



Faculteit Letteren en Wijsbegeerte

How to do Things with Butler

An Inquiry on the Origin, Citation and Application
of Judith Butler's Theory of Performativity

Sarah Claeys

Scriptie Ingediend tot het Behalen van de Graad van Licentiaat in
de Taal- en Letterkunde: Germaanse Talen

Academiejaar: 2006-2007

Promotor: Dr. Katrien De Moor

Contents

| | |
|--|----|
| Introduction | 1 |
| 1. On LANGUAGE the Linguistic Performative..... | 5 |
| 1.1. AUSTIN: THE FIRST FORMULATION OF THE PERFORMATIVE..... | 6 |
| CONSTATIVE AND PERFORMATIVE UTTERANCES | 6 |
| UNHAPPY PERFORMATIVE UTTERANCES | 7 |
| IMPLICIT PERFORMATIVES | 8 |
| A GENERAL DOCTRINE OF SPEECH ACTS | 9 |
| (UN)INTENTIONAL EFFECTS | 10 |
| A SPECIAL DOCTRINE OF THE ILLOCUTIONARY ACT..... | 11 |
| THE WEAKNESS OF THE PERFORMATIVE | 12 |
| 1.2. DERRIDA: DECONSTRUCTING AUSTIN..... | 12 |
| CITATIONALITY AS AN INTRINSIC PART OF LANGUAGE..... | 13 |
| CITATIONAL GRAFTING | 14 |
| 1.3. FELMAN: RE-EVALUATING AUSTIN | 15 |
| FAILURE AS AN INTRINSIC PART OF THE PERFORMATIVE | 16 |
| A SERIOUS PERFORMATIVE..... | 16 |
| THE IRREDUCIBLE SCANDAL | 19 |
| EXCITABLE SPEECH..... | 20 |
| 2. On SUBJECTS Language and Law bringing Subjects into Being | 23 |
| 2.1. HEGEL: THE DIALECTIC PROCESS | 23 |
| INTRODUCING A HEGELIAN SUBJECT AND ITS METAPHYSICAL JOURNEY | 24 |
| THE DIALECTIC: THESIS – ANTITHESIS – SYNTHESIS | 25 |
| WRITING WITH STYLE: A DIALECTICAL DEBATE WITH THE SELF | 26 |
| DESIRE FOR THE OTHER AND DESIRE FOR THE SELF | 29 |
| HEGEL’S ‘AUFHEBUNG’: TO LIFT UP, CANCEL AND PRESERVE | 30 |
| LORD AND BONDSMAN: A CONSCIOUSNESS THAT IS SPLIT | 31 |
| INTERSUBJECTIVITY: THE SELF AND THE OTHER | 32 |
| 2.2. ALTHUSSER: INTERPELLATION..... | 33 |
| THE IDEOLOGICAL STATE APPARATUSES | 34 |
| THE INTERPELLATIVE CALL: ‘HEY JUDE’ | 35 |
| GIRLING AND BOYING | 37 |
| AGENCY AND SUBJECTION | 38 |
| 2.3. FOUCAULT: DISCOURSE AND POWER..... | 39 |
| FOUCAULT AND THE GENEALOGY OF ‘SEXUALITY’ | 40 |
| POWER THROUGH DISCOURSE | 41 |
| 3. On GENDER the Heterosexual Matrix and Gender Performativity | 43 |
| 3.1. IDENTITY | 44 |
| THE INTELLECTUAL BATTLE BETWEEN ESSENTIALIST AND CONSTRUCTIONIST FEMINISTS ... | 44 |
| ‘WOMAN’ AS A UNIVERSAL CATEGORY | 45 |
| ‘WOMAN’ AS A TERM IN PROCESS | 46 |
| QUEER THEORY..... | 48 |

| | |
|---|-----|
| 3.2. GENDER TROUBLE AND THE HETEROSEXUAL MATRIX..... | 50 |
| SEX , GENDER, DESIRE..... | 50 |
| DESIRE: GAYLE RUBIN, SEX AND SEXUALITY..... | 53 |
| THE HETEROSEXUAL MATRIX..... | 54 |
| 3.3. GENDER PERFORMATIVITY OUT OF THE CLOSET..... | 55 |
| WHY DON'T YOU DO RIGHT (LIKE SOME OTHER MEN DO)..... | 57 |
| DRAG AS A WAY OUT OF THE HETEROSEXUAL MATRIX..... | 58 |
| DRAG AS REINFORCING THE HETEROSEXUAL MATRIX..... | 59 |
| VENUS XTRAVAGANZA: PERFORMATIVE OR CONSTATIVE..... | 61 |
| PERFORMATIVITY/PERFORMANCE: THE ACTOR ON STAGE..... | 62 |
| PERFORMATIVITY/PERFORMANCE: AT THE CROSSROAD OF AGENCY AND DETERMINISM.... | 64 |
| BUTCH/FEMME: IMITATION OR REAPPROPRIATION..... | 66 |
| 3.4. WHEN PERFORMATIVITY AND PERFORMANCE MEET: PARODY, MOCKERY, SHAME..... | 67 |
| QUEER PERFORMATIVITY..... | 68 |
| WITNESS AND MARRIAGE: IN THE PRESENCE OF FAMILY AND FRIENDS..... | 69 |
| SHAMEFUL INTERPELLATIONS..... | 70 |
| 4. On BODIES Matter, Matrix and the Performative Body..... | 73 |
| 4.1. MATERIALITY..... | 74 |
| INTERSEX AND GENDER ASSIGNMENT..... | 74 |
| MATTER, MATRIX, HYLE..... | 75 |
| BODY AND SOUL, MATTER AND MATRIX..... | 76 |
| 4.2. INCORPORATION..... | 77 |
| FREUD'S MELANCHOLIA..... | 78 |
| MELANCHOLIC HETEROSEXUALITY..... | 80 |
| INCORPORATION..... | 81 |
| 5. A Butlerian Analysis Fluidity of Identity in Jackie Kay's <i>Trumpet</i> | 84 |
| 5.1. JOSS MOODY'S TRUMPET..... | 85 |
| BILLY TIPTON..... | 85 |
| AMBITION OR SEXUAL ORIENTATION..... | 86 |
| REFUSING CATEGORIZATION..... | 88 |
| 5.2. PERFORMATIVE GENDER..... | 90 |
| REGULATING THE HETEROSEXUAL MATRIX..... | 91 |
| LAYING BARE THE TRUTH..... | 93 |
| THE STORY OF MY LIFE : VARIATIONS ON THE SAME THEME..... | 94 |
| WHAT'S IN A NAME: COLMAN..... | 95 |
| DIFFERENT LAYERS AND NICKNAMES..... | 97 |
| COMPLEX IDENTITY: SOPHIE STONES..... | 98 |
| PERFORMATIVITY AND RACE..... | 101 |
| Conclusion..... | 105 |
| Works Cited..... | 107 |

Introduction

When flipping through a magazine, readers are swamped by pictures of beautiful men and women. They are slim, perfectly dressed, their hair looks stunning and not a wrinkle or spot can be found on their entire face. Because of the magnitude of these images – which are not only distributed through magazines but also appear on television, especially in commercials – their readers start to see them as representations of what is ‘normal’ and of what a man or a woman *should* look like. However, these images that claim to represent what is beautiful and normal are often drastically photoshopped and retouched, thus making a very slim model even slimmer and making an almost wrinkleless face perfectly flawless. In a documentary entitled ‘Beperkt Houdbaar’, the Dutch journalist Sunny Bergman questions the representativeness of these media images. She asks why a lot of women who undergo plastic surgery claim that they do this because they feel they are not ‘representative’, not ‘normal’. Interestingly, ‘What is normal?’ is a frequently returning question in the documentary.¹ Bergman claims that the retouched pictures in magazines and the increasing normalization of plastic surgery impose an almost unattainable ideal on women and men. People feel they should look thin, flawless, spotless, hairless (at least everywhere from the head down) and wrinkleless to be considered as ‘normal’.

The philosopher Judith Butler is also very interested in the question Bergman puts forward: ‘what counts as normal?’. Butler, however, states the question differently in *Bodies That Matter*: ‘What qualifies as bodies that matter, ways of living that count as “life,” lives worth protecting, lives worth saving, lives worth grieving?’ (1993: 16). In an interview from 2000, Butler expresses her concern about the ‘intensification of normalization at this time, which involves a focus on the body and its perfectibility’ (Breen 2005: 18).² Though Butler was not specifically talking about plastic surgery and the cosmetic industry, this claim shows Butler’s interest in ‘normalization’, her concern with how norms are constructed and imposed, and how this ‘normalization’ excludes those lives that do not conform to the norm. In this investigation I hope to show how Butler questions those ideas that put themselves forward as self-evident truths and how she deconstructs ostensible stable identity categories such as ‘man’, ‘women’, ‘male’, ‘feminine’, ‘gay’, ‘lesbian’, ‘transsexual’, ‘black’, ‘white’. All Butler’s works are thus primarily concerned with identity and how subjects come into being through constraining power structures.

Butler’s formulations about gender performativity are central to her theory and will also be the main focus of my dissertation. After the publication of *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion*

¹ This documentary can be found online: Bergman, Sunny. 2007. *Beperkt Houdbaar* (documentaire; coproductie van Viewpoint productions en VPRO en kwam tot stand met steun van het Stimuleringsfonds Nederlandse Culturele Omroepproducties). Accessed on 1 July 2007: <http://www.beperkthoudbaar.info/docu/>.

² This interview entitled ‘*There is a Person Here*: An interview with Judith Butler’ can be found in Breen, Margaret Sönser and Warren J. Blumenfeld (ed.). 2005. *Butler Matters. Judith Butler’s Impact on Feminist and Queer Studies*, Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited.

of Identity (1990) Butler became instantaneously famous, which was in fact very surprising to some because of the density and difficulty of her work. In the years that followed, Butler was both violently criticised and worshiped for her formulations of gender, sex and identity. Despite the fact that *Gender Trouble* only contains one brief section in the chapter ‘Subversive Bodily Acts’ on gender performativity, it is this aspect of Butler’s theory in particular that has aroused as much hostilities as it has received adulation. Moreover, gender performativity has been misunderstood on numerous occasions and Butler has revised and reformulated some aspects of the theory in the course of several publications. Furthermore, although Butler’s work has often been cited, referred to and also – sometimes viciously – criticised, in my opinion there has not yet been a work that traces the history, emergence and reception of the aspect of Butler’s work which made her known as the ‘birth-mother’ of queer theory.³ For this reason, I believe an investigation in the theory of performativity is necessary. In my opinion, Sara Salih’s work on Butler provides a very good and thorough analysis of her ideas. Nevertheless, she presents Butler’s works in chronological order, which I believe is not only a very limiting mode of analysis, but it also suggests that Butler’s thinking is a chronological process of ideas, which ends with some sort of conclusion.⁴

Butler’s theory is, as I will show elaborately in the second chapter, highly influenced by the Hegelian dialectic and her works are, as Salih explains, only the parts of ‘a process or a becoming which has neither origin nor end’:

If you were to attempt to “plot” Butler’s work on a graph, you would not find her ideas progressing in a straight line from A to M to Z; instead, the movement of her thought would resemble a Mobius strip, or a series of Mobius strips, exemplifying how her theories curve or circle around issues without attempting to resolve them. (2002: 3)

Butler’s theory of gender performativity is thus not outlined in one single work or even in a cluster of works. Because of this, I have chosen not to describe Butler’s theory based on the chronological order of her writing. Instead, I will use a Foucauldian framework to investigate Butler’s insights in the performative. In the second chapter I will investigate Foucault’s influence on Butler and I will outline the mode of analysis Foucault calls ‘genealogical’. Very briefly, a genealogy does not have ‘truth’ or some kind of resolution as its goal, but it focuses primarily on the conditions of *emergence* and *effects* of that which is investigated. In my opinion, this is the most interesting mode for examining Butler’s theory of performativity because it allows me to trace the theory from its earliest formulations in speech act theory to the many criticisms it has aroused until today. Furthermore, I have organized this

³ Although Butler is generally associated with Queer Studies, I will show in this inquiry that the emergence of Queer Theory can not be attributed to one single figure. Nevertheless, Butler – and her theory of performativity in particular – did play a significant role in this and other fields of study like feminism, gay and lesbian studies, film studies, literary studies, cultural studies, psychology and pedagogy.

⁴ Salih is aware of this problem and she stresses that although she provides Butler’s work in chronological order this does not imply that there is ‘a clear or linear progression from book to book’ (2002: 3).

discussion around some important themes in Butler's works that prove to be important for the theory of gender performativity: language, the subject, gender and the body.⁵

In the first chapter, I focus on language and the important role theorists of language have played in the emergence of the performative. The title of this dissertation – *How to do Things with Butler* – is, not surprisingly, a pun on the work of the philosopher of language J.L. Austin, whose influence on Butler's theorizations of gender performativity should not be underestimated. Two important critiques on Austin are analyzed: Derrida's deconstruction of Austin in 'Signature Event Context' (1972) and Shoshana Felman's work *The Literary Speech Act: Don Juan with J.L. Austin, or Seduction in Two Languages* (1983). By looking into Butler's ideas about censorship and hate speech, I will demonstrate how Butler believes that language is always some sort of act of which the speaker is not completely in control. Depending on Derrida, Butler claims that every utterance recites previous utterances, and therefore, the speech act might be recited differently than the original. In this sense, an insult does not always have to be injurious. Terms of abuse might in fact be 'returned' to the speaker and receive new meaning. As I will discuss extensively, Butler provides as an example the revaluation in recent years of the term 'queer'.

The second chapter investigates three more important philosophers who contributed to Butler's ideas about how subjects come into being through existing power structures. Once more language will prove to be an important element when I discuss the interpellative call outlined by Althusser that 'hails' people into existence and when I demonstrate how Foucault suggests that the power that keeps people in their place comes through discourse. However, the chapter will begin with an analysis of the influence by the nineteenth century philosopher G.W. Hegel on Butler's work. As I will reveal, Hegel influences Butler's writing style – which proves to be the source of much volatile criticism – and the Butlerian subject: similar to Hegel's 'Geist', Butler's subject constantly renegotiates itself, resembling a dialectic movement. Finally, I will also elaborate on the genealogical mode of inquiry which was outlined by Foucault.

This philosophical background will be essential to understand Butler's insights about gender and the body. In the third chapter, the question about identity and how gender/sex identity comes into being will be tackled. I will first of all reveal Butler's insights about the 'heterosexual matrix', which she considers as a matrix of power that imposes norms and shapes subjects into existence. For example, I will investigate how the heterosexual matrix presuppose a relational dependence between gender, sex and desire: thus, when you are biologically female, you should act feminine and desire men. However, Butler will question this relational dependence and she will argue that gender, sex and desire are constructed. She shows how gender is performative: a doing without a sovereign subject doing the deed. Nevertheless, although gender is constrained by the heterosexual matrix, I will prove that Butler still leaves room for agency. Two important possibilities for subversion that expose the

⁵ Salih also uses some of these themes to organize her inquiry. I will however not associate each theme with one specific and single work by Butler as Salih has done.

constructedness of sex/gender/desire will be discussed: drag performance and butch/femme lesbian identities. Importantly, Butler's example of drag has been the source of much confusion concerning her theory of performativity. As I will show, some critics assumed that Butler was arguing that gender is like drag, a performance, and can thus be chosen at will. However, this is not at all what Butler was saying and I will elaborately prove this in the third chapter.

Furthermore, some readers believed that by claiming that 'sex' is a construction of the heterosexual matrix Butler was denying materiality altogether, resulting in a very nihilistic theory. In the fourth chapter, I will therefore examine the implications of Butler's theory on the material body. I will show how, although Butler does not believe that there is a body which is not always already moulded by the heterosexual matrix, she insists on the materiality of bodies that live, eat, sleep and feel pain. Butler's ideas about how identity is constructed are finally placed against the background of Aristotle's ideas about 'matter' and Freud's insights about 'incorporation'.

In the final chapter I will include what could be called a 'Butlerian analysis' of a literary text. Since my main goal is to provide an thorough genealogical inquiry of Butler's theory on gender performativity, it has not been my intention to include an exhaustive literary analysis. I will therefore merely show how Butler's notions on identity might prove to be a helpful framework for critically examining a literary text. I have chosen to briefly analyse Jackie Kay's debut novel, *Trumpet*. First of all, because it – similar to Butler's work – questions common notions about sex and gender and centres around the fluidity of identity. Secondly, *Trumpet* is an obvious choice to subject to an analysis in the light of Butler theory, since by focussing on someone who is born female – Josephine Moore – but who lives all his life as a male jazz trumpet player, Joss Moody, the plot is already quite Butlerian in itself.

1. On LANGUAGE the Linguistic Performative

In this first chapter I would like to consider the importance of language in Butler's work. As I hope to show in my investigation, Butler insists on the importance of critical writing and the use of language for political mobilization. To introduce this chapter, I will consider some recent reflections Butler made concerning critical writing. In a 2003 interview, she remarks that after September 11 there was a general resistance in the United States to 'questions about *why* these bombings had occurred' (Breen 2005: 9).⁶ Any explanations or analyses were considered as anti-patriotic, treason and even as collaboration with "the terrorists". According to Butler, this kind of anti-intellectualism states that 'moral condemnation' of the bombings 'requires paralyzing one's capacity to think, to analyze, to consider all the contributing factors to a situation' and in this way a public sphere is created in which 'only certain kinds of views may be heard, only certain kinds of images may be seen, and only certain interpretations of reality are authorized' (10). In other words, critical discourse is restricted when questions about why and how something happened can not be asked. Butler, on the other hand, stresses the importance of critical texts and has written some controversial essays that evoked a lot of criticism and many accusations. For example, when she, a self-declared 'progressive Jew', wrote about the Israel/Palestine conflict arguing against the Israeli occupation, she was accused of anti-Semitism (10). However, in an article entitled 'No it's not anti Semitic' Butler explains that 'the anti-Semitic charge' is used to 'quell public criticism about Israel' and she stresses the distinction between 'anti-Semitic speech' and 'political debate':

it is important to distinguish between anti-Semitic speech which, say, produces a hostile and threatening environment for Jewish students - racist speech which any university administrator would be obliged to oppose and regulate - and speech which makes a student uncomfortable because it opposes a particular state or set of state policies that he or she may defend. The latter is a *political debate*, and if we say that the case of Israel is different, that any criticism of it is considered as an attack on Israelis, or Jews in general, then we have singled out this political allegiance from all other allegiances that are open to public debate.⁷ [My emphasis]

Butler is thus interested in the speech which makes people 'uncomfortable' and makes people *think*. In an older interview entitled 'Changing the Subject', Butler already characterized her prose as what Foucault calls 'politics of discomfort' (2000a: 356). Of course, this does not imply that she attempts to annoy her readers – although some experience annoyance when reading Butler's work – but, rather,

⁶ This interview is included in *Butler Matters* (2005) and is entitled 'There is a Person Here: an interview with Judith Butler'. The interview was in fact compiled between 2000 and 2003 and Butler answered the questions submitted via email.

⁷ Butler, Judith. 2002. 'No, it's not anti Semitic'. Accessed on 1 July 2007: <http://www.lrb.co.uk/v25/n16/butl02.html>.

her work tries to invite the reader to ask questions and, more specifically, questions about those things that are supposed to be stable, unchanging and evidently true.

Language is thus a pressing issue to Butler and she is greatly concerned about what can be done by using words. The first philosopher who asked this very same question was J.L. Austin. In his work, tellingly titled *How to Do Things with Words*, Austin formulated for the very first time the workings of a performative. In fact, the ‘performative’ came into existence in Austin’s lectures at Harvard University in 1955. For this reason, I would like to begin this inquiry by investigating the insights of the birth-father of the performative. As will be evident later on in this chapter, Austin’s insights will prove to be highly important for Butler’s formulations of performative gender.

1.1. AUSTIN: THE FIRST FORMULATION OF THE PERFORMATIVE

The term ‘performativity’ was introduced in 1955 in a series of lectures at Harvard University by the philosopher of language and pioneer in speech-act research, J.L. Austin (Chinn 1997: 295 and Felman 1983: 15). Two of Austin’s students later edited the content of these lectures, using Austin’s own notes as well as notes taken by people who attended the lectures, and collected them in the book *How to Do Things with Words* (1962) (Austin 1975: v-viii). As the title of the book suggests, Austin was mainly concerned with the question ‘What can we *do* with words?’. Although grammarians had already pointed out that not all ‘sentences’ are ‘statements’ that can be either true or false (e.g. a question), this pragmatic aspect of language remained largely unresearched; up until then, philosophers too often assumed that a sentence always entailed a ‘description’ of a state of affairs or a ‘statement’ of a fact’ (Austin 1975: 1). By dividing language into ‘constative’ and ‘performative’ utterances, Austin demystified – in ‘a thoroughly Nietzschean manner’, according to Shoshana Felman – this illusion by which ‘the only thing at stake in language is its “truth” or “falsity”’ (1983: 15).

CONSTATIVE AND PERFORMATIVE UTTERANCES

In *How to Do Things with Words*, Austin tried to distinguish constative from performative speech. The former are ‘statements of fact’ that report on a certain state of affairs which can be either true or false⁸ (Felman 1983: 15). For example, when I say ‘the cat sits on the mat’, I might be either telling the truth or I might be lying.⁹ Performative sentences, on the other hand, do more than merely inform or describe; they ‘accomplish an act through the very process of their enunciation’, or, stated differently, they ‘carry out a “performance”’ (ibid.). Uttering a performative sentence, therefore, is not just *saying*

⁸Although these were often named ‘descriptive sentences’, Austin prefers the term ‘constative’, arguing that ‘not all true or false statements are descriptions’ (1975: 3).

⁹As I will try to show in what will follow, ‘lying’ is in fact also an act and thus in some way ‘performative’. If I claim that the cat sits on the mat while she is not, I am deceiving my interlocutor by performing a speech act. This is an interesting idea to keep in mind, and in the discussion that follows, I will hope to show how all speech is in fact performative.

something, it is *doing* something as well. For instance, pronouncing the words ‘I do’ at a wedding ceremony, when asked the question ‘Do you take this man to be your lawfully wedded husband?’, is not simply describing a situation or reporting on the wedding; rather, it is literally doing what you are saying, or, as Austin puts it, indulging in a marriage (1975: 6). In the same way, by pronouncing the words ‘I name this ship *Lucy*’ or ‘I bet that it will rain’, I am producing the very act of naming or betting.¹⁰

The opposition performative/constative is therefore basically a distinction between ‘doing by saying’ and ‘simply saying’. After making this clear, Austin seems mainly interested in all the things that can go wrong with these performatives, or speech acts as they are often called. As opposed to constative utterances, which can be either true or false, when something goes wrong with a performative, this does not imply that the utterance is ‘false’, but that the performative act is simply a failure: it is unhappy or unsuccessful (1975: 14). Essential to the performative, in other words, is the distinction between being ‘felicitous’ and ‘infelicitous’; a speech act can either act out successfully what it names or it can fail to do so (ibid. and Felman 1983: 16).

At this point in my inquiry, I would like to remark that Austin spends a lot of time distinguishing between felicitous and infelicitous speech acts. This will prove to be important when considering one of the most important critiques of Austin: the deconstruction of Austin’s theory by the philosopher Derrida (Salih 2003: 90-91). Derrida’s response is mainly concerned with Austin’s vast investigation into the (un)successfulness of the speech act, and his adjustments of the theory of linguistic performativity will be essential to Butler’s idea of gender performativity. Furthermore, Shoshana Felman’s interpretation of Austin’s ‘doctrine of Infelicities’ – as Austin himself labels the almost obsessive investigation into the failed performative – provides, in my opinion, a different reading of and a different viewpoint on Austin’s theory. Since Butler uses Felman’s text *The Literary Speech Act* in her *Excitable Speech* to make her point on the performative power of certain utterances (specifically racist/sexist speech), I will briefly contrast her ideas to Derrida’s. Before examining Derrida’s critique and Felman’s analysis more closely, I would like to consider Austin’s ‘doctrine of Infelicities’ (1975: 14).

UNHAPPY PERFORMATIVE UTTERANCES

There are many things that can go wrong when uttering a performative. According to Austin, speech acts can fail because they are embedded in a certain context. Although they seem very straightforward and self-evident, they are actually choreographed by a vast amount of conventions and rituals (Chinn 1997: 296). When I stop somebody in the street, for example, and say the words ‘I do’ (e.g. take you

¹⁰ For more examples see Austin, J.L. 1975, 2nd edition. *How To Do Things With Words*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press. All the examples that are provided in my inquiry that are used to explain the theory are taken from Austin (1975). Only when explicitly mentioned, the examples are found somewhere else (e.g. Felman) or are my own.

to be my lawful wedded husband), it is obvious that I have not (successfully) married this man. Furthermore, due to the conventions of our society, if I am already married, I can not marry again. According to Austin, the utterance would simply be a ‘mockery, like a marriage to a monkey’ (1975: 24). Because I ignored the conventional procedure – in this case of a marriage – my performative was ‘void’ and, as a result, the act uttered is not achieved. These kinds of failures, in which the conventional procedure or ritual is invoked in inappropriate circumstances or where something goes wrong with the procedure itself, Austin classifies as ‘misfires’ (14-16).¹¹

However, there are other failed performatives in which the act is not purported, but where there is *no* flaw in the procedure. For instance, when I say ‘I promise to help you’, even when the promise is made in bad faith, I will have made a promise *in fact*. Although the speech act will be conducted, since I do not intend to help the person I am addressing the utterance will be ‘hollow’. In the same way, the performative ‘I congratulate you’ will be unhappy if the act is insincere, even if the circumstances are all in order. Austin labels this kind of failed performatives ‘abuses’ (16, 39-40).

IMPLICIT PERFORMATIVES

Examining the examples given in the discussion above, an attentive reader may have noticed that all the ‘performative’ verbs are in the first person singular present indicative, active voice. For Austin these grammatical features were essential to the exemplary ‘explicit’ performatives which he used in his discussion (56). Examples like ‘I do’, ‘I name’, and ‘I promise’ are explicitly performative, since there can be no doubt that, when I am uttering these words, I am doing something as well. Nevertheless, sometimes the speech act is ‘implicit’, like in the utterance ‘Go away’ (Austin 1975: 58). In this instance, the implicated performative may be made explicit in the utterance ‘I order you to go away’. Another example is the sign ‘Beware of the dog’; implicated here might be the performative utterance ‘I warn you that this dog is dangerous’ (this example is taken from Felman 1983: 17).

Unsurprisingly, when Austin acknowledged that ‘performatives’ might be ‘implicit’, he was faced with the problem that *any* sentence could be a part of the performative category and that for this reason the binary opposition constative/performative started to break down (1975: 54-55). As Shoshana Felman emphasizes in her discussion of Austin’s ideas, and as Austin himself acknowledges, it seems like ‘even constative utterances might imply the ellipsis of “I note”, “I affirm”, “I declare”’ (1983: 17). This realization leads Austin to propose a general theory of speech acts, which takes into account ‘all the senses there are in which to say something *is* to do something, or *in* saying

¹¹ Austin further distinguishes two different types of ‘misfires’: there are either ‘misinvocations’ or ‘misexecutions’ of a procedure. With the former, the act is disallowed because there is no accepted conventional procedure or the persons and/or circumstances are not appropriate. The latter are either ‘flaws’ when the procedure is not executed *correctly*, or ‘hitches’ when not executed *completely* (Austin 1975: 26-36). Although Austin spends a lot of time distinguishing between these types, this brief summary will suffice for my investigation.

something we do something, and even *by* saying something we do something' (1975: 94). According to Austin, in other words, saying something is *always* doing something.

A GENERAL DOCTRINE OF SPEECH ACTS

In this general theory of language, Austin distinguishes three ways in which to speak is to act. First of all, to say something is – literally – to produce sounds, words with a certain sense and reference. This type through which specific 'meaning' is produced is labelled a 'locutionary act' (1975: 94, 109). Secondly, it is also possible to produce 'illocutionary acts', which involves utterances with a certain 'conventional force' (109). Finally, these two are contrasted with a third type: the 'perlocutionary act' by which to speak is to achieve certain 'effects' (ibid.).

According to Austin, the sentence 'He said to me "Shoot her!"' (meaning by 'shoot' *shoot* and referring by 'her' to *her*) is thus a locutionary act, since it simply produces a certain *meaning* by the act of uttering the different words. On the other hand, in the sentence 'He ordered me to shoot her', the verb 'ordered' indicates that a *force* was produced. To put it differently, while uttering these words, the 'he' does something else as well, in this case ordering. We do not know whether or not a shooting effectively took place, and because of this Austin classifies this utterance as an illocutionary act. Furthermore, these illocutionary acts are distinctly different from sentences like 'He persuaded me to shoot her', or 'He got me to (or made me, etc.) shoot her'. These two examples are perlocutionary because the utterance makes clear that an *effect* (in this case shooting somebody) was indeed achieved and we moreover know for certain what the effect was (that somebody was shot) (1975: 101-102).

Certain problems immediately arise which blur the difference between these three speech acts. First of all, it seems especially difficult to clearly distinguish the illocutionary act from the perlocutionary act. When saying that a sentence has a certain 'force', is it not possible that this sentence produces an 'effect' as well? For example, even if 'I order you to shoot her' does not cause the interlocutor to effectively shoot 'her' physically, either way, it is very likely that the utterance will arouse certain emotional effects. Taking it a step further, is it also not very likely that the utterance 'I hate you' (according to Austin a 'simple' (il)locutionary) will evoke certain feelings in the person I am saying it to?¹² It seems to be arguable that *any* sentence produces a certain effect on the interlocutor, as Austin too recognizes at a certain point (110-111, footnote 2). For example, when I say 'I hate you', is this sentence only the illocutionary act of 'hating' while 'saying', or could it also evoke certain feelings in the person I am saying this to? Surely, it is important to 'draw the line between an action we do and its consequences' (111). For Austin this distinction is vital since the 'doctrine of illocutions and of enunciatory forces' is the foundation for his theory on the performative¹³ (Felman 1983: 18).

¹² This is my own example.

¹³ When Austin tries his best to distinguish the illocutionary act from the other two, this is because this 'doctrine of illocutionary acts' provides him with a general speech act theory allowing him to develop his 'special theory' of the 'doctrine of performative/constative distinction' (1975: 103, 148).

(UN)INTENTIONAL EFFECTS

How, then, can we distinguish between the illocutionary and the perlocutionary act? Austin points out that the opposition between the two ‘is connected with the production of effects *in certain senses*’ (116, my emphasis). First of all, an illocution will have to have a certain effect or else it will be unhappy, unsuccessful. When uttering ‘I warn you’, my words will have to be heard and taken up by the audience, otherwise I will not have warned anybody successfully and the illocution will simply have been infelicitous. An illocutionary act thus always involves the ‘securing of uptake’ by the interlocutor (117, example also by Austin).

Furthermore, an illocution should also ‘take effect’, that is the effect of effectively acting out what it names. After uttering ‘I name this ship *The Mermaid*’, for example, the ship will consequently be named *The Mermaid* and calling it by any other name will be out of the order. Finally, the illocution may also ‘invite by convention a response’ (ibid.). Thus, when uttering ‘I order you to be quiet’, the response will be that the interlocutor stops talking or making noise. Consequently, ‘an order will invite the response of obedience’ and, similarly, the utterance ‘I promise’ invites a fulfilment of that promise (117).

Austin concludes that there are three ways in which an illocution is ‘bound up with effects’: ‘securing uptake, taking effect, and inviting a response’. These are distinct from the effects produced by the perlocution, since ‘the perlocutionary act may be either the achievement of a perlocutionary object or the production of a perlocutionary sequel’ (118, 121). For example, in ‘I got him to be quiet’ it is clear that the perlocutionary object – i.e. silence – is achieved, as opposed to ‘I ordered him to be quiet’ where the response of obedience is implicit or *conventional* as Austin puts it (121). For Austin, the ‘intention’ is vital for an utterance to be a genuine speech act. But is it not possible that a perlocutionary effect is achieved without the speaker ever intending an effect to happen? For example, insults can be unintentional. When I say: ‘You look a bit ill’, the perlocutionary effect may be that my interlocutor feels insulted even though it was not intended. However, there is no illocutionary formula like ‘I insult you by...’; although the locutionary act of uttering the sentence ‘I insult you’ exists, a conventional formula which I can use to insult another person does not. As a result, the sentence ‘You look a bit ill’ is a locutionary act with the perlocutionary effect of an insult, but it is not an illocution in Austin’s sense (1975: 107, 118). Austin’s recognition of unintentional effects – again – will be important in Shoshana Felman’s discussion of Austin’s failed performatives, which I will briefly examine in one of the following chapters. More importantly, the distinction between intentional and unintentional effects will prove to be crucial to Butler’s ideas on censorship.

According to Butler, when Austin remarks that a verbal injury like an insult (intentional or not) should be located ‘within the orbit of the perlocution’, he indirectly suggests that ‘*injury* does not inhere in the conventions that a given speech act invokes, but in the specific *consequences* that a speech act produces.’ (1997a: 17, my emphasis). Because of this Austin has often been cited by anti-

pornography activists such as MacKinnon, who claims that pornography is a priori 'bad' since it places women in a subordinate position and consequently produces and reproduces in 'real life' an injurious heterosexist frame. Butler will argue against McKinnon's claim by noting that the uptake of any utterance must also be taken into consideration and that pornography for this reason will not always be injurious. I will examine Butler's arguments more closely later on.

A SPECIAL DOCTRINE OF THE ILLOCUTIONARY ACT

Although there are still many loose ends and although the opposition between locution, illocution and perlocution seems at times extremely fabricated and abstract, Austin's general theory of speech acts provides him with a couple of foundational premises, allowing him to develop his 'special theory' of the 'doctrine of performative/constative distinction' (1975: 103, 148). 'With the constative', Austin explains, 'we abstract from the illocutionary (let alone the perlocutionary) aspects of the speech act, and we concentrate on the locutionary' (146). With the performative, on the other hand, attention should be paid to the illocutionary force of the utterance (ibid.). Although Austin recognizes that 'in general the locutionary act as much as the illocutionary is an abstraction only, every genuine speech act is both' (147), the distinction constative/performative is justified as a distinction between having either a locutionary meaning which can be false or true, or an illocutionary force involving a happiness/unhappiness dimension (148).

Austin divides the general doctrine of illocutions, in which the performative has its place, into five classes (Felman 1983: 18). For this genealogical investigation of the performative, it is not of great importance to examine these classes very thoroughly, so I will only briefly summarize them. The first category is that of the 'verdictives', which are typified by verdicts, i.e. speech acts which give some sort of judgment. Examples of this category include speech acts like condemning, estimating or evaluating (Austin 1975: 151-152). Secondly, Austin distinguishes orders or 'exercitives'. These performatives exercise power, for instance commanding, naming or advising (ibid.). 'Commissives' – the third type – always involve some sort of commitment. Examples are 'I promise', 'I do' (uttered in the course of a wedding ceremony), and 'I bet (ibid.). Austin further distinguishes a very 'miscellaneous' category: the 'behabitives', which involve certain attitudes and social behaviours. Within this category Austin groups examples like apologizing, congratulating, condoling, cursing, and challenging (ibid.). Finally, the 'expositives' offer 'discursive clarification' or explain how we are using words in a conversation, like the utterances 'I reply', 'I argue', 'I illustrate', et cetera (Felman 1983: 19, see also Austin 1975: 151-152).

THE WEAKNESS OF THE PERFORMATIVE

My investigation into Austin's speech act theory might seem quite long, considering that this dissertation mainly concerns the theories of Judith Butler. However, I would like to emphasise that Austin's ideas formed a turning point in thinking about language and, even more important for this inquiry on gender performativity, in thinking about the constructiveness of language. Furthermore, it seems to me that, although many of Austin's followers tried to install the constative/performative distinction as a solid dichotomy, deconstructing Austin's theory proved much more interesting for the coming generation of postmodern and poststructuralist thinkers (as is the case in the discussion between John R. Searle – who developed Austin's speech act theory even further – and Jacques Derrida, who exposed the many blind spots in Austin's work). In many of her works Butler does not literally explain Austin's ideas; sometimes he is only a vague, implicit presence, who is never explicitly mentioned (as in *Gender Trouble*). However, her ideas about performativity are mainly imbedded in texts which provide, in my opinion, some sort of deconstruction of Austin's work. I am particularly interested in two (different) readings of Austin which are essential for Butler's thinking about and development of her ideas concerning performativity. The text which is always referred to in articles and works about Butler's gender performativity is Derrida's 'Signature Event Context', since it is probably the most important deconstruction of Austin's *How To Do Things With Words*. The other text that I would like to take into account is Shoshana Felman's work *The Literary Speech Act*, in which Felman provides a practical application of Austin's theory by investigating the use of 'the promise' (an exemplary performative) in Molière's play *Don Juan*. Both of these texts seize on the loose ends in Austin's theory: while Derrida criticizes Austin for being too 'serious', for instance trying too hard to make his theory on speech acts work, Felman on the other hand reads Austin's *How to do Things With Words* as an ironic deconstruction of itself.

1.2. DERRIDA: DECONSTRUCTING AUSTIN

When Sarah Salih explains how Derrida in his essay responds 'to Austin's claim that performative utterances are only "successful" if they remain within the constraints of *context* and authorial *intention*' (2002: 90, my emphasis), she rightly indicates the main problem Derrida experienced when reading Austin's speech act theory. In 'Signature Event Context' Derrida emphasizes how 'Austin's analyses at all times require a value of *context*' and that 'consciousness, the conscious presence of the intention of the speaking subject in the totality of his speech act' remains for Austin an essential element of the performative (1988a: 14). However, it is in fact these two elements – context and authorial intention, which Austin considers essential for a performative to be 'successful' – that Derrida finds limiting and too idealizing for a theory of language. He will therefore show how texts can be taken out of context and used in ways outside of the original author's intention, to explain that 'what Austin regards as a pitfall or a weakness is in fact a feature of all linguistic signs that are

vulnerable to appropriation, reiteration and [...] re-citation' (Salih 2002: 91). Derrida thus very cleverly 'seizes on the "weakness" Austin discerns in the linguistic sign' to show how Austin himself already knew that language has to ability to be 'cited'; otherwise he would not have gone through the trouble of distinguishing between successful and unsuccessful speech (ibid.). Butler will use this idea of an incessantly ability of language to be 'cited' or 're-iterated' to develop and adjust her theory on gender performativity in her texts following *Gender Trouble* (see especially the 'Introduction' in *Bodies That Matter*). Butler has thus made an important theoretical movement from gender performativity to gender as citationality and in the third chapter I will sketch the importance of this adjustment for the theory of gender performativity. For now, I will briefly explain Derrida's argument in the essay 'Signature Event Context'.

CITATIONALITY AS AN INTRINSIC PART OF LANGUAGE

In 'Signature Event Context' Derrida begins by claiming that Austin's theory contains some interesting insights. First of all, although Austin appears to consider speech acts only as acts of communication – for example, he introduces illocutionary and perlocutionary acts – Austin recognizes that communication can be more than simply a movement of thoughts or ideas. By investigating the force and the effect of an utterance, Austin proves that communication could be an 'original movement', as Derrida claims, such as the movement of forces and effects (1988a: 13). Furthermore, while Derrida applauds Austin's attempt to free the performative from the true/false opposition at first, he immediately adjusts this claim by adding that Austin only succeeded in deconstructing this binary 'at least in its classical form' (ibid.). According to Derrida, when Austin claims that the performative can only be successful if it remains within the limits of context and if the effects produced are intentional, he indirectly reinstalls the true/false opposition, be it in a different shape. Therefore, 'it might *seem* that Austin has shattered the concept of communication as a purely semiotic, linguistic, or symbolic concept'; for Derrida, however, Austin's 'ideal regulation' which 'excludes the risk [e.g. the risk of performatives being taken out of context and used in ways out of the original authorial intention] as accidental, exterior, one which teaches us nothing about the linguistic phenomenon being considered', is too limited and too 'serious' (1988a: 14, my emphasis and addition). Derrida, therefore, will take on the challenge to deconstruct Austin's theory.

As stated before, Austin's concern for context and authorial intention is Derrida's main focus for deconstruction. When Derrida claims that Austin excludes the possibility for 'every performative utterance (and a priori every other utterance) to be quoted', he refers to a specific passage in *How to do Things With Words* (1988a: 16). In this passage Austin argues that a performative utterance is 'in a peculiar way hollow or void if said by an actor on the stage, or if introduced in a poem, or spoken in soliloquy' (21-22). It seems that, although performatives can be used in different contexts or can be completely taken out of context, Austin 'insists on the fact that this possibility remains abnormal,

parasitic, that it constitutes a kind of extenuation or agonized succumbing of language that we should strenuously distance ourselves from and resolutely ignore’ (Derrida 1988a: 16). However, Derrida wonders, ‘isn’t it true that what Austin excludes as anomaly, exception, “non-serious”, citation (on stage, in a poem, or a soliloquy) is the determined modification of a general citationality – or rather, a general iterability – without which there would not even be a “successful” performative?’ (17).

This ‘general citationality’ – which is generally regarded as the quintessence of Derrida’s theory on language – very simply means that every utterance is a citation of a norm. In the following quote, Derrida clearly explains his point:

Could a performative utterance succeed if its formulation did not repeat a “coded” or iterable utterance, or in other words, if the formula I pronounce in order to open a meeting, launch a ship or a marriage were not identifiable as *conforming* with an iterable model, if it were not then identifiable in some way as a “citation”? (1988a: 18)

The ability of any linguistic sign to be cited, repeated, iterated is thus not, as Austin claims, an unfortunate and marginal incident, but this ‘weakness’ is in fact the essential characteristic of any sort of language. The original context in Derrida’s theory about language no longer seems important; the original author and the intended receiver move to the background, opening up new possibilities for the text to be used and to function.

CITATIONAL GRAFTING

If it is an inherent quality of the sign that it can be transplanted in unforeseen contexts and used in very unexpected ways, this phenomenon, which Derrida names ‘citational grafting’, implies, according to Salih, that ‘all signs may be placed between quotation marks [...] and this means that, as Derrida puts it, the possibility of failure is intrinsic and necessary to the sign, indeed is *constitutive* of the sign’ (2004: 91). Because of this, ‘citationality’ or ‘iterability’ not only imply that any utterance is a simple quotation of the linguistic tradition; in the follow-up of ‘Signature Event Context’ – which responded to John R. Searle’s critique on Derrida’s ‘SEC’¹⁴ – Derrida underscores how something different simultaneously occurs when citing from past traditions. According to Derrida, it is not possible for a citation to be ‘pure’ or ‘simple’. To explain this very complex movement of thought, I would like to cite at length the following passage from ‘Limited Inc a b c...’:

Iterability supposes a minimal remainder (as well as a minimum of idealization) in order that the identity of the *selfsame* be repeatable and identifiable *in, through* and even *in view of* its alteration. For the structure of iteration implies *both* identity *and* difference. Iteration in its “purest” form – and it is always impure – contains *in itself* the discrepancy of a difference that

¹⁴ In this text Derrida refers to ‘Signature Event Context’ with the abbreviation SEC. Of course this is not done without a reason; it proves Derrida’s point that any text can be taken out of context and used in new ways the ‘original’ author did not intend. Although of course the writer of SEC and of the follow-up text are both Derrida, the philosopher claims that in essence the writer of SEC is not the same ‘Derrida’ as the one who wrote ‘Limited Inc.’ since the first did not know and could not foresee the critique his text would produce. Furthermore, Searle commented on SEC, quoting from the text, and in doing this taking the sentences literally out of context. While Searle tried to criticize Derrida’s analysis of Austin, his critique actually proved Derrida’s point.

constitutes it as iteration ... It is because this iterability is differential, within each individual "element" as well as between the "elements," because it splits each element while constituting it, because it marks it with an articulatory break, that the remainder, although indispensable, is never that of a full or fulfilling presence: it is a differential structure escaping the logic of presence or the (simple or dialectical) opposition of presence and absence, upon which opposition the idea of permanence depends. (1988b: 53)

Stated very simply, 'citationality' is a performative but a performative which *always* produces more than that which the author intended. The residue, or the 'remainder' of which Derrida speaks, unfolds many possibilities of language which in the past (especially by the speech-act theorists who were studying in the wake of Austin) were simply dismissed as irrelevant or as marginal. Austin, according to Derrida, did not succeed in distinguishing between constative and performative utterances, because he was holding on to the vision of an 'ideal' theory, which could not shed light on the complexity and possibilities of the sign (in 'real life'). For Derrida, deconstructing Austin's ideas is necessary to reveal the many artificial binaries and the 'weaknesses' which limit thinking about language as a means with endless possibilities.

As will be evident in the later investigation of Butler's ideas on gender, Derrida's formulations on 'citationality' will prove to be of great importance for the further development of Butler's thinking. When Derrida stressed that all language is always a 'citation' of a norm, but always an 'impure' citation, which supposes a 'remainder', he revealed the subversive potential inherent in all speech. Although there is inevitably an identification with the norm, making it impossible to deny the norm completely, this does not exclude the possibility of change: the norm may be altered since the citation of the norm is always impure. This idea of potential subversion will be an important element in Butler's theory of gender and will be discussed in length in the third chapter.

1.3. FELMAN: RE-EVALUATING AUSTIN

After having looked at Derrida's ideas about Austin, it is necessary to reveal some of Shoshana Felman's insights about the philosopher of language. As Felman points out, Austin claims in his general speech-act theory that 'statements' should be taken 'off their pedestal to realize that they are speech-acts no less' – be it locutionary, illocutionary or perlocutionary (Austin quoted in Felman 1983: 17-18). Although Derrida seems to stress how Austin desperately tries to hold on to the constative/performative distinction, Felman notices that Austin is actually aware that both the constative and the performative are abstractions, unattainable ideals or illusions, given that 'we can only *approximate* in real life to finding such things' (Austin 1975: 146, my emphasis). It was Austin himself who, already in *How to do Things With Words*, posed questions about the attainability of this ideal dichotomy. What Felman will try to prove is that the seeds of the (later) deconstruction of the theory (by for instance Derrida) were actually already present in Austin's original seminars.

FAILURE AS AN INTRINSIC PART OF THE PERFORMATIVE

Felman stresses that it are especially the speech-act theorists studying *in the wake* of Austin who try to reinstall the opposition between constative and performative utterances (1983: 22). Although Austin spends a lot of time developing his doctrine of infelicities (that is all the things that can go wrong with the performative), many of the following speech-act theorists believe his efforts only blur the opposition between constative and performative utterances. For example, Benveniste tries to ‘fix’ these weaknesses in Austin’s theory by doing away with the doctrine of the illocutions and with Austin’s claim that performatives could be unhappy (ibid.). According to Felman, when Benveniste excludes the theory of failures, considering it marginal and not interesting for speech act research, it is ‘a fundamental gesture..., which *situates* failure squarely *outside* of the performative’ (66). However, Felman continues, for Austin failure is inherent to the performative: any kind of speech is always to some extent out of our control since we can never be certain what effect or force will be produced (as in the unintentional insults which I touched on earlier). Therefore, it seems – according to Felman at least – as if Austin himself was aware that the possibility of ‘misusing’ language was not something which the speech-act theorist had to ‘fix’ or ‘resolve’; for Austin, it simply emphasises the subversive possibilities and the heterogeneity of language use. Felman, siding with Derrida, will state that failure resides *inside* all speech, and not outside it like Benveniste claims (ibid.).

With the use of some interesting observations in Austin’s text, Felman will further prove her claim that Austin considers the failure of the performative not as marginal, but as an important part of the performative act itself. First of all, she insists that the inherent subversiveness of language is exposed by Austin himself since – and here I would like to use a quote from Butler – it is an ‘*amusing* catalogue’ of failed performatives (Butler 1997a: 16, my emphasis). Not only does Austin ‘catalogue’ the many possible failures of the speech act, he also fails to succeed in his primary intention, e.g. to distinguish between constative and performative utterances; for this reason, *How to Do Things with Words* is just as much a failed performative as are the many cases Austin himself provides in his lectures as examples of infelicities (Felman 1983: 63). Butler’s use of the word ‘amusing’ to describe Austin’s almost obsessive investigation into the many possible ways the performative can be ‘unsuccessful’ establishes an interesting link in *Excitable Speech* with Felman, as I will show in more detail below. According to Felman, the most telling ‘proof’ that shows Austin’s ‘unseriousness’ with regard to his own theory are the many humoristic and ironic elements present in the text. The title of the work, for instance, ironically recalls the popular ‘how to’ manuals, although, in Austin’s case the question in the title remains largely unanswered (122).

A SERIOUS PERFORMATIVE

It seems to me that Derrida and Felman share the same insights on language – e.g. that failure is an inherent and necessary quality of speech – but their opinion about Austin’s view on this matter is very

oppositional. Felman believes that ‘both the theoretical school derived from Austin and the occasional criticism directed against him¹⁵ have paid attention only to what he *says*, not to what he *does*’ (1983: 120, my comments in footnote). By this she means that the following quote from Austin in particular has been taken out of context, apparently catching the philosopher ‘red-handed’ at ‘defending “seriousness,” what is “considered normal,” as opposed to the “parasitism,” the “unseriousness” of poetry, play, or joking’ (130):

Surely the words must be spoken ‘*seriously*’ and so as to be taken ‘*seriously*’? This is, though vague, true enough in general – it is an important commonplace in discussing the purport of any utterance whatsoever. *I must not be joking*, for example, nor writing a poem. (Austin 1975: 9, my emphasis)

Basing their theories on this kind of quotation, critics – like Derrida – take Austin’s words ‘seriously’ and don’t consider whether or not Austin was joking when he says ‘I must not be joking’ (ibid.). According to Felman, when critics ‘reproach Austin for excluding jokes, on the basis of the Austinian *statement* [and thus take his word literally]’, they ‘are failing to take into account the Austinian *act*, failing to take into account the close and infinitely complex relationship maintained, throughout Austin’s work, between the theory and jokes’ (ibid., my comments between brackets). It is therefore extremely paradoxical at least that ‘the critics of Austinian “seriousness,” of his exclusion of joking’, themselves ‘exclude his joking – they fail to take it seriously’ (ibid.).

Of course, it is impossible to know for certain whether or not Austin was being ‘serious’ or ‘just joking’. Felman just points out that it is interesting to consider the possibility that Austin was being ironic at certain points, regardless of whether he himself already foresaw the many blind spots and flaws of the dichotomy constative/performative, or whether he intended his theory to be the starting point of a great discussion about the (im)possibility of a doctrine of illocutions. Maybe therefore, at the end of his lectures in *How to do Things With Words*, he claims that his theory is only a starting point and he ‘leave[s] to [his] readers the fun of applying it in philosophy’ (1975: 164). However, it would be easier to be able to pin Austin down: ‘the history of ideas wants Austin to declare himself: is he *serious*, or is he *not serious*? Is he trying to *clarify* or to *obscure* the distinction between constative and performative? Let him come down on one side or the other: is he a linguist, *or* a philosopher?’ (Felman 1983: 134).

For Felman, it is not necessary to let Austin come out on one side or the other: Austin can be both philosopher and linguist. When Felman refuses to simply place Austin at one or the other end of the binary, the same can be said about Butler. I therefore agree with Salih who claims that ‘to pin Butler down’ would be working against the ‘Butlerian grain’ (2002: 2). As this inquiry develops, I hope to show that one of the important aspects of Butler’s work is that it defies easy categorization. Partly because of this, Butler’s writing style is at times highly difficult and obscure. Butler’s style will

¹⁵ For example, the criticism of Derrida. However, it should be noted that Felman does not explicitly refer to Derrida here. In my view, it is nevertheless very likely that Derrida is one of these critics Felman has in mind.

be discussed more thoroughly in the following chapter in which I will outline the importance of Hegel and the Hegelian dialectic in Butler's work.

In my opinion, although many of Felman's insights are important for this investigation, it should certainly be mentioned that she has laid bare the possibility that the readings of Austin's followers like Searle, H.P. Grice or Jerrold Katz are also 'perlocutory effects of Austin's philosophy'. Moreover, she indicates how 'this series of "influences," or of linked effects is not a constative, cognitive series (that represents its referent, which cognitively "reflects" its cause), but a *performative series* (that refers to its cause only in the very act of *missing* it). The history of ideas is thus a chain of acts that is, at the same time, a chain of errors' (Felman 1983: 136, my emphasis). Of course, this includes the critiques on Austin's theory as well. At the same time, although Derrida and Felman seem to approach Austin differently, Felman here proves Derrida's point on the 'citationality of language'; she shows how Derrida's critique was just as much a 'citation' as any other kind of language, not only copying a previous text, but adding something as well – producing an 'remainder'.

What history cannot assimilate is thus the implicitly analytical dimension of all radical or fecund thoughts, of all new theories: the 'force' of their 'performance' (always somewhere subversive) and their 'residual smile' (always somewhere self-subversive) (1983: 134).

Again this idea echoes Butler who continually revises her own texts. As Salih points out, Butler's work 'enters into dialectical debate with itself' (2002: 4). As I already briefly mentioned, Butler is highly influenced by Hegel and the importance of the Hegelian dialectic will be discussed in the following chapter. I will later also explain why many critics have often accused Butler of being unclear and obscure, pointing out – what seem to be – contradictions in her work. Nevertheless, Butler has always been prepared to revisit her own works, adjusting the theory at those points where she was unclear or wrong. In the 1999 edition preface of *Gender Trouble* she writes how 'this text [the original 1990 edition of *Gender Trouble*] does not sufficiently explain performativity in terms of its social, psychic, corporeal, and temporal dimensions. In some ways, the continuing work of that clarification, in response to numerous excellent criticisms, guides most of my subsequent publications' (1999: xxiv, my explanation between brackets). For example, Butler will address those critics who confused performativity with performance, admitting that her theory 'sometimes waffles between understanding performativity as linguistic and casting it as theatrical' (1999: xxv). In the third chapter of my investigation, I will elaborate in length on this distinction between performativity and performance. However, at this point, it is important to keep in mind that Butler's theory of performativity is not outlined in one single work but gradually shifted in the course of several publications. Furthermore, since Butler is still actively writing her theory is still evolving to this very day. For this reason, as I already explained, I have decided not to provide a chronological account of Butler's work.

Interestingly, Felman also tries to do away with the classical normal/abnormal distinction, critics usually saw reflected in Austin's theory. Derrida, for example, reproached Austin for trying too hard to separate 'normal' from 'abnormal' language in his doctrine of illocutions, because he feared

that Austin thereby tried to promote ‘the normal’ (whatever that may be). However, Felman reads Austin’s attempt as an analysis of the ‘abnormal insofar as it is constitutive of the normal, that is, in order to undo or to explode the very criterion of “normality”’ (1983: 139). Felman thus quotes Austin’s claim that ‘the abnormal will throw light on the normal’. This insight will be taken up by Butler and I will elaborate on the idea normativity and the ‘abnormal’ in the third chapter.

THE IRREDUCIBLE SCANDAL

In the sections above, I have already explained quite thoroughly how ‘misfire’ or ‘misuse’ is an inherent capacity of language; however, at this point I would like to explain how Felman notices an ‘irreducible scandal’ in relation to these ‘misfires’ (Felman 1983: 83). Although this ‘scandal’ pervades every performative, in *The Literary Speech Act* Felman uses the promise as the quintessential example to expose the ‘scandal’ which ‘consists in the fact that the act can not know what it is doing’ (Paul de Man quoted in Felman 1983: 96). Investigating the promise in the myth of Don Juan, Felman exposes the problematic character of this speech act (and of any performative in fact) visible in the story by Molière. With the help of Austin’s theory, Felman analyzes the central theme in the Don Juan myth: ‘the brake of promise’, the promise which is not kept and made in bad faith.

In the story about the famous Don, the ‘unkept’ promise plays a significant role, since Don Juan abuses this particular speech-act to get his way with the women in the story; he wraps them around his finger not by simply lying, but – as Felman tries to explain – by touching upon the ‘weakness’ of the performative – the ability of the promise to achieve something differently than what is formulated in the promise itself. When Don Juan, for example, promises Charlotte to marry her, he ‘escapes the hold of truth’ – a performative is thus not either true or false but merely happy or unhappy. Therefore, although Don Juan has no intention of keeping his promise, he is, strictly speaking, not lying (Austin 1975: 11 and Felman 1983: 31). Felman explains that Don Juan is capable of seducing the women of the play by creating ‘a referential illusion’ when uttering a promise: the women believe that the promise will purport a very ‘real’ or ‘extralinguistic act of commitment’ (e.g. that of marriage). For Don Juan, on the other hand, the promise refers only to itself; the ‘seductive discourse’ of Don Juan, in other words, exploits the capacity of language to reflect itself’ (ibid.). For this reason, the myth shows the inherent quality of language to be taken out of context. Moreover, it also shows how the performative can purport a very different sort of ‘effect’ than that which it is usually associated with.

Felman considers this ‘the scandal... of the incongruous but indissoluble relation between language and the body; the scandal of the seduction of the human body insofar as it speaks – the scandal of the promise of love insofar as this promise is par excellence the promise that cannot be kept; the scandal of the promising animal insofar as what he promises is precisely the untenable’ (1983: 11-12).

Commenting on Felman's idea about the 'scandal of language', Butler claims in *Excitable Speech* that 'Felman thus suggests that the speech act, as the act of a speaking body, is always to some extent unknowing about what it performs [...] The speech act says more, or says differently than it means to say' (1997a: 10). Butler agrees with Felman's ideas about language and even argues that 'speech is always in some ways out of our control' (1997a: 15). This view was already expressed by Austin when he wrote – according to Butler anticipating Felman's reading – that 'actions in general (not all) are liable, for example, to be done under duress, or by accident, or owing to this or that variety of mistake, say, or otherwise unintentionally' (1975: 21). According to Salih, in *Excitable Speech* Butler enters the censorship debate, questioning the 'power of language' by investigating hate speech, pornography (or so-called 'pornographic and obscene representations') and gay self-expression (2002: 99). As Butler herself explains, 'excitable speech' is a legal term referring to those utterances which are 'made under duress, usually confessions that cannot be used in court because they do not reflect the balanced mental state of the utterer' (1997a: 15). Butler will suggest that all speech is in some way 'excitable'. To prove her point, she rethinks Austin's performativity of language but also heavily relies on Althusser and Foucault. These two philosophers will be discussed in the second chapter, in which I hope to give a clear account of how a Butlerian subject comes into being through the power of the law. But for now, I would like to introduce Butler's ideas about censorship to close this discussion about performative language.

EXCITABLE SPEECH

As I have shown in length above, although Austin initially tries to distinguish between constative and performative sentences, he claims at a certain point in his discussion that to say something is always to do something as well (1975: 92, 94). Salih points out that – depending on this idea that language acts – it follows that to call somebody names (like for example 'fag' or 'nigger') is doing something, hurting somebody mentally; Salih thus concludes that 'there is only a difference of degree rather than kind between such verbal abuse and, for example, hitting someone or throwing a brick through their window' (2002: 100, examples by Salih). If somebody claims to have been injured by language, suggesting that 'words wound' to use a phrase by Richard Delgado and Mari Matsuda (quoted in Butler 1997a: 4), who is to blame for this 'injury' and should legal measurements be taken to deal with these 'wounding words'? These questions are tackled in *Excitable Speech*.

Butler first of all questions whether it is possible to ascribe this kind of agency to language. As I have shown, Austin attempts to distinguish between utterances that actually do something while uttering them (illocutionary acts) and utterances which lead to certain consequences (perlocutionary acts). Depending on Austin's analysis, it could be possible to claim that hate speech is an illocutionary act, a performative that acts out what it names. To counteract this view, Butler depends on Derrida's deconstruction of Austin's text. As I have shown in the chapter concerning Derrida, utterances are not

context bound; in fact one the characteristics of words is that they are always already cited, reiterated.

As Butler writes:

If a performative provisionally succeeds (and I will suggest that “success” is always and only provisional), then it is not because an intention successfully governs the action of speech, but only because that action echoes prior actions, and *accumulates the force of authority through the repetition or citation of a prior and authoritative set of practices* (1997a: 51).

This is what Butler means when she claims that all speech is ‘excitable’ and may thus ‘exceed the moment it occasions’ (1997a: 14). Furthermore, if language is, as Butler puts it, ‘a ritual chain of resignifications whose origin and end remain unfixed and unfixable’, this implies that the utterer is in some way not the sole creator of his words (ibid.). Salih rightly remarks that because of this speakers could claim that they are not responsible for their utterances, even arguing that ‘they did not speak language but it spoke them’ (2002: 100). However, this is not a reading Butler supports. On the contrary, Butler claims that ‘whereas some critics mistake the critique of sovereignty for the demolition of agency, [she] propose[s] that agency begins where sovereignty wanes’, and she furthermore argues that ‘the one who acts (who is not the same as the sovereign subject) acts precisely to the extent that he or she is constituted as an actor and, hence, operating within a linguistic field of enabling constraints from the outset’ (1997a: 16). In other words, when asked ‘If hate speech is citational, does that mean that the one who uses it is not responsible for that usage?’, Butler answers that ‘the one who utters hate speech is responsible for the manner in which such speech is repeated, for reinvigorating such speech, for re-establishing contexts of hate and injury’ (27). While the utterer does not have sovereign power over his language, he is nevertheless responsible for the way in which he reiterates the words.

The main idea of *Excitable Speech* is that although language is performative, it is not always felicitously so. For example, Butler argues that the illocution ‘I condemn you’ is unhappy or infelicitous when uttered by someone who is not in the position to condemn somebody. Thus, while this performative is still an act, or ‘verbal conduct’ as Butler claims, it does not produce any effects or consequences (1997a: 16). In the same way, not all hate speech might produce a wounded or injured subject. As an example Butler cites the term ‘queer’ which has been reevaluated in the past decade and instead of working as an insult against homosexuals it may now be used as a category people actually identify themselves with. The reevaluation of this term suggests according to Butler that ‘speech can be “returned” to its speakers in a different form, that it can be cited against its original purposes, and perform a reversal of effects’ (1997a: 14). I will come back to the re-citation of the term queer in the third chapter where I will deal with the question of identity.

Butler proposes, according to Salih, that ‘repetition and resignification contain the promise of affirmative recontextualizations and subversive redeployments that may constitute a more effective response to hate speech than legal measures’ (2002: 103). In the possibility for subversion Butler finds an alternative to legislation and censorship since she believes that the law is in fact highly inconsistent

when it comes to the regulation of race hate and sexual expression.¹⁶ As Butler explains, anti-pornography activists like MacKinnon and Matsuda situate hate speech within the orbit of the illocution, suggesting that ‘communication is at once a form of conduct’ (1997a: 72). Depending on this view, pornography is defined as hate speech and is thus consequently not seen as mere language but as an illocutionary act that acts out what it describes: it places women in a subordinate position and produces an injurious heterosexist frame.

Butler on the other hand suggests that regulations concerning hate speech should ‘remain restricted to hate speech as a perlocutionary scene, that is, one in which the effects of such speech must be shown, in which the burden of evidence must be assumed’ (101). Butler is thus not opposed to all kinds of regulations, but she remains highly sceptical ‘about the value of those accounts of hate speech that maintain its illocutionary status and thus conflate speech and conduct completely’ (102). She is nevertheless highly opposed to censorship, claiming that it is not a successful means to counter the chain of hate speech. First of all, because any speech is citational and even hate speech might be cited differently (for example the revaluation of the term ‘queer’). Secondly, when the law legislates hate speech by means of censorship, ‘paradoxically, the explicit legal and political arguments that seek to tie such speech to certain contexts fail to note that even in their own discourse, such speech has become citational, breaking with the prior contexts of its utterance and acquiring new contexts for which it was not intended’ (1997a: 14). Indeed, ‘the critical and legal discourse on hate speech is itself a restaging of the performance of hate speech’ (ibid.)

¹⁶ In *Excitable Speech* Butler discovers a very inconsistent reaction by the state to race hate and homosexual self-expression. After having analyzed a court case concerning the question whether placing a burning cross on the front lawn of a black family constituted an act of violence and race hate or whether it constituted an act of speech in which case it fell under the protection of the First Amendment, Butler concludes that ‘the court protects the burning cross as free speech’ (1997a: 65). On the other hand, (homo)sexual self-expression like the photographs by Robert Mapplethorpe is classified by the law as conduct, thus subjecting Mapplethorpe’s work to censorship (see Butler, Judith. 1990a. ‘The Force of Fantasy: Mapplethorpe, Feminism and Discursive Excess’, in: Sara Salih (ed.), *Judith Butler Reader*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing (2004)). Butler is highly troubled by what she calls the ‘arbitrary and tactical use of obscenity law’ with which the courts produce ‘new occasions for discrimination’ discounting African-American cultural production as well as lesbian and gay self-representation (1997a: 75). This leads Butler to claim that ‘the state produces hate speech’; an apparently paradoxical claim, but which will be discussed more fully in the next chapter when I will discuss Foucault’s influence on Butler and his ideas about power and the state.

2. On SUBJECTS Language and Law bringing Subjects into Being

In the following chapter, I will discuss Althusser and Foucault who also play a significant role in Butler's formulation of ideas about censorship. After having discussed Althusser's concept of interpellation and Butler's re-evaluation of Althusser's work, I will turn to Foucault and discuss his notions of power. I will thus look into the formation of subjects, how subjects come into being, and I will especially pay attention to the productive nature of the law. In fact, I hope to show how the law *constructs* a subject *before* the law in order to legislate that subject. Here Butler depends on Nietzsche's assertion that there is no doer behind the deed, the deed is everything (quoted in Butler 1999: 33). This will be one of the central notions in Butler's theory on gender performativity, and in the course of the following chapters I will thoroughly discuss the importance of this Nietzschean formulation. However, before I turn to Althusser and Foucault, I would like to discuss another important philosopher who exercises great influence on Butler's thinking: G.W.F Hegel (1770-1831).

2.1. HEGEL: THE DIALECTIC PROCESS

Already in the previous chapter I mentioned the importance of Hegel and especially the Hegelian dialectic for Butler's work. Although Butler is not often associated with Hegelian philosophy in the first instance, as Salih points out (already on the first page of her inquiry in Butler's work), it is nevertheless 'impossible to overestimate the influence of the nineteenth-century German philosopher' (2002: 1). Although Butler is Maxine Elliot Professor in Rhetoric and Comparative Literature at the University of California (Berkeley), during the 1980s Butler studied philosophy and her first book that was published, entitled *Subjects of Desire: Hegelian Reflections in Twentieth-Century France* (1987), examined the influence of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* on twentieth century philosophers. It was originally submitted in 1984 as Butler's dissertation at Yale University, but she revised it in 1985-6 adding sections on Lacan, Foucault, Deleuze and Kristeva. Already a year later – pressured by the academic job market – it was published (Butler 1987a: 42).¹⁷ Interestingly, although the subject of this work is thus highly specific, Salih notices that two philosophers whom Butler discusses in *Subjects* will be of great influence on her later thoughts: Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida (2002: 5). Nevertheless, Butler considers this work it as her 'juvenilia', since, at the time she revised the original

¹⁷ This is explained by Butler herself in the preface of the 1999 edition of *Subjects of Desire* (Butler, Judith. 1987. 'Preface to the Paperback Edition (1999)', in: Sara Salih (ed.), *Judith Butler Reader*, Oxford: Backwell Publishing (2004), pp. 41-48).

dissertation, she was not quite ready to make the theoretical moves she began in the final chapters of *Subjects* and subsequently made in *Gender Trouble* (Butler 1987a: 42). The sections on French philosophy from the 1960s and 1970s were, according to Butler, ‘first forays in material’; in her following works, these philosophers are taken into consideration more elaborately and this tradition of intellectuals will strongly influence the development of Butler’s ideas (ibid.).

As I already said, although Hegel is not an explicit presence in works like *Gender Trouble* and *Bodies that Matter*, the philosopher’s influence on Butler should not be underestimated and Hegelian notions of desire, recognition and consciousness are of undeniable importance to Butler’s thinking. Inevitably, as Butler acknowledges, all of her works remain ‘within the orbit of a certain set of Hegelian questions: What is the relation between desire and recognition, and how is it that the constitution of the subject entails a radical and constitutive relation to alterity?’ (1987a: 47). Consequently, it should not be much of a surprise when Salih claims that the Butlerian ‘subject’ resembles the Hegelian ‘Geist’ or ‘Spirit’ as it is described in the *Phenomenology* (2002: 22). This resemblance of Butler’s subject and Hegel’s Spirit is the first important connection between Butler and Hegel. The second important Hegelian element in Butler’s work is the influence of the dialectic, not only in her thinking but also in her style of writing. Butler’s style and the critique this style induces will be discussed later; first, I will briefly discuss the Hegelian subject as it is outlined in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807).

INTRODUCING A HEGELIAN SUBJECT AND ITS METAPHYSICAL JOURNEY

According to Salih, in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* (a loose translation of the German ‘Phänomenologie des Geistes’) Hegel relates the story of an ‘increasingly self-conscious Spirit’ in search for absolute knowledge; and for this reason, Butler compares the structure to that of a ‘Bildungsroman’ in which the protagonist undergoes some spiritual transition from ‘ignorance’ to adulthood ‘experience’ (2002: 22). Similar to fictional characters like Tom in Dickens’s *Hard Times* or the protagonist in Joyce’s *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, Hegel’s Spirit has to overcome a whole range of obstacles in order to attain its goal; in Hegel’s case, Absolute Knowledge of the world.¹⁸ Salih explains that the Spirit¹⁹ will ultimately obtain Absolute Knowledge when he realises that ‘everything in the material world is a construct of consciousness’ and that ‘reality is not independent of ’ his own mind; as a consequence, the ultimate goal will turn out to be knowledge about the Spirit himself (ibid.).

Relying on and developing this Kantian notion, Hegel makes use of the phenomenology to describe the Spirit’s journey. This type of philosophical investigation can be defined as the study of the ‘phenomena’ or the reality of how things appear to us (Salih 2002: 20). In other words, Hegel’s idea of knowledge is knowledge as consciousness of the phenomena and not knowledge as it is

¹⁸ These examples are also quoted in (Salih 2002: 22).

¹⁹ Butler remarks that Hegel’s Spirit is always male (1987: 50, n.*).

presented by philosophers: other than a philosophical construction, knowledge is consciousness about the reality that surrounds the philosopher. This notion of consciousness is therefore an important characteristic of the subject.²⁰ It is only through the successive stages of consciousness, which are outlined in the *Phenomenology*, that the subject can attain absolute knowledge. This metaphysical journey of the subject also resembles the journeys in travel-stories: for example, Jonathan Rée compares Hegel's work to Homer's *Odyssey* 'in which the hero's experiences on his travels lead him towards the state of greater wisdom, or Christian enlightenment, which he ultimately attains' (quoted in Salih 2002: 22). However, Salih rightly indicates that rather than a physical journey, Hegel's Spirit undergoes a 'metaphysical journey' (2002: 22).

Furthermore, because of the idea that the subject will ultimately reach 'enlightenment', the *Phenomenology* has often been understood as a (Christian) teleology which tells the story of the movement of the world towards 'Absolute Knowledge'. Nevertheless, this is only one way to interpret Hegel's work and Salih emphasises in the introduction to an abstract from *Subjects of Desire*, published in *The Judith Butler Reader* (2004), that Butler will contest the idea of a clear Hegelian teleology (1987a: 45). According to Salih, Butler does not read the *Phenomenology* as 'straightforwardly teleological', since 'far from describing "a self-identical subject who travels smugly from one ontological place to another," Hegel's Subject "is its travels, and is every place in which it finds itself."'; for Butler, in other words, 'the Hegelian Subject is not an entity on its way to completion' (Salih 2004: 40). The travel itself is thus much more important than the destination, it seems.

THE DIALECTIC: THESIS – ANTITHESIS – SYNTHESIS

The subject's ontological pursuit of absolute knowledge (which will never reach full closure in Butler's reading) is in essence a dialectical movement. Although the dialectic is most often associated with Hegel, he was not the first to outline this way of inquiry. Already Socrates and later Plato used the dialectic method as a means for philosophical investigation and, after Hegel had given the dialectic a second life, Marx mixed the dialectic method with his ideas about historical materialism resulting in a Marxist theory (meaning to overthrow capitalism).²¹ Whereas originally the dialectic was used to describe a specific way of thinking, Hegel also characterized the metaphysical journey of the Hegelian subject as a dialectical 'movement'.

In a dialectic reasoning, a proposition (thesis) is negated by its opposite (antithesis) and ultimately 'resolved in a synthesis'; this synthesis in turn will be the basis for another thesis triggering off the dialectic chain all over again (Salih 2002: 3). In other words, the synthesis is not always final

²⁰ Following Sara Salih, I will interchange 'Subject' and 'Spirit' since Butler's notion of the 'subject' stands very close to the Hegelian 'Spirit', as explained above.

²¹ Here I am relying on the information found online: Dialectics, *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopaedia*. Accessed on 1 July 2007: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dialectics>. Since I will not discuss in length Hegel's theory, I will only briefly look into his ideas about the dialectic.

and the dialectic chain of thesis-antithesis-synthesis can be an (endless) cyclic movement. As I have already explained, Butler will stress this possibility to show how Hegel's dialectic moving subject is not strictly teleological. Since every synthesis can function as another thesis, thus reinitiating the dialectic process, in the same way the subject will renegotiate himself (the synthesis) but also renegotiate this ostensible endpoint (the synthesis becomes another thesis).

This idea of the subject as a constantly negotiated 'movement' will be crucial for Butler's thinking about the construction of identity in general. Whereas the common view of Hegel's subject describes it as a 'static signifier' moving towards a specific goal, Butler claims that 'the subject can only be understood in its movement' (1987a: 49). Comparing the subject to a Don Quixotic figure 'who pursues reality in systematically mistaken ways' (54), and to a cartoon character like a 'Mr. Magoo whose automobile careening through the neighbour's chicken coop always seems to land on all four wheels', Butler discovers that the subject is an extremely resilient character who 'always assemble[s] [himself], prepare[s] a new scene, enter[s] the stage armed with a new set of ontological insights – and fail[s] again' (51-2). Here, Butler resonates – what Salih calls – a true 'Beckettian spirit' (2004: 40). Indeed, the Butlerian subject may be described by Beckett's following motto: 'Ever tried. Ever failed. No Matter. Try again. Fail again. Fail better'.²² Through a process of trial-and-error the subject can be summarized according to Butler as a 'fiction of infinite capability, a romantic traveller who only learns from what he experiences, who, because infinitely self-replenishing, is never devastated beyond repair' (1987a: 52).

However, although Butler does not interpret Hegel's *Phenomenology* as a clear cut teleological work, she does not see the subject's pursuit of absolute knowledge as a 'running around in circles', rather, it is a 'progressive cycle which reveals every deception as permitting some grander act of synthesis, an insight into yet more regions of interrelated reality' (Butler 1987a: 53). I would like to stress this important element in Butler's thinking, since it has often been overlooked by many of her critics who interpret her work as nihilistic and deny any political value and practical application of her theories. Furthermore, as I already emphasised in the previous chapter, Butler applies the dialectic method to her own work: as Salih points out, Butler's work 'enters into dialectical debate with itself, resembling the journey of the Spirit as described by Hegel' (2002: 4). Butler's style of writing is also highly influenced by the dialectic.

WRITING WITH STYLE: A DIALECTICAL DEBATE WITH THE SELF

As I already pointed out in the previous chapter, Butler has always been prepared to revisit her own works, adjusting the theory at those points where she was unclear or wrong. For this reason, the theory of performativity is not outlined in a single work – or, for that matter, a cluster of works – but Butler adjusted the theory in the course of different publications. Salih explains how, 'like the "subject" she

²² I have found this quote from Beckett's play *Worstward Ho* online: Beckett, Samuel. *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. Accessed on 1 July 2007: http://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Samuel_Beckett.

discusses, Butler's works themselves are part of a process or a becoming which has neither origin nor end' (2002: 3). Therefore, it is highly difficult to 'pin Butler down' in one or the other intellectual field but, according to Salih, the way her works 'defy easy categorization' is part of what makes them so challenging (2).

The dialectic as an open-ended process is furthermore important when considering Butler's style of writing. Characteristic of Butler is that she asks many questions without giving any clear cut answers. This piling of questions, Salih notices, 'can seem bewildering at times, but it is not just a stylistic flaw, and the withholding of answers is neither ignorance nor obtuseness on Butler's part' (2002: 3). Resolution is not something Butler tries to attain. Quite on the contrary, in her works she never claims to have discovered 'the truth' or to have resolved the problems with her theory since she considers truth-claims as highly anti-democratic.²³ Salih explains how Butler believes that ideas claiming to hold the 'truth' about something are often 'vehicles for ideological assumptions that oppress certain groups of people in society' (2002: 4). I will discuss this insight more fully in the third chapter. Nevertheless, the opaque, dense and insinuating style of writing Butler attributes is one of the reasons why many of her readers feel frustrated and annoyed at times.

Not surprisingly, Butler's style has aroused much criticism. In 1998 Butler was even voted that years number one 'bad writer' by the journal *Philosophy and Literature*. Each year this 'contest' 'celebrates the most stylistically lamentable passages found in scholarly books and articles'.²⁴ Many critics have accused Butler of being too dense and obscure, pointing out – what seem to be – contradictions in her work. One critic even accused Butler of 'bullying' her readers by the many rhetorical questions, the density of her work and the immense amount of allusions to theories and philosophers without providing any explanation (Nussbaum 1999: 4).²⁵ This attack – which is rightly described by Salih as 'bullying' in itself – came from the philosopher Marta Nussbaum in her article 'The Philosopher of Parody' (Salih 2002: 135). Nussbaum describes Butler's prose as a 'thick soup' which is elitist, has an 'air of in-group knowingness' and is 'not directed at a non-academic audience eager to grapple with actual injustices' (1999: 3). She furthermore attacks not only Butler's style of writing but also her ideas about gender performativity in general. According to Nussbaum, Butler 'collaborates with evil' (13) because she turns away 'from the material side of life, toward a type of verbal and symbolic politics that makes only the flimsiest of connections with the real situation of real women' (2):

For women who are hungry, illiterate, disenfranchised, beaten, raped, it is not sexy or liberating to re-enact, however parodically, the conditions of hunger, illiteracy,

²³ For example, in *Bodies That Matter* Butler explains how the term 'queer' is not the final resolution which will solve all the problems related to gender and sex definitions. I will discuss this more elaborately in beginning of the third chapter.

²⁴ Bad Writing Contest, Press Releases. Accessed on 1 July 2007: http://denisdutton.com/bad_writing.htm.

²⁵ Nussbaum, Marta. 1999. 'The Professor of Parody', *New Republic*, 22 February. Accessed on 1 July 2007: <http://www.akad.se/Nussbaum.pdf> For reference I have used the page numbers of the pdf document found online.

disenfranchisement, beating and rape. Such women prefer food and the integrity of their bodies (11).

In the fourth chapter dealing with the materiality of the body, I will show how Butler does not deny materiality or the reality of women who suffer. In my opinion the reason why Nussbaum provides this kind of vicious attack on Butler is because she tries to reject Butler's ideas altogether, and the same can be said about the 'Bad Writing'-prize Butler received. This idea is supported by Salih who suggests that sometimes 'complaining about Butler's prose style is a substitute for understanding her ideas, and an easy pretext for rejecting them' (2002: 12). Moreover, Butler herself claims in an interview 'Changing the Subject' (2000) that Nussbaum's attack does not strike her 'as an engaged or careful reading', and she presumes 'that it does probably epitomize a certain frustration that a certain kind of liberal American politics has with a critical approach to some of its most important issues' (2000a: 356).

As I hope to have explained thoroughly in the previous chapter, Butler is a philosopher who is highly interested in language and its use. It would therefore be very strange if Butler herself did not think about the way she uses language herself. In fact, since Butler's theory has much affinity with Austin's work, 'How to do things with words?' is probably a question Butler has asked herself as well. That language as a pressing issue for Butler is apparent in the frequent references she makes to her own style. For example, in the preface of the 1999 edition of *Gender Trouble*, Butler addresses both critics and friends who have drawn attention to its difficulty. For a work that was 'not easily consumed', to be that popular was at least 'strange' and even 'maddening to some' of Butler's readers (1999: xviii). The reason for this 'surprise', Butler claims, might in fact be attributable 'to the way we underestimate the reading public, its capacity and desire for reading complicated and challenging texts, when the complication is not gratuitous, when the challenge is in the service of calling taken-for-granted truths into question, when the taken for grantedness of those truths is, indeed, oppressive' (ibid.). Butler's style is thus not some sort of arrogant 'bullying' but is in fact a political strategy. In her reply to the *New York Times*, who also attacked Butler's style after she had won the *Bad Writing Contest*, Butler not only points out that the *Contest* targets those 'scholars on the left whose work focuses on topics like sexuality, race, nationalism and the workings of capitalism'; she also advocates a language that challenges 'common sense' since 'common sense sometimes preserves the social status quo, and that status quo sometimes treats unjust social hierarchies as natural'.²⁶

According to Butler 'neither grammar nor style are politically neutral' (1999: xviii). To Salih, 'it would therefore be inconsistent for Butler to contest gender norms, which she claims are linguistically constructed and mediated, without also contesting the very language and grammar in which those norms are instituted' (2002: 13). As the title of her second book suggest, causing trouble will be an important element in Butler's work and making trouble is in essence what her style is doing:

²⁶ Butler, Judith. 1999. 'A Bad Writer Bites Back', *New York Times*, 20 March. Accessed on 1 July 2007: <http://www.uwm.edu/~wash/butler.htm>.

in its open-endedness it pushes readers to think for themselves. Butler's affinity with making trouble will be discussed later on. Thus, the language she uses is in fact deliberately challenging: by painstakingly engaging in Butler's work the reader, according to Salih, 'experiences' what the philosopher is describing and the work consequently 'enacts what it describes' like a performative (2002: 13). In other words, Butler's prose style is a performative mode of writing that exemplifies the theory of performativity itself. Borrowing this idea from Nietzsche, in 'What is Critique?' Butler suggests that her readers should act more like cows 'and learn the art of slow rumination' (2001: 307). Finally, to close this brief discussion of Butler's style and turn back to Hegel, I would like to give the following quote from *Subjects of Desire*. Here, Butler explains why Hegel's writing is so very dense and difficult. Interestingly, what she writes about the nineteenth century philosopher can easily be attributed to her own writing:

Hegel's sentences *enact* the meaning that they convey; indeed, they show that what "is" only is to the extent that it is *enacted*. Hegelian sentences are read with difficulty, for their meaning is not immediately given or known; they call to be reread, read with different intonations and grammatical emphasis. Like a line of poetry that stops us and forces us to consider that the *way* in which it is said is essential to *what* it is saying, Hegel's sentences rhetorically call attention to themselves (1987a: 49)

DESIRE FOR THE OTHER AND DESIRE FOR THE SELF

If the subject does not reach its destination and is never completely fulfilled, then what drives this subject? What keeps the subject going? These are the questions that primarily interest Butler and she draws on Nietzsche to come up with an interesting interpretation. For Nietzsche 'Truth' 'does not necessarily denote the antithesis of error, but in the most fundamental cases only the posture of various errors in relation to one another'; in other words, Absolute Truth is a deception which can never be reached (Butler 1987a: 53). Butler will therefore read the *Phenomenology* as a study in deception and desire; the subject becomes the 'trope for the hyperbolic impulse itself, that frantic and overdetermined pursuit of the Absolute which *creates* that place when it cannot be found, which projects it endlessly and is constantly "foiled" by its own projection' (Butler 1987a: 54). Salih explains that the subject, deceived by the promise that he can know the truth, is motivated to overcome the obstacles placed in his way by desire; it is the 'desire to overcome these obstacles', but, more importantly, 'the desire to know himself' that prevents the subject 'from giving up at the successive stages of his journey when he discovers his own error' (2002: 25). In the *Phenomenology*, Butler remarks, desire emerges 'in the midst of a quandary', a turning point in the philosophical work and in the development of the Spirit, 'the subject has not arrived, but a predecessor is on the scene: consciousness' (1987a: 55). As Salih summarizes, desire will be 'intimately connected to the process of coming into consciousness and the subject's increasing capacity for self-knowledge' (2002: 26).

For Hegel the subject only appears when it is confronted with another consciousness: at first existing only in and for itself, consciousness – confronted with something 'other' outside itself – becomes aware of its own difference and moves towards a self-consciousness. Therefore, although the

subject is different from the Other, it can not exist without this encounter: ‘*Consciousness* finds that it immediately is and is not another consciousness, as also [sic] that this other is for itself only when it cancels itself as existing for itself, and has self-existence only in the self-existence of the other’ (Hegel 1807: 231).²⁷ This ‘Other’, Butler remarks, is ‘absolutely different, signifying nothing for consciousness except its own ontological limitations’ and therefore ‘desire, as the expression of self-consciousness, is a constant effort to overcome the appearance of ontological disparity between consciousness and its world’ (1987a: 63). The subject’s initial desire to know himself inevitably becomes the desire to know the Other, since it is only through knowledge of what is outside itself that the subject can achieve absolute knowledge (or self-knowledge). The subject therefore desires, Salih explains, to ‘consume’ the Other, to ‘absorb’ it into the Self’ (2002: 27). Interestingly, the German word for desire, ‘*Begierde*’, ‘suggests animal appetite’ (Butler 1987: 62); and in using this metaphor of consuming the Other, Butler makes clear that the Other is not simply destroyed or cancelled but, more importantly, at the same time preserved within the subject. Hegel defines this concept of simultaneously overcoming and preserving the Other in order to be lifted up to a higher level in consciousness as ‘*Aufhebung*’ and Butler furthermore describes it as ‘consuming desire, desire for recognition, desire for another’s desire’ (1987: 71). To summarize, sublation thus signals three different meanings at once: to lift up, to cancel and to preserve; to understand this complex thought, Salih refers to what happens to a single brick when used in construction (2002: 25). The brick will still be discernibly a ‘brick’; however, taken together with the cement and other bricks, the brick will lose and ‘transcend’ its original identity, being now part of a higher unit (for instance a wall, a house). Similarly, the Subject will cancel the Other but, in doing this, the Other will also be preserved as an essential part of the Subject. Thus, Salih claims, ‘as in *Gender Trouble* and *Bodies that Matter*, the Hegelian subject is characterized as a melancholic agent who must recognize and overcome the Other (*Aufhebung*) in order to become itself’ (2004: 39).

HEGEL’S ‘AUFHEBUNG’: TO LIFT UP, CANCEL AND PRESERVE

In the dialectic movement, ‘*Aufhebung*’ is the third synthesising step, which in turn can be the starting point for another antithesis. In *Subjects of Desire* Butler shows how many of the French philosophers she investigates in the book forget this complex description of Hegel’s *Aufhebung* and reject it as simply closed and fixed. As I have tried to show, Hegel’s work leaves room for an other interpretation in which the final stage is not at all fixed and unchangeable, but can be taken as the starting point for another dialectical chain. Butler illustrates how, although philosophers like Kojève, Hyppolite, Sartre, Derrida, Lacan and Foucault attempt to ‘overcome’ Hegel, in doing so they actually deploy the

²⁷ The grammar in this translated work, which can be found online, is at times very strange: Hegel, G.W.F. 1807. *The Phenomenology of Mind*, trans. J.B. Baillie, New York: Harper Torchbook (1967). Accessed on 1 July 2007: <http://www.class.uidaho.edu/mickelsen/ToC/Hegel%20Phen%20ToC.htm>.

dialectical mode: 'Indeed, often the marks of a distinctively "post-Hegelian" position are not easy to distinguish from an appropriative reading of Hegel himself' (1987a: 45-46).

However, Hegel's theory is not merely a simple encounter between two consciousnesses which find themselves in the recognition and supersession of each other. The process of 'Recognition' is complicated by the fact that the Other who the subject has to overcome is in fact a part of the subject itself:

Self-consciousness has before it another self-consciousness; it has come outside itself [...] This has a double significance. First it has lost its own self, since it *finds itself as an other being*; secondly, it has thereby *sublated that other*, for it does not regard the other as essentially real, but sees its own self in the other [...] First, it must set itself to sublimate the other independent being, in order thereby to become certain of itself as true being, secondly, it thereupon proceeds to sublimate its own self, for this other is itself (Hegel 1807: 229, my own emphasis).

Since the Other is an essential part of the Subject, the Subject therefore has also to overcome itself, again by cancellation and preservation. In other words, in order to know itself, the subject has to lose a part of itself; for this reason, the recognition of the Other is primarily experienced by the Subject as a threat. This encounter between two consciousnesses (or as Salih stresses, 'two self-opposed parts of a consciousness that is split' [2002: 27]) is formulated in the myth of 'Lordship and Bondage', an important section of *Phenomenology*.

LORD AND BONDSMAN: A CONSCIOUSNESS THAT IS SPLIT

Although both consciousness bring each other into being, their relationship, however, is characterized as 'unlike and opposed, and their reflection into unity has not yet come to light' (Hegel 1807: 234). The first consciousness is 'independent, and its essential nature is to be for itself; the other is dependent, and its essence is life or existence for another. The former is the Master, or Lord, the latter the Bondsman' (ibid.). In a contradictory manner, the Lord is said to be 'a consciousness existing on its own account which is mediated with itself through an other consciousness' (Hegel 1807: 234). Stated differently, Salih explains that even though the Lord exists 'for itself', he still needs the Bondsman to sustain his independence and his 'sense of Self' (2002: 27). Consequently, since the Lord 'is the power dominating existence' whose existence again 'is the power controlling the other', the Bondsman is subordinated (Hegel 1807: 235). While the Lord receives his recognition through the other, the Bondsman labours on an object which makes him become 'aware of himself as factually and objectively self-existent' (239). In labour - by 'shaping the thing' - the Bondsman works on reality; he 'cancels the actual form confronting it' and thus becomes aware that 'in labour where there seemed to be merely some outsider's mind and ideas involved [e.g. the Lord's] he can have and be 'a "mind of his own"' (139, my addition). According to Salih, 'unlike the lord', the Bondsman in other words 'finds that he can transform the external world into a reflection of himself, thus gaining independence and freedom' (2002: 28).

Once again, desire is the motivating force. For Butler, this struggle between Lord and Bondsman is a struggle to the death because ‘only through the death of the Other will the initial self-consciousness retrieve its claim to autonomy’ (1987a: 76). The Lord struggles for life through the annihilation of the Other: it is only by subordinating the Bondsman that the Lord can recognize himself. The Bondsman on the other hand struggles for life through his labour. Salih thoroughly explains Butler’s ideas about Hegel’s Lord and Bondsman, laying bare Butler’s idea that by transforming ‘the natural world’ the Bondsman can ‘gain autonomy and self-recognition’, which can result in a ‘gradual reversal of the roles the two subject initially assumed (2002: 28). Hence, Butler believes that ‘we are recognized not merely for the form we inhabit in the world (our various embodiments), but for the forms we create of the world (our works); our bodies are but transient expressions of our freedom, while our works shield our freedom in their very structure’ (1987a: 83).

Inevitably, Salih notices an important connection between ‘subjectivity, labour and community’ (2002: 28). Butler indeed emphasises the importance of ‘an historically constituted intersubjectivity’ by stating that ‘[t]rue subjectivities come to flourish only in communities that provide for reciprocal recognition, for we do not come to ourselves through work alone, but through the acknowledging look of the Other who confirms us’ (1987a: 83). The importance of intersubjectivity to Butler’s work should not be underestimated, which is also emphasised by Salih when she claims that ‘in later work intersubjectivity and exclusion prove to be crucial to Butler’s psychoanalytically inflected formulations of identity’ (2004: 40). In later chapters, I hope to show how the Other always and inevitably plays a crucial role in Butler’s formulations of identity.

INTERSUBJECTIVITY: THE SELF AND THE OTHER

The importance of Hegel to Butler’s work lies thus first and for most in Hegel’s dialectic method and secondly in the idea of intersubjectivity. As Salih explains, ‘in Hegel’s account of lordship and bondage there is no experience without intersubjectivity, as the lord and his bondsman seek to know themselves through the supersession of otherness: the lord “overcomes” the bondsman, while the bondsman labours on an object that is constitutive of his identity’ (2004: 40). Butler will further develop this idea of intersubjectivity in her later works, especially in *The Psychic Life of Power*. In this book, Butler turns to questions about subjection arguing that subjection plays in fact a very important part in the formation of the subject itself. It seems as if the subject is indeed attached to his own subjection and Butler will turn again to Hegel to explain this ostensible paradox.

As I have explained, while the Bondsman achieves a sense of Self through the creation of an object, the Lord has to consume this object and erasing the bondsman’s signature on it, in order to come into existence. In other words, the Bondsman labours for another; but more importantly, the Lord’s desire of the ‘death’ of the Other is in fact some sort of ‘annihilation’ of the Bondsman’s life through the negation of the object and through the erasure of the Bondsman’s signature on the object (in fact the object has never been the Bondsman’s ‘property’ in the first place, and therefore the

signature of the Bondsman is erased by the Lord and replaced for his own). Butler explains in *The Psychic Life* how this struggle to the death is thus replaced by ‘the strategy of domination’ (1997b: 41). As Salih puts it, although the Lord is ‘a threat to the Bondsman’s autonomy’, Butler emphasises that it is only through this experience of ‘absolute fear’ that the Bondsman can know himself (2002: 121 and Butler 1997b: 39): the ‘expropriation of the object does not negate the bondsman’s sense of himself as a labouring being, but it does imply that whatever he makes, he also loses’ (1997b: 41). In his labour the Bondsman sees himself projected, but since his creation is always and inevitably taken away from him the Bondsman, Salih argues, ‘comes to know himself as a transient object that is always vulnerable to appropriation’ (2002: 121). When the Bondsman – through recognition of his own ‘formative capacity’ – has finally overthrown the Lord and has taken his place, he will internalize the dominative order under which he formally laboured, and consequently, he will be confronted with a split consciousness into an internal ‘Lordship’ and ‘Bondage’ (Butler 1997b: 42). This development is what Hegel characterizes as the transition from the servitude of the bondsman to that of the ‘Unhappy Consciousness’ (ibid.). Whereas the Bondsman throws off the domination by the Lord, he still finds himself entrapped in ‘an ethical world, subjected to various norms and ideals’ (ibid.: 32).

To summarize, I would like to argue that characteristic of the Hegelian subject is its attachment to its own subjection and this is an important insight which Butler will analyse in her theorizations of gender and the body. These ideas about the subject’s attachment to subjection (and power) will specifically be dealt with in the section about Foucault and in the following chapters about gender and the body. The following philosopher I will discuss was equally concerned with power structures and how these structures work to keep people in their place.

2.2. ALTHUSSER: INTERPELLATION

Another philosopher to whom Butler repeatedly returns is the French Marxist thinker Louis Althusser (1918-1990). Being a Marxist, for Althusser it is not only important to understand which mechanisms are at work that keep subjects of a capitalist society in their place, but also to find out how it is possible that suppressed people continue to show loyalty to a system that perpetuates their oppression and only makes their lives harder. Sarah Chinn explains in her essay concerning gender performativity that according to Althusser fear for repercussions by the state can only partly explain people’s adherence to the system and does not make plain the great attachment to and enthusiasm for a suppressing regime (1997: 297).²⁸ For this reason, Althusser claims that there must be certain forces at work that make people accept their situation as normal, even natural, and as the way it should be and

²⁸ Chinn, Sarah E. 1997. ‘Gender Performativity’, in: *Lesbian and Gay Studies: A Critical Introduction*, ed. Andy Medhurst and Sally R. Munt, London: Cassell, pp.294-308.

always has been. Butler especially makes use of Althusser's essay 'Ideology and the Ideological State Apparatuses' (1969) in which Althusser describes these forces as 'ideological state apparatuses'.²⁹

THE IDEOLOGICAL STATE APPARATUSES

In his theory of historical materialism, Marx already incorporated the idea that there were so-called State Apparatuses at work which ensure that people are kept in their place. According to Marx, the State Apparatus is a group of institutions like 'the Government, the Administration, the Army, the Police, the Courts, the Prisons, etc.', and in Althusser's reworking of the Marxist theory, these constitute the 'Repressive State Apparatus' (1971: 142-3). Furthermore, Althusser claims that another set of State Apparatuses are at work which also 'present themselves to the immediate observer in the form of distinct and specialized institutions'; these are called the Ideological State Apparatuses and institutions like the Church, the School, the Family, the Media are part of it (143). Although, from the outset, the difference between the two State Apparatus seems to be that the former belongs to the public domain, whereas the latter type of institutions are all part of the public domain (144), Althusser emphasises that the basic difference between them lies in their function: 'the Repressive State Apparatus functions *by violence*', while 'the Ideological State Apparatuses function *by ideology*' (145). In other words, the first type holds people in their place by sheer force (which can be physical but also works through manipulation, intimidation, commands, and interdictions), but the Ideological State Apparatuses exercise power in a much more subtle way. Even though they are – just like the Repressive State Apparatuses – products of the regime itself, they represent themselves as part of the private sphere and as completely 'natural'. However, since these institutions are governed by the ruling ideology, they carry out 'the reproduction of the relations of production, i.e. of capitalist relations of exploitation' (154). The genius of these Ideological State Apparatuses is that they impose '(without appearing to do so, since these are 'obviousnesses') obviousnesses as obviousnesses, which we cannot *fail to recognize* and before which we have the inevitable and natural reaction of crying out (aloud or in the "still, small voice of conscience"): "That's obvious! That's right! That's true!"' (172). Stated differently, Sarah Chinn explains that because the main characteristic of ideology is that it presents itself as natural, arguing against it would simply be ascribed as 'crazy' or even 'evil' (1997: 297).

Given that ideology represents itself as 'obvious', people continue to be enthusiastically attached to those structures that actually oppress them. This process, Althusser continues, comes about in some sort of 'ideological *recognition*' and he gives the following example:

²⁹ Althusser, Louis. 1971. 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (notes towards an investigation)', in: *Lenin and Philosophy and other essays* (part 2), translated from the French by Ben Brewster, New York and London: Monthly Review Press, pp. 127-186.

We all have friends who, when they knock on our door and we ask, through the door, the question ‘Who’s there?’, answer (since ‘it’s obvious’) ‘It’s me’. And we recognize that ‘it is him’, or ‘her’. We open the door, and ‘it’s true, it really was she who was there’ (1971: 172).

As Althusser shows, it is only through this ‘recognition’ by ideology that the subject can become part of the ‘practical rituals of the most elementary everyday life (the hand-shake, the fact of calling you by your name, the fact of knowing, even if I do not know what it is, that you ‘have’ a name of your own, which means that you are recognized as a unique subject, etc.)’; in other words, ideology gives the subject a place in society, or, as Althusser formulates it, ‘*all ideology hails or interpellates concrete individuals as concrete subjects*’ (173).

Although it would seem like common sense to think that it is ‘we’, the subjects, who create the Ideological State Apparatuses, Althusser claims that it is in fact the other way around and that it is the Ideological State Apparatus which brings the subjects into being. Through the act of hailing or interpellation (which, according to Althusser, ‘can be imagined along the lines of the most commonplace everyday police (or other) hailing: “Hey, you there”’), a subject has come into (social) existence (174). In this sense, as Chinn rightly observes, interpellation is a performative speech act: ‘when a doctor says “it’s a girl”, or a parent says “That’s my child” or a judge says “I sentence you” (or “I marry you”) they’re all reiterating ideology saying “You are a subject”’ (1997: 297). Butler is especially interested in the way in which the law brings the subject into being through a interpellative call, and in *Bodies That Matter* and *Excitable Speech* she revisits some of Althusser’s scenes of interpellation.

THE INTERPELLATIVE CALL: ‘HEY JUDE’

Like Chinn, Butler recognizes that the Althusserian call ‘Hey you there’ is ‘formative, if not performative, precisely because it initiates the individual into the subjected status of the subject’ (1993: 121). According to Althusser, when a figure of authority ‘hails’ the individual, he will automatically ‘turn around’ and ‘by this mere one-hundred-and-eighty-degree physical conversion, he becomes a *subject*’ simply because ‘he has recognized that the hail was “really” addressed to him, and that “it was *really him* who was hailed” – and not someone else’ (Althusser 1971: 174). In other words, Althusser characterizes ‘hailing’ as a ‘unilateral act’, power exercised by or personified by a single agent and always obeyed by the hailed individual (Butler 1993: 121). Since Althusser describes power without taking into account the wide range of possibilities for disobedience that an interpellative call might produce, Butler will adjust his theory of interpellation. In the fourth chapter of *Bodies that Matter* ‘Gender is Burning’, Butler asks whether there are ‘other ways of being addressed and constituted by the law, ways of being occupied and occupying the law, that disarticulated the power of punishment from the power of recognition?’ (122).

Although in the Althusserian scene of the policeman calling out ‘Hey you there’, the individual always turns around, taking up and agreeing with his subjectivation, according to Butler this

‘reprimand’ of the law should not be a ‘simple performative’ and there is a possibility that ‘interpellation... creates more than it ever meant to, signifying in excess of any intended referent’ (Butler 1993: 122). The subject, may thus respond to the law in ways that undermine it, but Butler emphasises that the subject draws its ‘agency’ always ‘in part through being implicated in the very relations of power that it seeks to oppose’ (123). As Salih explains, any ‘acts of disobedience must [therefore] always take place *within* the law using terms that constitute us: we have to respond to the policeman’s call otherwise we would have no subject status, but the subject status we necessarily embrace constitutes what Butler (borrowing from Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak) calls “an enabling violation”’ (2002: 79, quoting Butler 1993: 122). In *Bodies that Matter, Excitable Speech and Psychic Life of Power*, drawing from a Foucauldian model of power (which I will discuss in the following chapter) and Derrida’s critique on Austin’s speech act theory, Butler leaves room for agency in the Althusserian scene of interpellation by claiming that interpellative calls can be just as ineffective as any other performatives and that it therefore does not automatically bring into being what it names. I will try to show that there are possible ways to respond to (injurious) interpellations that prevent the intended effects from taking place.

This in fact echoes the discussion of insults in the first chapter. As I explained, terms of abuse might be re-cited in different ways and therefore not all hate speech might produce a wounded or injured subject. As an example I cited the term ‘queer’ which has been revaluated in the past decade. This kind of revaluation of an originally abusive term suggests according to Butler that ‘speech can be “returned” to its speakers in a different form’ (1997a: 14). This kind of reappropriation is what Butler calls the ‘political promise of the performative’ (1997a: 161). Although Butler acknowledges that reciting an abusive term might involve some risks, she nevertheless insists that it is worth while to face this danger:

The word that wounds becomes an instrument of resistance in the redeployment that destroys the prior territory of its operation. Such a redeployment means speaking words without prior authorization and putting into risk the security of linguistic life, the sense of one’s place in language, that one’s words do as one says. [...] Insurrectionary speech becomes the necessary response to injurious language, a risk taken in response to being put at risk, a repetition in language that forces change (1997a: 163).

In an interview entitled ‘Changing the Subject’ (2000), Butler gives an interesting example from her own life of how an intended insult might be returned to the speaker.

She relates how one day she was walking down the street in Berkeley when suddenly a kid leaned out of a window and asked her ‘Are you a lesbian’. Of course, this ‘interpellation’ (‘lesbian’) was intended as an insult, but Butler simply replied affirmative: ‘Yes, I am a lesbian’. She noticed how her questioner was left in a kind of shock, ‘having heard somebody gamely, proudly take on the term – somebody who spends most of her life deconstructing the term in other contexts’ (2000: 352). Butler argues that to have received the term and simply give it back, was a ‘powerful thing to do’ (ibid.). She thus insists that ‘there is a certain challenge that is delivered with something like hate speech’ and that

in fact 'it does not have to be hate speech' depending on how the term is played out (353). Here Butler is clearly advocating the possibility of agency. Nevertheless, some questions remain. Salih for example provides a good critique on this aspect of Butler's theory. She asks whether it would be possible 'for me as a "subject-effect" to make the autonomous and unilateral decision that "lesbian" is now an affirmative term, particularly if my interlocutor is not in agreement with me?' (2002: 115). She suggests that partly the efficiency of Butler's strategy depends on the reaction of the Berkeley kid and according to Salih 'semantic consensus is still important' (ibid.). I will come back to this question of agency below.

GIRLING AND BOYING

In *Bodies That Matter* Butler considers how sexed bodies come into existence. Drawing from Althusser's notion of interpellation, she claims that a person's sexed identity is allocated to him/her at the scene of birth by the doctor's interpellative call 'It's a boy/girl' which immediately shifts the infant 'from an "it" to a "she" or a "he"' (Butler 1993: 7). Whether the child will be classified as either 'male' or 'female' depends on it possessing recognizably male or female genitalia. These body parts are thus, as Salih puts it, 'invested with significance' and, although the utterance 'it's a girl' merely seems to describe the infant's body, it is actually constituting and interpellating it, like a true performative utterance (2002: 80). However, although Butler is at this point questioning common notions about the body, this does not imply that she is completely refuting any bodily existence. As I will show, Butler still 'believes' in matter but insists that matter can only come into existence through language. In this way, although there must be indeed something like my physical body, I can only come to grips with it when I can describe it, and use existing words and existing classifying systems. In the following chapter dealing with Foucault, it will be clear that Butler depends on Foucault's notion of discourse to argue that language constitutes the body.

Interestingly, when a girl is 'girded' by a figure of authority (in this case, the doctor) the girling 'does not end there; on the contrary, that founding interpellation is reiterated by various authorities and throughout various intervals of time to reinforce or contest this naturalized effect. The naming is at once the setting of a boundary, and also the repeated inculcation of a norm' (Butler 1993: 8). According to Salih, it is therefore possible to change de Beauvoir's statement 'One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman' to 'One is not born, but rather is called a woman' to describe the reiterating process in which the girl is 'girded' (Salih 2002: 78).

Salih makes another interesting comment by noticing how Butler on the one hand emphasizes that interpellation can never be one-sided and that, in order for the call to be effective, the subject who is interpellated must 'metaphorically' turn around, while on the other hand an infant is still 'boyed' or 'girded' even though the foetus (when using sonograms) and the infant *can* of course not 'turn around'. How can interpellation work, if it is not recognized by the subject? For Salih 'this objection is not just a quibble, since Butler makes much of the importance of recognition and the subject's response to the

law in the chapter on interpellation in *The Psychic Life of Power*' (Salih 2002: 79). However, I would like to argue against this objection since I found it much more important how Butler – although she will indeed attach much significance to the notion of 'taking up' the interpellative call in *Psychic Life of Power* – insists on the fact that the girling/boying does not take place in a single act at the scene of birth, but is constantly repeated and reiterated throughout the person's course of life (in this way, leaving room – drawing on Derrida – for *mis*-citation). Although an infant can indeed not 'turn around', at a certain point in time when he/she is capable the subject might take up this interpellation or might resist it. In my opinion, since the interpellation is a repetitive act, it does not seem important that the infant can not literally turn around, that it can not confirm its status as a subject in the first instance. However what is important is that this person is brought into being by a performative utterance which is constitutive and a repetition of a norm. Since it will be repeated incessantly anyway, this initial interpellation does not need to receive recognition at the first instant; ultimately, at some point in time, the child will respond to it (affirmative or negative) anyway.

AGENCY AND SUBJECTION

For Althusser it is 'plain reality' that 'individuals are always-already interpellated by ideology as subjects' and are thus 'always-already subjects' (Althusser 1971: 176). In the same way as Butler makes use of the scene of birth, he proves his point by referring to the 'ideological ritual' concerning an unborn infant (*ibid.*):

[I]t is certain in advance that it will bear its Father's Name, and will therefore have an identity and be irreplaceable. Before its birth, the child is therefore always-already a subject, appointed as a subject in and by the specific familial ideological configuration in which it is 'expected' once it has been conceived. I hardly need add that this familial ideological configuration is, in its uniqueness, highly structured, and that it is in this implacable and more or less 'pathological' (presupposing that any meaning can be assigned to that term) structure that the former subject to-be will have to 'find' its place, i.e. 'become' the sexual subject (boy or girl) which it already is in advance (*ibid.*).

In this paragraph, Althusser explains that the individual is not only always-already interpellated as a sexual subject, but interestingly enough, the customary ritual of the Ideological State apparatus of the Family ensures that, even before the child is born, it already bears the father's name and all the identity-characteristics this name is associated with. However, what I find striking in this passage is that Althusser stresses how the subject 'becomes the sexual subject' and that the subject 'to-be' still has to 'find its place' although it is within the boundaries of this highly structured and limited society. The individual in other words has to fulfil the 'expectations' set out for him/her in advance to become a true subject. However, in my view there seems to be a slippage between the 'expected' development of the individual and the actual 'becoming' which lies in the possibility of subversion – the inappropriate use of the interpellation undermining the dominant ideology and crossing the set out boundaries. Of course I have in this way read this passage in a highly Butlerian manner, not taking into consideration the fact that Althusser characterized the interpellative call – like the appropriation of

a proper name – as divine and therefore inescapable (Butler 1997a: 31). However, I have tried to show just now how Althusser's call is too deterministic and limiting for the subject, while Butler's theory of the performative stresses the possibility for agency and thus subversion. In *Excitable Speech* she provides a detailed analysis of the process of name-calling in which the subject is not suffocated by the always-beforehand-efficient call of the law but is allowed some breathing space.

As I explained earlier, Butler acknowledges that a child does not (and simply can not) react when interpellated as a sexual subject. In the same way, she will claim in *Bodies That Matter* that the subject is being interpellated in discourse by occupying the paternal proper name, without any choice of its own. Here Butler very clearly refutes the Althusserian notion that in order for an individual to be constituted as a subject, he/she has to 'turn around'. Butler on the other hand will argue later on that even when the individual does not *know* that it is being interpellated (as is indeed the case when a child is given a proper name) the call still constitutes the person socially (1997a: 30-31). Furthermore, this subject can never deny its own 'historicity – 'as if it were an object opposed to me, which is not me, but only what others have made of me' – for the reason that the 'estrangement' of this 'I' 'is not only violating, but enabling as well' (Butler 1993: 122). The subject thus finds his possibility for agency precisely within the language that it seeks to oppose. It follows from this statement that categories like 'sex', 'race' or 'gender' should not be banned from being used only because they can be seen as the interpellative moments that bring into existence 'sexism' or 'racism'; according to Butler, it does not necessarily follow that 'such terms could only and always reconsolidate the oppressive regimes of power by which they are spawned' (1993: 123). Quite on the contrary, Butler argues that 'because such terms have been produced and constrained within such regimes, they ought to be repeated in directions that reverse and displace their originating aims' (ibid.).

2.3. FOUCAULT: DISCOURSE AND POWER

Butler uses a distinctly Foucauldian mode of inquiry to investigate identity, namely the genealogy. In the 1990 Preface to *Gender Trouble* she explicitly refers to this specific critical methodology used by Foucault – drawing on Nietzsche's *The Genealogy of Morals* – as a necessity to 'expose the foundational categories of sex, gender, and desire as effects of a specific formation of power' (xxix). Rather than searching for a certain essence or an inherent quality of identity, Butler asks questions about how an identity comes into existence; as Salih puts it, 'Butler's work traces the *processes* by which identity is constructed within language and discourse' (2002: 10, my emphasis). In other words, Butler sees the subject as the effect of institutions and discourses rather than the other way around, which implies that the subject can not simply *be*, but is always already *instituted*. An interesting point will be that Butler suggests that there are different ways in which the subject can be effected that can sometimes subvert existing power structure, and this idea will prove to be crucial in her theory about gender and sex as performative. It is, however, important to keep in mind at this point in my

investigation that genealogy is not just ‘the history of events’ or a simple historical reconstruction that has finding the truth as its mayor goal, but that for Butler it is ‘the enquiry into the conditions of emergence (*Entstehung*) of what is called history, a moment of emergence that is no finally distinguishable from fabrication’ (1999a: 15).

FOUCAULT AND THE GENEALOGY OF ‘SEXUALITY’

In *The History of Sexuality*, as the title already suggests, Foucault uses a genealogical methodology to investigate the emergence and appropriation of concepts of ‘sexuality’. The work consists of three volumes, *The Will to Knowledge* (published in France in 1976 and translated into English in 1978 and sometimes also entitled *An Introduction*; in this inquiry I will primarily focus on this volume), *The use of Pleasure* and *The Care of the Self*, which were all published before Foucault’s untimely death in 1984. The first volume focuses mainly on the 19th and 20th century, while the other two volumes go back to the Greek and Roman period to look into concepts of sexuality. Foucault’s basic premise in the introductory volume is that:

Rather than the uniform concern to hide sex, rather than a general prudishness of language, what distinguishes these last three centuries is the variety, *the wide dispersion of devices that were invented for speaking about it*, for having it be spoken about, for inducing it to speak of itself, for listening, recording, transcribing, and redistributing what is said about it: around sex, a whole network of varying, specific, and coercive transpositions into discourse. Rather than a massive censorship, beginning with the verbal properties imposed by the Age of Reason, what was involved was *a regulated and polymorphous incitement to discourse* (Foucault 1978: 34, my emphasis).

Although, it is generally presumed that sexuality was rarely spoken about during the 19th century (with its prudish and etiquette-obsessed Victorians who covered the piano legs with draperies because of their sexual suggestiveness [example taken from Bristow 1997: 173]), Foucault claims in this passage that there was actually an explosion of sexual discourse. The paradoxical reason being that in order to silence sexuality, sexuality had to be spoken about; and furthermore, in order to control sexuality, a discourse about sexuality needed to be established. Symptomatically, sexuality thus became medicalized and scientifically investigated. It is therefore not surprising that during the late 19th century same-sex desire came to be seen as a medical pathology and that the medical term ‘homosexuality’ arose as characterizing a distinct identity; whereas before 1869, the year in which the German physician Karl Westphal published a case history about a patient with ‘contrary sexual *feeling*’, same-sex practices were not indicative of somebody’s identity but were simply something somebody *does* (Greenberg 1997: 187).

Interestingly, Bristow notices how Foucault’s view implies that censorship might in fact result in the very opposite of that which it tries to achieve; since ‘the more modern Western culture devised methods for speaking about the unspeakability of sex, the more sex itself became a type of open secret, ushering into the public domain a scandal that had to be masked’ (1997: 14). Stated differently, the law itself has to use the words it forbids in order to be able to forbid them. Butler will elaborate on

this paradox of censorship in *Excitable Speech* (i.e. the law itself has to utter the words it tries to censor).

According to Bristow, in *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault explains for the first time in some detail ‘how power circulates within the social order through *discourse*’ (1997: 170). Foucault’s use of ‘discourse’ and ‘discursive constructions’ is meant to emphasise the historical and contextual dependence of concepts such as ‘sexuality’, ‘madness’, ‘medicine’ and ‘criminality’. In other words, genealogical investigation shows that discourses might shift over time, from which it follows that concepts are not stable and fixed entities but are subject to change. For Foucault – specifically in the nineteenth century – the discourse of sexuality appears ‘as an especially dense transfer point for relations of power: between men and women, young people and old people, parents and offspring, teachers and students, priests and laity, an administration and a populations’ (1978: 103). Foucault’s interest in power and discourse will influence many thinkers, including Butler who will follow Foucault’s insights into power structures.

POWER THROUGH DISCOURSE

According to Bristow, Foucault, ‘by emphasizing issues of power in his introduction to *The History of Sexuality*’, continues ‘his longstanding concern with the means through which institutions produce strategic methods of control to induce docility in the social body’ (Bristow 1997: 169). Already in previous works like *The Birth of the Clinic: An Archaeology of Medical Perception* (1963) and *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (1977), Foucault examined how social institutions like the clinic and the prison produce certain forms of power over the human body, keeping them in place and guaranteeing a stable social order. For Foucault, instead of creating the systems of power, the subject is him/herself created by power structures which come to represent themselves through discourse. Interestingly, this recalls the insights of Althusser’s interpellation which I have discussed above, and this link between Foucault and Althusser is also noticed by Chinn who compares Foucault’s ‘discourse’ with Althusser’s notion of the Ideological State Apparatuses ‘without the Marxism’ (Chinn 1997: 298). When Althusser claims that the subject comes into being through ideology that presents itself as natural and self-evident, Foucault argues in the same way that discourse posits itself as a ‘natural’ effect created by the subject, while in fact the subject is the effect of discourse. To illustrate how discourse works we can turn to the comparison Sarah Chinn draws between Foucault’s discourse and a menu in a restaurant.

Although ‘there may be a lot of choices’, Chinn argues, ‘you can only order from the menu, and you have to pay the price indicated’. In other words, the menu already limits the choices you can make which implies that if you are at a Chinese restaurant, ‘you don’t think to order spaghetti’ (Chinn 1997: 298). Consequently, sexuality – as a form of discourse – follows the same logic, and therefore ‘not only do you have to inhabit a sexuality in order to understand yourself as a subject, you can’t

imagine not doing so in the terms set up by discourse' (ibid.). Discourse, in other words, is limited from the start to a certain historical context and although there are sometimes different discourses available, the subject's choice will always be limited. Refuting discourse is furthermore never possible because the subject can only understand itself through the power of discourse.

However, Foucault does not claim that the subject is completely controlled by the power of discourse and he therefore refutes the general belief that power is imposed from above. On the contrary, he argues that power is a productive relation between oppressors and oppressed and that 'power comes from below' (1978: 94):

There is no binary and all-encompassing opposition between rulers and ruled at the root of power relations, and serving as a general matrix – no such duality extending from the top down and reacting on more and more limited groups to the very depths of the social body. One must suppose rather that *the manifold relationships of force* that take shape and come into play in the machinery of production, in families, limited groups, and institutions, are the basis for *wide-ranging effects* of cleavage that run through the social body as a whole. (ibid., my emphasis)

According to Foucault, discourse can be 'tactical polyvalent', by which he means that power can operate in polyvalent and therefore sometimes paradoxical ways. To illustrate this point, Foucault turns to the medicalization of same-sex desire in the nineteenth century, which I have already explained above. When during this period a whole range of discourses were produced 'on the species and subspecies of homosexuality, inversion, pederasty, and "psychic hermaphroditism"', this instituted a whole range of social control (Foucault 1978: 101). Nevertheless, according to Foucault, soon 'it also made possible the formation of a "reverse" discourse: homosexuality began to speak in its own behalf, to demand that its legitimacy or "naturalness" be acknowledged, often in the same vocabulary, using the same categories by which it was medically disqualified' (ibid.). Following from this passage, Bristow is right to acknowledge that, depending on who was deploying the category, 'homosexuality' could either refer to a clinical disorder, or it could be employed as a healthy condition 'giving a sexual minority a platform on which to develop concerted campaigns for emancipation' (1997: 178-9).

Foucault's theorizations about genealogy, power and discourse were especially important for anti-essentialist strands of thought in feminism and lesbian and gay studies. Bidy Martin for example insists on Foucault's usefulness to expose how concepts about femininity and female sexuality are not stable and universal. Bristow writes that Martin emphasises Foucault's insights 'on how social phenomena are understood through power-laden discursive formulations, since his theoretical model focuses attention on how femininity and masculinity are redefined over time' (1997: 198-9). Martin's constructionist position will become more influential during the 1980s and Butler will also participate in the great discussion between constructivist and essentialist feminists.

3.

On GENDER the Heterosexual Matrix and Gender Performativity

As I have already explained, Butler's work is theoretically founded on the genealogical thinking of both Nietzsche and Foucault. Butler is therefore, like Foucault, not interested in an ontological question about what a woman *is*, and neither is she concerned with an epistemological definition of how a woman can be recognized. She will instead question the category of 'woman' in terms of genealogy: how does a woman come into being? In this way, Butler will take an anti-essentialist standpoint in the feminist discussion about identity of the 1980s and 1990s, claiming that identity is not an essence but a process of construction in discourse. Butler asserts that a genealogical investigation looks into 'the political stakes in designating as an *origin* and *cause* those identity categories that are in fact the *effects* of institutions, practices, discourses with multiple and diffuse points of origin' (1999: xxix). It might be interesting to keep this sentence in mind, since the idea that identity categories are the effect of discourse rather than its cause is essential for understanding Butler's theory about gender performativity.

Elaborating on Simone de Beauvoir's famous sentence: 'one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman', Butler will suggest that gender is not something somebody *is* or *has*, but rather something somebody *does*. Gendered identities are therefore performative; identity is an act in the same way that performative language is an act. At the heart of *Gender Trouble* lays Butler's claim that 'there is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very "expressions" that are said to be its results' (33). To pull her argument together Butler relies heavily on the theorists I have already discussed and Chinn briefly summarizes gender performativity as follows: 'Gender is a discursive structure (in Foucault's words); it is a kind of Ideological State Apparatus (in Althusser's); it is citational and reiterative and has no intrinsic identity of its own (in Derrida's)' (1997: 299).

Since Butler draws on these linguistic and philosophical thinkers, the theory of gender performativity should not be confused with simple theatrical performance. As I will show in some detail below, Butler denies the existence of a subject who is doing the performing. Therefore gender performativity is distinctly different from theatre, which implies an actor doing the acting. Nevertheless, it should already be clear that Butler leaves room for agency in her theory; since gender is always a *repetition* of a norm this creates possibilities to repeat differently. Because gender is the effect of institutions and discourse, sometimes gender can be effected in ways that subvert the norm, exposing its unnatural and discursively constructed character. I will elaborate on this in length below.

However, Butler's claim that 'gender is always a doing, though not a doing by a subject who might be said to pre-exist the deed' remains a very counterintuitive proposition, and because of this many readers of *Gender Trouble* have often confused performativity with performance (Butler 1999: 33). On the other hand, many of Butler's critics have regarded the work as nihilistic in its negation of 'a doer behind the deed', assuming that there is no space for agency in adapting this Nietzschean claim. I would like to argue that Butler's work on the contrary tries to compromise between a voluntaristic theory of gender as performance and a deterministic theory of gender as completely constructed in and through discourse.

3.1. IDENTITY

According to Sarah E. Chinn, the theories about gender performativity have two main sources: the first one comes about in a theoretical context, and the other source which was essential for the theory to come into existence should be located outside of the academy, on the 'street' where 'queer people have imagined the spaces their own gendered identities [...] occupy' (1997: 294-5). Interestingly, Chinn here establishes a clear link between theories about gender performativity and queer identity; other theorists have also acknowledged this connection. Not surprisingly then, Butler's *Gender Trouble* was seen as the foundational work which initiated research in the field of 'Queer Theory'. In the first edition of an important academic journal devoted to gay and lesbian studies, *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick writes about the immense 'productive impact this dense and even imposing work has had on the recent development of queer theory and reading' (Sedgwick quoted in Prosser 1998: 24). However, in a Dutch essay about Butler's work, Gert Buelens draws attention to the fact that the emergence of queer theory out of feminist studies on the one hand and gay and lesbian studies on the other hand is due to a whole range of 'socio-intellectual' developments which can not be ascribed to one single person but which are the accomplishments of many writers and theorists (Buelens 2006: 130). Nevertheless, it still has to be said that with the help of a work like *Gender Trouble*, it was possible for queer theory to follow a completely different course than the ones possible in feminist or in gay and lesbian studies. In the following chapter, I will first of all look at how this split between the fields of study came about before elaborating on Butler's theory of gender performativity.

THE INTELLECTUAL BATTLE BETWEEN ESSENTIALIST AND CONSTRUCTIONIST FEMINISTS

At the end of the previous chapter about Foucault, I already briefly mentioned the clash between feminists who claim that gender identity is a stable and universal category and those who follow Foucault in suggesting that concepts about gender and sex are discursively constructed. According to both Chinn and Salih, questions about identity started to pop up during the 1980s when the category of

'woman' was being questioned (Chinn 1997: 299 and Salih 2002: 8). Feminists started to wonder what being a woman implied and how this identity intersected with other identities like sexuality, race, class or ethnicity. The most influential participant in this discussion is, according to Sarah Chinn, Judith Butler (1997: 299). Butler argues that feminism, by focussing so intensively on identity as if it were fixed and unchangeable, is indeed very exclusive, and she suggests that feminism will only be able to survive if a new and more flexible viewpoint is adopted (1999: 8).

In the wake of Foucault, theorists like Biddy Martin (whom I already have mentioned), Gayle Rubin, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Butler herself will place the categories like sex, gender and sexuality under scrutiny, arguing that their stability can no longer be assumed. The main reason for this was that a growing number of 'women' found themselves unrepresented by feminist theory. Women of colour, for example, argued that feminism was mainly concerned with the problems of bourgeois white women and was especially discriminatory towards the poor and the uneducated. Another example is the radical feminist theory of Monique Wittig who claims that a lesbian is not a 'woman', since a woman can only exist in oppositional relation to a man, thus consolidating this binary and the normative heterosexuality (Butler 1999: 143-4). In this sense, the lesbian is a supreme third gender, the only way out of subordination by men. Of course this radical viewpoint is highly exclusive towards heterosexual women, who in this model could be seen as collaborators with the male enemy, consolidating their own oppression. Butler will distance herself from this sort of essentialist theories³⁰ and she develops a different way of thinking about the category of 'woman' as the subject of feminism in the first chapter of *Gender Trouble*. It might be time, according to Butler, to 'free feminist theory from the necessity of having to construct a single or abiding ground which is invariably contested by those identity positions or anti-identity positions that it invariably excludes' (1999: 8).

'WOMAN' AS A UNIVERSAL CATEGORY

By uncritically depending on the category of 'woman', Butler argues that feminist theorists have mistakenly assumed that there was some sort of subject for whom political representation needed to be pursued (1999: 3). Drawing heavily on Foucault, she calls the pre-existence of some metaphysical subjects into question and describes it as a subject-in-process that comes into being in discourse through the acts it performs. Since Foucault made it clear that the juridical institutions *produce* the subjects they are assumed to represent, Butler claims that feminist theory should be aware of the fact that the category of 'woman' is 'produced and restrained by the very structure of power through which emancipation is sought' (1999: 4-5). Here, Butler refers to the idea that there might not be some sort of

³⁰ In an interview in 2001, Butler even claims that she has always hated the saying that 'feminism is the theory and lesbianism must be the practice' because in her opinion the desires of bisexual and heterosexual women have to be equally respected (Butler, Judith. 2001b. 'The Desire for Philosophy: Interview with Judith Butler'. Accessed on 1 July 2007: http://www.lolapress.org/elec2/artenglish/butl_e.htm).

subject-before-the-law who is awaiting representation, but that the law produces that subject, interpellates it as it were – in Althusser’s words. The ‘foundationalist fable’ presumes that there is a subject that needs to be represented and ‘the performative invocation of a nonhistorical “before” becomes the foundational premise that guarantees a presocial ontology of persons who freely consent to be governed and, thereby, constitute the legitimacy of the social contract’ (Butler 1999: 5).

Furthermore, apart from these foundational objections, Butler discerns another consideration which has to do with the political problem common identities like ‘woman’ bring about. When feminists in the 1960s battled for a (better) representation of women’s lives in society and politics, it was done under this conception that ‘women’ was a stable and abiding category; however, as already explained and Butler acknowledges, in contemporary society ‘there is very little agreement after all on what it is that constitutes, or ought to constitute, the category of women’ (1999: 4). In the following passage, Butler expresses her concerns about the use of woman as an identity category:

If one “is” a woman, that is surely not all one is; the term fails to be exhaustive, not because a pregendered “person” transcends the specific paraphernalia of its gender, but because gender is not always constituted coherently or consistently in different historical contexts, and because gender intersects with racial, class, ethnic, sexual, and regional modalities of discursively constituted identities. As a result, it becomes impossible to separate out “gender” from the political and cultural intersections in which it is invariably produced and maintained (Butler 1999: 6).

Butler argues in favour of a feminist genealogy which traces the effects of the category of ‘woman’, instead of a feminist ontology based on a (falsely presumed) stable identity category (1999: 9). In the following section I will elaborate a bit further on Butler’s dependence on de Beauvoir’s claim that one is not born, but rather becomes a woman, to make her claim about gender performativity.

‘WOMAN’ AS A TERM IN PROCESS

In *The Second Sex* Simone de Beauvoir made the famous claim that ‘One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman. No biological, psychological, or economic fate determines the figure that the human female presents in society; it is civilisation as a whole that produces this creature, intermediate between male and eunuch, which is described as feminine’ (1949: 281). According to Butler, in this statement de Beauvoir assumes that there is some sort of agent, ‘a *cogito*’, who takes on or appropriates gender; there seems to be a ‘cultural compulsion’ which urges the person to *become* one or the other gender. However, nothing in de Beauvoir’s account suggests that this compulsion automatically comes from the person’s biological sex (Butler 1999: 12). In other words, the person does not have to be necessary biologically female to become a woman. Although Butler refutes the idea of an agent who *does* its gender, she nevertheless relies on and sides with de Beauvoir’s claim by similarly asserting that gender is not something one automatically *is* or *has*, but that it is a *becoming*, some sort of process:

If there is something right in Beauvoir's claim that one is not born but rather *becomes* a woman, it follows that *woman* itself is a term in process, a becoming, a constructing that cannot rightfully be said to originate or to end. As an ongoing discursive practice, it is open to intervention and resignification. Even when gender seems to congeal into the most reified forms, the "congealing" is itself an insistent and insidious practice, sustained and regulated by various social means. It is for Beauvoir, never possible finally to become a woman, as if there were a *telos* that governs the process of acculturation and construction (1999: 43).

For Butler, this will be the beginning of a thorough deconstruction of categories like 'man', 'woman', 'male' and 'female', and their assumed connection. At the beginning of the following chapter 'Gender Trouble and the Heterosexual Matrix', I will provide a clear account of how Butler departs from the common assumption that sex, gender and sexuality are always and inevitably dependent on each other; for example, when a person is biologically female, she is expected to act out feminine mannerisms and desire men. Butler will expose the unnaturalness of this kind of thinking in terms of necessary relationships between sex, gender and desire, and argue that gender is performative. I will elaborate on this below and explain how gender is discursively constructed within a compulsory heterosexual matrix of power and how it is possible to expose the constructedness by 'doing' one's gender differently.

An interesting claim Chinn makes is that gender, according to Butler, is not an identity (1997: 299). This could suggest that Butler wants to do away with identity completely, which would result in a nihilistic theory about how the subject is completely constructed, without any involvement of his/her own. In my opinion, however, Butler does not argue that identity is *just* discourse. Following Foucault, Butler claims that identity categories like 'woman', 'lesbian', 'African-American' are 'discursive formation[s] and effect[s] of a given version of representational politics', and, furthermore, 'juridical power inevitably "produces" what it claims merely to represent' (1999: 4-5). In other words, the subject, which feminism tries to represent, does not exist 'before the law' (ibid.). Although Butler points out how the category of 'woman' is not the stable identity label and universal representative feminism wants it to be, she does not deny the possibility and need for groups of people to organize around a common identity, which often involves an abjected status in society. Therefore Butler is not saying that identity does not exist, but she is questioning identity as a stable and universal category. In an interview in 2000, Butler states explicitly that her 'deconstruction of gender and sexuality does not mean that identity categories are no longer available' (Breen 2005: 23).

One can still organize as a lesbian, but one has to be open to the notion that we don't yet know who else will ally with that sign or when that sign will have to be relinquished in order to promote another political goal, i.e. gay, lesbian, bi-, trans, solidarity, for instance. To enter into that solidarity is already to undergo a certain deconstruction, for that identity is neither the reason for one's being there nor the end-goal of politicization itself (ibid.)

Butler for example will never deny being a feminist. Nevertheless, siding with that label does not stop her from questioning the identity category – e.g. its subject 'woman' – of this field of study, running the risk of being classified as anti-feminist for analyzing 'the heterosexist assumptions' of that theory

(1994: 1). When Chinn writes that gender is not an identity, she is right when she means that gender is not a *fixed* identity. Although Chinn probably uses identity in this sense, I have somewhat elaborated on this statement because I found the claim ‘gender is not an identity’ somewhat confusing, an easy prey for misinterpretation and not doing enough justice to the theory.

QUEER THEORY

As I have already explained in a previous section, the emergence of Queer Theory is often ascribed to the appearance of Judith Butler’s work *Gender Trouble*. However, in a Dutch article Buelens emphasises that this was a socio-intellectual development which can impossibly be allocated to one single person (2006: 130). Nonetheless, it has to be mentioned that it is not irrelevant how both *Epistemology of the Closet* by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and *Gender Trouble* were published in 1990, the same year in which the activist group Queer Nation was brought to public attention (Bristow 1997: 216). These two works have had an immense impact on the development of queer theory as an intellectual field of study. According to Joseph Bristow, Queer Nation’s main goal was to set up a debate around the labels and terms that were established and used ‘to define, limit, and indeed naturalize the distinction between heterosexuality and homosexuality’; for Queer Nation, the vocabulary of sexuality needed to be expanded and the lesbian and gay movement was urged to get rid of their ‘constraining’ identity politics (216-7). In other words, in the same way that feminist theory was questioned about their essentialist identity politics, lesbian and gay theory came under severe scrutiny because of their affinity with exclusionary identity definitions. To illustrate this point, Bristow provides the following example: bisexual men and women were often excluded from gay and lesbian theory because bisexuality was said to involve ‘treacherous intimacy with the heterosexual enemy’ (217). Queer theory on the other hand tries to remain a highly inclusive term which encompasses a whole range of sexual dissidence and strategies to subvert the heterosexual matrix.

Not surprisingly, queer theory relies heavily on an anti-essentialist view on identity. According to Buelens, although the difference between feminism and lesbian and gay studies on the one hand and queer theory on the other is often attributed to a different perspective on identity and how identity comes into existence, which suggests that feminism and lesbian and gay studies a priori rely on essentialist identity categories, the split between the two is not that clear cut (2006). There is thus still a great affinity between the different fields of study and not surprisingly Butler’s *Gender Trouble* explicitly positions itself within a feminist framework by appropriating thinkers like de Beauvoir, Rubin, Rich, Kristeva, Irigaray and Wittig. According to Butler herself, the ‘critical encounter’ between the two is often ‘misconstrued as a war’, but ‘for either set of intellectual movements to remain vital, expansive and self-critical, room must be made for the kind of immanent critique which shows how the presuppositions of one critical enterprise can operate to forestall the work of another’ (1994: 1). Butler argues in ‘Against Proper Objects’ for a dialogue between feminism

and queer theory, rather than a radical split and she insists that ‘both feminist *and* queer studies need to move beyond and against those methodological demands which force separations in the interests of canonization and provisional institutional legitimation’ (24, my emphasis).

Butler finishes this essay by stating that ‘normalizing the queer would be, after all, its sad finish’ (1994: 25). Here, as in *Bodies that Matter*, Butler argues that the term should remain subject to productive debate since, as Bristow explains, ‘it would be a sad irony if queer ultimately became a token of precisely those kinds of normative thinking it initially sought to contest’ (1997: 217). When the term queer popped up, it was originally used as a term of abuse against homosexual men. Its re-appropriation in a liberating context is therefore telling and exemplary for Butler’s insights in the performative. Following Derrida, Butler claims that ‘queer’, as a performative, can only work ‘to the extent that *it draws and covers over* the constitutive conventions by which it is mobilized’ and therefore the term ‘derives its force precisely through the repeated invocation by which it has become linked to accusation, pathologization, insult’ (1993: 226-7). The re-iteration in a different context of the term queer has been the quintessential example of performativity as citationality; there is a way out of the performative because it is always a citation of previous performatives, and the performative can therefore be taken out of context, re-used in inappropriate ways, thus exposing the performatives dependence on the norm.

The term queer is nevertheless not the final resolution which will solve all the problems related to gender and sex definitions; in an interview ‘The Desire for Philosophy’ Butler states that ‘it can fall in the same patterns as all the other movements can’ and is therefore not automatically democratic (Butler 2001b).³¹ The term therefore has to remain ‘redeployed, twisted, queered from a prior usage and in the direction of urgent and expanding political purposes’; and, it might even be overthrown at some point in history ‘in favour of terms that do that political work more effectively’ – here it is clear that Butler follows Foucault by always keeping in mind that the words used to denote sexuality are ever historically contingent (1993: 228). ‘Queer’ as a category, like any other category, has to be subject to questioning and self-reflection, and in the preface of the 1999 edition of *Gender Trouble* Butler hopes for ‘a coalition of sexual minorities that will transcend the simple categories of identity’ which could be the base for a ‘productive political dimension’ (xxvi). In an interview in 2000, she furthermore claims that ‘queer’ can be this kind of coalition because it does not assume a specific identity but functions under a ‘broad rubric’ where re-consideration of the terms to organize political activist groups is possible (Breen 2005: 23). This means that, strategically speaking, queer should repudiate an ‘assimilationist politics’ (which implies a common identity like being gay, transsexual, female,...) and build a politics around a common status or problem³² (Greenberg 1997: 191). In addition, in another interview from 2001 Butler claims that ‘we have to think coalitionally to

³¹ Butler, Judith. 2001b. ‘The Desire for Philosophy: Interview with Judith Butler’. Accessed on 1 July 2007: http://www.lolapress.org/elec2/artenglish/butl_e.htm.

³² In this way a heterosexual woman for example can be part of the queer movement and protest against homophobic discrimination.

get things done’, and her understanding of queer implies that ‘you don’t have to present an identity card before entering a meeting’ (Butler 2001b).³³ Although this involves a lot of work and even though many critics have argued that it is impossible for Butler’s ideas to work in real life – some even accusing her of quietism because of this – Butler believes that, in the words of Bristow, ‘if we become more reflective in our handling of the terms we use to imagine sex, gender, and desire, then the greater becomes the possibility of resignifying our desires in ways that loosen the naturalizing power of the heterosexual matrix’ (1997: 218).

3.2. GENDER TROUBLE AND THE HETEROSEXUAL MATRIX

In the chapter above, I have tried to situate the debate around identity and have proven how gender has often been the source of trouble. According to Bristow, in order to explain why gender has been such a troubling issue, Butler tries to draw attention on ‘how discursive practices frequently create the very problems they are striving to analyse’ by looking at ‘a distinctly Foucauldian paradox’ about a child’s experience with making and getting into trouble (1997: 209):

To make trouble was, within the reigning discourse of my childhood, something one should never do precisely because that would get one *in* trouble. The rebellion and its reprimand seemed to be caught up in the same terms, a phenomenon that gave rise to my first critical insight into the subtle ruse of power: the prevailing law threatened one with trouble, even put one in trouble, all to keep one out of trouble (Butler 1999: xxvii)

In the same way, gender makes trouble too if not done properly, and in order to keep out of gender trouble one should not mess with the supposedly stable gender categories. As noted earlier, Butler explains why gender has been the cause of so much trouble in feminist debates by looking specifically at the category of ‘woman’. Furthermore, she will try to explain how one *should* make gender trouble to subvert gender’s constructedness and free gender from the heterosexual matrix. In the following chapter, I will discuss Butler’s ideas about gender, sex and sexuality, and her thinking about how these three interconnect to contribute to the stabilization and perpetuation of compulsory heterosexuality.

SEX , GENDER, DESIRE

During the 1960s, feminism generally presumed a binary opposition between ‘sex’ and ‘gender’. In its most basic sense, this implied that there was a biological or natural sex (either male or female) and a cultural gender which was attributed to the sexed body (masculinity or femininity). Furthermore, a causal connection between sex and gender was established, linking a female body with femininity and

³³ In the same article from 2001, Butler criticizes the ‘identity based’ liberalism in the USA which ‘makes everybody choose an identity too quickly, and a very narrow identity’. For example if you are a woman of colour you have to choose between either the Women’s Movement or the National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People, or you can go to the meetings of both ‘until you are burnt out’ (Butler, Judith. 2001b. ‘The Desire for Philosophy: Interview with Judith Butler’. Accessed on 1 July 2007: http://www.lolapress.org/elec2/artenglish/butl_e.htm).

a male body to masculinity. Seldom did feminists try to separate the sexed body from the gender attribute, although according to Butler the binary split was ‘originally intended to dispute the biology-is-destiny formulation’ (1999: 9). It is true that subversive severance between the two can be seen in contemporary culture: take for example effeminate behaviour in men or the female masculinity seen in butch lesbians. Nevertheless, contemporary society regards these behaviours with contempt, and it is still generally assumed that sex provides the biological foundation onto which the cultural gender is constructed. In *Gender Trouble*, Butler will claim that a disconnection between sex and gender is necessary, and she will furthermore argue that sex does not have its ground in nature but is a cultural construction in the same way that gender is.

According to Butler, ‘if gender is the cultural meanings that the sexed body assumes, then a gender cannot be said to follow from a sex in any one way’ (1999: 10). In the following passage, Butler will radically disentangle sex from gender, and moreover, – taking it a step further against ‘normal’ intuition – she will question the binary system of male/female and masculine/feminine:

Assuming for the moment the stability of binary sex, it does not follow that the construction of “men” will accrue exclusively to the bodies of males or that “woman” will interpret only female bodies. Further, even if the sexes appear to be unproblematically binary in their morphology and constitution (which will become a question), *there is no reason to assume that genders ought also to remain as two*. The presumption of a binary gender system implicitly retains the belief in a mimetic relation of gender to sex whereby gender mirrors sex or is otherwise restricted by it. When the constructed status of gender is theorized as radically independent of sex, gender itself becomes a free-floating artifice, with the consequence that *man* and *masculine* might just as easily signify a female body as a male one, and *woman* and *feminine* a male body as easily as a female one (1999: 10, my emphasis).

Gender, in other words, should not be restricted to either masculine or feminine, but there might be a whole range of ways to *construct* gender, independently of the person’s assumed sex. The examples of the butch lesbian or the recent phenomenon of the metrosexual³⁴ might show, as Bristow formulates it, how it is necessary to ‘think more subtly about the broad repertoire of gendered styles that men and women may adopt’ (212). The gender system, in other words, might be a spectrum of ways to do one’s gender instead of a strict dichotomy.

After having disconnected sex from gender, Butler continues to question the nature of ‘sex’ and how it is defined: ‘what is “sex” anyway? Is it natural, anatomical, chromosomal, or hormonal, and how is a feminist critic to assess the scientific discourses which purport to establish such “facts” for us?’ (1999: 10). In a footnote following this question, Butler states that already ‘a great deal of feminist research has been conducted within the fields of biology and the history of science that assess the political interests inherent in the various discriminatory procedures that *establish* the scientific basis for sex’ (195, my emphasis). One of the most notorious works Butler refers to in this context is Anne Fausto-Sterling’s *Myths of Gender: Biological Theories About Women and Men* (New York:

³⁴ A metrosexual is a recent word, referring to ‘a heterosexual male who is in touch with his feminine side’ (see: Metrosexual, *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. Accessed on 1 July 2007: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Metrosexual>). Often quoted examples are Brad Pitt and David Beckham.

Basic Books, 1985). Since it is clear from these investigations that culture played a significant role in establishing and constructing current notions about 'sex', *making* it appear as a natural and undeniably stable essence, the 'immutable character of sex is contested'. From this it follows that 'perhaps this construct called "sex" is as culturally constructed as gender; indeed, perhaps it was always already gender, with the consequence that all distinction between sex and gender turns out to be no distinction at all' (Butler 1999: 10-11).

Next to the sex/gender distinction – which turns out to be no distinction at all – Butler takes a third identity category into consideration, already mentioned in the title of the first chapter of *Gender Trouble*: 'Subjects of Sex/Gender/*Desire*' (3, my emphasis). According to Butler, a person's desire or sexuality (heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual, ...) is intertwined with society's constructions about sex and gender; there seems to exist a 'compulsory order' between these three categories (9). I would like to illustrate this with the following example. There seems to exist – especially in stereotypical imaging – an interesting connection between male/masculine/heterosexuality and female/feminine/heterosexuality in contemporary Western society; and this will be an important premise in Butler's ideas about sex/gender/desire. This is considered as 'normal' behavior and the most 'natural'. On the other hand, when a person is biologically male but he has distinctly feminine mannerisms, he is presumed to be gay and when a biologically female person acts out masculinity, she has to be a lesbian. This then becomes a 'normal' way to think about homosexuality, because if somebody is homosexual there has to be something else 'wrong' as well. It seems as if people always try to confirm heterosexuality by pathologically explaining homosexuality in the sense that, if somebody acts out femaleness, then that person has to have some sort of biological, hormonal, chromosomal female 'core' which causes that person to desire men. Thus, if somebody is homosexual, then that person has a 'female core' and therefore acts out feminine traits. Of course there are gay men who are not effeminate in the way stereotypes present homosexuality, but it is interesting to look at some of these stereotypical ideas about homosexuality and discover that stereotypes exploit a scandalous displacement of the male/masculine and female/feminine binary. I use 'scandalous' to stress the negative connotations attached to this kind of 'mismatch' which can be revealed in terms of abuse: sissy, pansy and queer (although the term has been re-evaluated in recent years) all stress negative effeminate behaviorisms, used to insult gay men. The Dutch insults 'verwijfd' of 'manwif' are telling in the sense that they both contain the insulting equivalent for 'woman', 'wif'; while the first one is an adjective that refers to a man who has effeminate mannerisms, the second is a noun used to describe a manly woman. Interestingly, it seems like the feminine behaviorisms and sides in particular are being penalized.

These brief examples show how heterosexuality is considered as the 'norm(al)' regulating the gender/sex system as a binary system in which male and masculine are distinguished from female and feminine. Any other kind of sexuality distorts this system and, as I have tried to show by using the stereotypes, in normative society people search for ways to mend the triad sex/gender/desire (often by

turning to the assumption that there is something essentially ‘natural’, some sort of gender ‘core’ invested in biology). According to Butler, ‘the institution of a compulsory and naturalized heterosexuality requires and regulates gender as a binary relation in which the masculine term is differentiated from a feminine term, and this differentiation is accomplished through the practices of heterosexual desire’ (30). Butler’s ideas about a ‘compulsory heterosexuality’ recall some of the insights of the anthropologist Gayle Rubin, which I will briefly discuss in the following section.

DESIRE: GAYLE RUBIN, SEX AND SEXUALITY

In *Gender Trouble*, one of the motto’s at the beginning of the first chapter is Foucault’s claim that ‘the deployment of sexuality... established this notion of sex’ (3). This claim could easily have been at the beginning of one of Rubin’s essays since this will be one of the foundational premises of her works. Following Foucault’s insights of *The History of Sexuality*, the anthropologist Gayle Rubin was mainly interested in how diverse societies around the world construct in a different way the sex/gender system, ‘a set of arrangements by which the biological raw material of human sex and procreating is shaped by human, social intervention and satisfied in a conventional manner, no matter how bizarre some of the conventions may be’ (Rubin quoted in Bristow 1997: 200).

In her essay ‘Thinking Sex’, Rubin argues that beliefs about ‘good’ and ‘bad’ sexuality are arranged along a diagram identifying certain practices as acceptable while others are categorized as unacceptable: on the ‘good’ side Rubin places the heterosexual, married, monogamous, reproductive relationships which are consummated behind closed doors; while on the opposite ‘bad’ side she lists transvestites, transsexuals, fetishists, sadomasochists, people who have cross-generational sex and prostitutes (either male or female). Next to these two extremes, Rubin is mostly interested in the in-between zone in the middle of the diagram, which she calls the ‘major area of contest’ since the attitudes towards the sexual behaviours and lifestyles in the middle of the diagram might shift. For example, in the contemporary West ‘unmarried couples living together, masturbation, and some forms of homosexuality are moving in the direction of respectability’, while other sexual behaviours like ‘promiscuous homosexuality, sadomasochism, fetishism, transsexuality, and cross-generational encounters are still viewed as unmodulated horrors incapable of involving affection, love, free choice, kindness, or transcendence’ (Rubin quoted in Bristow 1997: 202). According to Bristow, Rubin believes that ‘the contested zone in the middle indicates how the moral values attached to sexuality are gradually shifting, as different styles of tolerance permit formally stigmatized erotic behaviour and identities to inch towards those deemed “good”’ (1997: 202).

The essay by Rubin therefore shows how thinking about sex is highly influenced by thinking about sexuality. Although Rubin remains according to Bristow highly inattentive to how cultural differences like race, gender and class might influence the moral responses to sexuality (Rubin only briefly notes that ‘a rich, white, male pervert will generally be less affected than a poor, black, female

pervert' (Rubin quoted in Bristow 1997: 202), her work exposes how 'a single ideal of sexuality characterizes most systems of thought about sex' (ibid.). Rubin in other words shows how sex is constructed by society's ideas about an ideal sexuality. While in the 'liberatory feminist discourses of the 1960s and 1970s', as Sara Salih acknowledges, biological sex was still assumed to be stable and the basis for the cultural construction of gender, Rubin's work will be used by Sedgwick and Butler to claim that gender and sex are *both* discursively constructed (2002: 8). Furthermore, as I have already indicated above, Rubin's insights about sexuality as foundational for the established ideas about sex and gender are exemplary for Butler's theorization of the 'heterosexual matrix'.

THE HETEROSEXUAL MATRIX

I have already mentioned 'compulsory heterosexuality', a term that used by the feminist poet and critic Adrienne Rich to refer to the 'dominant order in which men and women are required or even forced to be heterosexual' (Salih 2002: 49). This idea is picked up by Butler who will describe heterosexuality as an apparent 'natural' institution which consolidates and perpetuates the binary sex/gender system; Bristow describes this as follows: 'dominant ideas about heterosexuality suppose that sex and gender are terms that can be split into opposite and yet complementary pairs: female and male, feminine and masculine. As a consequence, heterosexual desire proceeds from this system of gendered couplings' (1997: 213). Butler will expose how gender norms are socially constructed within, what she calls, the heterosexual matrix by looking at gendered identities that do not conform to this 'compulsory heterosexuality'.

According to Butler, 'inasmuch as "identity" is assured through the stabilizing concepts of sex, gender, and sexuality, the very notion of "the person" is called into question by the cultural emergence of those "incoherent" or "discontinuous" gendered beings who appear to be persons but who fail to conform to the gendered norms of cultural intelligibility by which persons are defined' (1999: 23). Therefore, the heterosexual matrix can be described as some sort of 'matrix of intelligibility', which implies that it is impossible for identities to be intelligible if they are not included within the heterosexual matrix (ibid.: 24). As an example Butler cites Foucault's work about Herculine Barbin, a hermaphrodite from the nineteenth-century. Herculine can not be described by the categories from the heterosexual matrix; the source of scandal is not that male and female anatomical elements are both present on the body, but that 'Herculine is not an "identity", but the sexual impossibility of an identity' (ibid.: 31):

The linguistic conventions that produce intelligible gendered selves find their limit in Herculine precisely because she/he occasions a convergence and disorganization of the rules that govern sex/gender/desire. Herculine deploys and redistributes the terms of a binary system, but that very redistribution disrupts and proliferates those terms outside the binary itself (ibid.).

Although Butler departs from Foucault's work about Herculine's experience at certain crucial points, she follows Foucault in positing that Herculine's 'sexual heterogeneity' provides a 'critique of the metaphysics of substance as it informs the identitarian categories of sex' (ibid.: 32).

The 'metaphysics of substance' is a phrase that is associated with Nietzsche and refers to the idea that there is a natural link between the body and 'sex' (Butler 1999: 27). As Salih explains, following the metaphysics of substance, the body and sex are '*material* entities', while Butler will claim that they are "'phantasmatic" cultural constructions which contour and define the body' (2002: 49). I will explain this idea about the body as 'defined' by sex and gender in a following chapter. For now, it suffices to understand that Herculine's failure to be categorized exposes, according to Butler, the constructedness and instability of the sex/gender/desire triangle and the heterosexual matrix. Furthermore, Herculine questions the 'naturalness' of the category of sex which, according to the metaphysics of substance, *describes* the material body: if 'male' or 'female' fail to describe Herculine's body, what does this tell us about their supposed 'naturalness'?

The limits of the discursive analysis of gender presuppose and pre-empt the possibilities of imaginable and realizable gender configurations within culture. This is not to say that any and all gendered possibilities are open, but that the boundaries of analysis suggest the limits of a discursively conditioned experience. These limits are always set within the terms of a hegemonic cultural discourse predicated on binary structures that appear as the language of universal rationality. Constraint is thus built into what that language constitutes as the imaginable domain of gender (1999: 13).

This kind of 'gender trouble', as embodied by Herculine Barbin, shows how gender is a social construction and leads Butler to reveal one of her most talked about insights. For Butler, '*gender* is not a noun, but neither is it a set of free-floating attributes, for we have seen that the substantive effect of gender is performatively produced and compelled by the regulatory practices of gender coherence'. Because of this, Butler continues, 'gender proves to be performative – that is, constituting the identity it is purported to be. In this sense gender is always a doing, though not a doing by a subject who might be said to pre-exist the deed' (1999: 33).

3.3. GENDER PERFORMATIVITY OUT OF THE CLOSET

Very briefly, it should be clear by now that gender is performative in the sense that people continuously *per-form* their gender in accordance to an established gender norm. This implies that gender is not a completely free choice, since the choice of gender is always curtailed by a heteronormative culture. Chinn notices how Butler in *Gender Trouble* relies heavily on both Foucault and Althusser to pull her argument together and, as quoted earlier, she summarizes 'gender performativity' as follows: 'gender is a discursive structure (in Foucault's words); it is a kind of Ideological State Apparatus (in Althusser's); it is citational and reiterative and has no intrinsic identity of its own (in Derrida's)' (1997: 299). Butler draws on the linguistic speech-act theory by Austin when she uses the term performative, referring to words and sentences like 'I condemn you' or 'I pronounce

you husband and wife' to make her case that gender is performative, a doing without implying a pre-existing subject doing the deed (1999: 33). Already in the previous discussion, I have stressed that Butler does not consider some sort of 'actor' who does the acting, yet this does not imply that she wipes away any possibility for agency in gender performativity. Her theory seems to balance between gender as a free choice on the one hand and gender as completely restricted by the heterosexual matrix. Drawing heavily from Foucault, Althusser and Derrida, Butler argues that although gender is constrained by the existing power structures, there remains some possibility of gender subversion but always *from within those constraints*.

To illustrate this, Sara Salih provides a very crude analogy of a person standing in front of a wardrobe and deciding what to wear for the day:

It is very likely that you choose your metaphorical clothes to suit the expectations or perhaps the demands of your peers or your work colleagues even if you don't realize that you are doing so. Furthermore, the range of clothes available to you will be determined by factors such as your culture, job, your income and your social background/status ... You would have to alter the clothes you already have in order to signal that you are not wearing them in a 'conventional' way – by ripping them or sewing sequins on them or wearing them back to front or upside down (2002: 50).

In other words, gender subversion is always and inevitably limited. The metaphor is very simplistic and has many flaws, the most profound one being the fact that it implies some sort of person standing in front of the wardrobe doing the choosing. Since she specifically claims that there is no 'doer behind the deed', Butler will explicitly refute this kind of analogy in *Bodies That Matter*: 'I never did think that gender was like clothes, or that clothes make the woman (231). Below, I will elaborate on this difficult Nietzschean 'no doer behind the deed'-idea by commenting on a number of critical considerations some of Butler's readers have made concerning the question of agency in her theory.

In the following chapter entitled 'The Body', I will investigate Butler's ideas about matter and the physical substance of bodies. At this point, however, it is necessary to briefly note that 'sex' for Butler is not the same as 'the body'. As I have pointed out before, sex is like gender a construction and therefore similarly performative. This does not imply that Butler completely refuses to believe in the existence of a physical substance which is 'the body'; what Butler tries to explain is that a body from the start is socially constituted. As I will argue in the next chapter, unlike the general presumption that 'sex' is a natural 'given' or an established fact, a baby is *allocated* a 'sex' (female or male) based on certain biological premises which categorize the outward genitalia, depending on the number of centimetres/millimeters it measures, as either a clitoris or a penis.³⁵ As a result, a child which is born with genitals that seem 'in-between' might be categorized as female with an enlarged clitoris, or as a male born with a noticeably small penis. Furthermore, this 'allocated sex' in turn constitutes the basis for the child's gender and sexuality. The example of intersexed children, exposes how the body is

³⁵ Intersex, Definition. *Intersex Society of North America*. Accessed on 1 July 2007: http://www.isna.org/faq/what_is_intersex.

therefore nothing more than the site of some constructions: sex and gender are performatively acted out on the body. In this context Butler speaks about ‘corporeal signification’ which means that ‘acts, gesture, and desire produce the effect of an internal core or substance, but produce this *on the surface* of the body, through the play of signifying absences that suggest, but never reveal, the organizing principle of identity as a cause’ (1999: 173). In this sense, the body, according to Bristow then, ‘provides a surface on which various acts and gestures accrue gendered meanings... the widespread belief that there is indeed a core gender identity actually depends on performative acts that give the illusion of naturalness’ (1997: 214). This idea of the ‘body as surface’ will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter in my inquiry. For now I will deal with the theory of gender performativity as it was developed by Butler herself and how it was received by her readers. I will also look into some possibilities for gender subversion, exposing the unnatural character of our binary gender system and deconstructing gender as a ‘copy of a copy’ denying the existence of an original and ‘natural’ gender.

WHY DON’T YOU DO RIGHT (LIKE SOME OTHER MEN DO)³⁶

Notwithstanding the fact that Salih’s analogy of the closet remains somewhat limited, it still clearly explains how gender is always restricted by conventions and that it is therefore highly difficult to subvert the existing norms. Not doing your gender right can in fact be a very risky business. Gender has to be acted out according to the conventions and rituals of society, otherwise the subject will have no considerable status in society. Chinn points out that for this reason the interpellative call ‘It’s a girl’ at the scene of birth should be seen as ‘a command and a threat’, not only bringing the person into being as a feminine gendered subject, but also *demanding* that it acts out ‘girlness’ (1997: 299). Like Althusser’s Ideological State Apparatuses, gender is enforced by making it feel ‘natural’ and ‘obvious’. Against this, as I have explained above, Butler will search for ways to expose the unnaturalness of gender, that is not vested in some sort of biological sex, and that it is an *effect* of a heteronormative society which can only exist when the binary system of male/female gender is maintained without any exceptions. However, I already demonstrated that there are plenty of ‘exceptions’ to the norm like gays, lesbians, transsexuals, hermaphrodites, and I would even argue that heterosexual men and women struggle to ‘do’ their gender right in order not to fall under this category of the ‘gender outlaw’ – using a term by Kate Bornstein – or the ‘abject body’ – relying on Kristeva’s term (Bornstein 1995 and Butler 1999: 101-119).

Chinn gives some examples of the fears people go through when they are not acting ‘masculine’ or ‘feminine’ enough, which can range from real fear of violent physical punishments like for example queerbashing or rape, to the mental fear of shame and embarrassment (1997: 300). These processes of violence and shame strengthen the power of discourse, since they put distinct limits and

³⁶ This is the title of a blues and jazz standard, written by Joe McCoy in 1936. The most know version is the one by Peggy Lee (1942).

restrictions on the way gender can be acted out differently. Nevertheless, Butler sees ways out of the heterosexual matrix that expose the constructed character of gender/sex/desire. Although not doing 'it' right might indeed be a risky business, Butler will interrogate 'improper' gender behaviour like drag and butch/femme lesbianism to claim that these behaviours 'in imitating gender' reveal the 'imitative structure of gender itself' (1999: 175). Interesting to note is that, by putting forward drag, cross-dressing, and the sexual stylization of butch/femme identities as a possible way out of gender performativity, Butler goes against the general tendency in feminist theory who considers these parodies as either degrading to women (in the case of drag and cross-dressing) or otherwise as a simple imitation of gender-role stereotypes, confirming the heterosexual role-pattern (especially with butch/femme lesbian identities) (ibid.: 174-175). Butler claims that the 'imitation' revealed in these gender practices, is much more complex than this feminist critique allows (ibid.).

DRAG AS A WAY OUT OF THE HETEROSEXUAL MATRIX

If gender is performative, in the sense that gendered acts and gestures create the illusion of a natural and essential gendered 'core', this implies that 'genders can be neither true nor false, but are only produced as the truth *effects* of a discourse of primary and stable identity' (Butler 1999: 174, my emphasis). Butler thus denies the existence of something like the 'original or primary gender' and claims that all gender is an imitation of an idealized construction of that gender. In what follows, I would like to consider two examples of cultural practices Butler discusses which parody this 'notion of an original or primary gender identity' (ibid.). The most notorious and often misunderstood example Butler provides as a possibility to subvert the heterosexual matrix, exposing the unnaturalness of gender/sex/desire, is drag. Again, I would like to emphasise that drag does not show how gender is merely a performance which exposes how a gender, like different clothes, is something you can freely put on and appropriate. In the following sections, however, I will look into this idea of gender as performance more closely.

Butler explains how a drag act plays upon the 'dissonance' between the anatomy of the performer (the biological sex) and the gender that is being performed, creating 'a unified picture of "woman"', but also revealing 'the distinctness of those aspects of gendered experience which are falsely naturalized as a unity through the regulatory fiction of heterosexual coherence' (by which Butler means the unity of sex and gender) (1999: 175). Buelens also notices that a drag performance is often seen as 'funny', 'amusing' or even 'exciting', and this 'giddiness' of the parody occurring on the stage can only come about, according to Butler, through this 'recognition of a radical contingency in the relation between sex and gender *in the face of cultural configurations of causal unities that are regularly assumed to be natural and necessary*' (Buelens 2002: 52 and Butler 1999: 175, my emphasis).

Drag is 'funny' or amusing because it makes unnatural what is supposed to be natural. Indeed, 'in imitating gender', drag reveal the imitative character of any gender (ibid.). Thus, all gender appropriations – also, and especially those from everyday life – are a 'parody' of the gender norms put forward by the heterosexual matrix. In the same way as a drag queen cites and uses conventional gender norms on stage to create a (parodic) female character, a female woman uses the same norms which are part of the 'heterosexual matrix' to 'do' her gender.

There are furthermore many different forms of drag. The most common understanding of drag is a man performing as a woman, but women too can dress up and put on a masculine performance. While the drag queen is very commonly known, there are also the so called drag-kings.³⁷ Finally, a woman performing 'womanliness' on stage could according to Butler also be seen as drag, because a woman acting out some parody of femaleness exposes similarly how the female gender norms are continuously cited and how they are therefore unnatural and constructed. In the wake of Derrida, Butler claims that this citation of the norm implies that gender can not be used and misused in any way the person pleases; since gender is a process of citation and never a single act, gender can never be a completely free choice. Although there is room for some change and subversion which can ultimately lead to social change – for example the shift in modern culture from the macho man (the Clint Eastwood type) to the contemporary metrosexual man (for example Brad Pitt) might be the effect of some initially subversive behaviour which has gradually become more acceptable and even normative in society – Butler makes her readers aware of the fact that it is very difficult to imagine life outside of the existing gender norms. Even if we think we can, Chinn remarks, how can we distinguish 'individual gender behaviour from the larger system of gender performativity, or to separate them from an oppressive regime of heteronormativity' (1997: 304).

DRAG AS REINFORCING THE HETEROSEXUAL MATRIX

Sara Salih makes the same objections as Chinn does. Since 'subversion and agency are conditioned, if not determined, by discourses that cannot be evaded', this poses the problem that it is difficult to tell whether or not it is subversion at all; Salih asks: 'What is the difference between subversive parody and the sort of 'ordinary' parody that Butler claims everyone is unwittingly engaged in anyway?' (2002: 66). Butler herself warns her readers that 'parody by itself is not subversive' and that there are indeed many forms of drag performance which are not subversive at all, but which only *reinforce* existing heteronormative power structures (1999: 176). In *Bodies That Matter* Butler will elaborate on this idea and argue that 'there are forms of drag that heterosexual culture produces for itself', referring to the performance of Julie Andrews in *Victor, Victoria*, Dustin Hoffman in *Tootsie* and Jack Lemmon in *Some Like it Hot* (1993: 126). Butler describes these forms of 'drag' as 'high het entertainment' and

³⁷ In her work *Female Masculinity* Judith Halberstam has written an interesting chapter about drag kings in New York: Halberstam, Judith. 2000. *Female Masculinity*, Durham: Duke University Press.

‘though these films are surely important to read as cultural texts in which homophobia and homosexual panic are negotiated,’ she would not consider them as ‘subversive’ (ibid.).

Although Butler thus already stresses in her early work that ‘there is no necessary relation between drag and subversion, and that drag may well be used in the service of both the denaturalization and reidealization of hyperbolic heterosexual gender norms’, still ‘many readers understood *Gender Trouble* to be arguing for the proliferation of drag performances as a way of subverting dominant gender norms’ (1993: 125). At its best, Butler continues, drag unveils certain ambivalences about gender performativity and is therefore only subversive ‘to the extent that it reflects on the imitative structure by which hegemonic gender is itself produced and disputes heterosexuality’s claim on naturalness and originality’ (ibid.). To stress her point, in *Bodies That Matter* Butler not only refers to ‘high het entertainment’ drag performances like the examples cited above,³⁸ but also considers the movie *Paris is Burning*, and especially one of its characters, Venus Xtravaganza, to ask ‘whether parodying the dominant norms is enough to displace them; indeed, whether the denaturalization of gender cannot be the very vehicle for a reconsolidation of hegemonic norms’ (125).

Paris is Burning (1991) is a movie about drag balls in Harlem, New York City, directed and produced by Jennie Livingston. Butler notices how, at these drag balls – attended by either African-American or Latino drag queens/transsexuals – there are contests ‘in which the contestants compete under a variety of categories’:

The categories include a variety of social norms, many of which are established in white culture as signs of class, like that of the “executive” and the Ivy League student; some of which are marked as feminine, ranging from high drag to butch queen; and some of them, like that of the “bangie”, are taken from straight black masculine street culture. Not all of the categories then, are taken from white culture; some of them are replications of a straightness which is not white, and some of them are focused on class especially those which almost require that expensive women’s clothing be “mopped” or stolen for the occasion [...]
“Realness” is not exactly a category in which one competes; it is *a standard* that is used to judge any given performance within the established categories. And yet what determines the effect of realness is the ability to compel belief, to produce the naturalized effect (1993: 129, my emphasis).

Butler thus asks whether this kind of ‘denaturalizations of the norm succeed in subverting the norm, or is this a denaturalization in the service of a perpetual reidealization, one that can only oppress, even as, or precisely when, it is embodied most effectively’ (ibid.). This striving towards ‘realness’, in other words, may in fact reinforce the existing gender/sex norms and consolidate the heterosexual matrix. For this reason, there exists, according to Butler, some kind of ‘reiteration of norms which cannot be called subversive, but which leads to the death of Venus Xtravaganza, a Lantina/preoperative transsexual, cross-dresser, prostitute, and member of the “House of Xtravaganza”’ (1993: 125).

³⁸ Sara Salih mentions as another example the more recent movie *Mrs. Doubtfire* with Robin Williams starring as a cross-dressing nanny (2002: 67)

VENUS XTRAVAGANZA: PERFORMATIVE OR CONSTATIVE

Paris is Burning firmly situates Venus's death in a transfobic context, stressing how she is presumably killed by one of her clients who had discovered, what she herself called, 'her little secret' (not inhabiting a complete female body) (ibid.). Since Venus 'seeks a certain transubstantiation' (130) and expresses her desire to become 'a whole woman, to find a man and have a house in the suburbs with a washing machine', Butler questions whether the 'denaturalization of gender and sexuality that [Venus] performs, and performs well, culminates in a reworking of the normative framework of heterosexuality' (133, my addition). She will argue in her essay about *Paris is Burning* that the movie 'documents neither an efficacious insurrection nor a painful resubordination, but an unstable coexistence of both' (137). In this sense, according to Jay Prosser, Butler's main thesis is that the film 'both denaturalizes and renaturalizes identity norms', so that drag can not be said to be *a priori* subversive (1998: 45).

However, Prosser will criticize Butler for describing Venus's fantasy to become a 'real' woman as constrained by the normative framework of heterosexuality, in contrast with other performers from the drag ball 'who "do" realness and who "resist transsexuality"' (Butler 1993: 136 quoted in Prosser 1998: 48). Prosser claims that Butler considers Venus to be subversive to the extent that her 'transsexual trajectory is incomplete' but 'in her desire to complete this trajectory[...], however, Venus would cancel out this potential and succumb to the embrace of hegemonic naturalization' (1998: 49). Since 'Butler's essay locates transgressive value in that which makes the subject's real life most unsafe' (Venus is presumably killed because she is an 'incomplete' woman), Prosser argues that Butler's text 'verges on critical perversity' (ibid.). If Butler reads Venus's transsexuality as gender performativity which strengthens the heterosexual matrix, Prosser clearly refuses the idea that gender is performative. Drawing on Butler's speech-act-theory framework, Prosser suggests that while 'transgender figures gender performativity, nontransgender or straight gender is assigned [...] the category of the constative'

While within this framework, this allocation is a sign of the devaluation of straight gender, and conversely queer's alignment of itself with transgender gender performativity represents queer's sense of its own "higher purpose," in fact there are transgendered trajectories, in particular *transsexual* trajectories [e.g. Venus] that aspire to that which this scheme devalues. Namely there are transsexuals who seek very pointedly to be nonperformative, to be constative, quite simply, to *be*. (1998: 32).

In Prosser's view, Venus does not seek gender performativity or subversion of the heterosexual norms, she quite simply wants to *be* a heterosexual woman, resisting gender performativity altogether. Venus's body is therefore not merely a 'surface' as Butler describes it, but a substantial limitation for true existence, made visible in Venus's desire for a male-to-female sex-change. As Salih points out, for Prosser 'the question as to whether the body is a phantasmatic surface or a pre-existing depth is crucial' since his book is an 'attempt to read individual corporeal experience back into theories of "the

body” (2002: 70 and Prosser 1998: 7). Experience, and in this example more precisely Venus’s experience, shows according to Prosser that the theory of gender performativity can not hold.

However, in an interview Butler insists that experience is an important issue to take into account when thinking about transsexuality, and she acknowledges that trans sex-change is not always about ‘becoming heterosexual’ or even ‘becoming another gender’; and, she will stress the importance of the ‘many writings suggesting that transsexuality can be very complicated’ (Breen 2005: 17). Furthermore, in the preface of *Bodies*, Butler accepts ‘primary and irrefutable experiences’ like eating, sleeping, feeling pain and pleasure, endure illness or violence (xi). Prosser has nonetheless interpreted Butler’s theory as ignoring the materiality of the body completely. As Salih rightly claims, ‘that Butler worries so extensively and consistently about exclusionary violence implies that she is by no means unaware of its consequences, i.e. the suffering it entails, but still it is possible to see how her theories might be construed as demoting suffering by paying little attention to interiority and “experience” and this is how Prosser has read Butler (2002: 144).

PERFORMATIVITY/PERFORMANCE: THE ACTOR ON STAGE

In the chapter about the Butlerian body, I will come back to Prosser’s critique. For now, I will turn to the question of agency in the theory of gender performativity. When Butler claims that gender is performative, she suggests that – as I have explained above – gender is a doing, a process of continuously acting out the gender you are *supposed* to be. Although, this might suggest that there is some person (the ‘you’ of the previous sentence) behind the act *doing* gender, in the previous discussion I emphasized that Butler adopts the Nietzschean claim that ‘there is no doer behind the deed’ (1999: 33). As a result, Butler clearly distinguishes her theory of gender performativity from theories of gender performance (or theatricality) which compare the act of doing one’s gender with a particular role taken up and performed by an actor on stage. One of the many sociologists who described gender as performance was Erving Goffman. In *Gender Advertisement* (1979), Goffman looks at gender in advertisement and develops a theory which states that gender is characterized by ‘display’, a mere acting out of certain characteristics typical for that gender (this is explained in Hood-Williams 1998: 76). Butler moves away from these kinds of sociological accounts which give a very rudimentary description of gender; she in contrast will develop her theory of performativity by drawing on the speech-act theory of Austin and Derrida’s ideas of citationality. Nevertheless, Butler’s *Gender Trouble* has often been interpreted as either a work about gender performance (which epitomizes drag as the quintessential example of theatricality) or as a nihilistic work advocating a complete denial of the subject. Neither of these two readings take into account the complexity of Butler’s theorization, although it needs to be said that in *Gender Trouble* Butler did not clearly define her theory as indebted to speech-act theory (for example, she does not explicitly mention Austin anywhere in *Gender Trouble*’s 1990 edition) and she acknowledges in the 1999 edition preface that her theory sometimes ‘waffles between understanding performativity as linguistic and casting it as

theatrical' (1999: xxv). Her later writing carefully revisits and refines the theory; as a result *Bodies That Matter* places Butler's theory more explicitly within an Austinian and Derridian framework:

Performativity is thus not a singular "act," for it is always a reiteration of a norm or set of norms, and to the extent that it acquires an act-like status in the present, it conceals or dissimulates the conventions of which it is a repetition. Moreover, this act is not primarily theatrical; indeed, its apparent theatricality is produced to the extent that its historicity remains dissimulated (and, conversely, its theatricality gains a certain inevitability given the impossibility of a full disclosure of its historicity). Within speech act theory, a performative is that discursive practice that enacts or produces that which it names (1993: 14-13).

Still, gender performativity has worried many thinkers regarding the question whether the theory might enable and foreclose 'agency' or whether it introduces the 'death of the subject'.³⁹ Seyla Benhabib for example claims that in Butler's theory the subject completely dissolves into mere language, completely debunking 'intentionality, accountability, self-reflexivity, and autonomy' (1995: 20).

Depending on a misreading of Butler's Nietzschean 'no doer behind the deed'- idea as 'no doer *beyond* the deed', in her essay 'Feminism and Postmodernism: and uneasy alliance' Benhabib insist that the post-modern 'death of the subject' can never be compatible with feminist goals since 'the very project of female emancipation' could never be thinkable 'without such a regulative principle on agency, autonomy, and selfhood' (21). Benhabib asks: 'If we are no more than the sum total of the gendered expressions we perform, is there ever any chance to stop the performance for a while, to pull the curtain down, and let it rise only if one can have a say in the production of the play itself? Isn't this what the struggle over gender is all about? (ibid.). As Benhabib acknowledges in a follow-up article, she inadequately interpreted Butler at this point by relying on a 'Goffmanesque theory of self-constitution', reducing gender performativity to mere theatre (1995: 108-9). The essay following Benhabib's text in *Feminist Contentions* is Butler's 'Contingent Foundations: Feminism and the Question of "Postmodernism"', which according to Nancy Fraser already provides an extended answer to Benhabib's question: 'If we are no more than the sum total of gendered performances, how can we possibly rewrite the script?' (Fraser 1995: 66). Above, I have already looked into this question extensively and I have tried to explain how Butler relies on Derrida's notion of citationality and Foucault's ideas about power to claim that although the subject is always already imbedded in normative power structures ('No subject is its own point of departure'), there is still room for agency ('the constituted character of the subject is the very precondition of its agency') (Butler 1995: 42 and 46):

For if the subject is constituted by power, that power does not cease at the moment the subject is constituted, for that subject is never fully constituted, but is subjected and produced time and again... To perform this kind of Foucauldian critique of the subject is not to do away with the subject or pronounce its death, but merely to claim that certain versions of the subject are politically insidious (ibid.: 47).

³⁹ For this discussion see Benhabib, Seyla, Judith Butler, Drucilla Cornell and Nancy Fraser. 1995. *Feminist Contentions: a philosophical exchange*, intro. Linda Nicholson, New York: Routledge.

In her response to Benhabib's essay, entitled 'For a Careful Reading', Butler again revisits the question of agency, criticizing Benhabib for 'grammatically reinstalling the subject "behind" the deed' and reducing her theory as mere theatricality (1995: 135).

PERFORMATIVITY/PERFORMANCE: AT THE CROSSROAD OF AGENCY AND DETERMINISM

'For a Careful Reading' explicitly names Butler's sources for her usage of the term 'performativity': 'J.L. Austin's *How to Do Things with Words* and read through Derrida's 'Signature, Event, Context' in *Limited, Inc.* as well as Paul de Man's notion of "metalepsis" articulated throughout his essays on Nietzsche in *Allegories of Reading*' (1995b: 134). The following quotation makes clear Butler's insights, and I therefore cite it at length:

To be constituted by language is to be produced within *a given network of power/discourse* which is *open to resignification, redeployment, subversive citation from within*, and interruption and inadvertent convergences with other such networks. "Agency" is to be found precisely at such junctures where discourse is renewed...

If the subject is a reworking of the very discursive processes by which it is worked, then "agency" is to be found in the possibilities of resignification opened up by discourse. In this sense, discourse is the horizon of agency, but also, performativity is to be rethought as resignification (ibid.: 135, my emphasis).

Butler's theory thus stands at the crossroad of determinism and voluntarism, and gender performativity compromises between agency and normativity. According to Salih, it would therefore be incorrect to assume that there is no subject at all because Butler denies the existence of an certain 'actor' who performs his/her identity; what her theory does imply is that the subject is not exactly where we expect to find it – 'behind' or 'before' the deed (2002: 45). If every reading is a misreading, like Harold Bloom suggested, the same goes for social conventions, suggesting that in performing the norm performatives are always already citations, liable to misappropriation and miscitation. In a Dutch article, Gert Buelens formulates it as follows: 'dit proces van aanhalen en herhalen vormt zowel de construerende kracht van die normen als hun potentiële zwakke punt'; according to Buelens, Butler's achievement of providing a theory which compromises between voluntarism and determinism is the most interesting part of gender performativity (2002: 51-52). Although I agree, at the same time I think that, because of the complexity and counter intuitive reasoning behind her views (counter intuitive because it goes against the normative binary thinking and supposedly 'natural' gender ideas), Butler has often been misunderstood. Benhabib, even after revisiting Butler, writes in a later essay (also published in *Feminist Contentions*) how she is still concerned with Butler's 'death of the subject' suggestion and fears a complete destruction of the feminist foundations for political activism:

The theory of performativity, even if Butler would like to distinguish gender-constitution from identity-constitution, still presupposes a remarkably deterministic view of individuation and socialization processes which falls short of the currently available social-scientific reflections on the subject (110).

As Sarah Chinn notices: ‘Suggesting that gender is not an essential part of the self can be experienced as an attack on the integrity of the subject; baldly speaking, it makes people uncomfortable and they don’t like it’ (1997: 307). In my opinion, making people uncomfortable is essential for Butler’s undertaking. Indeed, part of Butler’s project is about deconstruction the ‘contingent foundations’, but this does not imply that her theory deprives the subject of any possibility for agency.

On the other hand, whereas Benhabib read gender performativity as announcing the end of the subject altogether, leaving no room for change and agency, others, like Ed Cohen, have argued that Butler’s model is ‘voluntarist’, as if it would suggest that genders can be made at will (Ed Cohen cited in Bristow 1997: 216). From the previous discussion, however, it should be apparent that Cohen’s objections are unfounded. As Bristow argues in his text and as I explained above, Butler shows how the subject can only operate ‘within a field of signification that strives to regulate the production of sex, gender, and desire’ (defined as the heterosexual matrix) but which nonetheless has the possibility to ‘be adjusted, contested, if not revolutionized’ (1997: 216).

Butler clearly put much effort in distinguishing the theory about performativity from ideas about performance and theatricality. Nevertheless, Chinn suggests that there is still an interesting link between the two. In her contribution to *Lesbian and Gay Studies: A Critical Introduction*, Chinn tries to establish a dialogue between performativity on the one hand and performance on the other because, in her view, ‘many theorists, such as Kate Bornstein, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, Sue-Ellen Case and Michael Moon, see a close connection between outrageous, self-conscious theatrics of gender and the too-often unchallenged performances of gender identity that we go through every day’ (1997: 294). Arguably, since she elaborates on such performances as drag or butch/femme lesbianism, the same can be said about Butler herself. As Butler revisits her theory over time, she will acknowledge the close connection between performativity and performance; in the 1999 preface to *Gender Trouble* Butler will explicitly argue that she has reconsidered the speech-act as exposing ‘both theatrical and linguistic dimensions’ (xxv).

Because the power of gender performativity lies in the fact that it feels so natural, Chinn argues, the task theorists like Butler, Sedgwick, Bornstein will set themselves is finding ways of doing gender that expose the unnaturalness and even strangeness of it, whether they see gender as mere theatricality or, like Butler, have a more nuanced view about gender as a performance (1997: 306). Drag is one way which, as I have shown above, might reveal that *all* gender is an unnatural imitation of which there is no original. Apart from drag, Bristow notices how ‘lesbian and gay culture have already done much to perform what is colloquially known as the “gender fuck” by engaging with cross-dressing and butch/femme role-playing that baffle the apparently natural link between sex and gender’ (1997: 215-6).⁴⁰ Butler will also consider different strategies to make trouble with gender.

⁴⁰ It is important to take into account that drag and cross-dressing are not the same. However, space does not permit to analyse the distinction between both.

BUTCH/FEMME: IMITATION OR REAPPROPRIATION

According to Sarah Chinn, many people already experiment with gender performativity; butch/femme lesbian couples, for example, turn the conventions of a heterosexual pairing up side down (1997: 306):

For a femme to perform femininity for the benefit of a woman she must read gender directives against the grain, citing the identity of woman, but citing it out of context. Likewise, the butch plays out masculinity to a tee, even a kind of hypermasculinity, but is under no illusion that she is a man. She is a butch, a very different kind of identity, an identity that – like “femme” – undoes normative heterosexuality by showing that one can perform the style without embodying the content. (306)

This is also acknowledged by Butler in *Gender Trouble* where she claims that ‘the idea that butch and femme are in some sense “replicas” or “copies” of heterosexual exchange underestimates the erotic significance of these identities as internally dissonant and complex in their resignification of the hegemonic categories by which they are enabled’ (157). Importantly, the lesbian butch does not simply imitate the heterosexual scene but she questions it at the same time: by this ‘dissonant juxtaposition’, as Butler describes it, of a masculine gender and an female body the ‘naturalness’ of the binary comes under scrutiny and the idea of some sort of ‘original’ or ‘natural’ identity is contested (1999:156). In ‘Imitation and Gender Insubordination’ Butler focuses on how heterosexuality sets itself up as the natural, the original and the authentic, true identity, implying that homosexuality is some kind of ‘miming’ or ‘a vain effort to participate in the phantasmatic plentitude of naturalized heterosexuality’ (1990b: 127).

In this article, Butler provides a brief autobiographical note, rather rare in her writing, by relating how she suffered a lot as a young person from being told ‘explicitly or implicitly’ that what she ‘is’⁴¹ is ‘a copy, an imitation, a derivative example, a shadow of the real’ (ibid.). However, as I explained in the previous paragraphs, the presumption that there is some sort of ‘original’ gender is suspect, since gender is an *effect* of the heterosexual matrix and is merely performatively constructed as origin. This puts the framework of heterosexuality as origin and homosexuality as copy out of balance and reveals how there is no such thing as an ‘original’. Gayness, in other words, does not derive from straightness, and ‘*imitation* does not copy that which is prior, but produces and *inverts* the very terms of priority and derivativeness’ (1990b: 128). Exposing how ‘heterosexuality is an impossible imitation of itself, an imitation that performatively constitutes itself as the original’, Butler stresses how a kind of imitative parody of heterosexuality, or what she calls ‘*inverted* imitation’, is ‘always and only an imitation of an imitation, a copy of a copy, for which there is no original’ (1990b:

⁴¹ In ‘Imitation and Gender insubordination’ Butler is very troubled about the category of ‘lesbian’. She asks about the risks of ‘coming out’ as *being* a lesbian, and what it means to reveal oneself as lesbian? Butler suggests that although she is willing to appear under the sign of ‘lesbian’, she stills sees this category as part of a normative and oppressive regime of power. The only reason she attributes the category is to contest it from within, expose its short-comings and promote it as a site for trouble (Butler 1990: 121). Although lesbianism is an important part of her identity, ‘that is surely not all [she] is’ (Butler 1999: 6). Already under the heading of ‘identity’ I have discussed Butler’s insights on identity categories as a means for political organization and activism.

129). For this reason, Butler finds it important to ‘recognize the ways in which heterosexual norms reappear within gay identities, to affirm gay and lesbian identities are not only structured in part by dominant heterosexual frames, but that they are *not* for that reason determined by them’ (ibid.). About lesbian butch and femme gender stylizations, Butler writes how these interestingly play out the ‘logic of inversion’, turning upside down the relation between gender, presentation and sexuality (1990b: 131):

For a butch can present herself as capable, forceful, and all-providing, and a stone butch may well seek to constitute her lover as the exclusive site of erotic attention and pleasure. And yet, this “providing” butch who seems *at first* to replicate a husband-like role, can find herself caught in a logic of inversion whereby that “providingness” turns to a self-sacrifice, which implicates her in the most ancient trap of feminine self-abnegation ... In effect, the butch inverts into the femme or remains caught up in the spectre of that inversion, or takes pleasure in it. On the other hand, the femme ... may well eroticize a certain dependency only to learn that the very power to orchestrate that dependency exposes her own incontrovertible power, at which point she inverts into a butch or becomes caught up in the spectre of that inversion, or perhaps delights in it (131-132).

In ‘Imitation and Gender Insubordination’ Butler will also turn to psychoanalysis, deploying Freudian insights, to develop her idea that gender might be seen as a ‘psychic mime’ which is the subject’s response to the feeling of melancholic loss of a loved object (ibid.). Drawing heavily on Freud, Butler explains that, through identification and incorporation, the lost object will be encrypted in the body. How Butler develops this idea of an incorporated melancholic gender will be explained in the following chapter.

3.4. WHEN PERFORMATIVITY AND PERFORMANCE MEET: PARODY, MOCKERY, SHAME

In the previous section, the question of agency in the theory of gender performativity led me to stress how Butler tries her best to distinguish her theory of performativity from ordinary theatrical performance. Nevertheless, Butler uses *theatrical* practices like drag and butch/femme role-play to make her point that all gender is always *performatively* constructed and embedded in a set of norms, imposed by a heterosexual matrix of power. In *Bodies That Matter*, Butler furthermore cites other traditions in which the ‘increasing politicization of theatricality for queers is at stake’; apart from ‘cross-dressing, drag balls, street walking, butch-femme spectacles, the sliding between the “march” (New York City) and the parade (San Francisco)’, Butler also considers ‘die-ins by ACT UP, kiss-ins by Queer Nation; drag performance benefits for AIDS; the convergence of theatrical work with theatrical activism; performing excessive lesbian sexuality and iconography that effectively counters the desexualization of the lesbian; tactical interruptions of public forums by lesbian and gay activists in favour of drawing public attention and outrage to the failure of government funding of AIDS research and outreach’ as important strategies which align within queer politics the theatrical with the political (233). Theatricality is thus an essential part of Butler’s work. In the following chapter, I will

try to briefly analyse how an intersection between performativity and performance comes about and how this crossing can prove interesting for Butler's work and theories about sex/gender/sexuality in general.

QUEER PERFORMATIVITY

In *Bodies That Matter*, Butler clearly makes some adjustments to her theory of gender performativity. First of all, she explicitly refers to Austin and Derrida, rethinking performativity through Derrida's insights on citationality. Furthermore, unlike in *Gender Trouble*, Butler clearly distinguishes performativity from performance, but at the same time acknowledges the performative potential theatricality might have:

It is in the terms of a norm that compels a certain "citation" in order for a viable subject to be produced that the notion of gender performativity calls to be rethought. And precisely in relation to such a compulsory citationality that the theatricality of gender is also to be explained. Theatricality need not be conflated with self-display or self-creation [...] [T]he subject who is "queered" into public discourse through homophobic interpellations of various kinds *takes up* or *cites* that very term as the discursive basis for an opposition. This kind of citation will emerge as *theatrical* to the extent that it *mimes and renders hyperbolic* the discursive convention that it also *reverses*' (1993: 232).

These adjustments are partly indebted to the work of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick who 'prompted' her, as Butler writes, to 'rethink the relationship between gender and performativity' (1993: 281). Sedgwick's article 'Queer Performativity' (1993) in particular influenced Butler.

In 'Queer Performativity',⁴² Sedgwick writes how the term 'performativity' carries both the authority of discourses of theatre studies and of philosophy (1993: 2). She therefore finds it interesting to not only consider drag and 'gendered self-presentation' as performative (like Butler did in *Gender Trouble*), but also to make room 'for speech acts as coming out, for work around AIDS and other grave identity-implicated illnesses, and for the self-labelled, transversely but urgently representational placarded body of demonstration' in the theory about performativity (ibid.). Linking the linguistic speech act with queer performances, Sedgwick's article sets up a discussion about what she calls 'queer performativity', in her opinion 'made necessary' by Butler's highly influential *Gender Trouble* (1993: 1).

Sedgwick's queer performativity is indeed highly indebted to Butler's insights on gender performativity, but Sedgwick turns to classical Austinian examples to stress the importance of 'uptake' and of the 'witnesses' of the performative, developing interesting insights in the notion of 'shame'. 'Shame', for Sedgwick will prove to be the trigger for queer performativity.

⁴² This article was re-edited repeatedly and reappeared both as: Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky, *Shame and Performativity: Henry James's New York Edition Prefaces*. Accessed on 1 July 2007: <http://www.duke.edu/~sedgwick/WRITING/PREFACES.htm>; Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky. 1993. 'Queer Performativity: Henry James's The Art of the Novel.' *GLQ* 1 (1): 1-16; and as 'Shame, Theatricality and Queer Performativity' in Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky. 2003. *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity*, Durham: Duke University Press.

WITNESS AND MARRIAGE: IN THE PRESENCE OF FAMILY AND FRIENDS

In the introduction from *Performativity and Performance* (1995) (which contains a lot of references to the 1993 article), Sedgwick turns to Austin's example 'I dare you' to underline the importance of uptake. According to Sedgwick, apart from a first person (the 'I') and a 'second person' (the 'you'), the success of the performative depends also on a 'third person plural, a "they" of witness':

In daring you to perform some foolhardy act (or else expose yourself as, shall we say, a wuss), "I" (hypothetically singular) necessarily invoke a consensus of the eyes of others. It is these eyes through which you risk being seen as a wuss; by the same token, it is *as* people who share with me a contempt for wussiness that these others are interpellated, with or without their consent, by the act I have performed in daring you (1995: 8)

The performative 'I dare you' in other words interpellates the witnesses, although they might in fact not have any intention to sanction the second person singular for being a 'wuss'. Similarly, in 'Queer Performativity', Sedgwick reads the marriage (central to the origins of the performative) from a 'queer' viewpoint and she stresses how the ritual invokes a 'dynamic of compulsory witness' (1995: 10):

The marriage example makes me wonder about the apparently natural way the first-person speaking, acting, and pointing subject gets constituted in marriage through a confident appeal to state authority, through the calm interpellation of others present as "witness," and through the logic of the (heterosexual) supplement whereby individual subjective agency is guaranteed by the welding into a cross-gender dyad. The subject of "I do" is an "I" insofar as he or she assents in becoming part of a sanctioned, cross-gender "we" so constituted in the presence of a "they"; and the I "does," or has agency in the matter, only be ritually mystifying its overidentification with the power (for which no pronoun obtains) of state and church (Sedgwick 1993: 3-4).

Since the marriage depends largely on the reception by the 'audience' in church or city hall, this brings Sedgwick to think of 'marriage *as* theatre': '*le mariage, c'est les autres*: like a play, marriage exists in and for the eyes of others' (1995: 11). Any performative then always and inevitably exists before the eyes of others, interpellating these others as a community sharing the same ideas and forming between them a social bond.

Interestingly, Austin's most notorious example of the performative is the marriage ceremony. Already in the first chapter, I revealed that according to the philosopher of language, for a performative to be successful there are a series of conventions which need to be respected. To illustrate his claim, Austin at one point compares those so-called unhappy performatives with a marriage to a monkey, describing it as a 'mockery' (1975: 24). In her contribution to *Lesbian and Gay Studies*, Chinn revisits this comparison, by looking at the many 'mockery marriages' performed by gay and lesbian society (1997: 301). Since 'this kind of mockery is aggressive and self-consciously comic, often involving hairy-chested men in elaborate wedding gowns, burlesqued religious rituals, and broad sexual humour', it highlights the conventional character of the institution of marriage and indicates that it is moreover 'one of the building blocks of heterosexism and enforces specific

oppressive positions for women and men' (ibid.: 302). As Sedgwick already displayed, the marriage ceremony is an interesting scene in which the performative and the performance meet. Laying bare the theatricality of the whole event might even expose the heteronormative presumptions on which it is based.⁴³

Butler will take up Sedgwick's idea of how the performative might interpellate some sort of witness. In *Bodies That Matter* she turns to the term queer to explain how the word 'emerges as an interpellation that raises the question of the status of force and opposition, of stability and variability, *within* performativity' (226). As noted above, queer has long been used as a term of abuse. Butler describes it 'a shaming interpellation', which furthermore invokes 'a social bond among homophobic communities': in other words, since the interpellation draws on previous interpellations, it 'binds the speakers, as if they spoke in unison across time' (ibid.). Butler concludes:

If the performative operates as the sanction that performs the heterosexualization of the social bond, perhaps it also comes into play precisely as the *shaming taboo* which "queers" those who resist or oppose that social form as well as those who occupy it without hegemonic social sanction (ibid., my emphasis).

In this passage Butler relies heavily on Sedgwick in claiming how 'shame' is an essential catalyst in the 'queer' performative. For Sedgwick 'shame' and 'queer' are inextricably bound up with each other and this will put up the basis for Sedgwick ideas about 'queer performativity' (1993: 5).

SHAMEFUL INTERPELLATIONS

In 'Queer Performativity', Sedgwick puts forward the interpellation 'Shame on you' as useful to image queer performativity (5). Since the 'reception' or uptake plays such an intrinsic role, when gender is 'misperformed' it might cause embarrassment and humiliation. Sarah Chinn also notices how the notion of 'shame' attached to the misappropriation of gender guides the child through some sort of gender learning process. From a very young age onwards, Chinn explains, children are confronted with the consequences of not behaving properly according to their gender through performatives like 'Don't do that, it's not for girls/boys' (ibid.). Sedgwick's performative 'Shame on you' interpellates children in the same way, leading her to propose that a person '*is something*, in experiencing shame': while guilt attaches to what a person *does*, shame is constitutive of what a person *is* (2002: 37).

However, to build a theory on a negative value like shame might seem very undesirable in the light of the many 'pride' parades and organizations which strive to do away with any shame attached to gender and sexuality (see Sedgwick *Touching feeling* look up). Nevertheless, Sedgwick emphasises how 'the main reason why the self-application of "queer" by activists has proven so volatile is that

⁴³ Chinn notices how, even when a marriage between two women or two men is not 'a joke', in many countries it is still 'a legal impossibility'; in this case, Chinn finds Austin's example of a marriage to a monkey telling, 'since within the heterosexual matrix, marriage between two members of the same sex has the same performative values: not simply none, but a negative value. It is not just unhappy, it's ridiculous' (ibid.).

there's no way that any amount of affirmative reclamation is going to succeed in detaching the word from its associations with shame and with the terrifying powerlessness of gender-dissonant or otherwise stigmatized childhood': in other words, Sedgwick, like Butler, sees queer as a political potent term not because it might detach itself from the scene of shame but because it 'cleaves to that scene as a near-inexhaustible source of transformational energy' (1993: 5-6). As Chinn formulates it, Sedgwick will put forward shame as the 'pivotal tool in the struggle to rethink the coercive power of gender' and like Butler, she will take an exaggerated performance of the norm as a possibility to liberate gender performativity (Chinn 1997: 303).

In 'Divinity: A Dossier, A Performance Piece, a Little-Understood Emotion' (1993a), Sedgwick shows how the tacky drag movie star Divine (the alter ego of actor Glenn Milstead) manages to bridge the gap between gender performativity and the theatrical qualities of gender, since 'Divine's performances forcibly remind us... that "drag"... is inscribed not just in dress and its associated gender codes but in the body itself: in habitual and largely unconscious physical and psychological attitudes, poses, and styles of bodily relation and response' (Sedgwick 1993a: 220). Being very trashy and doing things people should 'normally' be ashamed of (for example incest, or, more simply, being fat and vulgar), Divine's performance of womanliness is experienced as extremely unnatural, but in fact she just lays bare the unnatural character of all gender performance, including the normative feminine performance women put on every day. Divine does not deny shame, she exploits it, turning it up side down, playing it out. According to Chinn, 'we can't not choose shame, just as we can't not choose our gender, but Divine transforms that coercion into an embrace' (1997: 303).

Shame, performativity and theatricality are in other words not separable from each other. As Sedgwick puts it, 'shame is the affect that mantles the threshold between introversion and extroversion, between absorption and theatricality, between performativity [in the linguistic sense] and – performativity [in the theatrical sense]' (my comments between brackets).⁴⁴ Butler sees particular potential in the 'theatrical rage', as she calls it, towards the passivity of governments on AIDS issues:

To the extent that shame is produced as the stigma not only of AIDS, but also of queerness, where the latter is understood through homophobic causalities as the "cause" and "manifestation" of the illness, theatrical rage is part of the public resistance to that interpellation of shame. Mobilized by the injuries of homophobia, theatrical rage reiterates those injuries precisely through an "acting out," one that does not merely repeat or recite those injuries, but that also deploys a hyperbolic display of death and injury to overwhelm the epistemic resistance to AIDS and to the graphics of suffering, or a hyperbolic display of kissing to shatter the epistemic blindness to an increasingly graphic and public homosexuality. (BTM 233).

Butler claims therefore that 'to oppose the theatrical to the political within contemporary queer politics is ... an impossibility' (232). Although performativity should not be reduced to mere performance, there is a clear linkage between the two. For this reason, I would argue that Sue-Ellen Case's

⁴⁴ Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky *Shame and Performativity: Henry James's New York Edition Prefaces*. Accessed on 1 July 2007: <http://www.duke.edu/~sedgwick/WRITING/PREFACES.htm>.

statement that Butler's performativity is 'most alluring as an effect of writing and reading' is ungrounded (1995: 8). Not only does Case depend on the false assumption that Butler's mission is to 'evacuate notions of the subject', she also tries to reduce the theory of gender performativity and redefine 'lesbian performance' by arguing that 'it is confounding to observe how a lesbian/gay movement about sexual, bodily practices and the lethal effects of a virus, which has issued an agit-prop activity tradition from its loins, as well as a Pulitzer-prize winning Broadway play (*Angels in America*), would have, as its critical operation, a notion of performativity that circles back to written texts, *abandoning* historical traditions of performance for the print modes of literary and philosophical scrutiny' (1995: 5 and 8, my emphasis). As I explained above, however, Butler does not abandon performance but on the contrary sees much potential in the theatricality of the performative.

4.

On BODIES

Matter, Matrix and the Performative Body

In *Gender Trouble*, Butler asks: ‘Is there a “physical” body prior to the perceptually perceived body? An impossible question to decide’ (1999: 146). Butler refers at this point to Monique Wittig’s claim that ‘language casts sheaves of reality upon the social body’, implying a *prior* body which is ‘stamped’ and ‘shaped’ by language (147). Butler disagrees with Wittig on this point, arguing that there is never a body that is not always and inevitably contoured and shaped by culture. Here, in other words, Butler seems to question the prior ‘physical body’. Nevertheless, in *Bodies That Matter* Butler will adjust her insights about the material body, after having receiving many questions and critiques regarding this issue following the publication of *Gender Trouble*; as I have tried to show above, she will acknowledge and stress that there is something as a body which eats, sleeps, lives, dies and feels pain.

In the preface to *Bodies That Matter* Butler relates how in the period following the publication of *Gender Trouble* she was repeatedly asked: ‘What about the materiality of the body, *Judy*?’ (ix). It seemed to her that by using the patronizing diminutive *Judy* instead of Judith her interlocutor tried to bring her back to a bodily materiality that ‘could not be theorized away’ (ibid.). She felt this addition constructed her as an ‘unruly child’ who needed to be taken aside and be taught about ‘the facts of life’; if she truly believed that the body is always and inevitably ‘constructed’, her critics reasoned, gender performativity might imply that everything is mere discourse, thus denying materiality (ix-x). Butler’s critics Jay Prosser and Sue-Ellen Case have read Butler’s work in this way, as I have shown in the previous chapter. However, I also tried to make clear that Butler does not reduce everything to mere language. The body as a construction might in fact be a misleading formulation and Butler will therefore propose a rethinking of the meaning of ‘construction’, redefining it as ‘constitutive constraints’ (1993: xi). In other words, Butler reads bodies as always already constrained by a certain set of norms, producing a domain of intelligible bodies but also producing ‘a domain of unthinkable, abject, unlivable bodies’; in this sense, bodies can only come to meaning (or to *matter*) within a heterosexual matrix of power (ibid.). The title of *Bodies That Matter* might therefore be read as an interesting play of words by which ‘matter’ denotes the materiality of bodies but also refers to the question Butler asks in the preface to the book: ‘which bodies come to matter – and why’ (xii).

4.1. MATERIALITY

Butler does not deny the materiality of the body but is interested in how this material body is made intelligible, made understandable and, most importantly, made thinkable. For this reason, although Butler deals with the ‘naturalization’ of gender and sex, I would argue that she is not theorizing about ‘nature’, which is a different matter. As Butler explains in an interview published in *Butler Matters*, “‘naturalization’ is the process by which gender and sex come to *appear* as natural’ and the two terms should not be confused (Breen 2005: 14). Butler does not try to deny the existence of nature, but she insists that it is important to realize how nature is ‘framed’, inflicted with meaning, and how ‘nature also “frames” us’ (ibid.: 14-15). Therefore, it does not suffice to simply state that nature only exists in culture, but in Butler’s view critical theory should investigate the boundaries that are drawn between nature and culture and question where one begins and the other ends. As Butler claims in the interview, it is never certain ‘where and how the line between nature and culture ought to be drawn’ (Breen 2005: 15).

INTERSEX AND GENDER ASSIGNMENT

For Butler, materiality is never simple and innocent. When I gave the example of intersex children in the previous chapter, this was to show how a child is attributed a sex (either male or female) on the basis of some highly questionable biological premises. A child with both male and female biological characteristics⁴⁵ might be classified as either male or female, depending on the measurements of the outward genitalia (in other words, doctors will decide whether there is a clitoris or a penis). Intersex people thus show that, although, the general presumption is that the male and female sex is based on an undeniable and stable ‘nature’, ‘nature’ is only made intelligible through the binary male/female, exposing the binary as constructed and indeed not ‘natural’ but ‘naturalized’. This furthermore exposes ‘science’ *not* as an authority on the subject, but as a discursive construct, equally embedded in the heterosexual matrix. In a section in *Gender Trouble* entitled ‘Concluding Unscientific Postscript’, Butler subjects the ‘recent developments in cell biology’ to a discursive analysis and concludes that ‘cultural assumptions regarding the relative status of men and woman and the binary relation of gender itself frame and focus the research into sex-determination’ (139).

45 “‘Intersex’ is a general term used for a variety of conditions in which a person is born with a reproductive or sexual anatomy that doesn’t seem to fit the typical definitions of female or male. For example, a person might be born appearing to be female on the outside, but having mostly male-typical anatomy on the inside. Or a person may be born with genitals that seem to be in-between the usual male and female types—for example, a girl may be born with a noticeably large clitoris, or lacking a vaginal opening, or a boy may be born with a notably small penis, or with a scrotum that is divided so that it has formed more like labia. Or a person may be born with mosaic genetics, so that some of her cells have XX chromosomes and some of them have XY’ (Intersex, Definition. *Intersex Society of North America*. Accessed on 1 July 2007: http://www.isna.org/faq/what_is_intersex).

Since the biological binary is a construction, would it be preferable to raise intersex children without a gender or with a third gender? The website of the 'Intersex Society of North America' does not advocate this as a solution; on the contrary, according to the ISNA raising children as a 'third gender' will lead to some serious problems. First of all, a 'third gender' is again a discursive category which implies that there need to be decided what will count as 'male', where 'intersex' begins and where 'female' ends. But more importantly, the 'Intersex Society' states: 'we are trying to make the world a safe place for intersex kids, and we don't think labeling them with a gender category that in essence doesn't exist would help them'.⁴⁶ Instead, they propose to give newborns with intersex a 'gender assignment' as either a boy or girl 'depending on which of those genders the child is more likely to feel as she or he grows up'; importantly, gender assignment does not involve genital surgery since 'genital "normalizing" surgery does not create or cement a gender identity' but 'it just takes tissue away that the patient may want later'.⁴⁷ In *Undoing Gender*, her most recent book, Butler agrees that this kind of gender assignment of intersex children is necessary for them 'to function socially even if they end up changing the assignment later in life'; according to Butler 'children do not need to take on the burden of being heroes for a movement without first assenting to such a role' (2004: 8). For this reason, 'categorization has its place and cannot be reduced to forms of anatomical essentialism' (ibid.).

In *Undoing Gender*, Butler will bring the theory of gender performativity within a framework of experience, especially focusing on intersex, transsexuality and transgender. Here, Butler states that 'the critique of gender norms must be guided by the question of what maximizes the possibilities for a livable life, what maximizes the possibilities of unbearable life or, indeed, social or literal death' (2004: 8). Although in *Bodies That Matter* Butler was also concerned with the question of what counts as a 'livable' body, in *Undoing Gender*, Butler will use more concrete examples and case studies, making this work less theoretical and much more experience-based. However, the work still follows the theorizations of the material body made in *Bodies That Matter* and in *Gender Trouble*. As I will show in the following paragraphs, Butler relies heavily on psychoanalysis to make her point about the body as a surface on which the heterosexual matrix operates.

MATTER, MATRIX, HYLE

The title of *Bodies That Matter* is more than an amusing pun, referring to those bodies that matter in and to society and their materiality; as Butler points out, 'matter' is also etymologically linked with 'mater' (the Latin word for mother) and 'matrix' (or womb), thus connecting matter to 'a problematic of reproduction' (1993: 31). This 'classical configuration of matter as a site of *generation* and *origination*', Butler continues, 'becomes especially significant when the account of what an object is

⁴⁶ Intersex, Third Gender. *Intersex Society of North America*. Accessed on 1 July 2007: <http://www.isna.org/faq/third-gender>.

⁴⁷ Intersex, Patient-Centered. *Intersex Society of North America*. Accessed on 1 July 2007: <http://www.isna.org/faq/patient-centered>.

and means requires recourse to its originating principle' (ibid.). For example, the Greek word for matter, *hyle*, contains the double meaning of either 'the wood or timber out of which various cultural constructions are made, but [it is] also a principle of origin, development, and teleology which is at once causal and explanatory' (ibid.). Like the English word 'timber', *hyle* does not denote the wood still in its natural context (the forest), but the wood already cut from the trees and made into planks, ready for being used in construction (for example, building a house or a ship). In other words, the Greek word for 'matter' already implies a cultural destiny, but it also refers to the material out of which things are made. For Butler this idea of matter as 'neither a simple, brute positivity or referent nor a blank surface or slate awaiting an external signification' but as 'always in some sense temporalized' will prove to be highly interesting (1993: 31).

The etymological link between 'matter' and 'matrix' is furthermore highly important when considering Butler's thinking about the 'heterosexual matrix' and the materiality of the body. In the previous chapter I explained how in *Gender Trouble* Butler describes the body as a surface on which performative 'acts, gestures, and desire produce the effect of an internal core or substance' (1999: 173). The body is thus *moulded* by the heterosexual matrix,⁴⁸ producing the effect of a 'corporeal signification' which presents itself as natural (ibid.). For that reason, the body is not 'a being', but it is 'a surface whose permeability is politically regulated' and onto which a 'corporeal style' is performatively acted out (177). The idea that the heterosexual matrix is a sort of mould or grid into which bodies are cast is essential in Butlerian thinking. In *Bodies That Matter* Butler draws on classic thinkers to expose how already in classical antiquity materiality and culture were viewed as continuously intertwined. By investigating Aristotle's distinction between body and soul and comparing his insights to Foucault's ideas formulated in *Discipline and Punish*, Butler will make clear 'how a gendered matrix is at work in the constitution of materiality' (1993: 32).

BODY AND SOUL, MATTER AND MATRIX

For Aristotle, it is meaningless to ask whether the soul and the body are inseparable, as he compares them to the wax and 'the shape given to it by a stamp' and 'the matter [*hyle*] of a thing and that of which it is the matter [*hyle*]'⁴⁹ (1993: 32, my addition between brackets). In the Greek text, Butler explains, there is no reference to a 'stamp' but the translation 'shape given to it by a stamp' is contained by the word *schema*, which means 'form, shape, figure, appearance, dress, gesture, figure of a syllogism, and grammatical form' (1993: 32-33). Put more briefly, according to Aristotle, 'matter' (the wax, the body) never appears without its 'schema' (the shape, the soul), and he thus establishes a

⁴⁸ According to Salih, a matrix can be defined as either 'a mould in which something is cast or shaped', or as a womb, or as a 'grid-like array of interconnected circuit elements' (2002: 51). Salih therefore claims that gender is like a 'structure' or a 'mould' which shapes the subject. I, on the other hand, propose to take the analogy further and claim that the heterosexual matrix is a mould which shapes the material body.

⁴⁹ Here, of course, Aristotle draws on the double meaning of *hyle*, which is as I explained, either the stuff out of which something is made (i.e. wood) and also its cultural destination (i.e. timber). These two meanings are always present and can not be separated, just like the wax and the shape given to it by for example a stamp.

continuing relation between the body and cultural principles of formation (33). In Aristotle's description of the soul as 'shaping' the body, Butler sees many similarities with Foucault's description of the "materialization" of the prisoner's body' (ibid.).

In *Discipline and Punish* Foucault investigates the soul as the 'instrument of power' which shapes the prisoner's body:

It would be wrong to say that the soul is an illusion, or an ideological effect. On the contrary, it exists, it has a reality, it is produced permanently *around, on, within*, the body by the functioning of a power that is exercised on those that are punished (Foucault quoted in Butler 1999: 172, Butler's emphasis).

Whereas a Christian teleology would suggest that the body is the prison of the soul, Foucault will argue that 'the soul is the prison of the body' (ibid.). As in Aristotle's description of the matter and its schema, the Foucauldian body is 'stamped' and 'shaped', 'brought into being' through the instrument of power which is the soul (Butler 1993: 34). In *Gender Trouble*, Butler already shows how Foucault challenges the 'doctrine of internalization' which claims that the law is internalized (171). For Foucault, the law is on the contrary 'incorporated', made visible *on* the body to 'compel' it 'to signify the prohibitive law as [its] very essence, style, and necessity' (ibid., my emphasis). In *Bodies That Matter*, Butler elaborates on this Foucauldian principle of the 'incorporated' law, since it enforces her idea about the heterosexual matrix as both producing and forming the body. Butler thus depends on an Aristotelian notion of matter as *hyle*, always and already implicated to become something, already shaped by culture, already poured into a matrix: 'matter is always *materialized*' (1993: 9, my emphasis).

In the interview published in *Butler Matters*, Butler claims that her view in *Bodies That Matter* was 'that there is an insistent materiality of the body, but that it never makes itself known or legible outside of the cultural articulation in which it appears'; in other words, the body is always 'given to us, and to others, *in some way*' (Breen 2005: 14). Crucially, by making this claim Butler goes against those theories that automatically *presume* or completely *negate* materiality. For her, the latter does not exclude the former and she shows in *Bodies That Matter* that it is possible to question the matter of bodies without falling into some sort of political nihilism (30).

4.2. INCORPORATION

Foucault's notion that the law is 'incorporated' has been highly important for the development of Butler's ideas on gender identity. Although up to this point, I have not discussed 'incorporation' in great detail, it is a crucial element in Butler's theorizations of gender, sex and the body. Interestingly, in Butler's work, 'incorporation' indicates both the materialization of the body but also a *psychic* process of identification. By the end of this chapter, I hope to make clear that 'incorporation' is essential to Butler's theories since in the theory of 'incorporation' her ideas about gender and the body meet.

In a previous section in which I discussed butch/femme gender stylizations, I already mentioned the essay 'Imitation and Gender Insubordination' in which Butler draws on psychoanalytic insights to claim how gender identity is a sort of 'psychic mime' (132). This 'mime' might be described as a melancholic reaction by which the lost love-object is incorporated and thus preserved in/on the body. In the following sections I will try to show how Butler is able to argue, drawing heavily on Freud, that the heterosexual matrix – by enforcing a taboo against homosexuality – triggers this melancholic reaction. Since Butler's readings of Freud are at times highly complex, I will not be able to discuss all Freud's insights at length, and I will therefore limit the discussion to some crucial Freudian concepts.

Notwithstanding the fact that melancholic 'incorporation' is an important section in Butler's work, her interpretation of Freud and psychoanalysis is at times highly dubious (making her insights even more difficult to understand at times). Sara Salih notices for example how it is not always clear which source Butler uses when she refers to Freud or whether she is drawing from any Freudian works at all (2002: 52). The theorists Hood Williams and Cealy Harrison find Butler's interest in psychoanalysis highly remarkable, because her ideas about 'no 'I' who stands before discourse' seems incompatible with psychoanalysis which always presupposes this 'I' (1998: 83). They further claim that Butler's reading of Freud is 'idiosyncratic and certainly not the only possible one' (85-6). Jay Prosser even tries to expose how Butler's use of Freud is simply wrong since it depends on a mis-citation of *The Ego and The Id* (1998: 41). Although it might be interesting to take these critical considerations into account, a brief summary of how Butler deploys Freud's insights about the melancholic structure should suffice, since I am mainly interested in how performativity and gender melancholia might be interrelated. Butler relies primarily on two works by Freud: 'Mourning and Melancholia' and *The Ego and the Id*.

FREUD'S MELANCHOLIA

In the essay 'Mourning and Melancholia' (1917), Freud describes 'melancholia' as a pathological disorder by which the patient experiences the reaction to an imaginary loss, and he thus distinguishes it from 'mourning', which is the reaction to the actual loss of a loved one (this is explained in Freud 1927: 35). In *The Ego and the Id* (1923) Freud revisits his previous concepts about melancholia and claims that he 'did not appreciate the full significance of the process and did not know how common and how typical it is' (ibid.).

Although in the 1917 essay, melancholia is the 'painful' pathological disease in which 'an object which was lost has been reinstated within the ego – that is [...] an object-cathexis has been replaced by an identification', in *The Ego and the Id* Freud will consider how a melancholic structure might appear in the formation of the 'ego' (ibid.). Instead of describing melancholia as an uncommon disease, Freud will claim that the ego formation is organized in accordance to this melancholic structure. In *Gender Trouble*, Butler describes Freud's insights as follows:

In the experience of losing another human being whom one has loved, Freud argues, the ego is said to incorporate that other into the very structure of the ego, taking on attributes of the other and “sustaining” the other through magical acts of imitation. The loss of the other whom one desires and loves is overcome through a specific act of identification that seeks to harbour that other within the very structures of the self (73-4).

To Freud, the child originally desires one of his parents,⁵⁰ but this desire has to be given up because of the incest taboo. The object that the child has lost is therefore ‘introjected’ or ‘reinstated’ within the ego (1927: 36). If a child has a primary object-cathexis for the father, the child will introject its forbidden object-cathexis and identify with the father; if it has a primary object-cathexis for the mother, it will introject and identify with the mother. However, Freud claims that this process is complicated by the ‘Oedipus situation’ which will cause the boy to identify with the father without the primary object-cathexis (40). This implies that the boy’s identification with the father might be not the result of a melancholic introjection of a lost object (the father), but as the consequence of the Oedipal drama of rivalry with the father.

In what follows, I briefly relate how Freud describes the Oedipus complex in the boy. A male child might develop an object-cathexis for its mother. Soon, the father is seen as an obstacle, standing in the way of the boy’s desire for the mother, which causes the boy to try to get rid of this rival. However, at the same time the boy identifies with the father, because he wants to take the father’s place at the side of the mother (40-41). It seems as if the Oedipus complex ‘would consolidate the masculinity in the boy’s character’; however, as Freud acknowledges, ‘these identifications are not what our previous statements would have led us to suspect, since they do not involve the absorption of the abandoned object into the ego’, which in this case would be the mother (41). Strangely enough, Freud claims that an alternative outcome is also possible, so that the boy might identify with the mother and develop feminine characteristics. What determines whether the child will identify with the father or with the mother depends, according to Freud, on ‘whether the masculinity [or femininity] in [the child’s] *disposition* – whatever that may consist of – is strong enough’ (1927: 42, my emphasis and addition between brackets). To Freud, it seems as if there is something innately feminine or masculine in the child, which will guide the child’s choice for either an identification with the mother or with the father.

Butler will question these Freudian ‘dispositions’ which imply some sort of ‘innate’ femininity or masculinity. She notices how Freud ‘avows his confusion about what precisely a masculine or feminine disposition is when he interrupts his statement midway with the hyphenated doubt: “– whatever that may consist in –”’ (1999: 77). Butler will argue that ‘dispositions’ are not as Freud argues ‘primary sexual facts of the psyche’, but that they are ‘produced effects of the law imposed by culture and by the complicitous and transvaluating acts of the ego ideal’ (1999: 81). In previous sections, I already made clear how Butler theorizes sex and gender as the *effect* of the heterosexual

⁵⁰ In Freudian terminology, the desire for a certain object, in this case the father or the mother, is called the ‘object-cathexis’.

matrix, and, in relation to Freud's theory of melancholia, Butler will claim that what Freud calls 'dispositions' are in fact the effects of an identification with the parents.

MELANCHOLIC HETEROSEXUALITY

Although Freud depends on these dispositions to explain why a child identifies with either the mother or the father, he also insists on what he calls the 'constitutional bisexuality of each individual' (40). At a certain point, Freud even claims that it might be possible that the 'ambivalence displayed in the relation to the parents should be attributed entirely to bisexuality and that it is not [...] developed out of an identification in consequence of rivalry' (43). In other words, since the child has a primary bisexuality, the female child might develop an object-cathexis for the mother; for the reason that the loved object needs to be abandoned in the eye of the incest taboo, the object lost will be introjected in the female child, causing the girl to act out femininity. Butler notices how this remark stands in contrast with Freud's attempt to explain 'why the boy must repudiate the mother and adopt an ambivalent attitude towards the father' by using the Oedipus complex, and how Freud thus implicitly denies the possibility of the son developing an object-cathexis for the father (1999: 75). She therefore claims that 'if it is primary bisexuality rather than the Oedipal drama of rivalry which produces the boy's repudiation of femininity and his ambivalence towards his father, then the primacy of the maternal cathexis becomes increasingly suspect and, consequently, the primary heterosexuality of the boy's object cathexis' (76).

Depending on Freud's ambivalent theorization of a child's dispositions and its 'primary bisexuality', Butler argues that it is not, as Freud proposes, the incest taboo which triggers the ego formation, but that it is 'the taboo against homosexuality' that 'must *precede* the heterosexual incest taboo' which initiates the identity formation of the subject (1999: 82). Also in *The Psychic Life of Power* Butler suggests that the taboo against homosexuality must precede the taboo against incest, for the reason that 'the oedipal conflict presumes that heterosexual desire has already been *accomplished*, that the distinction between heterosexual and homosexual has been enforced [...] in this sense, the prohibition on incest presupposes the prohibition on homosexuality, for it presumes the heterosexualization of desire' (1997b: 135). Masculine and feminine are therefore no innate 'dispositions' as Freud claimed, but they are 'accomplishments' imposed by the heterosexual matrix (*ibid.*). Within this matrix, homosexuality 'panics' gender because 'if one is a girl to the extent that one does not want a girl, then wanting a girl will bring being a girl into question' (136). Heterosexuality is thus cultivated in the prohibition against homosexuality, causing the subject to let go of his object of desire.

If feminine and masculine dispositions are the result of the effective internalization of that taboo, and if the melancholic answer to the loss of the same-sexed object is to incorporate and, indeed, *to become* that object through the construction of the ego ideal, then *gender appears primarily to be the internalization of a prohibition that proves to be formative of identity*. Further, this identity is constructed and maintained by the consistent application of this taboo,

not only in the stylization of the body in compliance with discrete categories of sex, but in the production and “disposition” of sexual desire ... As a consequence, dispositions are not the primary sexual facts of the psyche, but produced effects of a law imposed by culture and by the complicitous and transvaluating acts of the ego ideal (1999: 81, my emphasis).

From this quote it is clear that Butler regards gender as the effect of the taboo or the prohibition against homosexuality. According to Butler, since melancholia is the reaction to a loss and since the child’s initial homosexual desire needs to be abandoned and replaced by an identification with the loved object, this leads to a melancholic heterosexual gender identity.

In the previous chapter about gender, I demonstrated that Butler’s main concern is to expose how gender and sex are not ‘natural’ or pre-given facts but are instead the effect of, what she calls, a heterosexual matrix. However, Salih notices that when Butler instates the taboo against homosexuality before the taboo against incest, she implicitly claims that the child’s initial desire is for the parent of the same sex, because ‘after all, why do you need a taboo if there is nothing to prohibit’ (2002: 55). This of course would install homosexuality as the ‘natural’ and ‘innate’ sexuality’. Although I believe that Salih has a point in questioning Butler’s unspecific assertion that one desire is produced and repressed before another (homosexuality before heterosexuality), Butler does not claim that *all* gender is automatically heterosexual melancholia. She insists that when a homosexual believes heterosexuality is unthinkable, ‘he may well maintain that heterosexuality through a melancholic structure of incorporation, and identification and embodiment of the love that is neither acknowledged nor grieved’ (1999: 89). Nevertheless, Butler tries to make clear how ‘the heterosexual refusal to acknowledge the primary homosexual attachment is *culturally enforced* by a prohibition on homosexuality which is in no way paralleled in the case of the melancholic homosexual’ (ibid., my emphasis). In other words, although Butler acknowledges that there is something like homosexual melancholia, her main goal is to expose how what we think are ‘stable gender identities’ might in fact be the embodiment (quite literally) of a melancholic reaction, initiated by the heterosexual matrix which leaves no room for homosexual desire (1999: 81).

INCORPORATION

In the previous extensive quote from *Gender Trouble*, Butler specifically uses the word incorporation instead of the Freudian term ‘introjection’. Departing from Freud, Butler will depend on the theorization of Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok to claim that a melancholic identification with a lost object takes place on the body (1999: 86-87). In *The Psychic Life of Power* Butler will again stress that ‘letting the object go means, paradoxically, not full abandonment of the object but transferring the status of the object from external to internal’; the lost object is thus preserved as a part of the ego in ‘a melancholic *incorporation*’ (1997b: 134). Heterosexual melancholia is therefore not merely a matter of the psyche, but it is also a process which affects the space of the body as well: ‘gender identity would be established through a refusal of loss that encrypts itself in the body ... incorporation

literalizes the loss *on* or *in* the body and so appears as the facticity of the body, the means by which the body comes to bear “sex” as its literal truth’ (1999: 87). Sara Salih notices how the word ‘encrypts’ implies that the body is some sort of ‘tomb’ which does not fully ‘buries’ the lost desire, but ‘preserves’ it on the surface of the body (2002: 57). In *Bodies That Matter*, Butler describes the heterosexual melancholia as follows:

the melancholy by which a masculine gender is formed from the refusal to grieve the masculine as a possibility of love; a feminine gender is formed (taken on, assumed) through the incorporative fantasy by which the feminine is excluded as a possible object of love, an exclusion never grieved, but “preserved” through the heightening of feminine identification itself. In this sense, the “truest” lesbian melancholic is the strictly straight woman, and the “truest” gay male melancholic is the strictly straight man (1993: 235).

To put it very bluntly as a way of summary, Salih states: ‘You are what you have desired (and are no longer permitted to desire)’ (2002: 57).

In *Bodies That Matter* Butler will argue that drag performance allegorizes the heterosexual melancholy. The drag performer exposes ‘the mundane psychic and performative practices by which heterosexualized genders form themselves through the renunciation of the *possibility* of homosexuality, a foreclosure that produces a field of heterosexual objects at the same time that it produces a domain of those whom it would be impossible to love’ (1993: 235). In *The Psychic Life of Power* Butler elaborates on these insights in *Bodies*, which were only briefly mentioned in the final chapter ‘Critically Queer’; she returns to the question of drag to explain how she understands psychoanalysis to be linked with gender performativity and performativity with melancholia (1997b: 144). Previously, I elaborated in length on Butler’s claim that drag reveals how gender is an imitation of which there is no original. Drag thus imitates the imitative structure of gender itself: for example ‘femininity is an ideal which everyone always and only “imitates”’ (1997b: 145). Although Butler still believes that this formulation is highly interesting, she notices how it does not ‘address the question of how certain forms of disavowal and repudiation come to organize the performance of gender’; she therefore relates the phenomenon of gender melancholia to the practice of gender performativity (*ibid.*).

Since melancholia is the effect of an ungrieved loss, the acted out performance in drag might be described as ‘a loss that is refused and incorporated in the performed identification, one which reiterates a gendered idealization and its radical uninhabitability’ (1997b: 145). Drag is then the allegorized acting out of a loss that can not be grieved and thus ‘gender itself might be understood in part as the “acting out” of unresolved grief’ (145-146). Importantly, Butler does not suggest that drag is the best way to explain homosexuality (it might be one way, but there are others), primarily because not all drag performers are gay, but she stresses that the drag performance ‘exposes or allegorizes the mundane psychic and performative practices by which heterosexualized genders form themselves through renouncing the *possibility* of homosexuality’ (146). In this sense, gender performativity is not

only the acting out of a certain set of norms imposed by the heterosexual matrix, but it is the 'sign' or 'symptom' of what Butler calls a 'pervasive disavowal' (1997b: 147).

Further, the use of the word 'grief' is more than a simple metaphor since Butler refers to the real grief felt over those who have died from AIDS (1997b: 148). The surge of publications and political movements which openly mourn those who have died from the disease react against the silencing of this pandemic. To Butler it seems that a heterosexist and anti-gay culture finds it very difficult to permit the mourning of the loss of homosexual attachments, and she advocates the 'task of finding a public occasion and language in which to grieve this seemingly endless number of deaths' (138). When the grief remains unspeakable 'the melancholic effects of such a proscription can achieve suicidal proportions' and 'the emergence of collective institutions for grieving are thus crucial to survival, to reassembling community, to rearticulating kinship, to reweaving sustaining relations' (148). Butler's concern for those who grieve the loss of a loved one who died of AIDS, again underlines that Butler does not deny the materiality of the body. As I have tried to show in this chapter, the theory of gender performativity is not nihilistic, nor does it reduce everything to mere language.

Now that I have elaborately discussed Butler's theory about language, the subject, gender and the body, I would like to close down my inquiry about Butler's theory of performativity, by investigating how this Butlerian way of thinking might be applied. To counter those critics who accuse Butler of quietism and of being too elite, dense and obscure, I will provide a brief critical analysis of a literary text which will prove that Butler's theory of gender as performative is more than just words.

5. A Butlerian Analysis Fluidity of Identity in Jackie Kay's *Trumpet*

According to Sara Salih, though Butler only seldom engages in literary criticism,⁵¹ her work has made some important contributions to the field of literary studies (2002: 150). In a section dealing with some specific fields in which Butler's work has been influential, Salih cites an article by Jamie Hovey on Virginia Woolf's novel *Orlando*. Relying on a – quite simplified – interpretation of Butler's gender performativity, Hovey reads gender, sex and race as some sort of 'masquerade': 'Queer theorists [like Butler] used Riviere's essay to show that gender is performed – even parodied – through masquerade [...] Sexuality and other dimensions of identity, such as nation and race, are seen as performed through gender and gender is seen as performed through them' (Hovey 1997: 397, my addition between brackets). To Salih, even though Hovey reduces performativity to performance, her analysis shows 'how Butler's ideas may assist in the interpretation of fictional texts that represent subject-formation and self-construction' (2002: 150). Interpreting fictional text through a Butlerian lens might thus be productive.

In the following and final chapter, I will use Butler's theories explained in this dissertation to briefly examine Jackie Kay's novel *Trumpet*. Since the primary aim was to provide a genealogical inquiry of Butler's theory on gender performativity, it has not been my intention to provide an exhaustive literary analysis. In what follows, I will therefore merely show how Butler's notions on identity might prove to be a helpful framework for critically examining a literary work. Kay's debut novel – similar to Butler's work – questions common notions about sex and gender and centres around the formation of an individual identity. Moreover, by focussing on someone who is born female – Josephine Moore – but who lives all his life as a male jazz trumpet player, Joss Moody, the plot is already quite Butlerian in itself. *Trumpet* is therefore an obvious choice to subject to an analysis in the light of Butler's theory.

⁵¹ In an early article 'The Nothing That Is' Butler discusses the poet Wallace Stevens in the light of a Hegelian philosophy (1991). Also in *Bodies That Matter* Butler engages with literary criticism, providing a reading of the work of Willa Cather and Nella Larsen's novel *Passing* (1993: 143-166 and 167-185). However, according to Salih, most of the time Butler only refers to these literary novels to explain a political or philosophical point (2002: 150).

5.1. JOSS MOODY'S TRUMPET

Briefly, *Trumpet* is about the jazz trumpeter Joss Moody who lived his life as a man, but was discovered to be a woman after his death. The novel begins in the aftermath of the death of the protagonist, relating the effect the revealed secret has on various different characters. The only person who knew Joss's secret is his widow, Millie, whom he left in deep grief. The story is mostly told from her point of view and from their adopted son's, Colman. Colman, deeply in shock after the revelation that his father was biologically female, feels like he has been living a lie and colludes with tabloid journalist Sophie Stones in a sensationalist biography on Joss Moody. Interestingly, there is a multitude of voices present in *Trumpet*: Millie, Coleman and Sophie, but also the drummer of the band, the registrar, the doctor, and the cleaner give their version of the story about Joss Moody. In an interview Kay explains how she 'wanted to tell a story, the same story, from several points of view', and how, similar to jazz music, all the different voices would give 'the same story a different note'.⁵²

BILLY TIPTON

Kay's *Trumpet* is loosely based on the true story of the jazz pianist Billy Tipton,⁵³ born Dorothy Tipton. In the same interview mentioned above, Jackie Kay relates how she was intrigued by a short news piece about Tipton in which his adopted son was quoted saying "He'll always be Daddy to me", after having discovered that his father had been biologically female. Kay found it especially interesting how the son accepted his father's construction of identity:⁵⁴

I was interested in how fluid identity can be, how people can reinvent themselves, how gender and race are categories that we try to fix, in order perhaps to cherish our own prejudices, how so called extraordinary people can live ordinary lives. I wanted to write a love story where the reader would become so involved with the story that they too would believe Joss and be calling him "he" to themselves'.⁵⁵

Another novelist, Patricia Duncker, claims in an interview about her own novel *James Miranda Barry*⁵⁶ that gender can be a prison: 'Why do we have to know if someone is a man or a woman? [...] The only possible reason for wanting to know is that you'd treat them differently' (quoted in King

⁵² Kay, Jackie. Interview, *Boldtype*. Accessed on 1 July 2007: <http://www.randomhouse.com/boldtype/0499/kay/interview.html>.

⁵³ There is an interesting biography on Tipton by Diane Wood Middlebrook, called *Suits Me*, which was published in 1998. Tipton's otherwise low-key life story took a startling turn on his death in 1989 when the funeral director informed his wife and three adopted sons that the musician had actually been a woman. Kay used Tipton's story as her initial inspiration but Tipton is quite different from the fictional Joss Moody. Tipton was a white piano player, who had been married three times and none of his wives and lovers had the faintest clue that Tipton was not male (he told them he had been in a car accident which required him to bind his chest to protect broken ribs and left him with badly disfigured genitals).

⁵⁴ Kay, Jackie. Interview, *Boldtype*. Accessed on 1 July 2007: <http://www.randomhouse.com/boldtype/0499/kay/interview.html>.

⁵⁵ Kay, Jackie. Interview, *Boldtype*. Accessed on 1 July 2007: <http://www.randomhouse.com/boldtype/0499/kay/interview.html>.

⁵⁶ This novel is about the true story of woman living as a man for more than 50 years during the 19th century. Only after his death the successful military surgeon was discovered to be female.

2005: 1). According to Duncker, gender thus determines our response to people and this is the reason the revelation of the ‘true’ sex of the successful military surgeon caused so much trouble. Similarly, when Billy Tipton and Joss Moody were publicly exposed as women, the story was soon picked up by the tabloid press and even by the more ‘serious’ newspapers. Fuelled by the many scandalous articles published about the musicians, these revelations not surprisingly lead to a lot of what Butler would call gender trouble. According to Jeanette King,⁵⁷ ‘the heated debate [...] and the fascination the idea obviously exerts suggest that at some level most of us believe in essentialist notions of gender, so that the idea of someone simply deciding to change gender invites incredulity and incomprehension’ (2005: 1).

AMBITION OR SEXUAL ORIENTATION

As it appears from the biography of Billy Tipton,⁵⁸ one of the first possible motivations for his dramatic identity change could be of a professional nature. According to King, it was extremely difficult for a woman musician to find any work in America during the 1930s Depression (2005: 2). There are however hardly any references in Kay’s novel which might support this reading. Whereas Tipton lived during the 1930s, Kay set *Trumpet* in the 1960s in the UK and, as Colman points out, during this time (the Swinging Sixties) the jazz world was supposed to be ‘anything goes’ with much more sexual freedom than during the 1930s (Kay 1998: 57). The novel is thus not simply a comment on the limits society imposed on women’s ambitions. Joss Moody’s (and Billy Tipton’s) motivation could not have been solely professional.⁵⁹ Nevertheless, it is possible to find examples of women and men cross-dressing for professional reason in fictional texts and in films. For example, in *Some Like it Hot* jazz musicians pretend to be women in order to find a job. The effect of men dressing up as women in this case is intended as highly comical and, as I explained in the discussion above, Butler claims that this movie depicts a form of drag which only reinforces the heterosexual matrix (1993: 126). If Kay would have written a novel about a women musician who dressed up temporarily as a man to escape oppression and be able to have a career, it would not have been a work about transcending or subverting gender in a Butlerian sense.

⁵⁷ I have made extensive use of this essay *Gender and the Writer: Jackie Kay’s Trumpet* by Jeanette King (2005) which can be found online. I have included it in the bibliography as King, Jeanette. 2005. *Gender and the Writer: Jackie Kay’s Trumpet*, University of Aberdeen: course guidelines ‘Writing and Gender’. Accessed on 1 July 2007: <http://www.abdn.ac.uk/womens/documents/trumpet.doc>.

⁵⁸ Biographies of Billy Tipton can be found online: Tipton, Billy. Biography, *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopaedia*. Accessed on 1 July 2007: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Billy_Tipton; Tipton, Billy. Biography, *HistoryLink.org*. Accessed on 1 July 2007: http://www.historylink.org/essays/output.cfm?file_id=7456.

⁵⁹ Diane Wood Middlebrook also suggests that Billy Tipton’s motivations could not have been merely because of his ambition in the jazz world. According to Jeanette King, *Suits Me* is a well researched biography and, although Middlebrook does not write from a specific theoretical point of view, her biography on Tipton provides at times a ‘performative view of gender’ (2005: 4). I will however focus on the fictional novel by Kay, although it might be interesting to keep in mind that the character on which the novel is based could similarly be described using Butler’s framework.

Jeanette King suggests another possible motivation: perhaps Joss Moody adopted a male role because of his sexual orientation, because he is ‘a lesbian, who want[s] to love and live with women’ (2005: 2). Sophie Stones, the scandal seeking tabloid journalist, is convinced that Joss was a lesbian seeking to overcome heterosexual male power:

Dressing up as a bloke and blowing that horn turned her on. There has been too much talk about Joss Moody just wanting to play the trumpet. There have been articles about how there were no women jazz musicians in the 1950s ... She liked wearing those bandages, didn't she? She liked the big cover up. Going about the place taking everybody in. Going to the Gents. She got a buzz going to the Gents, didn't she? Slicking down her hair. Getting a new man's shirt and taking out the pins, the tiny pins. Shaving ... Most of all, she liked the power. The power: the way women treated her, the way men treated her ... Yeah, she liked playing the trumpet all right, but there was more to it than that. She liked being a man. Pure and simple (Kay 1998: 263).

Sophie's viewpoint seems to support, according to King a specific feminist position which sees heterosexuality as a collaboration with the male oppressor and which puts lesbianism forward as a way out of this patriarchal power structure (King 2005: 2-3).⁶⁰ Taking Sophie's point of view seriously for a second, King suggests that it would even be possible to read the novel in a Freudian light, ‘seeing Joss as an extreme case of penis envy, which leads a woman to pretend to have a penis to have access to the power accredited to men in patriarchal society’ (2005: 3). The enthusiasm Sophie expresses when she discovers that Joss's father died when he was only eleven years old suggests that Sophie finds this kind of Freudian reading extremely interesting: “‘He [Joss's father] died!’” Sophie Stones almost shrieked. “‘He died! My God! Of course!’” (Kay 1998: 250, my addition between brackets). King nevertheless rightly emphasises how the reader is not at all invited to accept Sophie's point of view: she is represented as a ‘literary hack’ who merely tries to gain money from a sensationalized version of Joss's story (2005: 3).

The novel thus suggests that to call Joss a lesbian would be missing the point. I follow King's analysis when she argues that *Trumpet* represents Joss not as a woman but as somebody who transcends the traditional categories and that the novel therefore shows how the ‘labels we impose on people regarding either gender or sexual orientation are limiting’ (2005: 3). This echoes Butler's insights on labels such as ‘woman’ or ‘lesbian’ as stable identity categories.⁶¹ Sophie, on the other hand eagerly labels Joss as a ‘transvestite’ because it ‘has a pervy ring to it’ (Kay 1998: 126) and she continues: ‘what made Joss Moody into a transvestite? ... No, this isn't a straightforward *tranny* ... Was she just a *perv* or what?’ (ibid: 128, my emphasis). A number of chapters later Sophie claims that ‘Lesbian stories are in. ... And this one is the pick of the bunch. The best yet. Lesbians who adopted a son; one playing mummy, one playing daddy. The big butch frauds. Couldn't be better’ (ibid: 170).

⁶⁰ According to King, this viewpoint is most notoriously expressed in Adrienne Rich's essay ‘Compulsory Heterosexuality’. However, it should be noted how King relies on a quite exaggerated analysis of Rich's essay. Nevertheless, it seems as if Sophie supports this kind of exaggerated reading when she claims that Joss liked the power of being a man.

⁶¹ For example, this was discussed in chapter 3, p.44.

Since Sophie continually addresses Joss as 'she' and 'her', she believes that the only 'truth' about Joss is that of his biological 'sex'. In her opinion, Joss was biologically a woman who dressed up as a man and slept with another woman; as a consequence, he is categorized as a transvestite and a lesbian. Sophie thus adopts an essentialist viewpoint, depending on the premise 'biology is destiny' and classifying 'lesbian' and 'transsexual' as stable, unchangeable categories. However, as already mentioned, the reader is not encouraged to accept Sophie's opinion. Her biography is clearly a distortion of Joss's life, since she twists and turns any information she obtains in order to fit it into her own scandalous and sensational construction of Moody's life. For example, in an interview with May Hart, Joss's old school friend, May starts crying when Sophie shows her a picture of Joss with his trumpet because 'Looking at Josie all dressed up as a man, May realized that she'd missed her all her life. Didn't she have style! Look at that suit! Her Bert never looked like that in a suit!'. Nevertheless, Sophie translates this as: 'May Hart was so upset at the deception of her old schoolfriend that she burst into tears' (ibid: 252).

REFUSING CATEGORIZATION

The reader is obviously aware of Sophie's deception and will feel more invited to turn to other characters to get a 'truer' picture of Joss, especially those characters who knew him best during his life. The two people who were closest to Joss are his wife and son. Millie never loses the sense that her husband was a man, although she knew that Joss was biologically female. Importantly, Millie expresses her fear of being categorized:

No doubt they will call me a lesbian. They will find words to put on to me. Words that don't fit me. Words that don't fit Joss. They will call him names. Terrible vertigo names. I can see myself holding the book out at arm's length, to see what words they have used, sinking with them. Down to the bottom, below the green film, to where the thick black mud lies (Kay 1998: 155).

In this passage, a simple classification of Joss and Millie on the basis of their biological sex is denied. Kay's novel sides with some of Butler's theories in refusing to attribute what essentialist feminists labelled as 'stable' identity categories. In fact, the novel exposes how these so called 'stable' terms may actually be misrepresenting and even hurtful. There are nonetheless some categories which Millie associates herself and Joss with: Millie's sense of Joss being a 'man' and of herself being a 'woman' is never shaken. Perhaps more importantly, Millie always addresses Joss as 'her husband' while she sees herself as his wife. Consequently, after Joss's death she has become a 'widow': 'My husband died. I am now a widow' (ibid.: 205). The reader is invited to believe Millie and, besides the fact that this novel is about transcending traditional gender categories, this is basically a story about love and grief

after losing a loved one. Not surprisingly, Kay hopes that her readers will be calling Joss 'he' to themselves, just like Millie and Colman do.⁶²

In contrast with Millie's grief, the reader is presented with Colman's rage about – what he feels are – his father's deception and lies. However, although deeply shaken by the revelation of his father's secret, in his memories Colman still continues to talk about his father in terms of maleness, always addressing him with the male pronouns 'he' and 'him' and referring to Joss as his 'father'. Another character who felt close to Joss Moody during his life is his drummer, Big Red McCall. According to Big Red 'a lot of people said Moody had a baby face ... but [he] didn't think so. [He] beat up anybody who said that' (Kay 1998: 148). When reminiscing, Big Red's memory of his friend does not seem to be affected by the revelation that Moody was biologically female; in his eyes Moody was and still is a man:

He accepted Moody had a bit of a squeaky voice. Big deal. Lots of people squeak. As for baby face, millions of jazz *men* have baby faces. [...] A *man* with a baby face could send you to town. A *man* with a baby face could have you away ta ta on a big raft sailing for an island you've never heard of (ibid.: 147, my emphasis).

At the end of the chapter Big Red is crying for the loss of his friend and the reader is again presented with grief about losing a loved one.

The two characters who knew Joss when he was still Josephine are his old school friend May Hart and her mother Edith Moore. Since May Hart has only known Josie, it is very understandable why she addresses her old friend using the female pronouns and her female name. Edith Moore on the other hand is a more problematic witness of Joss's gender. King rightly notices how Edith has a very strong sense that her child is a woman: even when she remembers that at her last visit Josephine was wearing a man's suit, this does not seem to make a huge impression on her (2005: 5). The recent contact between them has been through letters, which were - according to the cleaner - signed 'Josephine' (Kay 1998: 178). After Colman has visited Edith, King notices how 'the meeting seems to restore to Colman his love for his father: he feels safe for the first time since the revelation about his father, whom he realises is still "daddy" to him' (2005: 5). Although the reader does not find out what has been said and whether Colman has revealed to Edith that her daughter lived her life as a man, the meeting seems to be an important turning point and there seems to be an intimate bond between Edith and Colman. According to King, perhaps the point of this is 'that while Colman loved Joss the father, and Edith loved Josephine the daughter, they share a love for one person, which again seems to undermine the importance of gender difference' (ibid.). The same can be said about May Hart and Big Red, who both feel love for the same person and grief over the loss of that person. In this sense, the gender difference seems to be overcome by the feeling of love all these characters share.

⁶² Kay, Jackie. Interview, *Boldtype*. Accessed on 1 July 2007: <http://www.randomhouse.com/boldtype/0499/kay/interview.html>.

This does not imply, however, that Joss and Josephine are one and the same person. I would argue that it might be more correct to say that they are two sides of the same person in some sort of Hegelian sense. Millie for example relates how Joss ‘always spoke about her [i.e. Josephine] in the third person. She was his third person’ (Kay 1998: 93). The fact that Joss signed his letters to his mother with ‘Josephine’ is highly interesting because this might point to some sort of split personality: when Joss is with Millie he is male, when Josephine writes her mother she is female. Furthermore, as I will try to show, Joss is not the only character in the novel with this kind of ‘split personality’.

5.2. PERFORMATIVE GENDER

Kay is clearly offering us a performative view of gender. When Butler wrote that ‘gender proves to be performative – that is, constituting the identity it is purported to be’, she might as well have been talking about Joss (1993: 33). Put very crudely, Joss is a man because he passes as a man. Even so, Sophie Stones describes Joss’s masculinity as a performance:

Walking down the street with that walk she must have practiced [...] She studied that walk all right. She didn’t just wake up one day and decide to be a man. She must have practised first. She must have given it a lot of thought. [...] She’s studied that walk. That cool look (Kay 1998: 264).

The characters closest to Joss, however, will feel more affinity with the following quote from Loretta, the sister of one of Billy Tipton’s wives:

Loretta ... rejected the claim that Billy was a woman acting the part of a man. “Billy was a man”, she asserted ... What did she mean? That Billy’s conduct was not only stereotypically masculine (smoking cigars and so forth) but also honourable, truthful to a cultural ideal we label “manly”? Loretta ... did not permit the revelation of Billy’s biological sex to influence the assessment of his character (Middlebrook, quoted in King 2005: 6).

The reader might believe, looking at Joss Moody, that it is possible to choose one’s gender freely. However, this is not what Butler meant when she wrote that gender proves to be performative. I hope to have shown that Butler compromises between a gender which is completely determined by society and culture and a gender that a person can simply choose like choosing something to wear. Although Joss succeeded in transcending his gender, the reaction of society when his ‘secret’ is revealed suggests that the individual is not allowed this much freedom of choice. Only when Joss’s gender is assumed to be matching his biological sex is he left in peace. Since Joss’s gender (masculinity) and his sex (female) do not correspond and thus do not conform to, what Butler calls, the ‘heterosexual matrix’, he causes ‘trouble’. Because of this ruling ‘heterosexual matrix’ – which is therefore some sort of matrix of intelligibility – Joss is not permitted complete freedom of choice by society. However, Joss does expose the weak points of this matrix, and thus subverts this binary labelling and categorization completely.

There are a number of characters in the novel who I would like to metaphorically name the ‘agents of the heterosexual matrix’. Interestingly, these characters are all – in a very broad sense – representatives of the state: the doctor who wrote Joss’s death certificate, the registrar official and the funeral director. These three characters certainly do not recognize that Joss has a free choice when it comes to deciding his gender-identity. Instead they try to match Joss into the heterosexual matrix, the apparent ‘natural’ institution which consolidates an inevitable connection between gender and sex. They thus perpetuate the binary system and, since they have the power to change people’s names and write or adjust (death) certificates, they might be understood as defenders of the heterosexual matrix or as the Althusserian policemen who hail Joss into existence.

REGULATING THE HETEROSEXUAL MATRIX

The first official is tellingly a doctor. Prior to examining the body, Doctor Krishnamurty begins with filling in the ‘obvious’ on the death certificate: ‘Time of death: 1.12. Date: 21 July 1997. Sex: Male’ (Kay 1998: 43). Joss’s body is thus in her opinion ‘obviously’ male. She relates how the body ‘was not just a body to her. It was a man, a person’ (ibid.). However, this obvious male body gradually transforms into a female one when the doctor undoes the bandages around the deceased’s chest: ‘When she first saw the breasts [...] she thought that they weren’t real breasts at all. At least not women’s breasts. She thought Mr Moody must be one of those men that had extra flab on top – male breasts [...] It took her pulling down the pyjama bottoms for her to be quite certain’ (ibid.: 43-44). This transition from ‘man’ to ‘male breasts’ to ‘women’s breasts’ to ‘woman’ is very interesting: the person who at first was ‘obviously’ a man is after medical examination ‘obviously’ a woman. Moreover, it appears that this transition is only complete after the doctor has corrected the ‘mistake’ on the death certificate:

She got her red pen out from her doctor’s bag. What she thought of as her emergency red pen. She crossed ‘male’ out and wrote ‘female’ in her rather bad doctor’s handwriting. She looked at the word ‘female’ and thought it wasn’t quite clear enough. She crossed that out, tutting to herself, and printed ‘female’ in large childish letters. Then she put the medical certificate in the envelope, wondered what the registrar would make of it, sealed the envelope and closed the door on the dead *woman* (ibid.: 44, my emphasis).

Only when the red ‘emergency’ biro has violently crossed out ‘male’ and inserted ‘female’ in ‘large childish letters’, the doctor refers to the body as ‘the dead woman’ (ibid.).

There is a second official who has a similar experience of a male body transforming into a female one. The funeral director relates how, after having examined Joss’s body and preparing him for the embalmer and revealing the female genitalia, he quickly glanced at the face of the deceased and was shocked to see that:

The face had transformed. It looked more round, more womanly. It was without question a woman’s face. How anybody could have ever thought that face male was beyond Albert Holding. How he himself could have thought it male! There she was, broad-boned face, black

hair, with splatterings of grey, full lips, smooth skin. Quite an extraordinary looking woman [...] It had never happened to him before. He had never had a man turn into a woman before his very eyes (ibid.: 110-111).

After the discovery of the biological features, the funeral director is convinced that this person is quite 'obviously' female. However, at the thought that the death certificate would be 'wrong' and would read 'male', the funeral director feels agitated:

What if the medial certificate read 'male'. What if the wife turned up with the death certificate which said male too? Holden pulled open his special drawer to check that his red pen was still there. If there was anything untoward in the death certificate, he would be duty bound to correct it with this very red pen. He picked it up and rolled it between his thumb and forefinger. This pen would need to do the deed. He almost wished it would happen. If he could have the satisfaction of brutally and violently obliterating 'male' and inserting female in bold, unequivocal red, then at least he would have something to do (ibid.: 112- 113).

It is very interesting how the director feels 'duty bound' to correct the death certificate. It implies that it is his job to make sure that people are classified in the right group, either male or female. He is in fact 'duty bound' to keep the binary system in place, making him a true policeman of the heterosexual matrix.

There is nonetheless one official who comments on this violent action of correcting the male on the death certificate. The registrar official of births, marriages and deaths is quite appalled at the sight of the rapid change with the red biro:

On the grounds of pure aesthetics, Mohammad found the last minute change hurtful. The use of the red pen seemed unnecessarily violent. He knew of coroners and doctors who were overfond of the red pen. Compared to his beautiful black Indian ink, the red biro was a brash, loudmouthed, insensitive cousin who ought not to have received *anything* in the family fortune. Nassar Sharif would go further: the red biro should never have been born. It was a cheap impostor, an embarrassment to the fine quality paper used on such certificates (ibid.: 77).

The registrar is in fact much more sympathetic to Joss's case than the other two officials. Although he has a problem with deciding which name he should put on the death certificate, considering how Josephine Moore never officially changed her name into Joss Moody,⁶³ in the end he 'dipped his marbled fountain pen in the black Indian ink and wrote the name *Joss Moody* on the death certificate. He wrote the date. He paused before he ticked 'female' on the death certificate' (ibid.: 81). While the registrar thus seems to grant Joss the name he himself 'plucked out of the sky', the biological 'fact' inserted by the red biro which the registrar himself finds 'unnecessarily violent' is still an insuperable obstacle. This implies that, even though the registrar does not approve of the red biro, he is still duty bound to obey its 'hurtful' last minute change.

To claim that Joss is free to change his gender would therefore be a mistake. And, as Jeanette King rightly asks, even if individuals would be free to choose their gender, 'is changing gender the

⁶³ 'Mr Sharif concluded, one day Josephine Moore just plucked the name Joss Moody out of the sky and called himself this name and encouraged others to do likewise' (ibid.: 80).

same as transcending it' (2005: 6)? This question is what I discussed in the chapter about drag. According to Butler, drag may well be subversive but may also reinforce the heterosexual matrix. This is what King means when she claims that 'paradoxically, disguising one's gender in order to achieve one's goals confirms gender's power even in the act of apparently transcending it' (ibid.). I already mentioned the movie *Some Like it Hot* as an example of drag which confirm the power of the heterosexual matrix. From what has already been discussed about the novel and also from the discussion that will follow, I hope that it will be clear that *Trumpet* is subversive.

LAYING BARE THE TRUTH

It is important to keep in mind that the novel does not support any kind of simplified identification, primarily because there is no clear 'truth' about Joss. All the reader is presented with is a number of different voices and opinions. Yet the most important voice is also the most elusive one: only the chapters 'Music' and 'Last Words' are written from Joss's point of view. In fact the chapter 'Music' gives the readers a good idea of Joss's feelings about playing jazz and blowing his trumpet. King provides an interesting analysis of this chapter, arguing that it confirms how Joss's playing the trumpet 'does not, as Sophie thought, represent male power so much as enable him to transcend gender totally' (2005: 7).

When he gets down, and he doesn't always get down deep enough, he loses his sex, his race, his memory. He strips himself bare, takes everything off, till he's barely human (Kay 1998: 131).

According to King, this recalls the 'stripping bare' of Joss when he was examined by the doctor and the funeral director. However, this 'metaphorical stripping' does not emphasise his biological sex, but instead 'takes him beyond all categories by which we try to define each other, such as sex, race, and even personal history' (King 2005: 7). This reading is supported by a passage a few pages later, in which Joss emphasises how his 'blood' and 'cells', or his biological features, do not matter after all:

The music is his blood. His cells. But the odd bit is that down at the bottom, the blood doesn't matter after all. None of the particulars count for much. True, they are instrumental in getting him down there in the first place, but after that they become incidental. All his self collapses – his idiosyncracies, his personality, his ego, his sexuality, even, finally, his memory. All of it falls away like *layers of skin unwrapping*. He unwraps himself with his trumpet. Down at the bottom, face to face with the fact that he is nobody. The more he can be nobody the more he can play that horn. Playing that horn is not about being somebody coming from something. It is about being nobody coming from nothing. The horn ruthlessly strips him bare till he ends up with no body, no past, nothing (Kay 1998: 135, my emphasis).

The music liberates Joss of the categories and he is able to temporarily escape the heterosexual matrix. The liberation of unwrapping himself with his trumpet stands in clear contrast with the unwrapping of the bandages by the doctor, which is followed by the authorities pinning him down as 'female'. The reference to 'layers of skin' is nevertheless striking since it recalls the doctor's feeling that taking of the bandages was like 'removing skin': 'each wrapping of bandage that she peeled off felt

unmistakably like a layer of skin' (ibid.: 43). In the music, Joss's 'self collapses': 'He is 'a girl. A man. Everything, nothing. He is sickness, health. The sun. The moon. Black, white' (ibid.: 136). Importantly, King argues that this 'nothingness' should not be reduced to nihilism and I agree that 'nothing' here simply implies a 'negation of the binary oppositions that insist on our difference one from another' (2005: 7).

Jazz, and music in general, plays a significant role in this novel. To King, it is no surprise that this form of art should offer such liberation from normalizing identity categories:

music is one of the few forms of artistic communication which don't rely on language, like literature, or embodiment like drama and dance, and which are therefore potentially gender-free (ibid.: 8).

Furthermore, King argues, jazz 'by definition demands improvisation, the abandoning of scripts and precedents, the ability to construct variations on given melodies' (ibid.). Interestingly, the structure of the novel itself is quite similar to the structure of jazz music. In an interview, Kay relates that she was interested in 'how a story can work like music and how one note can contain the essence of the whole'.⁶⁴ Similar to different instruments playing together in the same song, she wanted to tell the same story from several points of view, letting different voices give 'the same story a different note' (ibid.). It seems like Kay is trying to show – to express this idea in musical terms – how there is not one true version of the story, but only variations on the same theme.

THE STORY OF MY LIFE : VARIATIONS ON THE SAME THEME

The other chapter 'Last Words', which is written from Joss's point of view contains, a letter from Joss to Colman, to be opened after his death. The reader may feel quite disappointed after having read the letter, since it does not provide Joss's life story, but the story of his father, an African man who arrived as a young boy in Scotland. But according to King, this is perhaps the whole point: 'it's just another story, another attempt to "explain" identity' (2005: 8). King rightly points out that in this chapter the reader is made aware that what they are reading and have been reading is always just one side of the story, since Joss emphasises how 'memory is a strange thing':

It will catch what you would think it couldn't catch, the slippery, the runaway, the taste of wet air. But he couldn't remember what he wanted to remember. He would read many books to see if they might remind him of what he wanted to remember: the hot dust on the red road, the jacaranda tree, his mother's hot breath on his cheek. The trouble with the past, my father said, is that you no longer know what you could be remembering (Kay 1998: 273).

The past is thus always a story of memories and other memories would have created a different story and a different past. This chapter questions the importance of personal history in the construction of personal identity. Similar to a performative view on gender, Kay adopts a performative view on

⁶⁴ Kay, Jackie. Interview, *Boldtype*. Accessed on 1 July 2007: <http://www.randomhouse.com/boldtype/0499/kay/interview.html>.

history. Furthermore, not only Joss's identity is questioned but the continuing reference to name-changing in the novel suggests the other characters' identity is also not straightforward and simple.

The first character who expresses her problems with identity is Joss's widow Millie. Already in the first chapter, when Millie reminisces about the time before she knew Joss, she addresses herself in the third person: 'She always wanted marriage, I remember. Marriage, children. She wouldn't have been surprised at that' (Kay 1998: 8). This suggests that Millie feels that she is no longer the person she used to be and that she can no longer identify with the person she was in the past. Millie believes she became somebody completely different after she married Joss, which is not surprisingly represented by her new name: 'I have become Millicent Moody. Mrs Moody. Mrs Joss Moody' (ibid.: 28). After Joss's death, however, Millie goes through an identity crisis:

I stare at myself in the mirror as if I am somebody else. I don't know what feeling like myself is any more. Who is Millicent Moody? Joss Moody is dead. Joss Moody is not Joss Moody. Joss Moody was really somebody else. Am I somebody else too. But who else was Joss? Who was this somebody else? I don't understand it. Have I been a good mother, a good wife, or have I not been anything at all? Did I dream up my own life? (ibid.: 98)

Identifying herself through Joss, Millie loses her sense of herself after losing her husband. She thus questions her own identity and she again becomes somebody different: 'My husband died. I am now a widow' (ibid.: 205).

WHAT'S IN A NAME: COLMAN

The importance of and constant reference to names in the novel provides an insight into the identity problems that the different characters deal with. The problematic nature of identity is highlighted, according to King, by what Joss says in the following passage about his father's, his own and Colman's name (2005: 8).

Even the name he was given, John Moore, was not his original name. That's the thing with us: we keep changing names. We've all got that in common. We've all changed names, you, me, my father. All for different reasons. Maybe one day you'll understand mine. (Kay 1998: 276)

Name-changing turns out to be a highly important issue to Colman who was actually named William Dunsmore before Millie and Joss adopted him. Colman believes that if he had kept the name William Dunsmore he would have turned out a completely different person (ibid.: 56). Like his mother, Colman is no longer sure of his own identity now that he has not only lost his father but found out that his father was biologically a woman. Although he considers changing his name, transforming himself into a completely new person (ibid.: 138-9), Colman decides to go searching for his father's past. By doing this, he tries to understand who his father 'really' was, in order to get a better idea of his own identity. However, in his goodbye letter, Joss says to his son 'Remember what you like' (ibid.: 277), emphasising that in the end Colman will make his own version about his father and what he was like. It appears accordingly that the novel stresses how personal history, blood line and inheritance do not matter much. Instead, it is what Colman himself makes of it that will matter. The fact that biological

inheritance does not need to be essential in identity formation is furthermore emphasised by the fact that Colman is adopted and that he ultimately realizes that Joss will always be his father. Biology is thus not as important as nurture. Although Colman claims that he always thought that he would trace down the past of his 'other father' instead of his adoption father (ibid.: 121), this in fact suggests that Colman does not need to be restricted by his biological heritage and that his identity depends mostly on what he himself will remember and identify himself with: his father Joss. Colman indeed identifies with Joss, particularly intensely before and after Colman visits Joss's mother Edith. Not only does he claim that 'he's turning into his father' (ibid.: 224), but after he has visited Edith, Colman seems much more convinced that Joss will always be his father.

To King, as the reader moves from the different versions of Joss's story and 'as the individual versions themselves shift, as Colman's does', the central theme of the novel is clearly the instability of identity (2005: 8). Nevertheless, this instability, King claims, is very liberating:

In particular there is liberation to be gained from the subversive view of gender it presents – one which refuses existing categories contained by biology. The intensity of Millie's feelings for Joss, and ultimately Colman's – their conviction that he was their husband and father, whatever the biological facts – suggests that we do not, after all, have to be the prisoners of gender (2005: 9).

I agree with King's view how the novel shows that this kind of fluidity of identity can be very liberating. Jackie Kay explains in an interview how she was intrigued by an article about Billy Tipton in which his son claimed 'He'll always be Daddy to me', thus accepting his father's construction of identity⁶⁵. Kay found this acceptance by the son especially interesting and she clearly has integrated this aspect of the Billy Tipton story in her own novel about the fictional character Joss Moody.

In my opinion it would not be surprising if Kay wrote this novel with a Butlerian theory in mind:⁶⁶ Joss is doing his gender in a way that exposes the normativity of gender and sex in general, that subverts heteronormativity and most importantly causes trouble. This is clearly what a book like *Gender Trouble* was trying to promote. As I already discussed extensively, Butler's main interest lies in trying to expose the unnaturalness of gender/sex binary thinking and categorization. The following quote by Chinn might easily be adapted to Joss:

Gender *is* work and, as Butler argues, gender performativity is always on the edge of failure. It takes courage to jump over that edge, and jump with your eyes open. It might be that the best way to do things with gender is to know what gender is doing with us, and then work it (Chinn 1997: 307).

However, I would like to underscore that, in contrast with what many of Butler's readers of *Gender Trouble* thought, Butler is not suggesting that everybody should start to do their gender completely differently and for example follow in Joss's footsteps. As Butler states in an interview, published in

⁶⁵ Kay, Jackie. Interview, *Boldtype*. Accessed on 1 July 2007: <http://www.randomhouse.com/boldtype/0499/kay/interview.html>.

⁶⁶ However, unfortunately Kay does not explicitly refer to Butler's theory (or any other theory) in the interviews I have employed for this analysis which could prove my claim.

Butler Matters (2005) as 'There is a Person Here': 'The purpose of my work is not to say: let's all become more hybrid! I think that the hybridity of dissonance [...] is already here, already structuring the gendered lives of many people' (Breen 2005: 24). In other words, Butler will look at those who do not conform to the norm and ask questions about why these people are often not included in society, why they cause so much 'trouble' and how this might open up possibilities to change the power structures from the inside out. This is exactly what Kay does with a novel like *Trumpet* since she exposes the limits of categorizing Joss (and the other characters) on the basis of biology, history or race.

DIFFERENT LAYERS AND NICKNAMES

Not only Joss's identity is quite complex: as I have already briefly indicated, the other characters in the novel do not seem to have a stable gender, historical or – even – racial identity either. When Millie shows the cleaner Maggie one of her Russian dolls, or babushka, Millie claims: 'We're all like that, aren't we? We've all got lots of little people inside us', to which Maggie responds: 'When you think about it. It's true, you know' (Kay 1998: 173). Maggie thus seems to agree that people do not have one stable identity, but that everyone has some secret self hiding inside. In my opinion it is interesting how this image of little dolls hiding inside the bigger dolls and the act of unpacking them is highly similar to the act of unwrapping Joss's bandages or the 'layers of skin' (ibid.: 135). What you see is thus not what you get: there are little people inside all of us, and layers of skin that need to be unwrapped.

This idea of people having different personalities or identities is also expressed by Joss's old school friend May Hart when she recalls how almost half of the children in her class were not known by the name that was on the register: 'They all had two personalities' (ibid.: 249). The revelation that her old friend Josie has a second male personality Joss, therefore does not seem to shock May very much. Quite on the contrary, when looking at the picture of Joss playing the trumpet, 'all the love came spilling back' (ibid.: 251). Another character who adopts a number of different names is the drummer of Joss's band, Big Red McCall. Already since McCall was a little boy he has been 'graffitied with nicknames: 'Big Man', 'Brassneck', 'Poacher', 'Bunk', 'Malki' and ultimately 'Big Red' (ibid.: 145). Although Malcolm McCall is his proper name, he never answered to it all his life. In fact, according to Big Red, having a nickname has something magical: 'only the unpopular swots were not granted the gift of a nickname [...] You had to be in the running to be crowned with a nickname' (ibid.: 145-146). Perhaps this implies that a nickname can be liberating, freeing you from the constraints of your proper name. Interestingly, Big Red suggests that it is impossible to simply choose a nickname:

Some of those clever bastards would skulk into smokers' corner and make a nickname up for themselves! Then they'd find some sly way of forcing the nickname to catch alight. But it never did. It always spluttered out like the damp match that it was. The boys who were called David, Peter, Walter and John tried to metamorphosize into Mince, Spider, Peanuts and Crow only to find themselves chucked back onto the slagheap of their dull names (ibid.: 145).

In other words, a nickname has to be given to you to work. It appears that Big Red is explaining at this point the performative nature of names.

Earlier, I tried to point out the importance of names in Butler's work. Although Butler is mostly concerned with injurious names and insults, her discussion might as well be used to describe naming in general. A nickname, it appears, is performative: more than being descriptive, it brings into being what it names: 'It seeks to introduce a reality rather than report on an existing one; it accomplishes this introduction through a citation of existing convention' (Butler 1997a: 33). When attributed or called a name, a person is thus 'quite without choice, situated within discourse' (Butler 1993: 122). This could imply that being given a (nick)name is extremely restricting and not leaving any room for personal development and identity formation. However, Big Red insists on the 'magic' of the nickname, describing it as something you are crowned with. Here Big Red suggests that while a nickname is something others impose on you, there is something liberating as well: 'that estrangement or division produced by the mesh of interpellating calls and the "I" who is the site is not only violating, but enabling as well' (Butler 1993: 122). Although 'the workings of interpellation may well be necessary', Butler argues in *Excitable Speech*, 'they are not for that reason mechanical or fully predictable. The power of a name to injure is distinct from the efficacy with which that power is exercised' (1997a: 34).

Another character who is 'crowned' with a nickname is the scandal seeking tabloid journalist Sophie Stones. Colman calls her 'The Hack' (Kay 1998: 243): however, whether this nickname is liberating to Sophie is highly questionable. In my opinion Sophie is a very intriguing character, not only because her distortion of Joss's story exposes her as highly unsympathetic, but more importantly because her identity formation is also very complex.

COMPLEX IDENTITY: SOPHIE STONES

The first interesting fact about Sophie is that she is clearly driven by sibling rivalry. She tries to live up to the expectations of her parents and surpass her sister Sarah in beauty, intelligence and personality. Sophie believes (or hopes) that writing this book about Joss Moody will not only bring her fortune and success but also love from her parents:

My parents will have to stop saying, 'Sarah this and Sarah that' to everything. This time is going to be *it*. I can feel it in my bones. Something lucky is about to happen. (Will they love me? Is success lovable?) It will completely change my life, place me in another league. I can see myself suddenly very rich in Italian clothes, my hair thick as my sister's and swept to one side (ibid.: 129).

In fact, it seems almost like Sophie tries to become her sister, or at least somebody better than herself. At times this desire to become somebody different is clearly almost an obsession to her. A striking passage in the novel in which Sophie relates what shopping and a wardrobe packed with clothes means to her reveals how Sophie tries to 'make her clothes lie':

I don't shop for pleasure – sometimes it feels like I shop to save my life. A wardrobe thick and dense, black skirts with slits, gold mesh halterneck tops, and trousers and jackets and black lace tops, is a wardrobe of the woman I'd like to be. I know I'm not her yet; but the clothes can lie. Was that it with Joss Moody? That the clothes could lie?' (ibid.: 233).

She has a wardrobe of another woman, somebody she likes to be but is not. However, Sophie feels that the minute she puts on the clothes 'it looks so Sophie it could be tailor-made' (ibid.: 234). In the discussion of Butler's theory of performativity, I already came across this idea of putting on different clothes and becoming somebody else⁶⁷. As I already argued in the chapter about gender performativity, Butler clearly refuses to compare gender with clothes: 'I never did think that gender was like clothes, or that clothes make the woman' (1993: 231). Nevertheless, Sophie does believe that her wardrobe makes her a different 'Sophie', a Sophie of whom she speaks in the third person: 'Clever Sophie' (Kay 1998: 128) who 'deserves it more than anybody' (ibid.: 129). This character thus clearly believes that she can choose to put on a personality by simply putting on different clothes. She is in every respect *performing* her identity, acting the part, dressing the part and working out the theatricality of her different personae.

However, Sophie's performance does not fool everybody. The characters that were closest to Joss like Millie, Big Red, and in the end Colman do not trust Sophie and see right through the act she puts on. The one character who expresses this feeling most clearly is Joss's old school friend, May Hart:

What would Josephine have thought of this young woman writing about her? She did not look the part. She looked all wrong. Sleek and sophisticated, wearing designer clothes and smile and exuding false charm (ibid.: 249).

Sophie is false: the identity she tries to present is merely a performance and fake. When she asks herself whether Joss Moody's clothes were lying as well, she implicitly compares herself with Joss, suggesting that, like herself, Joss merely performed and 'lied' about his identity. I would by contrast argue that the rejecting attitude towards Sophie by the characters that were close to Joss and who *did* accept Joss's construction of his identity suggest that the performance of Sophie and Joss are completely different. I would even claim that the difference between Joss and Sophie lies in the fact that Joss's identity is performative while Sophie's is merely a performance. While Sophie's construction of identity is obviously felt to be fake, Joss's identity is more than just a performance, it is felt to be very 'real'. This perhaps might best be illustrated by the passage in which Millie relates how she helped Joss putting on the bandages to cover up his breasts:

His breasts weren't very big. They flattened easily. Nobody except me ever knew he had them. I never touched them except when I was wrapping the bandages round and around them. That was the closest I came to them, wrapping them up. He put his arms in the air whilst I tucked it underneath and then pinned carefully, making absolutely certain there was no chance in the course of a long day of that pin ever coming undone. That was it. Other than that, they didn't exist. Not really (ibid.: 239-240).

⁶⁷ Salih has tried to explain Butler's theory of performativity with the metaphor of the closet.

The reality of the breasts does not matter, in fact to the extent that they are not ‘really’ there anymore. Sophie on the other hand tries to become the woman of her wardrobe, but does not succeed. Similar to – what Big Red calls – the ‘unpopular swots who were not granted the gift of a nickname’, Sophie is not granted her ‘clever Sophie’ identity. Just as a nickname can not be forced to catch alight, so Sophie can not force another identity by mere performance.

Although Sophie is thus clearly performing ‘Clever Sophie’, there are other sides of her identity that are arguably performative. Similar to what Millie says when she shows her cleaner the Russian dolls about people having different ‘little persons’ inside them, Sophie claims that ‘everybody has a bit of perversion in them’:

Every person goes about their life with a bit of perversion that is unadmittable, secretive, loathed. I know this. I have my own skeletons in the cupboard (ibid.: 264).

Here Sophie acknowledges that she has her ‘secrets’ as well, some dark sides of her identity which she tries to suppress. Perhaps one of this suppressed side of her personality is revealed in the following passage:

I was a heavy little girl. I was. Being plump made me feel silly and inferior so I went on a diet and got thin. But I can’t be too careful: there is always the fat person, lurking around, waiting for a chance to take me over. If I looked away, she’d be in there quicker than I could snap my thin finger (ibid.: 124-125).

There is thus always a ‘fat person’ lurking inside Sophie which she tries to resist. Taking this into consideration, it is clear that Sophie is trying to conform to a certain norm, a norm of what counts as a body that matters since being overweighed made her feel ‘inferior’. Here Sophie not only exposes how she herself is bound up within the heterosexual matrix which predicts not only what femininity entails, but what counts as an intelligible female body. In an interview in 2000, published in *Butler Matters*, Butler explains that she is worried about the ‘intensification of normalization at this time, which involves a focus on the body and its perfectibility’ (Breen 2005: 18). What counts as intelligible life, or an intelligible body, is consequently restricted and limited. Against this background, Butler argues ‘performativity takes on a new meaning’:

since what happens when the less than human nevertheless assumes its place within the human, producing a paradox and a tension for the norm? It exposes the norm as exclusionary and its ideality as normative. But it also produces an aberration with the power to redefine the norm. What is important, of course, is to keep the “redefining of the norm” from being “an assimilation of the norm” (which is what gay marriage is doing). The redefinition has to take aim at normativity itself, establishing the progressive and irreversible dissonance of human life, its radical non-unity, as the only viable definition (Breen 2005: 20-21). (Interview bron?)

Sophie is clearly ‘assimilating to the norm’, nevertheless her secret sides are still an essential part in her identity formation and are clearly performative. It is quite ironic how Sophie in the end entitles the book on Moody ‘Under my skin’ (266), since this title could as well be attributed to Sophie herself, who has a ‘fat person’ under her skin.

PERFORMATIVITY AND RACE

To close this discussion of *Trumpet*, I would like to briefly investigate an important motif of the novel. One of the most important changes Kay made to Billy Tipton's story is that she made Joss Moody black. A central part in Colman's and Joss's self-awareness is their national and racial identity. As King rightly points out, 'both race and nationality feed into the whole family's identity as they move between England and Scotland' (2005: 8). Joss in particular has a definite clear-cut sense about his national identity; Colman on the other hand is more in doubt:

His father was always telling him: you are Scottish, you were born in Scotland and that makes you Scottish. But he doesn't feel Scottish. He doesn't speak with a Scottish accent. He can do a good one, like all children of Scottish parents, but it's not him (Kay 1998: 190).

Whereas Joss believes that when you are born in Scotland, you are Scottish, Colman has completely lost his affinity with Scotland. However, when Colman returns to Scotland to visit Edith Moore, Colman's memories show how Scotland is indeed a part of him because it was a part of his father. Although national identity and racial identity are clearly intertwined, I would like to turn specifically to the matter of race in this final section. Since I have not yet discussed Butler's ideas about how race might be performative, I would like to briefly include some considerations Butler has made in reference to performativity and race.

In *Bodies That Matter*, Butler acknowledges that there are other 'regulatory regimes' besides heteronormativity which are 'operative in the production of bodily contours' or which set 'the limits to bodily intelligibility (1993: 17). Racial imperatives are one of them and Butler will try to include race in her discussion of identity formation. Although Butler did not discuss racial issues in *Gender Trouble* and elaborates much more profoundly on gender and sex in her writings, this does not imply that Butler considers racial differences as subordinate to sexual differences. On the contrary, Butler stresses how 'the social regulation of race emerges not simply as another, fully separable, domain of power from sexual difference or sexuality, but that its "addition" subverts the monolithic workings of the heterosexual imperative' (1993: 18). As I have explained in previous chapters, Butler remains highly suspicious of any identity categories; she nevertheless acknowledges how identity is an important factor in political mobilization and regrets how many feminist theories – including her own – have focussed too much on gender as the 'site of political mobilization at the expense of race or sexuality or class or geopolitical positioning/displacement' (1993: 116). Race, gender, sexuality, class, are accordingly no 'separable axes of power' but they operate *on* each other as well, they are – as Butler puts it – '*embricated* in one another, the vehicle for one another' (ibid., my emphasis). Butler asks:

How is race lived in the modality of sexuality? How is gender lived in the modality of race? How do colonial and neo-colonial nation-states rehearse gender relations in the consolidation of state power? (1993: 117)

Here again, Butler stresses how – ‘given the complex vectors of power’ – an identity-based policy for political mobilization will produce ‘a violent rift, a dissension that will come to tear apart the identity wrought through the violence of exclusion’ (1993: 118). For this reason, Butler argues for some sort of ‘coalitional politics’ in which a common identity is taken as the basis for activism, but since ‘every insistence on identity must at some point lead to a taking stock of the constitutive exclusions that reconsolidate hegemonic power differentials, exclusions that each articulation was forced to make in order to proceed’, the coalition needs to be revised or even abolished⁶⁸ (ibid.).

Butler thus considers race as an important part in the formation of identity. However, she will again resist race as a stable identity category, since it is inevitably highly exclusive. For example, Joss explains to his son the importance of music to black people and his affinity with the stories about slaves and Africa:

Black people and music. Black people and music; what would the world be without black people and music. Slave songs, work songs, gospel, blues, ragtime, jazz. (‘Rap?’ Colman would say. ‘What about rap?’ ‘No, that’s just a lot of rubbish,’ his father would say quite seriously. ‘A lot of shite. Rap isn’t music. Rap is crap. Where’s the story?’) The stories in the blues. All blues are stories. Our stories, his father said, our history. You can’t understand the history of slavery without knowing about the slave songs. Colman doesn’t feel as if he has a history. Doesn’t feel comfortable with mates of his that go on and on about Africa. It feels false to him, mates that get dressed up in African gear, wank on about being African with a fucking cockney accent, man. Back to Africa is just unreal as far as Colman is concerned. He’s never been to Africa, so how can he go back? (Kay 1998: 190-191).

To Colman, his father’s concern about Africa is strange to him. Although Colman is thus black, he does not feel that kind of affinity towards Africa, which excludes him from a ‘black identity’ based on the idea that blacks should turn to their ‘African roots’. While Colman does not identify with this kind of ‘black identity’, he identifies with a different black identity of which rap music referred to in the passage above is an important part. I would argue that the reference to rap does not come out of the blue. It first of all exposes some kind of generational conflict between the father and son. More importantly, however, it exposes how Colman does not identify with the stories from the blues and jazz, which are about black history according to Joss: Colman identifies with the stories in rap music. Whereas Joss claims that rap does not tell any story and is thus mere ‘crap’, I would argue on the other hand that rap does include stories, but indeed stories of a different kind. Rap music became popular when Colman was young during the 1970s and 1980s and it’s musicians are mostly inner-city young Blacks. Without going too deeply into this cultural movement, I would argue that rap music often contains many references to the problems of inner-city life and the poorer parts of the city, areas which are often used as a way of claiming a link between poverty, violence and race.

Whereas Colman lives in London and not in New York, the following passages demonstrate that he is highly aware of the kinds of associations that his “race” evokes:

⁶⁸ In the paragraph about queer theory and identity politics I have already given a thorough account of Butler’s insights on the strategy of ‘coalitions’ for political mobilization.

I mean practically every black guy my age that I saw on TV had just been arrested for something. Or was accused of mugging. It's like we only had the one face to them. The same face. The one that was wanted for something. I can tell when I go out and about, fuckers staring at you as if you've done something. I've been picked up by the police countless times, man, for doing fuck all. Just for being black and being in the wrong place at the wrong time (Kay 1998: 162).

It's not easy to travel in this country. Black guys like him. People always think they are going to be wrong or they've done something wrong or they're lying, or about to lie, or stealing or about to steal. It's no fucking joke just trying to get about the place with people thinking bad things about you all the time (ibid.: 189).

Men that look like Colman are always in the news. Some top asshole in the police said recently that black guys were more likely to be muggers than white guys. It is quite possible that Edith Moore is somewhere in that small house spying on him, terrified that he has come to mug her (ibid.: 224).

Colman is wondering how he can prove who he is. His head is full of the news. Perhaps they think he's a criminal. Why else are they all staring at him? (ibid.: 225).

Colman's identity, I would argue, does not depend on the stories from his father's music, but is highly conditional upon the stories that can be found in rap music. An interesting reference Colman makes in these quotes is when he says that the Blacks have 'one face', 'the same face' to the whites. This echoes Fanon when he claims that 'not only must the black man be black; he must be black in relation to the white man' (Critical Theory 87). Both Fanon and Colman thus stress the relational context in which race is produced. Fanon tries to explain how 'blackness' becomes an issue (or a part of a person's 'self') when encountering a white subject, and when the difference in skin colour is explicitly revealed. This is in other words a Hegelian relation in which the two races are dependent on each other but will at the same time also try to overcome each other.

Elaborating on previous constructionist race theories of this kind, in *Bodies That Matter* Butler will suggest that race might be performative since 'a dominant "race" is constructed (in the sense of *materialized*) through reiteration and exclusion' (1993: 275, note 4). In this sense, race, like gender, might bring into existence what it names and is therefore a discursive construct. 'Blackness' not only comes about in relation to whiteness, but is furthermore produced as an 'other' or 'abject' body, a body – to re-appropriate Butler's words – that does *not* matter. Butler at this point follows critical race theorists who suggest that race is produced in the service of racism (Anthony Appiah, Collette Guillaumin, Sandra Harding) and that racial categories 'tend to divide into "units" what is actually a continuum' (Breen 2005: 11). Butler acknowledges in an interview that race could be described as performative, since 'institutional exercises repeatedly construct race within a set of differentials that seek to maintain and control racial separateness' (Breen 2005: 11). The problems which arise the moment it comes to 'mixed race', as is the case with Colman, thus expose how clear cut lines and distinctions between races are performatively produced. Colman's sense of racial identity is an example how race can be performative since he is clearly afflicted by the sense that his blackness

makes people suspicious about him. Colman feels as if he is pushed towards a stereotypical image classifying him in advance as violent and a criminal.

Conclusion

In the introduction I briefly touched on a documentary about the normalization of plastic surgery in which the question was asked ‘What counts as normal?’. Although in this inquiry, I have not elaborated on issues concerning the cosmetic industry, I believe this documentary provides an interesting link with Butler’s work. As I hope to have revealed, Butler mainly focuses on those bodies and people who *do not* conform, who do not fit the matrix of intelligibility and are consequently excluded from society. By referring to commercial images, I thus briefly introduced the idea that people’s assumption of what counts as a normal body is in fact constructed by the images television and commercials provide. This constructedness of norms is exactly what Butler tries to lay bare with her theory of performativity.

In the first chapter I have outlined the origins of the linguistic performative as it was described in the speech act theory by Austin. I have then followed the performative through the work of Derrida and Shoshana Felman to show the importance of ‘language that acts’ in Butler’s theory. By investigating speech acts like the insult and hate speech, I have made clear that Butler believes that language always does something; but it might do things differently than intended. The same goes for performative gender. Although gender and sex are always and inevitably citations of the norm, the citing leaves room for agency. Thus, the possibility of failure of the performative proves to be of quintessential importance for Butler’s theorizations on gender, sex and subversion. Language was also an important issue in the second chapter. Here, I demonstrated how subjects come into being through the existing power structures – often thus through language. I analyzed the interpellative call outlined by Althusser that ‘hails’ people into existence and touched on Foucault who suggests that power comes through discourse. I also briefly investigated the importance of Hegel, whom, as I have shown, is often an implicit presence in Butler’s work. He does not only influences Butler’s writing style (which, as I pointed out, received much violent criticism), the Hegelian subject is very similar to a Butlerian subject: it is a dialectical movement, a never ending process without neither origin nor end. This philosophical background proved to be essential to Butler’s insights about the ‘heterosexual matrix’, which shapes subjects like a mould. Butler furthermore gets rid of the distinction between gender and sex, claiming that they are *both* constructed by the heterosexual matrix. Gender is thus performative; it is a doing but without there being a completely sovereign subject behind the deed. Although gender, sex and desire are always and inevitably constrained by the heterosexual matrix, Butler’s theory is not deterministic and leaves room for agency. As I have demonstrated by looking at drag and butch/femme lesbian identities, causing trouble and not doing your gender right might in fact question the heterosexual matrix. However, two important problems arose. First of all, it is important to keep in mind that performativity is not the same as mere performance (although performance is a part of performativity). Secondly, the fact that Butler claims that sex is equally constructed by the

heterosexual matrix does not imply that she completely denies the materiality of the body. For this reason, in the fourth chapter I revealed how Butler depends on Freudian insights about incorporation to explain how a (melancholic) gender is ‘encrypted’ onto the surface of the body and shapes it. However, while Butler does not believe that there is a body which is not always already ‘stamped’ (to use an Aristotelian phrase) by the heterosexual matrix, she insists on the materiality of bodies that live, eat, sleep and feel pain.

Although I have focussed on the *theory* of gender performativity, I have ended my dissertation by briefly examining a literary novel in the light of a Butlerian framework. I displayed the fluidity of identity in the figure of Joss Moody and conclude that *Trumpet* does not only show how Joss Moody’s identity is a construction, but that everyone else’s identity is similarly performative: everybody in the novel *does* his or her identity in some way. *Trumpet* reveals how imitation of norms is an essential part of identity and how everybody recites the norms outlined by the matrix of power. Nevertheless, causing trouble – citing the norm in unexpected ways – exposes the performative, deconstructs the binary thinking and refutes simple categorization: Joss is not *a* lesbian, not *a* cross-dresser, he simply *is* and is performative.

I, personally, was intrigued by Butler’s theorization about which bodies and genders count as ‘intelligible’. For this reason, I hope to have displayed the importance and the impact of Butler’s theory of performativity which questions those ideas and categories that represent themselves as self-evidently true and ‘normal’. My main goal was to provide a thorough genealogical investigation in the theory of gender performativity. I have thus tried to show how Butler’s thinking has influenced and opened up the debate about language, identity, gender and sex and how she has played (and still plays) a prominent role in the development of feminist and queer theory. Her writing and ideas have unleashed a wave of critical debate and perhaps this is one of Butler’s most important achievements. A mere glance at the amount of works by and on Butler exposes the extent of her influence not only in the field of queer theory and feminist theory, but also in sociology, literary studies, film studies, art studies, politics, pedagogy, psychology and philosophy.⁶⁹ Since Butler is such an influential figure in many different fields of study, I believe an investigation in the theory of performativity is necessary. Furthermore, although there are numerous works and articles that refer to or criticise Butler’s theory of gender performativity, I noticed that a thorough genealogical investigation of Butler’s work with special attention to gender performativity has not yet been executed. Since in this dissertation, time did not permit to give a complete account of everything that is written by and on Butler, I would propose that further research on her theory – especially a genealogical examination which focuses on how the theory develops and is received – is required.

⁶⁹ For a detailed bibliography of the works by and on Butler, see: Yeghiayan, Eddie. Bibliography of Judith Butler. Accessed on 1 July 2007: <http://sun3.lib.uci.edu/~scctr/Wellek/butler>.

Works Cited

Althusser, Louis. 1971. 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes Towards an Investigation)', in: *Lenin and Philosophy and other essays* (part 2), translated from the French by Ben Brewster, New York and London: Monthly Review Press, pp. 127-186.

Austin, J.L. 1975, 2nd edition. *How to do Things With Words*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Bad Writing Contest, Press Release. Accessed on 1 July 2007: http://denisdutton.com/bad_writing.htm

Beauvoir, Simone de. 1949 *The Second Sex*, trans. H.M. Parshley, London: Everyman (1993).

Beckett, Samuel. *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. Accessed on 1 July 2007: http://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Samuel_Beckett.

Benhabib, Seyla, Judith Butler, Drucilla Cornell and Nancy Fraser (ed.). 1995. *Feminist Contentions: a philosophical exchange*, intro. Linda Nicholson, New York: Routledge.

Bergman, Sunny. 2007. *Beperkt Houdbaar* (documentaire; coproductie van Viewpoint productions en VPRO). Accessed on 1 July 2007: <http://www.beperkthoudbaar.info/docu/>.

Bornstein, Kate. 1995. *Gender Outlaw: On Men, Women, and the Rest of Us*, New York: Vintage Books.

Breen, Margaret Sönsler and Warren J. Blumenfeld (ed.). 2005. *Butler Matters. Judith Butler's Impact on Feminist and Queer Studies*, Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited.

Bristow, Joseph. 1997. *Sexuality*, London: Routledge.

Buelens, Gert. 2002. 'Recensie Genderturbulentie', in: *Tijdschrift voor genderstudies*, vol.5: pp. 51-3.

Buelens, Gert. 2006. 'Judith Butler', in: Masschelein A., De Geest D., *Engelstalige literatuur na 1945. Deel 3: Kritiek, theorie en essay*, Leuven: Peeters, pp. 129-143.

Butler, Judith. 1987a. 'Desire, Rhetoric, and Recognition in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*', in: Sara Salih (ed.), *Judith Butler Reader*, Oxford: Backwell Publishing (2004), pp. 41-89.

Butler, Judith. 1987b. 'Variations on Sex and Gender: Beauvoir, Wittig and Foucault', in: Sara Salih (ed.), *Judith Butler Reader*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing (2004), pp.21-38.

Butler, Judith. 1990; reprinted in 1999. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, New York: Routledge.

Butler, Judith. 1990a. 'The Force of Fantasy: Mapplethorpe, Feminism and Discursive Excess', in: Sara Salih (ed.), *Judith Butler Reader*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing (2004), pp. 184-203.

Butler, Judith. 1990b. 'Imitation and Gender Insubordination', in: Sara Salih (ed.), *Judith Butler Reader*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing (2004), pp. 120-137.

Butler, Judith. 1993. *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of 'Sex'*, New York: Routledge.

Butler, Judith. 1994. 'Against Proper Objects', in: *Feminism Meets Queer Theory*, Elizabeth Weed and Naomi Schor (ed.), Bloomington and Indianapolis (1997): Indiana University Press, pp. 1-30.

Butler, Judith. 1995a. 'Contingent Foundations: Feminism and the Question of "Postmodernism"', in: Seyla Benhabib (ed.), *Feminist Contentions: A Philosophical Exchange*, London: Routledge, pp. 26-55.

Butler, Judith. 1995b. 'For a Careful Reading', in: Seyla Benhabib (ed.), *Feminist Contentions: A Philosophical Exchange*, London: Routledge, pp. 127-143.

Butler, Judith. 1997a. *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative*, New York: Routledge.

Butler, Judith. 1997b. *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection*, Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Butler, Judith. 1999. 'A Bad Writer Bites Back', *New York Times*, 20 March. Accessed on 1 July 2007: <http://www.uwm.edu/~wash/butler.htm>.

Butler, Judith. 1999a. 'Revisiting Bodies and Pleasure', in: *Theory, Culture and Society*, vol.16 (2), pp. 11-20.

Butler, Judith. 2000a. 'Changing the Subject: Judith Butler's Politics of Radical Resignification', in: Sara Salih (ed.), *Judith Butler Reader*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing (2004), pp. 326-356.

Butler, Judith. 2000b. 'Competing Universalities', in: Sara Salih (ed.), *Judith Butler Reader*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing (2004), pp. 260-277.

Butler, Judith. 2001a. 'What is Critique? And essay on Foucault's Virtue', in: Sara Salih (ed.), *Judith Butler Reader*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing (2004), pp. 304-322.

Butler, Judith. 2001b. 'The Desire for Philosophy: Interview with Judith Butler'. Accessed on 1 July 2007: http://www.lolapress.org/elec2/artenglish/butl_e.htm.

Butler, Judith. 2002. 'No, it's not anti Semitic'. Accessed on 1 July 2007: <http://www.lrb.co.uk/v25/n16/butl02.html>.

Butler, Judith. 2004. *Undoing Gender*, New York: Routledge.

Case, Sue-Ellen. 1995. 'Performing Lesbian in the Space of Technology: Part I', in *Theatre Journal*, vol. 47, pp. 1-18.

Chinn, Sarah E. 1997. 'Gender Performativity', in: *Lesbian and Gay Studies: A Critical Introduction*, ed. Andy Medhurst and Sally R. Munt, London: Cassell, pp. 294-308.

Derrida, Jacques. 1988a. 'Signature Event Context', in: *Limited Inc*, Evanston: Northwestern University Press, pp. 1-21.

Derrida, Jacques. 1988b. 'Limited Inc a b c...', in: *Limited Inc*, Evanston: Northwestern University Press, pp. 29-111.

Dialectics, *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. Accessed on 1 July 2007: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dialectics>.

Felman, Shoshana. 1983. *The Literary Speech Act: Don Juan with J.L. Austin, or seduction in two languages*, transl. by Catherine Porter, New York: Cornell University Press.

Foucault, Michel. 1978. *The History of Sexuality, vol. 1: An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley, New York: Random House.

Fraser, Nancy. 1995. 'False Antitheses: A Response to Seyla Benhabib and Judith Butler', in: Seyla Benhabib (ed.), *Feminist Contentions: A Philosophical Exchange*, London: Routledge, pp. 59-74.

Freud, Sigmund. 1927. *The Ego and the Id*, trans. Joan Riviere, London: Hogard Press (6th edition 1950).

Greenberg, David F. 1997. 'Transformations of Homosexuality-Based Classifications' in: *The Gender/Sexuality Reader: Culture, History, Political Economy*, ed. Roger N. Lancaster and Micaela di Leonardo, New York and London: Routledge, pp. 179-193.

Halberstam, Judith. 2000. *Female Masculinity*, Durham: Duke University Press.

Hegel, G.W.F. 1807. *The Phenomenology of Mind*, trans. J.B. Baillie, New York: Harper Torchbook (1967). Accessed on 1 July 2007: <http://www.class.uidaho.edu/mickelsen/ToC/Hegel%20Phen%20ToC.htm>.

Hood Williams, John and Wendy Cealy Harrison. 1998. 'Trouble with Gender', *The Sociological Review*, vol.46 (1), pp. 73-94.

Hovey, Jaime. 1997. 'Kissing a Negress in the dark: Englishness as a Masquerade in Woolf's *Orlando*', in *PMLA* 112 (3), pp. 393-404.

Intersex, Definition. *Intersex Society of North America*. Accessed on 1 July 2007: http://www.isna.org/faq/what_is_intersex.

Intersex, Third Gender. *Intersex Society of North America*. Accessed on 1 July 2007: <http://www.isna.org/faq/third-gender>.

Intersex, Patient-Centered. *Intersex Society of North America*. Accessed on 1 July 2007: <http://www.isna.org/faq/patient-centered>.

Kay, Jackie. 1998. *Trumpet*, London: Picador.

Kay, Jackie. Interview, *Boldtype*. Accessed on 1 July 2007: <http://www.randomhouse.com/boldtype/0499/kay/interview.html>.

King, Jeanette. 2005. *Gender and the Writer: Jackie Kay's Trumpet*, University of Aberdeen: course guidelines 'Writing and Gender'. Accessed on 1 July 2007: <http://www.abdn.ac.uk/womens/documents/trumpet.doc>.

Metrosexual, *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. Accessed on 1 July 2007: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Metrosexual>.

Nussbaum, Marta. 1999. 'The Professor of Parody', *New Republic*, 22 February. Accessed on 1 July 2007: <http://www.akad.se/Nussbaum.pdf>.

Prosser, Jay. 1998. 'Judith Butler: Queer Feminism, Transgender, and the Transubstantiation of Sex', In: *Second Skins: the Body Narratives of Transsexuality*, New York: Columbia University Press, pp. 21-60.

Salih, Sara. 2002. *Judith Butler*, New York: Routledge.

Salih, Sara (ed.). 2004. *The Judith Butler Reader*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky. 1993. 'Queer Performativity: Henry James's *The Art of the Novel*', *GLQ* 1 (1): pp. 1-16.

Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky. 1993a. 'Divinity: A Dossier, A Performance Piece, a Little-Understood Emotion', in: *Tendencies*, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, Durham: Duke University Press, pp. 215-251.

Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky, and Andrew Parker (ed.). 1995. *Performativity and Performance*, London: Routledge.

Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky. 2003. *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity*, Durham: Duke University Press.

Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky, *Shame and Performativity: Henry James's New York Edition Prefaces*. Accessed on 1 July 2007: <http://www.duke.edu/~sedgwic/WRITING/PREFACES.htm>.

Tipton, Billy. Biography, *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopaedia*. Accessed on 1 July 2007: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Billy_Tipton.

Tipton, Billy. Biography, *HistoryLink.org*. Accessed on 1 July 2007: http://www.historylink.org/essays/output.cfm?file_id=7456.