are not interested in sexual intimacy with the men. But Gilman, like Scott, hints at female sexuality by what she does not say. Female intimacy is based in terms of "friendship, the one purely personal love they knew, and of ultimate parentage" (97)[56] Gilman's Utopia shows that essentialized space allows for the strategic development of women, a development that takes place in separatism that

[56] The Utopia privileges motherhood as the center of the community; Gilman moves the private space of the woman into the public space of the community in order to focus on the relationship of mother to daughter.

displaces binary sex and gender prerequisites. Luce Irigaray identified this opportunity for women to create identity that moved them outside of the commoditization of women's skills and natural abilities and into a space of agency via gender-role emancipation:

> For women to undertake tactical strikes, to keep themselves apart from men long enough to learn to defend their desire [. . .] to discover the love of other women while sheltered from men's imperious choices that put them in the position of rival commodities, to forge for themselves a social status that compels recognition, [. . .] these are certainly indispensable stages in their escape from their proletarization on the exchange market. (Irigaray 33).

It is precisely this strategic separation that Gilman suggests in *Herland.* As Gilman clearly shows, both men and women will eventually benefit from the kind of separatist community established in Herland. But more, the women are neither restricted by, nor forced to comply with, gender behaviors traditionally associated with biological sex.

By the 1960s and 70s, an oft proposed solution to the difficulty of change in the gendered environment was separatism, and separatist communities sprang up all over America. These compounds were driven by early, radical feminists who proposed that they would find both personal growth and communal liberation in undoing an assumed "natural" division of labor and then reaping the benefits of that labor. By extrication from men, women learned about their both their abilities and passions. Ariel Levy recently

reminded us of these lesbian separatists and their respective communities in an article in the *New Yorker* when she wrote,

> The lesbian separatists of a generation ago created a shadow society devoted to living in an alternate, penisless reality. There were many factions: the Gutter Dykes, in Berkeley; the Gorgons, in Seattle; several hundred Radicalesbians, in New York City, along with the smaller CLIT Collective; the Furies, in Washington, D.C.; and the Separatists Enraged Proud and Strong (SEPS), in San Francisco. There were outposts of Women's Land all over the United States and Canada-places owned by women where all women, and only women, were welcome. “Only women on the land” was the catchphrase used by separatists to indicate that men, even male children, were banned from Women's Land (and they often spelled it “wimmin” or “womyn,” in an attempt to keep men out of their words as well as their worlds). Separatists were aiming for complete autonomy, and to that end there were separatist food co-ops-such as the memorably named New York Lesbian Food Conspiracy-separatist publishing houses, and separatist credit unions. “We will soon be able to integrate the pieces of our lives and stop this schizophrenic existence of a straight job by day and radical political work at night,” Nancy Groschwitz wrote in a 1979 treatise called “Practical Economics for a Women’s Community.” Perhaps the most successful separatist venture was the women’s-music-festival circuit, with its offshoot, Olivia Records, started

> in 1973. (Since the early nineteen-nineties, Olivia has concentrated on the lesbian cruise and resort business.) Levy.

This rather long passage makes several points upon which I would like to remark. First, we see the timing for the emergence of these communities in the midst of the second wave feminist movement; second, we recognize that this separatist movement began only 35 years ago, a short time in a civil rights struggle. Third, we note that it was not an isolated movement, but rather that women all across North America sought refuge in these communities. Fourth, we can recognize the goal as "complete autonomy," an ambition that imitates the Herland project 50 years earlier. And finally, Levy acknowledges the "women's-music festival-circuit," as an important essential space, one that I will address in the next chapter.

In 1975, amidst this aggressive American feminist movement and at the height of the separatist movement, Joanna Russ's *The Female* Man found an audience among women. This postmodern, science fiction piece is both simultaneously strikingly similar to and different from *Millenium Hall* and *Herland.* The straightforward framed construction of *Millenium Hall* is forgotten as Russ employs a non-linear narrative approach, a fractured style that jumps from character to character, from time period to time period, and from world to world. Instead of the male narrators Scott and Gilman depend on to tell their stories, Russ tells her story from the points of view of four different women, each from a different but parallel Earth. Joanna comes from the 1969 world of Russ. Jeannine, a shy librarian, lives in a hyper-patriarchal society that never emerged from the Great Depression, as the Second World War never happened. Janet

lives in Whileaway, a world where all of the men died centuries ago and an all-female society has evolved, which, like Herland, is without wars or poverty. Jael, an assassin, lives in a dystopian world where the sexes are at war. It is Jael who, as she later explains to the others, has brought them together. Jael works for an organization that focuses on people's counterparts in each of these different parallel worlds. She ultimately admits that she orchestrated their meeting because they are "four versions of the same woman" (Russ 162). Russ passes the plot between these four characters that are not only versions of the same woman but are also complimentary aspects of the global identity "Woman." But it is not just a causal meeting in which Jael has interest when she coordinates their gathering. She assembles the others so that she can establish bases in each of the worlds in order to secretly begin a movement to overthrow both the patriarchy and their gender roles for women. She works to spread the aggression she has learned in Womanland.

The narrative style, a postmodern schema, underlines the conflicted, contradictory life of these four females, two of whom live in male dominated societies. Yet the characters are each defined by gender roles specific to the world in which they have developed. This, of course, marks gender again as learned rather than innate. In Joanna's 1969 world, the gender roles are quite familiar to most readers; the world in general is similar to the 1970s earth. The emergence of feminism has fueled many women's desire to show themselves as equal to men. Joanna is assertive and competent, yet she still has difficulty proving herself as such to men. She calls herself the "female man" (5) to indicate her adoption of the general instead of the gendered female.

The character of Joanna is often clearly a characterization of Russ. In fact, at one point, she refers even to her surname (141). Joanna is an intellectual and she is rightfully and dreadfully aware of the oppression of women in her society. She understands the negative dynamic between men and women but she succumbs to conventions, often it seems, to avoid sacrificing her own place in society when she finds it highly unlikely that the sacrifice would make a difference anyway. Although Joanna has a greater understanding of society than her counterpart Jeannine, her position can be seen as worse because she understands the nature of her oppression.

In Jeannine's world, it is also easy to recognize both the signs of oppression and depression that mark pre 1950's women's roles. Jeannine Dadier, a librarian who lives in a world parallel to the others' but that is locked into the great depression, believes that "there is a barrier between [her] and real life which can be removed only by a man or marriage" (120). Yet she does not believe that either her boyfriend or marriage will make her happy. Nonetheless, she consents to an engagement. Jeannine is transformed from a woman hoping that marriage will offer her fullfillment to one who welcomes the social revolution against men. Jael and Janet, however, come from worlds very different from our own, and as such, the gender and sex relationships and differences are distinct and illustrate gender evolution as part of a process of essentialism. The worlds of Jael and Janet will be the main focus of my argument as they represent the greatest opportunity for an analysis of gender identity in separatist societies.

Jael lives in a dystopian world of two sexes and multiple genders. Biological men live in Manland and are separated from the biological women, who predictably live in

Womanland. As such, though the two states are aware of each other, they are relatively discrete spaces. A war between the "Haves," the men, and the "Have-nots," the women, has raged between them for 40 years (164). Clearly, because the men and women have limited communication, there are few social, cultural, or economic exchanges between them. Yet both their proximity to each other and the relatively short time they have been separated have disallowed the kind of sex and gender evolution shown in either Whileaway, Janet's world in *The Female Man,* or in Gilman's *Herland*. Instead, both the men and the women have fashioned sexual partners to meet their needs. As a result, on Manland, there are three genders. "Real-men" are those biological males who are familiar to all of us; "the changed" are transsexuals, surgically altered to become "women"; and the "half-changed [who] keep their genitalia but [. . .] grow slim, grow languid, grow emotional and feminine" (167). Manland's gendered system seemingly subordinates changed and half-changed men in the same way it once did the women of Womanland. Womanland is, of course, comprised of all biological women, yet as is clear with Jael, at least some of them are masculinely gendered. Seemingly though, the culture has not yet moved into the realm of the single sex species of Herland. Jael has a male robot, Davy, who is "The most beautiful man in the world" (185).[57] Both Manland and Womanland operate within the realm of compulsory heterosexuality despite their discrete communities. In Manland, "All the real-men like the changed; some real-men like the half-changed; none of the real-men like real-men, for that would be abnormal" (167). While Janet's world, Whileaway, has seemingly reordered its systems into a single-sex

[57] Jael herself is a cyborg. She has surgical claws and steel teeth hidden under plates that look like human teeth. (181-82).

utopia, Jael's world is unsuccessful in its revolution precisely because it insists on maintaining the binary relationship of heterosexuality. Even though both the men and the women have found some leeway in gender expression, heterosexuality remains the basis for both communities.

The dystopia of Womanland clearly reinscribes heterosexual habits, codes, and institutions; it illustrates the danger of women becoming like men, or as Wittig puts in "substitut[ing] women for men" ("The Straight Mind" 55). Jael never makes the transition to the "female man" like Joanna does, but she does often pass as male. While Russ clearly positions Joanna as the heroine of the novel and Jael's world as a failure, as an imitation of the very heterosexual paradigm that the women war to free themselves from, she also destabilizes this world through parody[58] of both institutions and identity classifications.

Russ not only emphasizes a female to male assumption of gender, but the reverse in creating a parody of the feminine. Jael's bravado in posing as the Prince of Faery parodies the male gender role, exposing it as constructed by showing how easy it is to perform masculinity, but more so do the changed and the half-changed from Manland. One example of the excessive parody of gender roles occurs when Jael takes Joanna, Janet, and Jeannine into Manland on business. They meet their contact, Anna, a half-changed in a "recreation center" that seems more like a tavern (Russ 167-72): "A pink chiffon gown, with gloves up to his shoulder, [Anna is] a monument of irrelevancy on high heels, a pretty girl *with too much of the right curves* and a bobbing, springing, pink

[58] See Chapter one for more on parody and Virginia Woolf's *Orlando*.

feather boa"(my emphasis 171). Thinking that the four women (Jael, Janet, Joanna, and Jeannine) are biologically male, "Anna bats his eyes at [them] and wets his lips" (173). Jael thinks that "there must be a secret feminine underground that teaches [the changed and the half-changed] how to behave (171)." She watches him "wet his lips again, the indescribably silliness of that insane mechanism, practiced anywhere and everywhere" (173). The role is over-performed; it is literally "too much," but a good deal of this performance is fueled by the body specifications the Womanlanders provide the men for their sex change operations. Jael tells her companions that "[Manlanders have] been separated from real women so long that they don't know what to make of [them]; [She doubts that] even the sex surgeons know what a real woman looks like" (169). The changed and the half-changed are based on an idea of originality, an idea of what makes up the category "woman."

The cross-dressed passers are parodies that remind us of Butler's idea of "primary gender identity." She writes "[drag] reveals the distinctness of those aspects of gendered experience which are falsely naturalized as a unity through the regulatory fiction of heterosexual coherence. In imitating gender, drag implicitly reveals the imitative structure of gender itself—as well as its contingency" (Butler, *Gender Trouble* 135). This parody is the most apparent in the "changed." The four women eventually meet Natalie, the changed wife of the "Boss-man," who is of course a "real man." She "clicked in with a tray of drinks—scarlet skin-tights, no underwear, transparent high-heeled sandals like Cinderella's—she gave [them] a homey, cute smile...and stilted out" (Russ 173). Jael says, "The specifications we send them every year grow wilder and

wilder and there isn't a murmur of protest." No "real woman" exists behind the fantastic specifications (169). Anna and Natalie's performance of the feminine—the dress, the coy behavior, and the assumption of the female gender role—works to illustrate the way that feminine gender evolves in response to a masculine model. Without that binary, in an essentialist environment, women are free from the "original" model that forces them into a "complementary" position

While Russ has constructed several worlds in *the Female Man*, Whileaway is the one that presents an authentic opportunity for positive exploration inside of a lesbian separatist community. Russ builds a female utopia that, like Herland, rises above the binary of gender in that it is not anti-male but instead pro-human. Yet, unlike Herland, which hosts explorers, Janet, the Whileawayian, is an explorer, an ambassador for Whileaway, who encounters Jeannine's world, a reflection of our world without the experience of WWII. This world is poorer and seemingly less developed than our own 1960's world, and it does set up an argument for ties between progress and war or aggression. Because there was no war, Jeannine's world lacks technological progress. Janet senses an "uneasy aggression" based on the gender binary. It is this gender binary that Russ exposes as problematic in terms of creating equality between the sexes. Again, by referring to Monique Wittig we can establish a base from which to launch this discussion of gender. Wittig asserts that there are not two genders but rather one. She says "there is no such thing as being-woman or being-man. 'Man' and 'woman' are political concepts of opposition" (Wittig. "The Point of View: Universal or Particular 60).

These concepts are missing in Whileaway, and because of this, so are the expectations of gendered behavior.

Whileaway is an alternate future of earth, and Janet Evason is a Whileawayian ambassador, not because she is special but for precisely the opposite: because she is expendable. And on Whileaway, like in Herland, only women exist because of a gender specific epidemic that killed all men thirty generations earlier. The women reproduce parthenogenically, like those women of Herland, having mastered both science and technology. Whileaway is a utopia that suffers no pollution or other environmental problems that plague the earth. People celebrate often and for a multitude of reasons (Russ 102-03). The absence of men eradicates the need for gender construction. Without a binary, there is no need for complementary behavior, at least not based on sex. Most importantly, citizens of Whileaway are free human beings, all equal and free of both physical and verbal abuse:

> There′s no being out too late in Whileaway, or up too early, or in the wrong part of town, or unescorted. You cannot fall out of the kinship web and become sexual prey for strangers, for there is no prey and there are no strangers [...] there is [...] no one who will follow you and try to embarrass you by whispering obscenities in your ear, no one who will attempt to rape you, [...]You can walk around the Whileawayan equator twenty times [...] with one hand on your sex and in the other an emerald the size of a grapefruit. All you′ll get is a tired wrist. (82)

Because the sexual relations are between women and no sex difference imposes a hierarchy, equality and individual agency reign. Possessiveness is unknown and non-monogamy is the norm. The Whileawayians view this freedom as a healthy outlet. Janet says,"Vittoria [her wife] is probably whoring all over North Continent by now, I should think. We don't mean by that what you do, by the way. I mean: good for her" (Russ 79). This sexual freedom illustrates the absence the ownership that attends gender hierarchy in a heterosexual binary. Gender equality, specifically, that both partners are free to pursue other sexual relationships, illustrates the absence of gender codes.

Joanna's transformation into the female man illustrates both Wittig's idea and the growth Joanna enjoys after experiencing Whileaway. When Joanna learns that she has an identity outside of that which creates her as different from man, she destroys gender, the feminine, and becomes the universal as the female man. All of the women of Whileaway (and I suppose we could argue of Herland too) are female men as they are not gendered female, a condition that can only exist in context with men.

Jael's warring, competitive world, a place that substitutes the "Other" for "One" aptly demonstrates ways in which gender development can be manipulated by a social dynamic, yet it is not a solution to advancing equality, either then or now. Jael's world parodies heteronormativity, but at the same time, recreates another structure just as fixed and limiting. Whileaway, on the other hand, destabilizes or exposes heteronormativity by demonstrating the constructedness of gender congruency and biological sex.

Like the other utopias discussed here, Whileaway is not a convincing argument for a workable blueprint for social restructuring. Whileaway still suffers from social ills,

though admittedly not many, but its economic productivity and its governing strategies are vague, and like Herland, many of the problems of society are explained away by suggesting they have miraculously vanished or that an outsider cannot understand the social system. Likewise, the novel is filled with 1970's feminism that is often extreme and sometimes unproductive. But the work still stands as a testimony to alternative social constructs, some that suggest equality or at least call for equality. More importantly to this analysis is the novels contribution to seeing the ways that gender construction is related to a bipolar construction based on sex. It demonstrates what could be called a complete humanity for women in an essential environment, and it ultimately supports strategic essentialism as a port of entry for creating a dual-sexed society based on complete autonomy for all citizens.

Russ provides a solution to the issues that have grown because of the gender dichotomy that has evolved in our world. Her utopia, an all female world devoid of the tensions and problems between men and women, is everything the patriarchy is not. It is, instead, a society of equals. It is decentralized and free from the restrictions of constructed roles. In this way, Whileaway looks much like Herland. The women move freely about their worlds, exploring all aspects of it without fears common to women in a patriarchal system: rape, robbery, murder. Like Millenium Hall, it is a society where people help each other in order to create comfort and advantage.

Russ creates Whileaway for precisely the same reasons Scott and Gilman create their Utopias: to show that strategic essentialism is the tool that will allow women to master their own fates and develop their own skills. It is only then that we can avoid the

dystopia of Jael and the war of the sexes we have been fighting all along. When men and women meet in equality and find balance in the fair trade of ideas, the human existence can move toward utopia. Appropriately, Russ ends with an envoi: "Go little book...." and "Do not get glum when you are no longer understood.... Rejoice, little book! For on that day, we will be free" (214). Though we have not yet reached a time where we do not understand the message in the book, her tactics seem rough and her methods harsh. We have made progress.

Bonnie Morris's pulp fiction novel, *The Question of Sabotage* (2001) is the story of a young woman's first trip to the Amazon Womyn's Music Festival, a thinly disguised version of the Michigan Women's Music Festival held annually in a fern forest near Hart. While this fantasy music festival is not the on-going utopia of the other novels discussed here, it is a reference to a real-time women's only space that endeavors to provide a women-born-women environment. It is an oft-attacked space, finding dissenters in both the religious right and in the queer movement that decries the essentialism of maintaining this seven day retreat for mostly lesbians.

The novel poses the plot of sabotage, undertaken by a woman who is part of a Nazi movement to infiltrate and ultimately destroy the festival, a plan not so far from those yearly coordinated by both the Michigan right and the Camp Trans goers who protest Michigan's attendance policies. And much like those dissenters who rail at the idea of the MichFest's essentialism, the antagonist of the novel who spearheads the attack has never been inside of the festival grounds. She infiltrates the camp because her male counterparts have insisted she do so. This pulp fiction is neither great literature nor a

great story, but it is both a good illustration of the power of strategically separatist space and a convenient launching pad for a discussion of the existing space of the Michigan Women's Music Festival.

## Chapter Six

## Essentialism, and Space: The Michigan Women's Music Festival

In this final chapter, I will tie some of this conversation about gender to real, contemporary situations dealing with gender, gender expression, and gender destabilization. To do so, I will here discuss how gender might be re-determined outside of a dual sexed, dual gendered society by offering an analysis of a true site of lesbian feminist separatism. Even now, in the 21st century, in the midst of the general call for an end to identity politics, lesbians still seek essential space and essential time, unconstrained by traditional limits, to conceive possibilities and support methods of change aimed at resisting the limitations of constructed identity for both queer and non-queer people. Within these communities, there are ongoing discussions, arguments, and problem-solving focused on gender expression, identity, and definitions of essentialism.

Simone de Beauvoir wrote, "One is not born, but becomes a woman. No biological, psychological, or economic fate determines the figure that the human female presents in society: it is civilization as a whole that produces this creature, intermediate between male and eunuch, which is described as feminine" (103). Years of conditioning, beginning at birth, contribute to the formation of the category "woman." She is identified by both a physical presentation and an agenda of behavioral characteristics. Women are formed throughout their lifetimes based on their bodies: in which lines they stood in elementary school, which bathrooms they used, which toys they received, which social groups they belonged to, how they were perceived by other people of both sexes. While some refuse the idea that biology is indeed the determiner of social treatment, according

to Wittig, "most of the feminists and lesbian feminists in America and elsewhere still believe that the basis of women's oppression is biological as well as historical" ( "One is not Born a Woman" 10).

Though drastic social changes have taken place in terms of granting agency to women since Beauvoir and Wittig made these statements, these ideas still hold true in general. One way this social habit can be undone is in occupying women's space. And, there is still a call for separatism like that exhibited in literature, made obvious by the fact that women are still creating these spaces. Strategic essentialism offers asylum from the binary, a scheme that fuels the emphasis on biological difference. And even though essentialism is not generally popular today, women, as well as other minoritized groups, still struggle to keep those spaces alive. For example, separatist education continues to gain popularity world wide, with educators and administrators constantly noting the improvement in girls' and women's education when they are separated from boys and men. Studies show that females lose self-confidence when they are required to compete with males who are generally favored and called on more often in coed classroom situations. JoAnn Deak at Kent State University, found that in all-girls' spaces there is not only a "greater willingness to take risks in discovery learning without fear, but also a greater self-confidence and self-esteem."[59]

Likewise, in a recent study focusing on management training methods, research showed that both women and people of color significantly benefit from separatist training, focusing on the context of their own needs and experiences. Benefits from

[59] See, for example, Hughes, Teresa A. Or Klan, Stan.

participation in separatist space include "a safe, supportive environment for sharing experiences, practicing skills, and taking risks; appropriate, relevant, and valid feedback that [is] less subject to bias and prejudice, [and] opportunities to be with people like oneself, reducing feelings of isolation" (Ohlott 5). Results of the study also show that in single gender or race groups "self-protection is less an issue"; therefore, participants are more willing and able to take risks and "engage in interactions that build strengths." Trying out "ideas, skills, and behaviors" in a single-identity space reduces feelings of isolation and allows people to build networks and support systems. These provide validation that help build confidence (Ohlott 1). Proven success with separatist education and training is one way to imagine the positive experiences of the women who take part in separatist activities.

Separatism draws fire from many and for good reason at times. Since the decision of Brown vs. Board of Education ruling in 1954 that made us acknowledge that separate is inherently unequal, we have aimed at inclusion designed with equal opportunity in mind, and I do not wish to argue specifically against the benefit of that tactic. But strategic essentialism figures into women's separatism in order to reap the obvious benefits of discrete space: among them, the development of women's ways of doing and being and the development of an unrestricted, unlegislated gender and identity expression. It is in separatist spaces that have evolved from the creations of Scott, Gilman, and Russ that women go to begin their transformations from that binary position of underdog, or the woman, into female men—women who are allowed to celebrate the general and universal.

In order to illustrate the possibility of gender development, of gender restructuring, in strategically essentialist space, I must first narrate the story of Music Festivals, for most people have no idea of the number and expanse of this generally underground phenomena. Second, I will analyze the content of this real-world experience to show how women respond to centralized and validating environments, those like Scott, Gilman, and Russ represent in their fictional worlds.

Music festivals have become inextricably intertwined with lesbian culture, and some have become a yearly sojourn for lesbians. The first one was the National Women's Music Festival, which began in 1974 and still meets today on university campuses. While there are variations in structure from festival to festival, one truth remains constant: Women come from all over the world to attend these events that range in length from a single day to a full week. At some, women camp in tents or; at others, they group in motels, hotels, R.V. parks, and on college campuses. They are held from one American coast to the other. In Florida, there is a festival just for women over 50 and their partners. So many mini-fests are held that it is difficult to keep track of them. In 2000, Bonnie Morris reported 20 festivals ("At the Michigan"), but in the last ten years at least a dozen more have opened themselves to a predominantly lesbian crowd. There is inevitably music that speaks to women, political discussions that support the marginalized, and plenty of Samuel R. Delaney's "contact" among women who are in general denied access to each other.

The Michigan Womyn's Music Festival began in 1976 as the dream of still festival producer Lisa Vogel. According to Jennifer Vanasco, "The first festival drew

2,000 [women], about 1,000 more than they expected" (Vanasco 68). By 1982, it was being held "on 650 acres of privately owned land, where the separatist ideal of uninhibited women-only space took root" (Morris "At the Michigan"). Each year between 6000 and 10,000 women migrate to this festival, each volunteering between four and eight hours of her time to help the week come together. For a single fee, each woman is provided camping space, three vegetarian meals a day, workshops, movies, and music and comedy. The whole experience takes place in a lush fern forest that has been carefully modified to accommodate the needs of various groups without disrupting the peacefulness of the woods. Women's voices from workshops offering courses in singing, dancing, and drumming, kissing, conversing, and karate, breast casting, story writing, business administration, and stilt walking, fill the air. Women laugh, work, and play in every corner of land covered in trees and peppered with tents of all sizes. No matter how people perceive this event and the controversies that surround it, American lesbian history cannot be discussed "without bowing before the house that Lisa Vogel built" (Morris "At the Michigan").

Michigan is not only a space where lesbian performers have a forum for their art, but "also a workers' community and a working-class success story" (Morris "At the Michigan) Michigan was initially staffed by all volunteers, but over the years it has evolved into the cooperative-style corporation it is today. Through trial and error, the women of Michigan have carved out their own sanctuary where they can rest, relax, communicate, process, heal, and party. Methods of providing for large numbers of women with varying needs were discovered and employed by Michigan, and are now

routinely used at both other music festivals and "mainstream conferences." Facilities such as those for childcare, sober support, interpreting, the disabled, and healthcare are only a few examples of the services provided first by the Michigan production team. All of this is created through the engagement of crews of women diverse in age, race, nationality and ability. Moreover, "the festival also has to accommodate the burgeoning needs of campers who, returning every year since 1976, are well over fifty and often bringing along their children" (Morris "At the Michigan).

The festival really begins weeks before the guest participants ever arrive. Each year 600 plus women volunteer to build and then remove the festival's many structures. None can be left intact on the land without supervision as locals vandalize anything left standing. Three large stages and several other smaller ones are constructed, complete with lighting and sound systems. Plumbing is installed: sinks for dishwashing, faucets for hand washing, and showers for bathing. Hot water is provided by solar power, yet this is only in the last decade. In the early years, lesbians tolerated ice cold showers to enjoy the festival. Even now, comments about the old days' showers can be heard as a dozen or so women perform their ablutions in the warm outdoor facilities of Michigan. A kitchen, including cafeteria lines, dishwashing pools, preparation tables, and barbeque pits, is erected. Numerous tents rise from rolled wads of white, water-proof canvas to mark spaces for the many events that take place on "the land." The supplies required for the festival are astonishing: "37,200 feet of twine [. . .], 1,250 pounds of ice in the worker kitchen alone [. . .], 4,416 rolls of toilet paper. [. . .] The main kitchen [produces] a total

of 100,000 meals [and] interpreters [generally work] with 45 deaf women from five countries." (Morris, "At the Michigan").

Stages are the heart of Michigan activity. With four major centers of entertainment, the festival remains lively from early one day until the wee hours of the next morning. Michigan has not only featured many performers who have crossed over into mainstream popularity, including Melissa Etheridge, Tracy Chapman, and the lesser known but still more conventional performers like The Indigo Girls, Betty, and Holly Near, but they also create space for lesbians to find women like Ferron, Chris Williamson, Meg Cristian, Phranc, Alix Dobkin, and Toshi Reagan, women who speak to them without ever seducing the mainstream population. There are also those amateur musicians and comedians who perform in the hopes of being selected for the next year's popular stages. Along with the music comes the dancing: mosh pits, line dances, hip hop and salsa. Political activists, radical separatists, poets, comedians, lecturers and writers also appear on stage.

Food, fun, and entertainment are only a small part of the Michigan experience. In a recent roundtable discussion consisting of feminist academics, Ann Cvetkovich, author of *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Cultures* says, "as a place for analysis and critique, the Michigan festival rivals any classroom or conference panel" (Lurie et al.) She points to "conversations about sex, class, race, parenting, intergenerational conflict, anti-Semitism, addiction, and more [that] occur daily" as evidence of this ongoing critical discussion. Furthermore, she claims Michigan provides a space where "lesbian feminist values and a commitment to anti-oppression be the rule

rather than the exception" (Lurie et al). Forums, services, and opportunities created by Michfest contribute to the ongoing struggle to build an egalitarian society run by people who share power, agency, and opportunity.

Despite all the joys of Michigan, not everyone thinks it is the "Eden" that most lesbians find it to be. The Christian Right wages yearly attacks on the festival, calling for city officials to close it down. In 2000, Lisa Vogel posted an announcement on the "MWMF [Michigan Women's Music Festival] website in response to an article written by a right wing reporter accusing the Festival of endangering children and subjecting them to sexual abuse." Vogel says that "the group 'Americans for the Truth' [. . .] petitioned the Michigan State Attorney General and the Oceana and Mason County prosecutors to investigate the Festival regarding six Michigan penal codes. This organization's purpose, in their own words, is to 'expose and oppose the homosexual movement'" (Mantilla and Vogel 8-9)). Subsequent festivals were threatened by similar groups, some asserting charges as far fetched as the sacrifice of pre-teen virgins; others asserted inappropriate sexual conduct with minors present. Since 2000, all workshops introducing adult subject matter are carefully monitored, and women at the workshop are asked to volunteer as potential witnesses in case charges are filed.

One might expect the religious right to make claims about the inappropriateness of the festival, but they are not the only group of people who threaten Michigan's continued existence. Festival expert Bonnie Morris writes, "Regrettably, threats to Michigan's survival now come from some radical LGBT [Lesbian Gay Bisexual Trans] activists as well as from right-wing religious groups ("At the Michigan"). While many

music festivals, like Ladyfest Midwest Chicago, invite trans-women to participate (some invite men as well) the Michigan festival admits only 'womyn-born-womyn'— a policy that excludes male-to-female transgendered people" (Vanasco). Since the early 90's, Trans activists have also targeted this event as a site of protest.

In spite of attacks from both sides of the political spectrum, lesbians and other-orientation identified women hold tight to this site of separatism, precisely because it frees them from both social institutions, like religion and its moral pedagogy and gender codes; and maleness, which holds females locked in an oppositional binary that works to enforce and inscribe those gender roles. Lesbian and feminist space offers sanctuary that provides for free expression of gender without regard to sexual orientation. Inside of the matriarchal world, women find ways of being without the competition of sex, thus relieving the pressure of a scripted performance.

Religious groups have long been driven by conformity and exclusivity. Nietzsche all but settled that with his arguments about the nature of morality.[60] But both this discussion of morality and arguments made about other heteronormative institutions are often made, and rehashing them here will hardly make a case for gender development and

[60] Let us finally consider how naive it is altogether to say: "Man ought to be such and such!" Reality shows us an enchanting wealth of types, the abundance of a lavish play and change of forms and some wretched loafer of a moralist comments: "No! Man ought to be *different*." He even knows what man should be like, this wretched bigot and prig: he paints himself on the wall and comments, "*Ecce homo!*" But even when the moralist addresses himself only to the single human being and says to him, "You ought to be such and such!" he does not cease to make himself ridiculous. The single human being is a piece of datum from the front and from the rear, one law more, one necessity more for all that is yet to come and to be. To say to him, "Change yourself!" is to demand that everything be changed, even retroactively. And indeed there have been consistent moralists who wanted man to be different, that is, virtuous they wanted him remade in their own image, as a prig: to that end, they negated the world! No small madness! No modest kind of immodesty! Morality, insofar as it condemns for its own sake, and not out of regard for the concerns, considerations, and contrivances of life, is a specific error with which one ought to have no pity an *idiosyncrasy of degenerates* which has caused immeasurable harm. (Nietzsche "Morality as Anti-Nature." *The Twilight of the Idols* (1889) *and the Anti-Christ* (1895). section 6).

freedom in essential space. However, parsing the discussion of the "trans" issue at the Michigan Women's Music Festival will shed some light on the importance of this space to women's social, political, and spiritual identities, all of which fuel freedom for gender experience. It is critical to note the problems of "inclusion" and "mainstreaming" within the larger queer community. This scrutiny of gender discussion and behavior inside of the new queer movement, a movement that many might often call a new queer-driven neglect of lesbian women at best and misogyny at worst, makes it an especially powerful discussion of the need for single sex space for women.

In 1991 male to female transsexual, Nancy Burkholder, was confronted about her sexual origin by a member of the staff at the front gate at MichFest, citing the womyn-born-womyn policy. Burkholder, a post-op transsexual offered to submit to a genital examination but refused to discuss her sex at birth. The staff declined the offer of the genital check and allowed her entrance to the festival (Morris *Eden Built By Eves* 172). In 1994, trans people set up a protest at the festival gates (Morris, "At the Michigan Womyn's Music Fest"). The initial movement for this protest was stirred by Burkholder and Leslie Feinberg, a female to male transsexual and the author of *Stone Butch Blues.* The interest in the whys of the womyn-born-womyn policy was foundational in the creation of Camp-Trans, which was established across a dirt road from Michfest and held daily workshops and dialogues in the interest of exploring the controversy. The communication between camps was remarkably peaceful (Morris. *Eden Built By Eves* 171).

Five years later, a group that calls itself Transsexual Menace planned to hold a similar event, a "Son of Camp Trans" protest across the road from the Festival grounds. This protest was not an earnest gathering designed at looking at motivations for the separatist policies of Michfest. Rather, it was a formal objection to those policies in terms of its exclusion of, in particular, male to female transsexuals. Lisa Vogel issued a statement saying, "The Festival is an event organized by, for, and about womyn. Our intention is for the Festival to be for womyn-born womyn, meaning people who were born and have lived their entire life experience as female. We ask that the transsexual community support and respect the intention of our event" ("Festival Reaffirms Commitment). Nevertheless, six transsexuals, knowing that the festival was endeavoring to provide womyn-born-womyn space, bought tickets. Workers held to the policy that no woman's gender would be questioned, sold the six tickets, and the transsexual-identified persons entered the Festival. Shortly after their entrance, they proceeded to the showers and disrobed, revealing that two of the activists were anatomically male; word began to spread that men were on the land. Another Camp Trans participant went to a teenage girls' discussion and engaged in explicit talk "about the clinical aspects of sex change operations," a tactic many women found inappropriate. As the presence of the Son of Camp Trans activists became known throughout the festival, many women expressed their concern. (Camp Trans activists include both transsexual and transgender-identified people. While festival policy excludes the transsexuals, it does not exclude transgender identified, female born people). Festival organizers focused on making rumor control their number one priority. Spontaneous debates and discussion took place throughout the

land and "volunteer facilitators helped to structure discussions so that various viewpoints, including those of the Son of Camp Trans, could be heard" ("Festival Reaffirms Commitment).

Festival staff met with trans activists to try and negotiate their voluntary participation in the women-born-women policy. The two anatomically male people voluntarily left the festival; however, "Transsexual Menace and Son of Camp Trans organizer Riki Anne Wilchins declined to respect those wishes and entered the Festival, participating in discussions and the workshop, and attending performances." Wilchins scheduled a workshop session as a forum for trans issues ("Festival Reaffirms Commitment). The workshop was well attended, and after listening to the Trans argument for disbanding the womyn-born-womyn's space, the majority still cried out against such a move.[61]

The next day, after a demonstration by trans activists where they displayed signs proclaiming themselves "FTM," "intersex," "transwoman," and "drag queen," eight people were escorted to the main gate and asked to leave the festival grounds. This challenge to the policy was met by another request for the trans community to respect the intention of the festival to maintain the womyn-born-womyn space. The festival producers reiterated that they would not question gender, but that self-proclaimed transsexual individuals would not be admitted. This event heightened the tension between the two camps and met with even more disagreement as this was the first instance of invoking the rule against "trannie boys, boydykes, FTM's [female to male

[61] I attended both this festival and this discussion.

transsexuals], Lesbian Avengers and young gender-variant women"; however, only those who identified as transsexual, not transgender, were asked to leave. Eventually, those who agreed to vacate the premises were escorted to the front gate chanting, "We have been asked to leave, we are not going voluntarily" (Mantilla and Vogel. "Michigan: Transgender controversy).

In response to this conflict, Lisa Vogel released yet another statement to the community, part of which is reproduced here:

Michigan has always been home to womyn-born womyn who represent every point along the continuum of gender identity: from butch to femme and beyond butch and femme, including many who consider themselves transgendered. We remain committed to providing space for womyn-born womyn to gather in celebration of our diverse identities as womyn-born womyn. [. . .]That means it is an event intended for womyn who were born and who have lived their entire life experience as female-and who currently identify as a woman. [. . .] We ask the transsexual community to respect and support this intention [. . .] Just as we call upon the transsexual community to support womyn-born womyn space, we encourage support and respect for the transsexual community. As a community, we in Michigan are committed to fighting prejudice and ignorance of all kinds; we do not want to see transphobia fostered here or anywhere. Claiming one week a year as womyn-born womyn space is not in contradiction to being trans-positive and trans-allies. In the year 2000, the queer community enjoys such rich diversity. We believe there is room for all affinity groups to enjoy separate and supportive space, and also to come together in broader alliances to fight prejudice that

affects all of us. We are strong enough to hold our incredible diversity in mutual respect and support. (Mantilla and Vogel. "Michigan: Transgender controversy).

Because of the presence of transexual people who refused to leave the festival, several cis[62]-and other alternately-gendered people chose to express their desire to maintain womyn-born womyn's space by leaving the land early (Mantilla and Vogel. "Michigan: Transgender controversy). Others, like transgender performer Animal Prufrock supported the festival policy, saying, "I identify as trans, and I don't think it's anti-trans for creatures with cunts to get together for a week" (Vanasco).

Because of these events, the Michigan Festival has been stigmatized, and many music groups that perform there are labeled "trans-phobic" (Halberstam *In a Queer Time and Place180*). Some people call space defined as specifically for women who are and have experienced life as female people "essentialist," using the term to suggest discriminatory and unequal. Yet, According to Cvetkovich,

> An analysis of festival policy in terms of how it defines women doesn't really address the remarkable range of people, including trans-identified women, who in practice assemble under that sign. More than grounding the construction of individual identity, the category of 'womyn born womyn' serves as a vehicle for the construction of community, enabling the very rare feeling of participating in a collective. (Lurie et al)

[62] Cis is the latin for "On the same side." It is often used in opposition to trans. I use it here to name those womyn born womyn who comfortably and freely exhibit gender behavior commonly associated with their sex.

Michigan is neither discriminatory nor transphobic in its desire to maintain one week a year for women with similar growing and living experiences. The Michigan Women's Music Festival has both the right and, possibly the responsibility, to maintain woman-born-woman space to ensure a productive site for women's communication, growth, and gender exploration until personal agency is no longer at issue in the larger community of humans. Cvetkovich maintains that her "academic training" made her leery of "cultural feminisms" as they "essentialized womanhood or presumed to be able to create alternative institutions or languages that escaped patriarchal structures." But when she attended MichFest, she found that "the range of identities, femininities, and theories that operated under the rubric of a "womyn's" festival was seriously under described by academic feminism's critique of lesbian separatism." She found MichFest not to be essentialist in the way it is often accused of being, generally by those who have never attended, but instead to include a range of female people (Lurie et al). My own experience of 15 weeks in Michigan echoes this assertion. The range of gender exhibition by women at Michigan is rivaled by no other communal meeting site of which I have ever seen or heard. Gender is displayed, practiced, refined, experienced, lived, loved, and changed. Women at Michigan are free to find a space of comfort because of the absence of binary opposition, including transsexuals that have at one time functioned in that binary on the other end of the spectrum.

The kind of critical inquiry that happens at the festival often focuses on the issues within the lesbian and queer communities, much like the trans inclusion debate. One I would like to speak to particularly exemplifies the kind of work that is being done within

this separatist space, work that likely gets done no where else. It is not traditionally theoretical, though often women come armed with theory and opinions, some good, some not good. But it is often a critical discussion that lends itself to the practical application of theory. Sometimes theory supports the outcomes. Sometimes it does not. Lesbians differ not from the larger population in terms of resisting change, and so it would be ludicrous to try to report that all lesbian discussion results in understanding and group consensus. But I would like to offer one occurrence when I did experience remarkable movement between multiple groups in conflict. In 2005, at my 13th or 14th festival, I attended a gender discussion workshop. The turnout was large, maybe 50 women, women who I imagine identified from high-femme to bull-dagger, from cisgirl to trannie-boi and in all of the marginal spaces in between. The range of opinions on gender varied by age, by identity, and by class, and many of these were obvious. The older group of lesbians, those who survived the 50s and 60s argued for butch identity as primary in changing gender roles for women. The 70s and 80s lesbians railed against that idea and talked of the days when gender was not an identity, but a construction foisted upon them by heterosexuals; both groups judged the younger queers—transbois, boydykes, boychicks, dykedaddies, bi-girls, and girl femmes—all of them confused by the anger, lost in a sea of identities and experiences about which they knew little.

The arguments ensued while difference was parsed by multiple, minoritzed groups of women. While the 70s lesbians called the 50s lesbians "imitations of men," the butch women called the transbois "passers." The androgynous femmes accused both groups of masculinized women of accepting male privilege, even encouraging male privilege. The

more masculine women accused the femmes and the androgynes of passing too. The young queer girls defended their boys, the old femmes stood in front of their butches, and the androgynous 70s crew stood side by side in matching outfits. All claimed the most success in changing the world for lesbians. I wondered how we ever survived at all when even within our community we were disrespectful of each other and those identities we had chosen, all of them based solely on timing, and luck, and some biological or socially created urge we could not touch.

The critical conversation began after the arguments over who had done the most, ended. Here, I watched women from 70 years old to 17 find a place of support for the other. The old butches began to understand the choices the young transbois were making. They were not different people. The fight was different as all struggles in ongoing revolutions are. The young queers listened to a social history that they cannot learn in books or at school. They touched a past that is rarely accessible. They heard the world of butch-femme; they listened to the stories of the feminist movement; they began to understand how they had become who they were. And hours later, hours after the formal workshop should have ended, after the participants had evoked everyone from Monique Wittig to Audre Lorde, from Adolf Hitler to Hillary Clinton, they knew each other, and they had new critical perspectives from which to launch an old fight for free gender expression, for free sexual expression. Of course, it was not a perfect game. Of course, some dissenters left in a huff of righteousness, but ultimately, most of us learned that day that destabilization of a gender binary comes in all forms, and we all had value for a new and different way to upset a fixed set of beliefs that we did not share with the majority

culture. Work like this can only take place in a real space of opportunity, in a real space of separatism. This is the critical, practical value of essential space, and it is this space that Scott, Gilman, and Russ fictionalized and promoted in the hopes that it could someday be real.

The importance of essential space in which to develop gender identity is amplified when it is examined through a queer lens. Clearly, even the presence of other queer people, even people who identify as women, albeit trans-women, change the dynamic of the space. Often women born women feel male privilege accompanies transwoman identity because of their earlier experiences as males. The sample postings that follow are from *Notes from the Political Forum* titled "WBW" (Womyn born Womyn) from the Michigan Festival pages ("WBW"), and they illustrate an overall feeling of anger and frustration by some of the women who attend Michigan regularly over the potential loss of separatist space. The multiple entries that refer specifically to lesbian gender identity in response to the debate about the gender and sex identities of the male to female transsexuals emphasize the significance of strategically essential space in fostering gender development. Clearly the trans community sees this space as vital to their gender development and expression, but the boards also indicate that the womyn born womyn also find it imperative to their own gender experience. What is also communicated here, and what seems to spread throughout most of the arguments in favor of maintaining this space, is the idea of the assertion of identity, often gender identity as K illustrates in this post:

> BUTCH Lesbians especially are invisible while MTF's in all their 'glorious" femininity like Dana International, and Donna Sachet and all the Empresses in royal courts throughout the land in gay communities get attention [while] butch dykes STILL get discriminated against everywhere we turn cuz we TRULY question female roles because female does NOT equal feminine. This is what most MTFs don't get.

In addition to the maligning some feel over the attention that some MTFs garner, the womyn born womyn seem to understand the MTF's experience as male as having endowed them with attitudes and rights to which women generally feel no relationship. These are often the very behaviors the festival attendees are attempting to escape. H writes,

> The male-born, by virtue of the fact that they ARE male-born, cannot help but participate in the ongoing subjugation of the people of women, the female-born [. . .] It feels like the most natural thing in the world to them, just as it feels natural and right to all of those born to male privilege to participate in the oppression of women, directly or indirectly.

This identified male oppression does not stop at wanting access to events that this women's group wants to keep separatist, but extends to the guilt they place on the women who refuse to cater to their needs. M.A. writes, "Over and over again we're shamed for being SELFISH [for] claiming our space, instead of caretaking the male born." This kind of expectation of caring fits into a gender role model championed by traditional gender

proponents. It is one gender expectation which Michfest manages to circumvent by keeping the space for womyn.

Like Animal Prufrock, who I cited earlier as a transgender-identified person defending the festival policy, festival goers express a desire to be with people they identify as like them. A festival regular writes, "I pray all the time that Lisa [Vogel] will not give in to this pressure. I need to be with a woods-full of wbw one week a year. [. . .] I fear the day when it will not be an option for us anymore and *everything* will be all-inclusive" (T, my italics). J says, "It is about womyn consciously making the decision to be with each other for one week. 'With each other' doesn't translate into 'against anyone' - not men and not transwomyn." The festival women, particularly the lesbians, who have celebrated their gender in this space, still fear their erasure with mandatory inclusion policies. The general consensus on the boards is that transsexuals, not having lived life as female, are experientially excluded from sharing these insights and other intimacies at all women's events. T.J. writes, "For someone who lived 50 years as a man to start saying "'Hi, I wanna join your club' sounds a bit much." Neither these comments, nor the anger that accompanies them, are not difficult to understand.

The majority of the women of MichFest protest the colonization of their space by people who they do not recognize as the same as themselves. R says, "the issue is simply whether people who were born and raised as female human beings have the ability to define their boundaries and to have those boundaries respected. The undeniable fact is that SOME women feel violated when MTFs come to the Festival and/or demand the right to be accepted as women." Some people call this desire for separatist space

discriminatory, but others have clear ideas of how this decision operates outside of that construct. C.F. writes,

> [G]athering together as female-born/female-lived IS NOT about essentialism. [I]t is NOT being essentialist to recognize that the culture we live [in] IS essentialist and wanting to heal from that. [T]he culture we live in treats us in a very specific way because we are female [. . .] ALL OUR LIVES [. . .]and we, the female-born have a [. . .] RIGHT to [. . .] gather to DEAL with that. [. . .] getting together to heal and deal with THE EFFECTS of living in an essentializing culture IS NOT the same as essentializing ourselves.

C.F. uses the word "essentialist" in a negative sense, which signals the influence of the ongoing movement toward all-inclusive policies. In order to clarify meaning, I would suggest she is denying discrimination inherent in strategic essentialism. Yet, it is imperative to respond to the stirring and controversial cry of the horror of essentialism. To do so, I will again invoke Fuss's strategic essentialism, but I would like to point out, like Diana Fuss, that "essentialism is more entrenched in constructionism" than has been acknowledged" both so far in this conversation and in general (Fuss 4). Constructionism and essentialism function as parts of each other rather than as bipolar opposites; like gender, they are fluid and mix in places we often ignore. Particular terms, like woman, must be retained to keep a framed reference to that of which we speak, even though, like other signs, at times we find simple signifiers limiting and reductive.

John Locke offers "nominal essence," which he views as a "linguistic convenience," and Fuss points to this category as useful for "[holding] onto the notion of women as a group without submitting to the idea that it is 'nature' which categorizes them as such" (qtd in Fuss 5). Keeping Locke and Fuss in mind, I would like to posit, instead of the essentialism from which many recoil for fear of inequality and the essentialism to which C.F referred in the last post, a combination of strategic essentialism and constructivism as the lens through which to view both the MichFest debate on the womyn born womyn attendance only policy and the reason for preserving this space as a site of free gender identity. Using Fuss and Irigaray, I have previously used literature to point to the often necessary strategy for using essentialism in building and establishing an independent identity forum, but now I would like to add to that theories of Social Identity and Dominance to assert the constructionist view that women are made not born, and therefore that they comprise an entire class of people who suffer from gender expression denial. A separatist community is called upon to help women transcend barriers to freedom of expression.

First, I would like to briefly revisit Fuss's argument: she maintains that, "there is an important distinction to be made [. . .] between 'deploying' or 'activating' essentialism and 'falling into' or 'lapsing into' essentialism." Choosing, then, in order to strategically confront social or political issues is not the same kind of "separate but equal" referred to in Brown vs. Board of Education. That conflict was not about choice but rather insisting that the government could provide separate facilities and services that would be equal to those provided to the majority. In the case of Michfest, women purposely use specified

time and space as a forum for womyn born womyn to gather and explore ideas, politics, power, and identity.

Yet beside that need for strategic essentialism is the need to identify and acknowledge the constructionism that feeds the need to establish separatist time and space. Multiple systems figure into the making of woman. Clearly, social conditioning is a major factor in creating all people. Biology, too, remains an aspect that has long been enforced when determining gender behavior. A long-standing assertion of social scientists claims that the social dominance of men is based on both genetic and cultural information.

Social dominance theory (SDT; Sidanius *1993*; Sidanius and Pratto *1999*) attempts to explain intergroup relations, and it is that theory of social order that I would challenge here in order to show how strategic essentialism supports ultimate equality through gender freedom. Social Dominance Theory rests on the observation that social groups are always hierarchically organized and that people share some ideologies legitimizing the hierarchical organization (i.e. hierarchy-enhancing legitimizing myths) and others which are opposed to hierarchy (i.e. hierarchy-attenuating legitimizing myths) (Caricati 159-60). In simpler terms, social groups are sorted from best to worst or strongest to weakest in similar ways by a broad cross-section of people. This standardized way of judging is supported by myth that makes the hierarchy seem logical, reasonable, or even lawful. Other groups share different kinds of ideology, which are opposed to organized hierarchies. The construct that encapsulates personal devotion to either of these two kinds of ideology is called Social Dominance Orientation (SDO). According to

Caricati, SDO is "defined as 'a general attitudinal orientation toward intergroup relations, reflecting whether one generally prefers such relations to be equal, versus hierarchical'" (Caricati 159), though Altemeyer (*1998*) defines SDO as "an extraordinary measure of prejudice" and "the best measure we have of missing link in the domination-submission authoritarian social system" (Caricati 160). Ward's definition is a bit more specific. He describes SDO as "The degree to which people: (a) desire to have their own ingroup dominate and be superior to generalized outgroups, and (b) support generalized hierarchical relationships among groups in society and (c) [have] a view of the world where social groups are engaged in zero-sum conflict over social value"(Ward). SDO is comprised of

> three distinct stratification systems (Sidanius and Pratto *1999*): (a) age-set system in which the oldest are the powerful, (b) gender-set system in which men have more power than women and (c) arbitrary-set system in which the powerful and the powerless are defined on the basis of any salient social characteristic (e.g. ethnicity, nation or race). (Caricati 160).

The gender-set system will be my focus for marshalling support for my argument.

In the gender-set system, "Ideological Asymmetry" (IA), the phenomenon wherein subordinates endorse myths of hierarchy though to a lesser degree than dominants, holds true, but while in other systems particular levels of SDO should interact with other variables like culture or status, in the gender-set system this is not true. Caricati informs us that "gender-based difference is assumed to be universal and independent from social and cultural contexts (e.g. genetically determined); a principle

known as the Invariance Hypothesis (IH).” This “Invariance Hypothesis,” according to Sidanius and Pratto (1999) is determined by both men’s need to rationalize their hierarchical privilege and their response to biologically driven, reproductive strategies: “Male reproductive success is increased when they have sexual access to several women (Pratto and Hegarty *2000*), reaching control over other men and women [optimizes] male reproductive success” (Caricati 168). The clear conclusion from this research is that males are more inclined to support “group-based social inequality (SDO) than women.”[63]

I would like to consider the outcomes of SDO using new research from social theorists to do so. In 2007 Luca Caricati noted that, “the invariance hypothesis has been greatly criticized by both social identity and role learning theorists. [. . .]: when gender identification was statistically controlled, men and women showed the same levels of SDO” Because of these recent insights, the idea of SDO as an individual personality trait is difficult to rationalize. A new argument suggests that SDO is rather a “product of social life rather than an underlying cause (p. 200)” (Caricati 170). SDO, then, is driven by a social system supported by a gender binary rather than being a cause of the gender binary. Gender is not, at least in terms of SDO, a biological behavior; instead it is a result of gender socialization. The “Study 1” results of Foels and Pappas (2004) “provide some evidence that ‘the difference between men and women is not invariant when controlling for social factors, which suggests that gender differences in social dominance may be learned through masculine socialization’ (p. 748)” (Caricati 161). Study two confirmed

[63] According to Caricati, “consistently with these expectations, Sidanius and Pratto (1999) found that across ten samples (Australia, Canada, Israel, Mexico, Palestine, Republic of China, New Zealand, the former USSR, Sweden and the United States) men scored higher in SDO than women. (see also Sidanius et al.) 2000). These results, however, do not account directly for any stable gender difference in SDO, rather they suggest that gender differences in SDO are less sensitive to the cultural factors.

and extended these same findings. What this means is that having men and women fixed in our traditional sex binary influences outcomes of their desires for social dominance based on gender expectation. This is significant to this analysis because it suggests liberation from a gender construction or expectation in a single-sex environment.

Not surprisingly, "power" is a major factor in Social Dominance Orientation. The control of people and resources results in prestige in our social system. Likewise, "achievement" figures into SDO. The desire to demonstrate competence also leads to social prestige. According to social theorists, "SDO, power, and achievement are expected to be strongly, and positively, correlated" (Caricati 161).[64] Men and women differ in how they view and value prestige and the steps to achieving it. According to Caricati, "Generally, men are more oriented to self-enhancement values (i.e. power and achievement) while women are more oriented to both conservation and self-transcendence values" (Caricati 162).[65] But these differences are attributable to gender socialization based on the studies using social-factor controls.

According to Eagly et al 2000, "Role learning theory explains these gender differences in values as the product of the current division of the labour" (Qtd in Caricati 162).[66] Because the discrete roles for the sexes are shared but divided, men's and

[64] At the same time, universalism and benevolence (which refer to social equality and fairness) should be negatively correlated to SDO. Accordingly, McFarland (*1998*; *1999*; McFarland and Adelson *1996*), found that SDO was negatively correlated with universalism and positively with power, whereas it was not correlated with tradition, conformity, security and self-direction. Values of hedonism, stimulation and benevolence were not administered by McFarland and colleagues. More recently, Duriez and Van Hiel (*2002*), with a Belgian sample, and Heaven and Connors (*2001*), with Australian undergraduate psychology students, highlighted that SDO was positively correlated with values of self-enhancement (e.g. power and achievement) and negatively correlated with values of self-transcendence (e.g. universalism and benevolence). Moreover, SDO does not seem correlated with values referring to both conservation and openness to change.

[65]. (Bond *1988*; Feather *1984*; Hitlin and Piliavin *2004*; Rokeach *1973*, Schwartz et al. *2001*).

[66] Eagly et al 2000.

women's "feelings, thoughts, and behaviours," are affected. Men, even today, have jobs that reflect more status, more decision making opportunities. On the other hand, women are often still caretakers. Ultimately Men have more agency in higher status positions, and that agency translates to "self-reliance, independence and self-gratification." Women, on the contrary are more "vulnerable." Ultimately, according to Caricati, the findings of multiple studies indicate that "the different socialization processes of the two sexes seem to affect gender differences in SDO" (168). Likewise, SDO researcher Dana Ward suggests that there is no biological component that controls behavior. There is no gene or hormone (ie testosterone) that causes males to be more dominant or aggressive. Furthermore, Ward claims, we are products of only "learning and socialization." Ward's research is supported by other inquiries as well. Turner and Reynolds have concluded "that social dominance theory is flawed by conceptual inconsistencies and has been disconfirmed empirically in relation to its key hypothesis of behavioural asymmetry," and have determined the hierarchy is "better explained by social identity theory," that is, by the way people are enculturated (Turner and Reynolds 199). The research of Dambrun, Duarte, and Guimond, designed to determine whether models derived from SDT or SIT "accounted best for the relations between gender, SDO and gender identification," concurs with the conclusions of both Ward and Turner and Reynolds, showing that the "results imply that the gender difference in SDO is wholly explainable without recourse to genes (Sidanius, Pratto, & Bobo, 1994), hormones (Sidanius & Ekehammar, 1980) or sexual reproductive strategies (Pratto, 1996; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999)" (Dambrun, Duarte, and Guimond 294).

This research not only confirms de Beauvoir's assertion that one is not born a woman but created so, but also that neither genetic dispositions nor hormone therapy mitigate behaviors that have been enculturated into personality. Commonly, trans men and women take hormones to change physical appearance, such as facial hair; and modify gender-associated characteristics, such as voice register and temperament behavioral patterns, such as passiveness and aggressiveness. Yet these studies suggest that hormones do not contribute to the classes of either "men" or "women." Hence, we see support for the desire for separation from both cis-men and transgendered women.

Worth noting but not particularly surprising is that Social Dominance Theory is more widely accepted as true by those in power, men. Dambrun, Duarte, and Guimond assert that "SDO provides intellectual and moral justification for the privileged position of males in the social hierarchy, not because of sociobiological influences" (295). But these studies also illustrate that this conception is maintained because it serves the men who support it. Ward maintains that often the less powerful minorities will align themselves with the stronger as a survival tactic or "defense mechanism," a point I stressed earlier in regard to the gender-set system: "Ideological Asymmetry." Yet, he is quick to point out that another form of survival is to "strengthen internal group bonds and to undermine the dominant hierarchy by promoting egalitarian social values" (Ward). These facts offer a frame upon which to hang Michigan separatism: Enculturated males and those women who identify with them in hopes of survival, the "IA" model, including, unpredictably, some of those invested heavily in the new "queer" movement, encourage minoritized others, for example, feminists and lesbians, to subordinate themselves to the

social dominance of men. Women who separate from men, those who choose strategic essentialism, then have chosen to fortify relationships between themselves and to challenge the authoritarian structure by encouraging classless community standards. They have seemingly disrupted the binary in a way that undoes their subordinate position in social dominance. Some of these, I maintain, are the radical feminists and lesbians of Michigan. As long men and women differ in SDO, there will be a need for separatist spaces, and as long as gender is tied directly to social and cultural conditioning, women will not be free to exercise gender. Moreover, trans women will be unable to experience that which will make them part of the class "women." Strategic essentialism allows for an escape from a socially created dominance and an opportunity to experience gender as a natural phenomenon.

The controversy surrounding the exclusion of transsexuals to maintain essentialist space at Michigan has continued from 1991, nearly 20 years of debate that has surely harmed supporters of both camps and divided the queer community. Festival opinion is that the Transsexual Menace supports activities meant to "disrupt and undermine the very fabric of the Michigan community," and women are distressed that "political energy is being directed at tearing down womyn's space, instead of at the external institutions that still concentrate power and control in patriarchal hands" (Festival Reaffirms Commitment). On the other side of the argument against separatism, trans Activist Riki Anne Wilchins and the Transsexual Menace advocate for inclusion of transpeople based on the gender fluidity movement of queer culture (Nangeroni). Morris defines the soul of the argument of whether transwomen should be allowed to attend Michian as basic. There

are those who believe that a man who is so "desperate" to be female that he has surgery should be allowed "since an intended and deeply felt female identity is his/her obvious location." The other side is represented by those women who are not comfortable sharing space with people not raised female, but rather as men, and who have had the experience of socialized dominance as explained by Caricati. They do not believe they should be welcomed to attend workshops where women tackle such issues, for example, as rape, incest, spousal abuse, and gender expressions of femininity and masculinity. Morris maintains that "the celebration of female life and energy that is festival culture seems mocked by the inclusion of men who have *selected* female identity; they are not, to use Alix Dobkin's phrase, *survivors of girlhood"* (Morris, *Eden* 173).

I find Morris's assessment of the basic differences in opinion on this issue, clear, although I am not sure that she has completely represented the stand of the pro trans inclusion movement. I base my own argument against transsexual inclusion on the idea that trans women raised male, even as marginalized males, do not share a significant part of being female with women raised girls. They, like cismen, have had an experience, though undoubtedly a different version, of learning social dominance. They function as one part of a binary that women must destabilize in order to freely experiment with both gender and social freedom. I am not suggesting that transexual people do not face difficult issues in childhood, nor am I suggesting that essentially all women suffer the same trials growing up; I am merely stating the obvious: the experiences are different from one another, different enough to warrant separatist space from all male born for womyn-born womyn. Allowing enculturated males into womyn-born womyn space

potentially, and often literally, reinstates the binary that endeavors to force women and lesbians back into the construct identified by compulsory heterosexuality and patriarchal values.

It is difficult for many to imagine why these attacks on the stability of a mainly lesbian institution go on. Maybe Michigan is perceived as strong enough to withstand them. Yet, Judith Halberstam says "the debates about the antitrans politics of the Michigan Women's Music Festival has tended to drown out other debates about race" (*Female Masculinity* 180-81), and, I would assert, other equally important work done there about gender and class identities. Strikes at the Festival from both the right and the left, ignore what Morris identifies as

> the collective work ethic; the extraordinary dedication to unlearning racism; the safe space for toddlers and adolescent girls; the opening ceremonies honoring Native land; the entirely ASL-interpreted stage program and the wheelchair-accessible forest; No other institution in the world offers this range of services on such a large scale for a primarily (but not exclusively) lesbian consumer base. The festival is not Wal-Mart. Whatever views people have about it, it is not the establishment. (Morris "At the Michigan")

Separatism in Michigan is not designed to keep people out; it is created to bring people into their own power.

I think it is important to look at this need for such exclusive separatism by considering the stances and changes within queer communities, and this is what I have

endeavored to do in this last section of this chapter. This post from Mon May 18, 2009 by Gynophile is an insight into practical views of the dynamic between lesbians and the larger queer political assembly. On Mon May 18, 2009, Gynophile posted this on the Michigan boards:

> Women who speak out against the misogyny that queer theory engenders are the ones who get informally and formally harassed. It's all very selective and neatly hierarchical. Women who speak out against the erasure of woman-only space and the slippage going on at Fest are the ones "harming" Fest. Uh huh. The resident TS [transsexual] who intrudes on every conversation and advocates that Fest rules be violated is "respected". [. . .] What's really going on here is a concerted effort by the usual players to change Fest policy to a trans inclusive one - by any means possible, including disingenuous accusations and double talk. The pitifully few of us willing to challenge them on that, in no uncertain terms, are "confused", "uncivil", in need of "censorship" - not lady-like. How two people [referring to two posters in a forum] can "bully" a posse of queer theorists [referring to several, generally trans-inclusive, posters] is beyond me, but it's in keeping with the plaintive lament that characterizes queer discourse which is dominant culture in drag. "Woe is me, I'm so mistreated - the bullies are coming, the bullies are wrecking Fest, whatever shall we do?" they lament - all the while turning the knife. But

> politely, always, politely, at least according to their patriarchal standards, rules and regs. (“What is the Position”).

This monologue points out the very frustrating consequence of inclusion policies within the queer movement, seen as encouraged by queer theorists, generally from the sidelines. It seems that the argument for essential space defends a return to policies that marginalized women, people of color, gays and lesbians in the first place. If men, and theorists, and those who have appropriated queerness—of whom there is no dearth—call for *only* inclusion policies when inequality is still at hand, equality will never be achieved. Because of these fears and possibilities, The Michigan Womyn's Music Festival producers remain firm in their commitment to maintain the Festival as womyn-born womyn space. At the same time, they stand as allies with the trans community and refuse to be forced into false dichotomies that equate being pro-womyn-born-womyn space with being anti-trans or even, anti-male.

Inarguably, even though women and lesbians have made great strides toward equality in the last century, they still often live as second-class citizens in this world. Women must still insist on separatist space in order to overthrow a status assigned to them by an oppressive binary that cannot be dismantled while social systems still embrace it. Male Social Dominance Theories have been exposed as constructed, based on the social conditioning of men. By breaking the binary, we allow women to find their own power, and at the same time, we release men, too, from their slotted gender performance. Constructionism meets strategical essentialism to illustrate how gender is conceived and experienced in separatist space. Considering both the political identities

and activities of lesbians provides clear evidence as to the reasons they choose to maintain separatist space, but as Elizabeth Freeman points out**,** lesbian feminists are still a "drag" to others (728).

# Conclusion

## What Does It All Mean? Where to from Here?

My broader goal in this work has been to show how genderqueer women have contributed to the emancipation of gender expression. By pointing out this feat of marginalized people, I brought a broader thinking to expressions seen as outside of the norm. For the queer community, I demonstrate how gender rebels ultimately work to liberate people from restrictive formulas for behavior and identity. Furthermore, I illustrate the importance of not invalidating alternate forms of expression, and further, to encourage the male contingency not only to embrace but also to empower women who look for strength and identity in spaces outside of the heteronormative traditions. I have both revealed the connotative fiction of "homonormativity" as potentially maligning to lesbians and erased the idea of "not queer enough" in a country that still denies so many marginalized citizens civil rights. I wished to show the queer community the sacrifices and advances made based on the movement of genderqueer women.

To the non-queer population, I have re-articulated the idea of gender liberation. I expose the construct as a confining entity that exists, as Judith Butler says, by imitating an idea of the original. This dissertation will revise views of disparity in that it will expose difference by degrees. In other words, we are often held to the expectations and desires initially generated, and now fortified, by those who celebrate the inherent benefits in discrete identity categories and firm boundaries; it is those who are different in more extreme ways that will eventually emancipate people from the restrictions that limit the development of both our idiosyncrasies and personal abilities. Finally, I hope to take this

one instance of manifesting change and make it relatable to infinite other moments of possible change. By validating the reality of productive revolution for everyone by a minority of disenfranchised and invalidated individuals, we can see the reality of equality for all and a future full of benevolence and inclusion.

From this work, I have discovered multiple realms of identity cached in spaces that beg for investigation and analysis. I have realized that gender is complicated by both class and performativity. There is much to uncover about gender expressions and constructions by conflating and analyzing intersections of class, gender, and queer performativity, and doing so will support a continuing project of both re-creating a queer history and celebrating those markers of change that that history has promoted. I see a significant opportunity to engage gender, class, and queerness as performativities, or as "the disciplined application of conventionalized practices," as WB Worthen says (9), using theorists such as Karl Marx, Michel Foucault, Judith Butler, Erving Goffman, and Laura Mulvey. I believe that there are new identity categories, performance opportunities, and institutions of performativity to discover; ultimately, I believe, we will see how performativity continues to inspire inequality, and I wish to initiate conversations that address this ongoing product of constructivism.

Although theories of gender performativity have proved vital in undoing normative expectations about sex and gender, new conventionalities materialize even as this "undoing" takes place. Seemingly, performativity is not dismantled; rather, the social behaviors and beliefs that sustain performativity change: the performative effects are redirected to serve a contemporary audience. Contra Eve Sedgwick who describes queer

performativity "as an ongoing project for transforming the way we may define—and break—boundaries to identity," I would argue that when queer performativity "breaks" boundaries, it must of necessity reset boundaries. Sedgwick's "ongoing project" attempts to distract her readers from what is a paradoxical consequence for queer performativity—that, like other performativities, it results in conventionalized practice.

WB Worthen and Sharon O'Dair interrogate performativity outside of the realm of gender, so well theorized by Butler. Worthen argues that performativity in the theater, for example, consists not in the citing of texts but "'in reiterating its own regimes of performance [. . .]—acting, directing, scenography'" (9). O'Dair pushes the questioning further by arguing that different realms of performativity might end up affecting one another. Developing an insight in Butler's essay "Athletic Genders" (108, 111), O'Dair contends that tennis icon Martina Navratilova did indeed break through limits of gender performativity, making "bodies [like Martina's] acceptable for women in society." But more importantly this achievement was "made possible when one arena of performativity, sports, affected another, gender" (149).

This idea that realms of performativity might intersect compels me to consider what new structures emerge from these spaces of contact. When realms of performativity meet, it is possible for them to coalesce, changing one or both, or creating an entirely new space, a new realm of performativity that may or may not imitate the originals. It is from within this framework that I would like to look at "gender," "class," and "queer" as performative structures. I offer here two brief examples and a hypothesis to illustrate the observations that emerged from my dissertation study. The first is from the 1940s and

1950s lesbian community, a rich period in the history of butch-femme relations. It was during this era that a working class butch-femme community became visible, precisely because of its clearly defined gender roles.[67] Lesbians sought refuge in community, and the visibility of this group invited women from all classes to enter and thus to engage a new culture. For some women, doing so represented a downward mobility reinforced by the demonized position of being a lesbian. This intersection of gender performance and queerness both reinforced and recreated butch-femme culture as part of the working class.

In the 1960s and 1970s, the women's movement began a process of interrogating patriarchy that benefited both heterosexual women and lesbians, but butch-femme was ridiculed as part of the patriarchy women were trying to dismantle. According to contemporary feminists, such role-playing was obsolete. Lesbian feminists again inscribed role-playing as a working class phenomenon and focused on the reform of butch-femme dyads. Not realizing the class implications of such ridicule, feminists ostracized those who refused to conform; these lesbians were denied both recognition and economic opportunity because of their gender performance. Abandoning butch-femme and embracing androgyny, then, could elevate one's class status in a heteronormative society.

Finally, I would like to further address gender construction through two contemporary queer and class intersections; each I suspect as a genesis of an evolving queer conventionality. In the first, Richard Goldstein points to successful, "good gay" icons who speak to and for the gay community but simultaneously embrace

[67] This era supported a strong butch femme working class culture, yet there were, of course, other passing lesbians, middle class for the most part. And, there were also upper class lesbians, notably Gertrude Stein. But, by and large, because butch-femme was the visible culture, it received most of the notoriety and the social pressure.

heteronormativity. Goldstein speculates that this pursuit of the "good gay" role reflects the desire to regain the class privilege lost to a homosexual identity. The second, ostensibly the opposite, is equally pervasive. A queer community works to determine criteria for queerness that rejects heteronormativity. Its cast includes not only gays, lesbians, and genderqueers,[68] but also heterosexuals who engage in queer practices.[69] While this group defines queer against heteronormativity, it resets boundaries of queerness as it does so.

The hypothesis that has sprung from my dissertation, then, is that just as the feminist movement toward androgyny had unrecognized class implications, so will the current queer movements in their responses to heteronormativity. In the example of the "good gays," queerness has inspired what may be a new arena of performativity, complete with the structures of exclusion that are attached to traditional gender and class performativities. In the other, as happened in the butch-femme exclusion of the 1960s and 1970s, the result may be an in-group social policing. In both cases, the outcome may repeat those of the earlier periods' activism: people will be classed based on both the body and performance.

My academic work thus far has been focused on analyzing gender and queer expression, including transgender corporeality, but it has leaned heavily on both the English Department and novels as sources. In a new project, I may shift my focus to include performance, to incorporate expressions of corporeality in my analysis of how

[68] And other non-heterosexuals.

[69] non-monogamy, cross dressing, and other non-traditional heterosexual behaviors

gender, queer, and class performativities affect each other. I am happy that I undertook this project, as I have learned so much about my own writing and thinking. My original thesis has been complicated and expanded to reflect the growth in my own critical philosophies. I look forward to my next project.

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