

QUEER INTERCORPOREALITY

BODILY DISRUPTION OF STRAIGHT SPACE

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by

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....everywhere a miscroscopic transsexuality, resulting in the woman containing as many men as man, and the man as many women, all capable of entering – men with women, women with men – into relations of production of desire that overturn the statistical order of the sexes. Making love is not just becoming as one, or even two, but becoming as a hundred thousand. Desiring-machines or the nonhuman sex: not one or even two sexes, but n sexes.

Deleuze & Guattari (1983) *Anti-Oedipus Capitalism and Schizophrenia*

Abstract

This thesis explores the potential of queer embodiment through the experiences of transgendered people. After discussing the importance of researching the body, often left out of academic enquiry, I engage with theoretical frames that radically reconfigure concepts of subjectivity providing the means to reveal the innovative forms of embodiment that participants embrace. Within these frameworks the mind/body division is disrupted and reconfigured to demonstrate that these are not separate entities rather the mind exists in the body as does the body in the mind. Drawing on Deleuze and Guattari's version of the becoming body, I locate the body as a vibrant multiplicity of particles capable of infinite connections as opposed to a separated and contained entity. Through approaching embodiment as a never ending process of becoming I look to the way in which spatial settings such as the family have a major influence on the way in which bodies are formulated. In these spaces, I contend, bodies are directed and regulated to conform to dominant understandings of being. Such directing I argue creates 'straight' bodies/space restricting the presence of queer bodies and the disruption they embody. Extending this spatial investigation I look to the way in which open spaces are straight spaces and how the dynamics of such spaces create the queer body as hyper-visible. Exploring queer as a spatial term I suggest that the queer body exists at an angle to the normative straight line creating new and challenging ways of living.

A major theme that runs throughout this thesis is the intercorporeal nature of bodies. In developing this concept I demonstrate the generosity of queer bodies and their radical disruption of the distinction between maleness and femaleness. In doing so I explore how bodies are spatially sexed according to the myth of two-sexes, disrupting such a limited view I demonstrate how queer bodies have the potential to move beyond the boundaries of recognizable identity/bodily categorizes and anatomical understandings and embrace a space of intermezzo/ in-betweenness.

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Chapter One

Introduction

This thesis is an exploration into queer/transgendered embodiment and sexuality in the context of Aotearoa/New Zealand. For the purposes of this work, following Halberstam, “queer” refers to the “nonnormative logics and organizations of community, sexual identity, embodiment, and activity in space and time” (2005:6). In order to explore queer embodiment this work centers on the micro-dynamics of interrelations and interactions between bodies within space and place. I will explore the way power functions through such spheres and interactions to expand the presence and domination of some subjects, while diminishing the presence and power of others. I investigate traditional understandings of bodies, which construct and influence how we experience our bodies, how bodies are normalized, and subsequently how bodies through their normalization tend to slip from view and become in a sense ‘disembodied’. I will argue that, alternatively, bodies that do not conform to such normalization appear hyper-present or hyper-embodied and as such are registered as a threat to the body that has comfortably slipped from view and the focus of attention. This involves applying a micro political look at embodiment, investigating some of the fundamental or basic aspects of material bodies that comprise lives. Macro politics, in contrast, concerns itself with political entities, historical forces and institutions; and while I do engage with such spaces in this investigation, I do so from the bodily everyday experiences of transgendered and intersexual people.

In order to explore how these interactions function to maintain or resist the social ordering of bodies I will examine the concept of the individual as a product of Western traditional thinking which seeks to contain the potential innovation of bodies by reducing them to simplified, static and fixed identity categories. Furthermore, I challenge the idea

that the sense of self that formulates such an identity is thought to reside as an inner and core essence. At the heart of my work, in contrast, is a radical approach to rethinking living through the “de-individualization and de-normalization” (Seem 1983:xxi) of bodies. Challenging the liberal humanist understanding of biological entities as self-sustaining and unified organisms, presented as existing prior to their social and historical formation I demonstrate how bodily differences are subordinated to rigid concepts of identity. Furthermore that culture is conducted through the materiality of bodies, their movements, connections, desires and pleasures.

In the last two decades increased recognition of the place of the body in politics has lead to a surge in publications looking at the relationship between bodies and society and the ongoing debates over nature vs. nurture or essentialism vs. social construction (Battersby, 1993; Grosz, 1994; Hanson, 2007; Hoogland, 2002; Murray, 2007; Narvaez, 2006; Shilling, 2003; Turner, 1996; Williams & Bendelow, 1998). Out of these debates the Cartesian myth that separates the mind from the body has begun to be challenged and recognized as an outmoded concept. The body is now an important site through which to explore the possibilities of challenging restraints that curb the ways in which bodies can be lived differently. Politicizing the movement, interactions and directions of bodies allows for a means to address levels of subordination and oppression that have been overlooked through other forms of analysis. As philosopher Charles Sheperdson points out, the body must be discussed, because it represents an impasse in the very arrangement of our knowledge, an enigma that poses a conceptual challenge and an epochal matter – a problem that arises from inside the history of our thought, as a rupture within that history (1999:206). By bringing the body to the forefront of analysis it is possible to see the ways in which power functions at microscopic levels through and between bodies.

This thesis, therefore, arose out of the perplexity of how to theorize the materiality of the body in relation to sexual difference while taking into account the discursive practices that produce male and female bodies. It engages with questions of how to talk about the body in ways that demonstrate that the matter of the body matters. As Butler suggests, “bodies cannot be fixed as objects of thought as not only do bodies tend to indicate a

world beyond themselves, but this movement beyond their own boundaries, a movement of boundary itself, is central to what bodies ‘are’” (1993:ix). For example, the intersex body demonstrates a “continuum of human morphology challenging the idealized version of ‘human’ morphology” (Butler 2004:4). This is a body that moves beyond the boundaries of male/female and heterosexual/homosexual. Therefore it is the intention of this work to engage with the agency of imaginative queer bodies as they are affected and affect the world around them and push boundaries of normative sex. Hoogland suggests:

the question of embodied being, because of its inescapable multi-facetedness, must be released from the chains of both liberal humanist and poststructuralist thought, in order to be addressed more productively from a genuinely multidimensional, interdisciplinary perspective, in which any form of mind/body distinction can no longer be legitimately maintained (2002:215).

Releasing the body from the reductive lens of convention allows us to capture what it means for bodies to embrace different possibilities for subjectivity. The materiality of bodies is always in negotiation with cultural understandings that shift over time and change the matter of bodies. While the body is constrained by such influences it also has the potential to push the boundaries that contain it and transform social formations. For example, the homosexual subject, once constructed as pathological by psycho-medical discourses, highlights the agency of bodies at work. Since the coming out stories of the 1970’s gay bodies have made their embodiment visibly present. Refusing to be ‘cured’ they have embraced and celebrated same-sex eroticism, bringing bodies and new forms of sensation and pleasure into the public arena. As Weeks argues:

We can intervene in the world of the erotic as we can in other social phenomena. The sexual is not an all-powering force beyond human control. Made in a complex history, it can be changed in and through history. Sexual history is not made somewhere out there, in Nature. It is made by us, here, in our everyday lives. We all make sexual history (2000:11)

As Weeks suggests, sexual history is determined by everyday practices. More specifically it is bodies, through the directions they take, spaces they occupy, embodied communities

they formulate and sexual acts they perform in the pursuit of pleasure, that shift sexual history.

A major theme, therefore, throughout this thesis is that the body is transformative and more open/ porous to its surroundings than scientific accounts have allowed for. I will suggest that the interactive body comes into being through a range of practices, a dynamic interaction with history, geographical space, communities, other bodies and objects, all of which determine possible forms of corporeality. In accordance with Deleuze and Guattari, I do not see the body as “an organism centered either biologically or psychically, organized in terms of an overarching consciousness or unconscious, cohesive through its intentionality” (Grosz 1994:168). Through denaturalizing the body Deleuze and Guattari (1983, 1987) demonstrate its dynamic capacity to overflow stable ordered identities and spaces, potentially creating new actualizations. Furthermore, this theory of the body allows us to politicize the ways in which bodies are constrained and regulated within specific spaces. In particular, however, this work explores the agency of queer embodiment for destabilizing dichotomized thinking of sexual difference as fixed and oppositional and the “primacy given to heterosexual forms of sexualities” (Plummer 2002:9).

In disrupting the primacy given to heterosexual forms of sexualities there is a need to critically examine ideas of the individual and self-identity so crucial to Western thinking and the subsequent hegemonic understandings of bodies that such ideas have produced. The conception of the individual as a stable identity, “a fixity, a system that functions homeostatically, sealing in its energies and intensities” (Grosz 1994:172) within the West has created and maintains divisions of social power which limit our capacity to visualize and embrace human gender, sex and sexual diversity. Our insistence on thinking and living in terms of binary categorizations of male/female, masculinity/femininity and heterosexual/homosexual has created a repressive social system which considers those whose genders, sexes or sexualities fall outside of such classifications to be either physically or emotionally ‘damaged’. Such thinking has prevented us from considering the infinite differences that exist within and between individuals. By restricting the

body's differences into rigid socially produced categories, the body, as I will explore is controlled and its creative potential undermined. As Richard Ekins and Dave King state:

all forms of transgendering potentially raise questions about the fundamental cultural assumptions (a) that 'normal' men do (and should) have male bodies, and do (and should) display an appropriate amount of masculinity; and (b) that 'normal' women do (and should have female bodies, and do (and should) display an appropriate amount of femininity (2005:381).

While such categories are perhaps necessary for the meaning-making process, it is the lack of tolerance for the blurring of the boundaries or in-between-ness that makes these boundaries profoundly problematic.

Connell argues that: "we experience our selves and our environment through our bodies" (cited in Shilling, 2003:13). On this understanding, therefore, "the body needs to be approached as a multi-dimensional medium for the constitution of society" (Shilling 2003:x). In order to explore the ways in which bodies and culture are intertwined, the material body needs to be taken into account in social analysis. While transgendered bodies are understood and made meaningful through social relations and social structures imbued with power relations, such as the authoritative voice of medicine, they are also bodies that have the power to affect those structures and expand on the ways in which human bodies can be conceptualized and lived. This requires that we pay attention to the everyday experiences of people who have been marginalized for their alternative sexual and gendered embodiment rather than taking prevalent medical narratives as the only lens through which to understand being intersex or transsexual. The medical interpretation of such bodily alterity fails to recognize the diversity of tranz subjectivities and the multiple possibilities of embodiment, sexual orientation and desire.

Western heteronormativity fails to recognize the cultural variation on sex and gender norms. The experiences of Samoan fa'afafine, for example, demonstrate the cultural relativity of the categories of 'male' and 'female'. In Samoa fa'afafine do not neatly fall into the dominant understandings of male and female yet are a significant part of the culture. The assumption that to be a 'woman' you have to embody a biological female

body is defied by fa'afafine, biological men who identify not only as women, but as 'powerful' women. In spite of the suppression of non-heterosexual identities that followed Western colonization of Samoa and other Pacific Nations, the 'Third Sex' continues to be a visible part of Pacific culture where they are known by a collection of terms reflective of the region they represent: Fakalati (Tonga); Akava'ine (Cook Islands); Mahu (Tahiti); Mahuwahine (Hawaii), Fa'afafine (Samoa) (<http://www.nzaf.org.nz/>).

The transgressive possibilities of queer embodiment have, in recent times, begun to be understood and transgender people are making their presence felt in Aotearoa/New Zealand. With phenomena such as the prominence of public figure Georgina Beyer, the first transsexual in the world to be elected to parliament and stories such as *Mani's Story*, a documentary that aired on New Zealand prime time television in April 2003, telling of the experience of growing up intersex in Aotearoa, such occurrences are making transgendered lives visible. Furthermore a surge of innovative filmmakers and photographers, for example Cosmo Kentish-Barnes, Meschell Edgecombe and Rebecca Swann, are using these mediums to bring the lives of transgendered people to public awareness. These emerging stories are creating new understandings of the way in which marginalized peoples define themselves and express their gender, sex and sexuality in ways that disrupt and challenge naturalized concepts of the 'normal'. Cultural critic Jeffrey Weeks suggests:

These new stories about the self, about sexuality and gender, are the context for the emergence of the 'sexual citizen' because these stories telling of exclusion, through gender, sexuality, race, bodily appearance or function, have as their corollary the demand for inclusion: for equal rights under the law, in politics, in economics, in social matters and in sexual matters. They pose questions about who should control our bodies, the limits of the body, the burden of custom and of the state (2000:375).

Sociologist Kenneth Plummer (1995) also embraces these new stories when he speaks of expanding the notion of citizenship, which he calls 'intimate citizenship'; he suggests "rights and responsibilities are not 'natural' or 'inalienable' but have to be invented through human activities, and built into the notions of communities, citizenship and

identities”(1995:150). Feminist philosopher Judith Butler (2004) also engages with these concerns and coins the phrase ‘New Gender Politics’ through which challenges are being made to western notions of subjectivity. These politics emerge from the debates raised by postmodernism, feminism, identity politics, disability politics and queer theory and rethink questions around embodiment, essence, difference, self and ‘other’, heterosexuality, patriarchy and power. Butler (2004) puts forward the idea that those who stand outside of binary sex and gender have been excluded from the category of ‘human’ and in order to gain human rights awarded to the ‘normal citizen’ queer bodies need to be made ‘intelligible’. This requires addressing hegemonic forms of sexual citizenship through which citizens are normatively constructed as heterosexual subjects who conform to clearly defined notions of sexual difference and normative sexual practices.

This project also involves politicizing aspects of bodies often excluded from analysis. As Bacchi and Beasley point out “‘bodies’ and ‘citizens’ are seldom connected” (2002:324). The Western conception of the autonomous citizen, through its construction of the disembodied citizen, works to obscure the workings of power that target and control the materiality of the body. However, rethinking such concepts to emphasize citizenship as embodied, in the sense of a lived, fleshly, and intercorporeal body (Bacchi & Beasley 2002) allows for new stories to emerge. As Butler argues “the struggle to rework the norms by which bodies are experienced is thus crucial not only to the intersex and transgendered movements but also disability politics as they contest forcibly imposed ideals of what bodies ought to be like” (2004:28). Bacchi and Beasley claim that, subjects who are regarded as having control over their bodies are regarded as citizens whereas “those reduced to their bodies are constituted as lesser citizens” (2002:326). Therefore expanding on the ideas of sexual and intimate citizenship, this thesis works in conjunction with the concept of embodied citizenship, which encompasses the intercorporeal exchange between bodies and acknowledges that the body is “a product of social interplay”(Narvaez 2006:61). Furthermore it challenges the normalized body’s pretense of disengagement through making explicit its bodily affect on others. In order to make explicit the transgressive forms of subjectivity that queer embodies I trace, in the

following section, the development of subjectivity against which I make the claim that queer is innovatively creating new possibilities of living.

The Phantasmal Family: Framing the Production of Straight Desire and Space

The understandings that we have of our bodily selves are created within specific spaces such as the space of the family. In order to comprehend the significance of this space for being embodied I explore the influences that have created normative concepts of healthy families and bodies within the modern West. I will briefly provide the frameworks for my analysis of family space, which I will further explore in chapter three; but firstly I look to Freudian psychoanalysis and the founding discourses of sexologists, to demonstrate how such knowledge infiltrates and creates family space, the public image of family and understandings of desire. Much of what is taken as ‘natural’ in relation to the family, bodies and sexuality is a product of traditions of thinking, seeing and being derived from disciplines such as psychoanalysis, sexology and medicine. In Freud’s view, sexuality is developed early in life and he marks the Oedipus complex as the moment in the child’s development where the child emerges as a sexually differentiated self. Prior to this moment the child does not experience itself as a unified self, nor does it distinguish between itself and the outer world “the child is like a field across which the libidinal energy of basic drives plays” (Flitterman-Lewis 1992:205-206). In this stage there is no differentiation between the male and female child; both are in a reciprocal relation to the mother. However in the Oedipal complex, “the parent of the same sex becomes a rival in the child’s desire for the parent of the opposite sex. The boy gives up his incestuous desire for the mother, because of the threat of punishment by castration perceived to come from the father” (Flitterman-Lewis 1992:206). He thereby identifies with the father and takes up the role of masculinity and represses any aspects of femininity. According to Freud the desire for the mother is driven into the unconscious and the body learns as he develops as an adult to seek substitutes for the mother. The girl, in contrast, recognizes her castration and lack of the phallus, relinquishes her desire for the father, and learns to identify with the mother.

In this phallocentric account of the emergence of sexuality and heterosexual desire, bodies take on the movements, gestures and behaviors of the ‘appropriately’ sexed role model,

which is seen as a ‘natural’ progression. Any bodily identification with the parent of the opposite sex is repressed. Children learn to develop their sexuality based on a sense of incompleteness. Through this process desire is fashioned on a tenet of loss and lack and is invested in the phantasmal image of the other. Male and female desire (and bodies), are polarized through the perceived irresolvable differences between them in relation to the object of desire thus creating a permanent severance between self and other. Heterogeneous pleasures and desires, the polymorphous perversity considered by Freud (1905) to be present prior to the ‘oedipal moment’ get directed or repressed into the unconscious of the ‘individual’. The individual thus learns to unconsciously desire what it is not. In *Anti-Oedipus Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1983) and *A Thousand Plateaus* (1987), Deleuze and Guattari argue against this interpretation of ‘normal sexuality’ and identity and use a terminology of machines, assemblages, connections and productions to describe an alternative version of subjectivity. Rather than thinking of biological beings as self-sustaining organisms, they rethink subjects as unbounded mobile machines. As Colebrook explains, for Deleuze and Guattari “an organism is a bounded whole with an identity and an end. A mechanism is a closed machine with a specific function. A machine, however, is nothing more than its connections; it is not made by anything, is not for anything, and has no closed identity” (2002:56). Grosz further suggests, that in Deleuze and Guattari’s alternative version of subjectivity the subject is fore-grounded as a “series of flows, energies, movements, and capacities, a series of fragments or segments capable of being linked together in ways other than those that congeal in into an identity” (1984:18). This view of bodies disrupts the humanist concept of the individual as fixed and closed and portrays this construction as a form of repression, suggesting that the body is capable of infinite connections and thus unfixed and changing boundaries. As Deleuze and Guattari state:

(Sexuality) is badly explained by the binary organization of the sexes, and just as badly by a bisexual organization within each sex. Sexuality brings into play too great a diversity of conjugated becomings; these are the *n* sexes, an entire war machine through which love passes...Sexuality is the production of a thousand sexes, which are so many uncontrollable becomings (1987:278-279).

Deleuze and Guattari’s notion of a thousand sexes captures the innovation and experimental power of sexuality when released from its dogmatic ‘straightening’. Rather than

conceptualizing desire in terms of loss and an inevitable investment in the objectification of the other, as psychoanalysis claims, desire according to Deleuze and Guattari is productive, creative and explosive. Deleuze and Guattari's *desiring machine* calls into question the social order and the way it coercively directs desire into established patterns and bodily parts to serve the purposes of compulsory heterosexuality. May suggests "to desire is to connect with others: sexually, politically, athletically, gastronomically, vocationally" (2005:124). To rethink desire through this lens is to recognize the transformative and highly political potential of desire when released from its entrapment by concepts of normalcy. It is this entrapment of sexuality that forms Deleuze's case against the humanism of psychoanalysis, in which the organic body functions in unified alignment of organs, and operates according to the normative matrix of dialectical heterosexual desire of the other (Braidotti 2002:159). Such understandings inform the family institution/space and thus it becomes an agent in the production of the normative matrix of heterosexual desire and bodies. The family therefore works in conjunction with broader social fields through its embodied practices of thinking, acting and 'seeing', which in effect forecloses other possibilities of becoming. As Deleuze and Guattari state:

On the one hand there are the desiring-machines, and on the other the Oedipal-narcissistic machine. In order to understand the details of this struggle, it must be borne in mind that the family relentlessly operates on desiring-production. Inscribing itself into the recording process of desire, clutching at everything, the family performs a vast appropriation of the productive forces; it displaces and reorganizes in its own fashion the entirety of the connections and the hiatuses that characterize the machines of desire. It reorganizes them all along the lines of the universal castration that conditions the family itself...but it also redistributes these breaks in accordance with its own laws and the requirements of social production. The inscription performed by the family follows the pattern of its triangle, by distinguishing what belongs to the family from what does not (1983:124-125)

The Oedipal family works to sediment bodies and discourages difference, inconsistency and nonconformity, favoring instead likeness, stability and straightness. It is an agent that seeks to constitute specific forms of corporeality that mirror its own embodiment and the upholding of the liberal humanist individual. Bodies are thus spatially carved up to conform to perceptions of the individual as fixed, bounded and ordered along the axis of inner and outer worlds and spatial systems of heterosexual desire. Desensitizing and blocking the body's

intensities, flows and innumerable potential connections, the Western nuclear family organizes the body into a single and separate unit.

Sexology, being the scientific study of human sexual behavior, also has had a major influence on the way in which sexual subjects/bodies have been constructed and leads people to believe that certain kinds of sex are ‘natural’ and solely biologically driven. In her recent research on the impact of sexuopharmaceuticals for women suffering from so-called ‘female sexual dysfunction’, Geraldine Treacher suggests, “sexological and medical discourse constitutes the authoritative modes of understanding and self regulation that women and men bring to their everyday lives in terms of their construction of healthy and desirable sex and sexuality” (2004:12). Such understanding not only influence what people consider to be normal and healthy sex and sexuality, but also play a major role in the normalization of the heterosexual family and thus the bodily shaping and directing of their offspring. While there have been some exceptions in the sexology literature, in general, sexology has prioritized and promoted heterosexual intercourse as normal, functional and biologically driven, while developing the notion that other forms of sexual activity are abnormal and therefore dysfunctional.

William Masters and Virginia Johnson’s well-known *Human Sexual Response HSR* (1966) mapped what they considered to be a universal human sexual response cycle, which functioned along a very prescribed and linear path. They identified four phases in the human sexual response cycle (HSRC) and write: “Progressively, the four phases are: (1) the excitement phase; (2) the plateau phase; (3) the orgasmic phase; and (4) the resolution phase” (1966:4). Not only did they naturalize a ‘straight’ and linear path through which sex progressed but they successfully directed male bodies towards female bodies and vice versa. Sexology, having established itself as an ostensibly objective and scientific enquiry into human sexuality, “consolidated the alignment of [itself] with medicine” (Irvine, 1990:66). Drawing on the power of science and medicine, Masters and Johnson’s work has been incorporated into the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM-IV), a text published by the American Psychiatric Association which covers all mental health ‘disorders’ for both children and adults. Masters and Johnson’s interpretation of ‘normal’

sexual responses is evident in the classifying of ‘sexual dysfunctions’. The HSRC assumes that the goal of arousal is penile-vagina intercourse. Located therefore within what is seen as the ‘objective’ discourses of sexology and biomedicine is a strong coital imperative and unfaltering insistence on polarization of male and female sexual anatomy. Jackson points out “this discourse privileges heterosexual coitus (penetration of the vagina by the penis) as the most natural form of heterosexual activity, with all other types of sexual expression- such as oral sex, masturbation, touching, and kissing – as preliminaries (foreplay) or ‘optional extras’ to the ‘real thing’”(1984:44). This has powerful implications for the ways in which families locate the future sexual health and bodily functioning of their children, foreclosing the possibility and perception that their children may experience sexuality in different ways and embody anatomical diversity. Such understandings inform the bodily knowledge of parents and are incorporated into family values, thereby influencing the physical shaping, interaction and directing of children. This heterosexualization of children, I suggest, is carried out without reflection of the way in which bodily habits or knowledge, shaped by prevailing social conditioning and the imposition of norms, are intergenerational and not merely natural.

The family as an institution produces a version of desire, which supports the perpetuation of the existing social order and family bloodlines. Lines, as articulated by Deleuze and Guattari, are a means of directing bodies and produce what Deleuze and Guattari call the molarized individual. A molarized individual is a ‘person’ to the extent that a category (cultural image of unity) has been imposed on it, and insofar as its subsequent actions are made to conform to those prescribed by its assigned category (Massumi 1992:55). For example, the multiplicity of the intersex or transgendered body is disciplined into accepting an assigned sex/gender category. As Massumi elaborates: “when we say that a molarity is grasped as a whole, the emphasis is on the *as*. The particles are still there, no less numerous than before, a molarity remains a multiplicity – only a disciplined one” (1992:55). As molarized individuals are always simultaneously a multiplicity of particles threatening to fragment the unified organism, within the context of heteronormativity the imperative for the ongoing disciplining of the unruly body is both complex and inexhaustible. Deleuze and Guattari offer an alternative view of subjectivity as Grosz explains; the subject is fore-grounded as a “series of flows, energies, movements, and capacities, a series of fragments or segments capable of

being linked together in ways other than those that congeal it into an identity" (1994:18). They provide the concept of the molar to describe the way such energies are repressed into the unified, disciplined and coherent individuals. Using a trilogy of lines Deleuze and Guattari demonstrate the way in which being is either constrained to conform to dominant structures or in moments, which I will suggest are queer, escapes its repression. They use the term molar lines and suggest that these "represent those macroforces in society which divide, define, control and regulate. They follow particular patterns or pathways and are associated with dichotomization, rigidification, categorization, and stratification" (Potts 2001:148). The pathways and patterns of the traditional family move along molar lines, which are disguised through the normalization of life course trajectories and inheritance. Molecular lines, in contrast, although still following a determinate path through particular 'connections', are less rigid, less striated, less segmentary, referring instead to 'minoritarian', 'subordinated' microscopic processes. (Potts 2001:149). Microscopic processes potentially open up opportunities for change although the distinction between these lines may be blurred.

The disciplining of molarized individuals therefore is dependent on the rigid structuring of space, and the bodies and social relations that formulate it, across molar and molecular lines. However there are moments when there is a break in these directional lines and alternative trajectories are potentially created. Deleuze and Guattari term these innovative paths as 'lines of flight', which constitute radical routes of escape from the molar and molecular (although these lines are sometimes indistinguishable from the molecular). Lines of flight are nomadic; they 'deterritorialise' by disturbing supposed boundaries or demarcations (Potts 2001:149). They are nomadic wanderings fleeing from convention and obligation, creating new ways of becoming not yet visualized, through which the transgressiveness of ambiguity and intercorporeal generosity, a concept I will explore at some length, is embraced.

Desire, which is not subordinated to a straight/molar and linear line of sexual progression and the perceived polarization of male and female genitals, involves displacing the power working through the sexual spatiality of the body; this is a theme I will explore at length in chapter five. This task requires that we disrupt the boundaries of the body that divide it between interiority and exteriority which in turn get transferred onto bodily regions such as

the penis and vagina, demarcated male or female respectively, and relocate diverse and fluid sensation as a boundless sexual act in itself. Philosopher Alphonso Lingis (1980) talks of libidinal excitations in his discussion of the work of French philosopher Jean-Francois Lyotard: in this interpretation the erotic surface is not in a pre-given space or invested in a particular region but extends the surface of the body. Any part can conjoin and form an intensive field of sensation. This interpretation of desire and libidinal surfaces refuses the reductive investment in identities, interiority or organs and focuses instead on surfaces, intensities and pleasure. Such an expansive view of pleasure and erotic surfaces does not require that bodies conform to binary sex, heteronormativity, nor its subsequent spatiality of female and male bodies as either exclusively internal or external. In this version arousal does not require completion in the act of coitus, interpreted as orgasm in normative sexual discourse, as every sensation has the capacity to make a multitude of connections and is not driven in a singular progressive line. The phallocentric focus of trapped desire is dismantled and desire is reconfigured as an innovative explosion of sensation or ‘intensity’. Desire removed from the cultural interpretation and intensive focus on sexual anatomy is potentially dynamic and causes a rupture in the straight line zigzagging off in its own energetic flow. In order to engage with such an understanding of desire and its potential disruption to the order that produces normative bodies I briefly set out in the following section the corporeal affect that medical bodies and institutions have on the bodies with whom they interact.

Medical Bodies and the Production of Sex

In this section of the introduction I set out the framework in which I interpret medicine as, at least in part, a spatial institution, which contains and constructs bodies that affect other bodies. This work, however, does not employ medical jargon in relation to transgendered bodies nor is its focus an engagement with the medical interpretation of such bodies. Furthermore critical engagement with medical accounts has been covered well in the past by academics such as Chase, (1998), Dreger (1998), Epstein, (1990), Holmes, (1998, 2000), Kessler, (1990, 2000), Kessler & McKenna, (1978), Morland, (2001, 2005), Phibbs ((2001), Preves, (2003, 2004), Prosser, (1998) and Roen, (1998, 2001). Such works have made invaluable steps to highlight the ways in which ‘different’ bodies are pathologised according to medical assumptions of ‘natural’ dimorphic sex and

gender. As Grosz suggests “the body has thus far remained colonized through the discursive practices of the natural sciences, particularly the discourse of biology and medicine” (1994:x). According to Lupton one of the central arguments of Foucauldian analyses of medicalization is that “society is medicalized in a profound way, serving to monitor and administer the bodies of citizens in an effort to regulate and maintain social order as well as promoting good health and productivity” (1997:100). To continually talk back to such knowledge is potentially counterproductive, and may only reinforce medical power to determine realities. In saying this, however, it is not my intention to trivialize the interexchange between transgendered people and medical institutions; at times this is may be necessary and/or desired by transgendered people themselves. I am more interested in questioning the construction of transgendered bodies as medical ‘problems’ via reconfiguring how we conceptualize embodiment and difference. My aim is to critically explore the spaces that are socially and historically constituted to marginalize queer bodies through the micro-dynamics of the movement and exchange between bodies. As geographer Michael Brown states “space does not just represent power; it materializes it” (2000:3). In addition, I set out to demonstrate the ways queer bodies resist their spatial marginalization and express creative and innovative ways of being and living.

While I do not intend to focus on medical terminology or accounts of transgendered bodies, I do wish to make a connection to the significance of medicine as an institutional space created through the contours of predominantly normative bodies. This is intended to firstly draw attention to the fact that medical practitioners are embodied beings but also to highlight the connection between medical space and family space, which is one focus of this thesis. I contend that these spaces cannot be distinctly separated but simultaneously are affected and affect one another, such that the contours of such spaces extend into public space. Foucault argues that the appearance of modern medicine is intimately linked with the historical fact of the clinic; that is, the spatial and material organization of medical practice into clinical medicine and teaching hospitals (Foucault, 1975:xviii and translators note): the clinic is both the material and discursive site of modern medicine (Foucault, 1975:xviii). It is within the context of this institutional space

that the ‘clinical gaze’ developed and it is through such a gaze that the dominant understandings of bodies are constructed, understood and often experienced. This ‘gaze’ of the medical practitioner presents itself as a disembodied gaze, in that it distances itself from its own corporeality, its own embodied history, family/social location and bodily practices, to present itself as an impartial and objective gaze which can locate a truth in the body of the ‘other’. However all bodies have histories, values, move in certain directions and conduct interpersonal relations, all of which congeal into one’s bodily presence in space. Yet impartiality and body specificity is obscured through an authoritative and decorporealized medical gaze. This theme of ‘bodily absence’ (Leder 1990) has until recently not been acknowledged as having cultural significance, yet upon closer analysis of the functioning of hegemonic power, it is of particular saliency for the perpetuation of a social order. As Ahmed argues, “we can also consider ‘institutions’ as orientation devices, which take the shape of ‘what’ resides within them. After all, institutions provide collective or public spaces. When we describe an institution as ‘being’ white, we are pointing to how institutional spaces are shaped by the proximity of some bodies and not others: white bodies gather and cohere to form the edges of such spaces” (2006:132). Therefore, not only, is western medicine dominated by white male bodies, but such bodies, are predominately straight and as such cohere to form the space of the medical clinic as a straight/white space. I use the term ‘straight’ to refer to hegemonic heterosexuality, which goes beyond sexual practices to incorporate a way of being and moving/directing in the world that does not recognize or take seriously certain forms of diversity. These spaces naturalize/normalize the “paradigmatic makers of life experience – namely, birth, marriage, reproduction, and death” (Halberstam 2005:2), which are obvious components of normative family values, and it is through these eyes that queer bodies are viewed. As Murray argues “the authority of medical discourse acts as a legitimizing force in marginalizing bodies of difference, and reaffirming the power of the normative body, which is still fundamentally an immaterial body” (2007:365). As such the medical gaze orientates and directs bodies in line with its own normative bodily history and experiences, whilst paradoxically denying its own corporeality by way of presenting itself as a disembodied rational mind. Furthermore “these medico-scientific readings of the body …are embodied by western ‘lay’ society, and deployed in every

“social space” (Murray 2007:371). The clinical ‘gaze’ becomes part of the collective conscious/body and infiltrates the gaze and perception of those outside of its institutional space. As Foucault considers:

Medical space can coincide with social space, or, rather, traverse it and wholly penetrate it. One began to conceive of a generalized presence of doctors whose intersecting gazes form a network and exercise at every point in space, and at every moment in time, a constant, mobile, differentiated supervision (2003:33)

As Foucault points out medical space merges into all other spaces and therefore subsequently infiltrates the viewpoint through which transgendered bodies are interpreted, constructed and at times experienced. Given the proliferation of medical knowledge/space queer bodies are continually drawn into negotiating and renegotiating such understandings.

As I have pointed out various institutions such as medicine, psychoanalysis, sexology and family cultivate an understanding of the body as individual, contained, separated and embodying normative displays of sexed anatomy. This thesis, in sharp contrast, presents an alternative understanding of existence and embodiment, which asserts that bodies only exist in the context of other bodies, and that there is always an ongoing exchange between bodies that cannot reduce the body to an individuated entity, but suggests instead that all interactions are based on an intercorporeal exchange upon which our existence depends. This thesis therefore draws on the politics of what feminist philosopher Rosayln Diprose (2002) calls ‘intercorporeal generosity’. This concept works on the premise of the giving and taking that is conducted at bodily levels and negates the over investment in an economy of exchange between ostensibly autonomous individuals that often benefits from yet fails to recognize or value, the bodies it constructs as non-normative bodies. As Diprose nicely argues:

generosity...happens at a prereflective level, at the level of corporeality and sensibility, and so eschews the calculation characteristic of an economy of exchange. Generosity is being given to others without deliberation in a field of intercorporeality, a being given that constitutes the self as affective and being affected, that constitutes social relations and that which is given in relation.

...generosity is not one virtue among others but the primordial condition of personal, interpersonal, and communal existence (2002:5).

This understanding of existence and bodily reliance is unacknowledged within an economy based on exchange and disembodiment. Yet ironically such a system can only function and promote the rights of normative bodies through its dependency on the bodies of others. By theorizing the importance of intercorporeal existence a path is developed that orientates itself towards greater social and embodied justice.

This cultural analysis of embodiment and space is grounded in qualitative research based on interviews on the experiences of transgendered people. Transgender is a term used today to encompass “the community of all self identified cross gender people whether intersex, transsexual men and women, cross dressers, drag kings and drag queens, transgenderists, androgynous, bi-gendered, third gendered or as yet unnamed gender gifted people” (Tom & More cited Ekins & King 2005:379). In using this umbrella term I wish to acknowledge that there are criticisms of including intersex within this broad range of people. For example, Dreger (2007) has argued that intersex issues differ from those related to transgender. In using the term transgender I do not intend to diminish the unique experiences of intersex people, and there will be several sections of the thesis that focus explicitly on intersex experience. However, for the purposes of this work I use the terms transgender and queer intermittently as a means to indicate bodily and sexual diversity. In addition to emphasizing diversity, the concept of transgender, emerging out of the transgender community itself, has avoided assumptions of pathology inherent in the discourse of transvestism, transsexualism, gender identity disorder, and gender dysphoria generated by the medical profession. It also allows consideration of a range of transgender phenomena that have not been subject to the medical gaze (Ekins & King 2005). Within queer renderings “of postmodern geography, the notion of a body-centered identity gives way to a model that locates sexual subjectivities within and between embodiment, place, and practice” (Halberstam 2005:5). Accordingly this work is placed within the context of recent feminist, queer and queer geographical research on space and bodies as that of Ahmed (2006), Bell & Valentine (1995), Best (1995), Brown (2000), Brown & Knopp (2004), Butler (1993,2004), Corber & Valocchi (2003), Halberstam

(2005), Kirby (1996), Massey (1994), Pile & Keith (1997), Sedgwick (1990).

Furthermore such research suggests, contrary to liberal individualism, that “‘one’ is never alone in one’s body; there are always already other people, histories of meaning, and changing terms used to describe identities and practices” (Holmes 2000:86). The body will therefore be explored as an intercorporeal and interorientated body, personal but never separate.

The dominant meanings that circulate in relation to transgenderism, as I have mentioned, have historically arisen from medical and scientific discourses, which have constructed gender ambiguity or difference as an individual and pathological problem at the level of biology and mental disorder. These sources have often relied on quantitative or positivist research methodologies “premised on the idea that we can reduce the complexity of the social world to its component parts and deal with each of these in isolation” (Davidson & Tolich 1999:27). This form of understanding is also applied to bodies, separating them from their social and historical location. Such methods and their claim to absolute intellectual authority come from the belief that the application of scientific methods provides a transcendent and super-rational path to universal truths (Davidson & Tolich, 1999). Such truths are grounded in western concepts of subjectivity and individualism which Potts argues have produced binarized thinking (and hence binarized modes of ‘making sense’ of experience), through the constitution of hierarchical dualisms such as man/woman, mind/body, culture/nature, masculine/feminine, heterosexual/homosexual, presence/absence and so on (2002:2). Rather than recognizing a multiplicity of particular differences, then, this system of meaning-making which can be referred to as a ‘metaphysics’ produces binaries that delimit the existence of alternative conceptualizations: the binary man/woman, for instance, produces two sexes, thus precluding the recognition of multiple sexes (Fausto-Sterling, 2000). This binary also informs intimate sexual practices and as such heterosexual coitus is seen as natural and normal. The perceived biological differences between male and female bodies, seen to be a harmonious balance for the purposes of reproduction, disavow firstly the similarities between male and female bodies, and secondly the infinite differences across bodies that can not be explained by the existence of binary sex.

Colebrook argues, “our languages, our genes, our bodies, our desires, historical forces, social forces – all these things intersect and constantly mutate, in such a way that what we are cannot be traced back to a single point of origin or intent” (2002:xii). As the work of Thomas Laqueur (1990) reveals, for example, modern definitions of biological sex are not transhistorical; instead, understandings of male and female bodies are context specific. Our contemporary understandings of biological sex, which are the bedrock of our social order and have the power to define how we live our productive and sexual bodies, can be traced to politics, not biology. Prior to the early 1800s there existed a belief that male and female bodies were homologous in nature. Humans were considered to be of one-sex and male and female anatomy varying versions of the same thing. Male and female reproductive organs were considered to be the same organs but in different places; in women the reproductive organs were inverted. Women within this version were considered to be less perfect men. A two-sex model was developed in the 1800s whereby the bodies of women were defined in opposition to men and this rapidly replaced the understandings of male and female bodies. Laqueur argues that “the context for the articulation of two incommensurable sexes was neither a theory of knowledge nor advances in scientific knowledge, the context was politics” (1990:152). Significant social events and changes in society contributed to this shift in bodily knowledge, such as the French revolution, postrevolutionary conservatism, postrevolutionary feminism, the factory system with its restructuring of the sexual division of labor, Enlightenment theories, the birth of classes and Lockean ideas of marriage as a contract (Laqueur 1990). The two-sex model, in contrast to the one-sex model, created male and female anatomy as distinctly opposite and whose reproductive and sexual functions were completely different. Within this model the social status of men and women could be defined by their apparent biological differences. Likewise, the work of feminist biologist Anne Fausto-Sterling (1993, 2000) contests dominant understandings and she approaches the biological evidence of multiple sexes. Disrupting the ‘reality’ of the two sex model, she demonstrates that sex, like gender, is socially and historically specific and therefore as much a product of social relations as biological materiality. That in fact biological materiality has been filtered through the straight and normative lens of medico-science.

Research Process

The objective of my thesis is to engage with the fluidity and vibrant nature of queer embodiment through drawing upon the experiences of transgendered people. I do so as means to disrupt normative and hierarchical understandings of bodies, which work to exclude difference. Furthermore I wish to highlight that embodiment is an ongoing and interactive process, which involves the bodies of others and particular environmental spaces. In order to capture the complexities of such lived experiences my work draws on a cultural studies acknowledgement of the “need to theorize ‘experience’” (Gray 2003:25) which requires the use of a range of epistemological tools. This work utilizes a variety of theoretical frameworks in conjunction with the experiences expressed by participants. This is in keeping with cultural studies, which is eclectic in its approach, drawing liberally from across the humanities and social sciences. It is an interdisciplinary and open field of enquiry and is structured around an interest in lived experiences, discourse and social context (Gray 2003, Saukko 2003). As such it draws on diverse research approaches, combining aspects “in order to piece together maybe more complex and nuanced, even if never complete, analysis of the phenomenon we study” (Saukko 2003:7). Fundamental to cultural studies projects is the aspect of “rendering visible hitherto hidden lives and unacknowledged experiences” (Gray 2003:30-31). This is of particular importance for understanding transgendered embodiment considering the dominance of medical narratives surrounding their lives that presents a very narrow and monolithic account.

In order to link experience to social structures this approach is concerned with the generation and circulation of the meanings which constitute culture. Cultural theorist Simon During argues:

that culture is not a thing or even a system: it's a set of transactions, processes, mutations, practices, technologies, institutions, out of which things and events...are produced, to be experienced, lived out and given meaning and value to in different ways within the unsystematic network of differences and mutations from which they emerged to start with (2005:6).

Cultural studies recognize that the social field is constituted unevenly by power flows and hierarchies, and as such acknowledges the exclusions, injustices and prejudices that operate within society. Cultural researchers often tend to position themselves on the side of the marginalized and seek to expand and demonstrate the diversity of lived experiences. They recognize that the social fields, and the spaces that constitute them are divided along the axes of domination and subordination, which are never static but a site of ongoing struggle. As Fiske argues:

in the domain of culture, this contestation takes the form of the struggle for meaning, in which the dominant classes attempt to ‘naturalize’ the meanings that serve their interests into the ‘common sense’ of society as a whole, whereas subordinate classes resist this process in various ways and to varying degrees and try to make meanings that serve their own interests (1992:285).

One approach that scholars of cultural studies employ in their exploration of lived experience is phenomenology. Phenomenology is a valuable resource for research into queer lives “insofar as it emphasizes the importance of lived experience, the intentionality of consciousness, the significance of nearness or what is ready-to-hand, and the role of repeated and habitual actions in shaping bodies and worlds” (Ahmed 2006:2). Recent research on embodiment and lived experience has utilized what is termed ‘new ethnography’ which refers to forms of social inquiry that seek to be ‘truer’ to the lives and experiences of people and aims to understand lived realities. Characteristic of new ethnography, along with phenomenology, is that it is particularly interested in modes of experiencing the world, such as emotions (Douglas, 1977; Ellis, 1991), embodiment (Merleau-Ponty, 1962) which according to Saukko have “often been neglected by rationalistically, orientated modes of social scientific inquiry” (Saukko 2003:57). This focus allows for the recognition that the social field is constituted through bodies and a phenomenological approach would suggest that meaning/ knowledge is embodied. As Murray argues “‘knowing’ is not a primarily cognitive function and tacit body knowledges are intercorporeal ways of knowing and ordering the meanings of our various ways of being and our interaction: they are constitutive of our bodily being-in-the world” (2007:362). Simultaneously our bodily being-in-the-world and being a body- for-others (Diprose 2002) has the power to reinforce dominant meanings or destabilize such

understandings according to the specifics of, and the ways in which we conduct our embodied selves. This version of knowledge, as embodied and intercorporeal and contingent, provides a strong critique to understandings of the assumed objectivity of researchers and findings put forward by positivist sciences. New ethnography seeks to address and challenge the traditional understandings of social research as being conducted ‘objectively’ and the subsequent criticisms of the use of other people’s experiences to prove and validate particular narratives or hypotheses. Cultural enquiry, therefore, embraces a need for flexibility in its research methods. Gray suggests that “this approach to method acknowledges the dynamic nature of cultural and social processes and of meaning production, and has the potential to respond to complex ways in which individuals, or agents, or subjects, inhabit their specific formations, identities and subjectivities” (Gray 2003:17 -18). According to Gray this enables us to be “dazzled” and to be “surprised” by our research (2003:18).

At times writing/researching in a linear mode of progression, as is required for the purposes of academic enquiry and the institutional setting of university space, can go against some of the off-center logics of queer, which throughout this work I seek to illuminate, and in keeping with such off-centre logics this project deviated off its predetermined path. This thesis had its inception as an exploration into queer sexuality in mid to later life. I had recognized a significant gap in the inclusion of queer sexualities in recent research on sexuality in later life. While there had been a token inclusion of gay and lesbian sexualities in the literature on later life sexuality, sexualities outside of the heterosexual/homosexual binary, for example those of transgendered and intersexed people, were rarely, if at all acknowledged, adding to what I felt was the marginalization of transgendered people. This lead to the obvious need to have other forms of queer sexualities included in research in order to have a more expansive understanding of sexualities in Aotearoa/New Zealand. However as my research progressed and interviews took place, what transpired was not a driving focus on age, but rich and unique material on alternative ways of living and experiencing embodiment. Participants’ accounts drew my attention to the power dynamics of space and bodies. Therefore the version my analysis took was influenced by their experiences of queer bodies in different social and

personal spaces. So after much deliberation and a period of unsettling disorientation this work took a different direction, a queer direction. In keeping with the flow of a queer direction, a theme which I will explore at some length throughout this thesis, my work veers from the straight and narrow, is experimental, at times intuitively driven and always seeks to disrupt Western dualistic understandings of human subjectivity that value the mind above the body, rationality over intuition and progression/structure rather than spontaneity.

This also highlights the importance of talking to tranz subjects and researching through their experiences alternative ways of understanding embodiment and space. However as Halberstam argues:

obviously not all gay, lesbian, and transgender people live their lives in radically different ways from their heterosexual counterparts, but part of what has made queerness compelling as a form of self-description in the past decade or so has to do with the way it has the potential to open up new life narratives and alternative relations to time and space (2005:2-3).

This is evidenced, for example, in the talk of transgendered people around their interactions with health professionals and their insistence on having their own understandings of their bodies recognized. Within this medical space the ‘distressed’ subject narrated by the medical model is replaced with one with agency, self-knowledge, innovation and dignity. This agency has the potential to inform and create change, both within medical spaces and within public awareness in relation to transitioning, ambiguous and/or gender diverse bodies and the sexual subjectivities they embody. Tensions at times do exist within the narratives of transgendered people, for example negotiating the dominant meanings of sexual difference within the context of medical spaces/bodies. The ability to survive within a social order that only recognizes two sexes is dependent on this juggle between resistance and compliance. As Pile suggests “the map of resistance is not simply the underside of the map of domination” (cited Halberstam 2005:6). Transgendered subjectivity, as I will argue throughout this work, is made up of multiple layers of difference, recognition and creativity and the resilience to survive.

Reflexivity in Research

Feminist researchers have been highly critical of the power imbalances that remain in quantitative and qualitative research and are aware that different forms of inquiry affect the nature of understandings that are generated (Franklin 1997). By utilizing a critical analysis, influenced by various political and/or postmodern theories, I wished to engage with and draw awareness to the personal and social baggage that hinders our comprehension of different experiences, and, by pushing the limits of understanding, to foster openness towards possibly radically different lived worlds. Within this process I was also mindful of the issues of power within the research process and sought to challenge more traditional approaches whereby the researcher is positioned as ‘the knower’ and the people who participate in the research as ‘the known’ (du Bois, 1983). This is of particular importance when we consider “that informants might be viewed as theorists and experts in their own lives and realms of experience” (Lemert, 1997:xi).

Transgender people, because they push the boundaries of sexual difference, are confronted by societal constructions of gender/sex on a daily, if not momentary, basis and become highly reflexive of their experiences. This reflection, I will argue, is instantaneous with the levels of exclusion experienced when bodies transgress normative ideals. Attention and sensitivity therefore needs to be given to this awareness and the acknowledgement that research is produced through the generosity and knowledge of the participants involved. Furthermore the researcher is an embodied person with his/her own complex personal history, which is reflected in all aspects of a study (Cole & Knowles, 2001:10). My own presence alongside the presence of the people involved in this study is interwoven in the end product. I am not a transgendered person but identify as ‘queer’, and like all people that do not exist within the dominant group I am continuously drawn into reflection when I negotiate spaces that have an unspoken claim to be heterosexual normative spaces, for example schools, supermarkets, bars, restaurants, recreation facilities, family spaces, the street and so on. I can identify with the reflection process and embodied feelings of otherness when confronted by exclusion but can only imagine the magnitude of negotiation that must be undertaken when dealing with social structures and practices that only recognize your being within medical and psychiatric constructs.

Having acknowledged the desire to conduct a more egalitarian research relationship, the inescapable paradoxes must also be addressed. As Ribbens argues, in “in-depth interviews you give the interviewee the power to control the interview itself, and yet as a result they put themselves very much in your hands by exposing themselves in a one-sided relationship. When you come to depart, you take their words away, to be objectified as an interview transcript” (1989:587). The theoretical frameworks and forms of analysis that I then apply are a result of my own academic and personal positioning. The narration might well be different, had it been collected by a different person, with a different personal background, and different categories of reference to guide this directing and editing (Coles & Knowles, 2001). As a researcher, I am an outsider with my own version of ‘reality’ and history, and while this location of outsider invariably invokes levels of vulnerability, as a non-transgendered queer woman, I cross boundaries to peer into another world in order to understand as best I can and as reflexively as I can that person’s perspective (Davidson & Tolich 1999:182).

Phibbs (2001) suggests that personal stories generated in social research situations enable people to reflect upon themselves, their relationships with others and with the social worlds in which they interact. Phibbs further argues that interviewing involves both the respondent and the researcher positioning themselves in particular story-actions (2001). As Chase points out “attending to another’s story in the interview context...requires an altered conception of what interviews are and how we should conduct them” (1998). In order to draw out the stories that my participants told of their lives and the different narratives they drew on, I positioned myself as a researcher that was more of a facilitator or what Plummer (1995) calls a ‘coaxer’ rather than a highly visible ‘asker’ of questions. Reflecting on Mishler’s (1986) argument that the “question-and-answer method of interviewing has a tendency to suppress respondents’ stories” (cited in Holloway & Jefferson 2000:32), I decided that rather than imposing my own language and order I would allow the interviewees to develop their stories based on their experiences. This required that I positioned myself not only as a ‘coaxer’, but also a ‘good listener’. Through listening and inquiry into the ways in which people develop their subjectivities, a narrative emerges that suggests a fluidity of ‘sex/gender’, and narrates bodies which are

in the process of what could be holistically described as ‘reinvention’, ‘creation’ and ‘innovation’. As Bakhtin (1985) claims, we experience ourselves within a liminal space between what is and what could be. Transgendered bodies, I suggest, are always pushing the parameters of what is possible and what is yet to be perceived and lived. This, I contend, is because transgendered people are simultaneously inventing themselves as they go along while negotiating the past, present and future.

Recruitment of Participants

In order to recruit volunteers, I made contact with Agenda, which is a national group that supports transgendered people, requesting their permission to circulate my information sheet at their next monthly meeting (See Appendix A). I also approached Tranzguys, which is a support group for female to male transgendered people, via the Internet, again requesting their permission to circulate information regarding my research and my interest in interviewing people. Through Agenda I made contact with two male to female (mtf) transgendered people.

From the onset of this thesis I was aware that the availability of intersex participants would be problematic, not just because of the small population within Aotearoa/New Zealand but more significantly due to the cultural narratives that make their presence invisible. Standard medical practice within Aotearoa dictates that children born intersex are directed firmly into one or other of the sex categories ‘male’ and ‘female’. This creates the situation where people may not be totally aware of their beginnings or may identify with the various medical ‘conditions’ constructed to understand sexual variation, rather than adopting an intersex identity. Fortunately I was lucky to interview Mani Bruce Mitchell, a prominent figure in intersex activism both here in Aotearoa/New Zealand and internationally. Mani reinforced the importance of research that acknowledges the diversity of bodies and the variety of subjectivities they embrace.

I made contact via email with one person who identified as fa’afafine, who had been referred to me, and I was fortunate to interview him.

I interviewed six participants whose accounts appear in this thesis. For the most part I have left interview material in the original form: so as to allow the participants' voices to infiltrate my work as they have my thoughts.

Interviews

I conducted the interviews during July 2005 over a two-day period, in a city other than my hometown, during which time I interviewed five people, audio-taping each interview. A further interview was conducted by phone in September 2005 due to this participant's unavailability at the time the other interviews were conducted. Interviews lasted anywhere from two to three hours. In some cases interviews ended due to lateness, which highlighted one of the limitations of one-off interviews and interviewing in a city different to one's own. Interviews were carried out either in the participants' homes or in one case the hotel I was staying in. Participants were interviewed individually except in one case where I interviewed a participant and her partner together. The couple requested this, and, given the fact that they had been in a long-term monogamous relationship before and during transition, I decided this would work within the focus of my research. This turned out to be significant in the sense that it demonstrated the importance of intercorporeal connections to others in how people experienced their lives, bodies, and the transition from one sex to another. Subsequently this allowed for the opening up of discussion surrounding the complexities of how partners of transgender people situate their own sexual identities in relation to the partnership and in relation to the wider community. For example the couple I interviewed had in the past been recognized as a straight married couple. Transition of the male partner to female consequently brings the conventions of sexual orientation and marriage into question.

All participants gave informed consent prior to interviews and the Consent Form comprises Appendix B. Interview schedules were not given to participants prior to the interview, apart from the last interviewee who requested this. I wanted participants to talk of their experiences without having to systematically follow an interview schedule, which I felt might restrict their talk to what they believed I might want to hear. While there was a difference between the last interview and the previous interviews, this was not

necessarily negative but it was evident that the schedule dictated and structured the talk more than the other interviews. The fact that this interview was conducted via phone may also have played a part in this difference. The interview schedule was developed with the understanding that it would provide me only with guidelines as to what topic areas to cover during the interview. Part of the process of developing questions for the interview schedule was as a means to find ways to articulate open-ended questions designed to encourage interviewees to talk about their own stories and experiences.

Profile of Interviewees

The six interviewees who participated are described below using information they gave me in the interview. Pseudonyms are used to preserve anonymity, except in the case of Mani, who preferred to retain her own name.

Carol: At the time of the interview, Carol, was a 48-transgendered female who has been in a long-term monogamous relationship and is married to Jen. Carol has always been sexually attracted to women but describes herself as not exactly lesbian.

Claire: At the time of the interview, Claire was a 65-year-old transgendered female. She made it clear that she wished to have sex reassignment but due to financial factors was reliant on being eligible for the government-funded surgery. Claire suggested that her sexual orientation was not directed towards a particular sex but was more importantly about the connection.

Jay: Jay was at the time a 43-year old transgendered male in a non-monogamous relationship with a lesbian woman. Jay is also sexually attracted to gay men (although at the time of the interview was not sexually active with gay men) and identifies as queer.

Jen: Jen is a biological woman who is married to Carol (mtf), and who prior to Carol's transition identified as a heterosexual woman. She currently considers the recognized sexual categories to inadequate to explain her experiences.

Kelvin: Kelvin is a Samoan fa'afafine who at the time of the interview was 55 and defines himself as physically male with the spirit of a powerful woman. Kelvin is sexually oriented to gay and straight men. He has lived in Aotearoa/New Zealand for 46 years.

Mani: At the time of the interview, Mani was a 55-year-old intersex person who has considerable visibility both within Aotearoa/New Zealand and internationally due to hir¹ activist work for the Intersex Society. Mani has a significant public persona due to documentaries that have been reproduced telling of hir life and exploring the diversity of human existence. Mani made it clear to me that visibility was important and so did not wish to be anonymous. Mani does not identify with the categories of male/female or heterosexual/homosexual but claims an intersexed identity and sexuality.

Chapter Progression

The next four chapters are an interweaving of aspects of the theoretical framing I have set forth and analysis of the transcript material from the interviews. These chapters are inspired by participants' accounts and the analysis specifically reflects the specific experiences of this small group of volunteers and does not represent a generalized account of transgendered lives. This project focuses on the diversity of human embodiment and experiences, therefore steers away from any suggestion of a unified transgender identity. Instead this work involves an exploration into the instability of sexual difference as demonstrated through transgendered embodiment, which contests 'biological' and scientific ideas about sex. As Jackson and Scott outline, "(t)he categories 'men' and 'women' are social categories and the 'recognition' of biological 'sex difference' on which this distinction seems to rest is itself a social and cultural practice." (2001:13). This work explores how people are directed and regulated into adopting unified identities/sexualities, such as man/woman, and how such categorizes are negotiated and at times resisted. Chapter two delves further into theories of embodiment and utilizes the Deleuzian concept of the body as 'becoming'; that is, as a substance we are continually "folding, unfolding, and refolding" (May 2005:60). In contrast to the

¹ Gender neutral pronouns such as hir, and s/he will utilized when referring to the experiences of Mani

concept of ‘being’, which signifies a constant identity that preexists the social, *becoming* gives us the means to explore the body’s creative ability to constantly mutate/metamorphose in context to intercorporeal connections, times and places. While infinite differences may congeal into specific identities, the body remains open to its surroundings and as such is a dynamic and innovative body. I also look to the ways in which faculties such as imagination, perception, fantasy, memory, knowledge and emotions traditionally situated in the mind - can be also located in the body demonstrating the political significance of bodies and their agency and interactions.

In Chapter three I examine the space of the traditional heterosexual family and the shaping and directing of bodies through the giving of love. I explore the notion that bodies, rather than existing as separate and contained units, are always in a process of interchange with other bodies and the spaces within which they exist. Drawing on alternative understandings of space, I examine the way the traditional family channels the multiplicities of bodies into closed, hierarchized and sexed identities thus producing, what I term ‘straight bodies’. I explore the disruption that the presence of the queer child/adult causes within the family formation/space. Investigating how this disruption is either contained or creatively instigates changes in the contours of family space, I highlight that potentially new forms of embodiment and family structure may develop. I also look to the way in which intercorporeal generosity (that is the open exchange and giving of bodies to others) provides a transformative space where the multitude of differences repressed by identity constructs can be actualized. Drawing on different cultural understandings of bodies and collectivity I point to the way in which liberal humanist understandings of individualism restrict the potential of desiring bodies.

Chapter Four is an exploration of queer bodies within wider social spaces such as the street and recreational space. I develop further the concept that space takes the shape and contours of the bodies that inhabit it: I specifically examine the micro-dynamics of power that functions through bodies to create the street as straight, I investigate the way the straight body, due to its domination and normalization, slips from visibility creating the

sensation that the queer body is hyper-present. I describe the way in which the queer body, registered as a threat to the closed body, is either made to shrink its presence or made to conform to binary sex. I also examine the idea that violence is a structured component of straight space/worlds. I identify how the proximity of queer bodies is regulated in relation to both straight and other queer bodies preventing the de-normalization of space or any spontaneous connection between bodies. I explore the phenomenon of ‘straight acting’ and the problems within queer worlds when identity categories, although marginalized/alternative, are utilized to exclude certain queer bodies.

Chapter five is an accumulation of the theorizing set out in previous chapters, involving a discussion of the creative potential of queer bodies to challenge the normalization of heterosexuality through approaching desire and bodies as productive and transformative. Drawing on the themes of bodily generosity developed throughout this work I explore the potential of queer sex sexual practice and embodiment for social change. Critiquing the ways that desire has been repressed to conform to the dominant understandings of sexual performance, I explore the expansiveness of desire and the ways in which it seeps beyond the limitations of Western traditional constructs to embrace new and innovative forms. Drawing on participants’ experiences I push beyond the reduction of pleasure to particular bodily regions and sexual dimorphism and emphasize the polyvocality of bodies, connections and pleasures.

Chapter Two

The ‘Becoming’ Queer Body

Introduction

In this chapter I lay down the foundations for one of the central themes that runs throughout this thesis the deconstruction of the mind/ body division. Such a division has had a phenomenal influence on the way in which bodies are lived and understood in western culture. According to Annie Potts Western metaphysics “produces binarized thinking (and hence binarized modes of ‘making sense’ of experience), through the constitution of hierarchical dualisms such as presence/absence, mind/body, culture/nature, masculine/feminine, active/passive, to name but a few” (2002:2). This form of thinking produces understandings of subjectivity that divide the body between separated realms of interiority and exteriority (inner and outer space). Utilizing a combination of queer, poststructuralist, and posthumanist theories I reconfigure these divisions by locating faculties such as imagination, perception and fantasy, often associated with the mind, as working simultaneously in the body. This suggests that ‘the mind’ and ‘the body’ are not distinct or separate ‘entities’ but interwoven parts of the self. I examine the ways in which corporeality, as experienced by the people I interviewed, is simultaneously shaped by cultural narratives while they actively push beyond the controls embedded within such narratives to create new and innovative forms of queer embodiment. Concepts of embodiment challenge classic Cartesian dualism, which separate the mind from the body and minimize the relevance and importance of bodies for being in the world. As Mathews states:

Human subjectivity necessarily expresses itself through the human body: quite simply, I see with my eyes, hear with my ears, act through moving my arms and legs, speak through moving my vocal chords, smile through arranging my face in the relevant way, and so on. I could not have any subjective response to the world

unless I had a body...At the same time, my body is not a mere object in the world, as it is both for Cartesian dualists and traditional materialists, but something I 'live', something I inhabit, as the vehicle of my subjective experience. It is as true to say that my body is me as that I am my body (2006:51).

Contrary to dominant understandings of the individual which present the self as located in the conscious, and preexisting social interactions, Mathews' account suggests that the body cannot be separated from consciousness; that, in fact, consciousness is embodied. The body therefore plays a major role in the way identity is both created and performed and by paying closer attention to the significance of bodies it is possible to explore the way power functions at a macro and micro level through locating 'normative' identity as disembodied and situated in an autonomous rational mind. The mind/body split renders the body as a static entity; embodiment on the other hand suggests a more ongoing process in which bodies are never finished but always in a state of formation being shaped and shaping the world around them. This thesis explores the body "as social and natural construction, as a malleable organism which is open to re-formation through its location within networks of historically variable social relations" (Burkitt 1999:7). Through this notion of embodiment as a constant and unending process the body will be approached as a productive, communicative, powerful, thinking body (Ilyenkov 1977). Engaging with binaristic understandings such as female/male, nature/culture, inner/outer worlds and private/public, I will demonstrate the power and ingenuity of the body to disrupt such notions, and argue that such divides are a product of traditional thinking patterns rather than 'reality'. As Rosi Braidotti argues, "metaphysics is not an abstract construction – it is a political ontology" (1994:180). The significance and impact of social relations on the body will be explored more fully in the following chapters. This chapter focuses on the process of bodily change and the instability of sexual difference as demonstrated through transgendered embodiment which contests 'biological' and 'scientific' ideas about sex.

This chapter is influenced by a variety of theorists, to greater or lesser degree, such as Ahmed, Deleuze and Guattari, Diprose, Lyotard, Merleau-Ponty, Nietzsche and Spinoza,

for their work on the significance of the body for being in the world. As Gatens states, in relation to Spinoza:

The Spinozist account of the body is of a productive and creative body, which cannot be definitively “known” since it is not identical with itself across time. The body does not have a “truth” or a “true nature” since it is a process and its meaning and capacities will vary according to its context. We do not know the limits of this body or the powers that it is capable of attaining. These limits and capacities can only be revealed in the ongoing interactions of the body and its environment (1996:57).

As Spinoza points out, the body defies any attempt to generalize or map accurately its functions and capabilities nor separate it from the spaces within which it exists; yet authoritative accounts continue to present the body as an innately readable and definable text. By paying attention, therefore, to the micro aspects of embodiment, (that is, the everyday experiences of living /feeling bodies) it is possible to explore the role of the body in rethinking normative concepts of sex/gender and sexuality. This work approaches embodiment through Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of the ‘becoming’ body. Their unconventional re-conceptualization of the body creates a radical challenge for living differently, which defies modern understanding of the unified and singular body and suggests that the becoming body is an “endless experimentation, metamorphosis, or transmutation, alignment and realignment” (Grosz 1994:167). While it is vital that we pay attention to the micro-dynamics of embodiment, it is also pertinent that we pay attention to how we are *looking*. I will suggest throughout my work that perception (the way in which we see the body of the ‘other’) can only be carried out through having a body ourselves. Therefore any account of bodies is an intercorporeal act, which involves our own bodily understandings.

Transgendered bodies blur the dominant view that sex is natural and biologically preexists any social inscription. As I have addressed in the introduction to this thesis, drawing on the work of Thomas Laqueur and Anne Fausto-Sterling, sex is not stable, nor fixed over time but is subject to social and political change. Understanding the role of bio-history in shaping the body and social relations is vital to thinking new ways of

living. Laqueur and Fausto-Sterling both trace the historical development of biological knowledge, revealing that science rather than discovering the ‘truth’ of the sexed body, limits bodies according to the logic of metaphysical (i.e. dichotomous) thinking. As Chanter argues:

Science itself is ideologically driven: there is no purely scientific definition of male and female, only culturally circumscribed interpretations of data that give rise to certain views, some of which come to form part of the ‘scientific’ canon. This canon itself is far from immune from assumptions deriving from its practitioners, most of whom, up until fairly recently have been white, privileged, western, and male, and many of whom are still dominated by patriarchal white, bourgeois assumptions (2006:7).

I will suggest that these assumptions are brought to bear on transgendered bodies and through this process the diversity and force of sexed bodies is reduced in order to conform to cultural interpretations. It is the discourses and bodily knowledge of scientists, not nature, that constructed sex as a ‘truth’ and developed understandings of the body that make sex the focal point of identity. As Foucault (1978) has shown us in *History of Sexuality* in developing knowledge and truths about the body science created the categories which define and therefore produce notions of the normative body and sexuality thereby creating the means with which to regulate and control bodies, pathologize any signs of ambiguity and difference, and construct the so-called ‘abnormal’ body. Tracing the emergence of such knowledge Foucault states:

The human body was entering a machinery of power that explores it, breaks it down, and rearranges it. A “political anatomy,” which was also a “mechanics of power,” was being born; it defined how one may have a hold over others’ bodies, not only so that they may do what one wishes, but so that they may operate as one wishes, with the techniques, the speed, and the efficiency that one determines. Thus discipline produces subjected and practiced bodies, “docile” bodies (1984:182).

The body, according to Foucault, is caught up in a political field in which power works subtly to coerce and subject the body to disciplinary forms of knowledge. Such knowledge infiltrates the very mechanisms and functioning of the body and the body’s self-perception. Caught in monitoring any signs of ambiguity or difference, the body

becomes complicit in its own docility. Disciplinary power works to increase the forces of the body (in economic terms of utility) and diminishes these same forces (in political terms of obedience), functioning all the more subtly on the ‘physical body’ while seeming to appear less ‘corporeal’ (Rainbow 1984:182).

It is the intention of this work to capture the heterogeneity of embodiment and desire by not reducing transgendered experiences to the dominant psycho-medical scripts of ‘pathology,’ ‘distress’ or ‘conditions’. Having said this I in no way wish to minimize the difficulties that might be experienced by transgendered people or their right to identify with psycho-medical scripts. As Finn and Dell argue, ‘distress’ often “occurs, emerges in and through the struggle to free the body from socio-cultural imperatives and ‘normalizing’ psycho-medical discourses and practices that restrict choice, pleasure and (body) freedom” (1999:467). Within psycho-medical scripts the ‘problem’ of identifying as the opposite sex, or in the case of intersex, not definitively presenting as either one sex or the other, is located in the individual rather than within the societal understandings within which they both exist. The object of this analysis is to provide a queer approach to the way in which bodies might be lived and understood differently, in order to utilize the resistant power of bodies to challenge dominant scientific ideologies, which naturalize sex and sexuality.

In investigating queer embodiment I draw a parallel to the vision of Foucault in the 1980s when he argued:

Homosexuality is a historic opportunity to open up new relational and affective potentialities (*virtualities*), not in virtue of qualities intrinsic to the homosexual, but because the position of the homosexual ‘off-center,’ somehow, together with the diagonal lines which the homosexual can draw through the social fabric, makes it possible to bring to light these potentialities (cited Halperin 1995:67)

As Halperin argues, Foucault saw homosexuality not as a newly liberated species of sexual being but as a strategically situated marginal and spatial position from which it might be possible to glimpse and to devise new ways of relating to oneself and to others. Foucault utilizes the spatial terms ‘off-center’ and ‘diagonal lines’ to draw attention to

the ways in which queer subjects spatially situate themselves in relation to the norm or as I argue throughout this work, to the straight. Likewise drawing on the work of Merleau-Ponty and phenomenology I will also look to the disruptive potential of queerness in terms of geographical and bodily space. Ahmed suggests queer is a spatial term in itself, if “we can turn to the etymology of the word ‘queer’, which comes from the Indo-European word to ‘twist’” (2006:67). Queer then gets translated into a sexual term, a term for a twisted sexuality that does not follow a “straight line,” a sexuality that is bent and crooked (Cleto 2002:13). Utilizing queer’s resistive spatiality I will suggest, that the queer body orientates and moves in different directions, engaging with space in different ways. My aim here is to emphasize the micro-dynamics of resistance often overlooked by the pervasiveness of dominant scripts. As Pile points out “resistant political subjectivities are constituted through positions taken up not only in relation to authority – which may well leave people in awkward, ambivalent, down-right contradictory and dangerous places – but also through experiences which are not so quickly labeled ‘power’, such as desire and anger, capacity and ability, happiness and fear, dreaming and forgetting” (1997:3). Pile’s understanding of resistant subjectivities, I suggest, is evident in the experiences of transgendered subjects who if they resisted totally medical scripts may deny themselves access to the technologies they wish to access. Understanding the resistances of tranz people requires looking beyond their relationship with medicine to their everyday lives, loves and intercorporeal bodily movements. Furthermore by adding *imagining* to forms of resistance it is possible to demonstrate the agency of queer subjects. To imagine oneself differently to that of the dominant social imaginary is an embodied act of resistance. These themes will be drawn on at various points throughout this chapter and subsequent chapters.

Queer Imagination

Firstly I will begin by rethinking the mind/body split, which has valorized the mind as the center of thought and subsequently the center of imagination. However if we rethink the body as a ‘thinking body’ then imagination equally can be located within the body and the ‘imaging body’ can be explored. This suggests that the intertwining of mind and body is extremely significant for how lives are lived and understood. Traditional

narratives surrounding the body have tended to create the idea of the body as a container to house the mind, a static entity separated from perception, imagination, memory and emotion. However this understanding is more a product of dualistic thought itself as Daiute and Lightfoot argue:

Imagination, as one of the properties of the mental apparatus that generates images, has been understood as something that happens in the mind. However to make the Cartesian claim that imaginings are happenings taking place on the shadowy stage of the mind is to affirm a demonstrably futile model of human conduct. A review of theories and research designed to clarify the concept of imagination makes one fact abundantly clear: the model of pictures-in –the-mind metaphor collapses when somesthetic experiences are imagined (2004:9-10).

The fact that recalling memory can spark senses in the body suggests that we experience imagination not just in the brain but functioning from within the materiality of the body. If we no longer privilege the mind but theorize the body as an active, complex entity that is materially made up of not only physiological responses but history, fantasy, imagination and desire then the body can be recognized as a creative force. The body as an active force acts and reacts to the social formation that seeks to constrain it. Hoogland suggests: “the ‘coming-into-being’ of the embodied subject is as much a product of imagination, desire and fantasy as of sense/ual embodied perception, and thus, it should also be acknowledged that embodiedness is equally an enactment of these as much as an interaction with them” (2002:218). The role of the imaginary therefore plays a major role in how bodies are shaped, lived and how they negotiate the pressures to conform to rigid identity categories.

Hegemonic imaginary seeks to cement the body in a unified fixed subject position based on sexual anatomy and gender. In doing so it denies the possibilities of embodied multi-identifications or multi-imaginings across gender and sex. I draw on Butler’s suggestion that through the creative deployment of alternative imaginary schemas, both “anatomy – and sexual difference itself – (can be opened up) as a site of proliferative resignifications” (Butler1993:89). Weiss also suggests that:

Exploring the corporeal possibilities that have been foreclosed by a given culture's own imaginary, itself helps to bring into being a new imaginary – one that does justice to the richness of our bodily differences. Changing the body image, I maintain, must involve changes in the imaginary, which situates the body image within a vast horizon of possible significances. To change the imaginary, we must in turn create new images of the body, dynamic images of non-docile bodies that resist the readily available techniques of corporeal inscription and normalization that currently define "human reality" (1999:67).

As Weiss suggests, by releasing the imaginary and fantasy from their entrapment in the mind, the body can materialize alternative forms of embodiment. This 'queering' of the imaginary disturbs the boundaries of the fixed body and allows for the validation of the role the imagination plays in the shaping and 'becoming' of bodies. I explore this in the following excerpt in which Jay, a female to male transman, talks of his body image. Within this account Jay captures a sense of a fluid self-perception. His alternative imagination and perception are embodiment and significant in his becoming male and in how he lives his body. Jay described himself to me as a very imaginative person:

I always had.....the sense of being bigger than I was and I always used to wear, and I am quite small, I would always wear big clothes. I lifted things and stuffed my back because I was always you know I had this perception of myself being much bigger than I was. And um I remember one time someone took a photo probably about fifteen years ago now of my back because they were taking a photo of a tattoo on my back and because I didn't often look at my back I remember looking at it really surprised at how small it was. So it wasn't you know I always wanted to be stocky you know. Whereas I am one of those long thin sort of body types

Jay captures the power of his embodied perception of a bigger and stronger body that plays a part in his desire for transformation. This perception is so strong that he lives his embodiment as if he was bigger. Matthews points out that, "contrary to dualism, the perceiving subject is not some 'inner' entity, but something which by its very nature 'opens out on to' the world" (2006:47). Rethinking the binaries, Jay's imagination and perception of himself rather than being located in his mind as traditional thought suggests, is located in his body. 'Becoming' a male body for Jay is actualizing the body that is already part of his bodily imagination and bodily comportment. Projecting his embodiment and bodily imagination, which is not conventionally feminine, outwards into the world Jay lives his embodied imagination. The body imagines itself differently and

possesses a desire for masculinity. This is, I argue, not a mind trapped in the wrong body but a mind-body that imagines and materializes itself differently and wishes to express its perceived masculine self. However this masculinity rather than being closed and fixed such as straight masculinity (hegemonic masculinity), opens itself to the world to move and imagine itself in different forms and flow in different directions resisting rigid categories that threaten to reduce its intensity. I will explore this phenomenon further in a later section of this chapter.

The dominant narrative in relation to sex reassignment suggests that a person wishing to change their sex is born in the ‘wrong body’. Roen argues “that the idea that transsexuality is a discrete and bounded phenomenon, defined by the sense of being ‘trapped in the wrong body’, permeates psycho-medical, sexological, sociological, and anthropological literatures” (2001:94). What I would like to consider here is that the body is not the ‘wrong’ body, but a body that has multi-imagination or identifications that disrupt and blur the boundaries of gender and sex. The ‘wrong body’ discourse arises from the liberal humanist concept of the individual which situates identity as fixed in the consciousness and overlooks the ongoing formation of identity which functions continuously through the body and the connection with the bodies of others. To separate consciousness from the body is a fiction derived from traditional modes of thinking. A transgendered person does not step outside his or her body to step into a new body in order to transition to the other sex but brings bodily parts and behaviors into alignment with self-imagination and perception. While perception can follow dogmatic and habitual corporeal styles inherited through the direction of others and “can affect an ontological closure to the other” (Diprose 2002:175), it can also be transformative. As Diprose suggests when discussing the work of Merleau-Ponty:

...each perception and the judgment it contains, however rigid, is infected with ambiguity. Just as the body realizes “culture” through its expression in perception, perception also realizes “nature” or the “world” through its impact on the body. Perception takes place in the interworld of affectivity, “between” body and world, in the intertwining and reversibility of flesh. This ambiguity of perception is also its generosity where I am given and opened to a world as it is given to me. The generosity of perception effects a transformation of meaning and so a metamorphosis of my style of being and the world it actualizes (2002:175).

Perception, and hence generosity, therefore are located in the body and once set free from their cultural sedimentation and embodied habits have the potential to actualize new ways of being that break through the concepts that divide the self between inner and outer worlds. The mind, I argue, is not trapped in the wrong body, as these are inseparable, rather the body-mind imagines itself differently in connection to its openness and intertwining with the world. In the following extract Carol (male to female) talks about her expectations of transitioning when I asked her about body image:

When I first went to see the endocrinologist at the hospital, he said you know “I don’t quite know how it is going to go”, he said, “well what do you want me to do for you” and I sort of said, “I want to grow breasts and stuff”. He said “right we can do that” and I mean I wanted to have a more feminine body but at that stage I was aware that I was, I mean, when I started the hormones I was forty, so I realized I was never going to look like a super model and I never particularly considered myself to have a particularly attractive face, either as male or female so I fully realize that what I will get is what I will get and I didn’t have any illusions of how I was going to look. Which I think was the healthy way to go because, you know, a lot of people I know have a lot of unrealistic expectations.

Carol, in her engagement with medical professionals, does not draw upon a concept of the wrong body nor an inseparable division between maleness and femaleness; rather she reveals her desire to be ‘more feminine’. Traditional ways of perceiving bodies suggest that there is a linear process, a straight line from one sex to the other and a severance of the ‘old’ body. However if we pay more attention to the body in this process it appears that the narrative of wrong/right is a simplified account. The ‘wrong’ body is not discarded and replaced by a new and completely different version. As Carol points out many of the characteristics of the body remain the same while others change significantly. Bodies display varying levels of masculine and feminine characteristics yet dominant modes of thinking more often than not reduce the complexities of the body to conform to the dominant social formation of binary sex. The concept of binary sex is founded on the idea that the biological predetermines the social and follows a natural, logical and fixed order. Yet as Jay in the following extract captures, bodies do matter not because they preexist the social but because they are interwoven with the social and therefore are malleable biological matter:

I think before I transitioned I had done the whole, you know, I had done feminist stuff and I believed quite strongly in social construction. You know the environment where we grow up shapes our perceptions of who we can be, therefore the reality of who we can be and it was probably anti-essentialist stuff. Well I remember stuff I wrote in my late teens but one of the things, for me, that comes through with my experience of being transgender is that biology does matter on some level. Bodies do matter on some level they are part of it and you know it is all a mixture of nature and nurture, and the type of guy I am is influenced by my perceptions of the world. You know the types of men I see and how I want to be in the world and I have lots of choices over that.

Jay's body plays a role in his transition because his bodily perception is male. Bodies are open and receptive to the environment and to other bodies, rather than closed and fixed. Jay disturbs the binary of nature versus nurture and his experience highlights the interwoven process of embodiment that undermines such distinctions. Maleness and its subsequent performance of masculinity rather than fixed, as Jay reveals, is a process of self-reflection and bodily interaction with the world. He talks of various forms of masculinity, demonstrating that masculinity is diverse and that he has choices over how he performs it. Queer embodiment of masculinity therefore has the potential to create new forms of masculinity. As Roen suggests “arguing against a ‘wrong body’ perspective on transsexuality presents a challenge to...discourses about the correlation between sexual anatomy and gendered subjectivity; and any psychiatric classification of transsexuality which fails to accommodate the lived diversity and fluidity of gender” (2001:99). To classify transsexuality as a psychiatric condition works to maintain socially produced hierarchical categories as natural. If we change the way we ‘look/perceive’ and validate the micro-dynamics of bodies in relation to other bodies within specific spaces we can gain a different perspective. As Jay points out:

In terms of things being fixed or fluid, in liminality - in between places, I think when I started I hoped, I don't know if I mean hoped (maybe hoped is a good word for it), I liked thinking about places that were neither, male or female. You know because I knew I didn't want to be you know I knew I didn't feel, I was going to say female but even that is a hard thing to say because it kinda puts me back there, I wasn't that so to be tranz was not to be female you know. It felt a very strong place but as you transition and you get the ability to feel your maleness have your

maleness reflected back at you. What happens; it is not a question of passing or not it is actually a question that as soon as people know that you are tranz they then put you back in the box. The world doesn't have this place in the middle.

Jay captures the problems of dogmatic perception and subsequent categorization, which constrain the potential of how Jay could live his body and the forms of masculine embodiment he is able to display. Jay's embodiment and self perception outrun any categories that seek to capture it, yet pressure from outside traditional and normative discourses undermine this queer difference and potential. The tranz body is viewed through 'straight' eyes, which seek to contain the threat to the division between men and women. Other 'ways of seeing' are possible, however, as Halperin argues:

Queer, does not designate a class of already objectified pathologies or perversions; rather, it describes a horizon of possibility whose precise extent and heterogeneous scope cannot in principle be delimited in advance. It is from the eccentric positionality occupied by the queer subject that it may become possible to envision a variety of possibilities for reordering the relations among sexual behaviors, erotic identities, constructions of gender, forms of knowledge, regimes of enunciation, logics of representation, modes of self-constitution, and practices of community – for restructuring, that is, the relations among power, truth, and desire (1995:62).

The queer body illuminates the arbitrary nature of categories. Yet, in Jay's experience, when people realize he is tranz, which disturbs their sense of order, they put him back in the 'female' box not recognizing or accepting the diversity of humans and pulling him to the binary poles.

However because dominant structures are built on the opposition between female and male, a place in the middle is not imagined nor represented within society. Philosopher Todd May, when discussing the work of Nietzsche, talks of *active* and *reactive* forces. (For Nietzsche these forces constitute the power dynamics of society whereby active forces are creative as opposed to traditional, seeking to exercise themselves, to make whatever can be made of themselves, going to the limit of whatever they can do.) Such creativity is experimental, as it cannot be known in advance as to how far it can go before reactive forces impede on creativity. Reactive forces such as institutions/normalizing discourses are those forces that are dominant within society. As May states "reactive

forces do not overcome active forces; they undermine them” (May 2005: 66). Reactive forces produce the repetition of social mores; they do not recreate but stifle the creativity of active forces. I will interpret Jay’s queer embodiment as an active force that struggles against those forces that wish to dampen and undermine its exuberance. As Jay states:

People react, you know they don’t have a frame of reference for it and don’t understand it and keep having a struggle in their head to figure out whereto put you. That’s the damage of binaries because it means there is a whole lot of people whose edges gets squished and they try to squeeze down the edges of the box to hold them in.

The innovative body, which flows beyond its surfaces in its desire to live differently is held in and contained. The potential power of the plasticity of bodies is regulated by the body being closed in its ‘correct’ sex category and through this process of normalization the embodied presence and force of ambiguity is undermined. Such reactive forces, as I explore throughout this thesis, work on levels that are often not tangible and therefore work coercively to minimize resistance.

In the next section I will explore this concept further suggesting that if we look at the body with ‘queer’ eyes rather than ‘straight’ eyes we can rethink the transitioning body as moving from one place to another, not necessarily in a linear fashion, but more as a ‘becoming’ and metamorphosis which disrupts the boundaries of male/female and mind/body. I also point out that this process always takes place within the context of other bodies, within specific spaces and time, which can either inhibit or aid its flow. The intercorporeality of the body is a theme that will be picked up throughout this thesis examining the different spaces where bodies are affected by the bodies of others. Firstly, however, I explore the concept that emotions originate through our intercorporeal existence with others rather than from a psychological interiority.

Embodied Emotions - The Expressive Body

In this section I demonstrate the ways in which the notion of the self, as located in an interior core, is produced to perpetuate the belief in the individual and works as a means to hierarchically separate normative bodies from non-normative bodies. As Butler points

out “the ascription of interiority is itself a publicly regulated and sanctioned form of essence fabrication” (1988:528). This fabrication of the self, often utilized as a means to pathologize deviant individuals whose inner self is perceived to struggle with the exterior world, works, I suggest, to distract attention from the way in which power functions oppressively to subordination bodies of difference. For example, Franz Fanon captures how such power relations affect the body and emotions and the sense of self:

And then the occasion arose when I had to meet the white man’s eyes. An unfamiliar weight burdened me. The real world challenged my claims. In the white world the man of color encounters difficulties in the development of his bodily schema. Consciousness of the body is a negating activity. It is a third-person consciousness. The body is surrounded by an atmosphere of certain uncertainty (1986: 17).

I present Frantz Fanon’s account as a means to consider the impact of racism on the way in which the black body can embody space and how such a body is forced into negotiating feelings of conflict. Drawing on this, I suggest, there is a parallel experience for queer bodies that are also caught in an oppressive state and made to feel bodily conflict, which in turn is internalized resulting in such emotions being recognized as a problem of the individual. I use this as an example to demonstrate how some bodies are made to ‘shrink’ in space through the presence and domination of other bodies. In this situation the binary notion of white and black, which equates white with power and privilege, controls the way in which humans live their embodiment. Bodily expression is afforded to normative (and paradoxically disembodied) white bodies, and those who do not conform are driven into a state of conflict in which bodily projection out into the world is stilted. Spontaneous expression by those deemed ‘other’, under the watchful eye of those who dominate, is driven inwards and the body learns to negotiate its bodily presence in a state of contradiction with the ‘outer’ world.

Conflict is inherent, therefore, within spaces that are dominated by normative bodies and non-normative bodies are alienated within that space. The alienated body drawn into a bodily state of tension with itself, negatively fragmenting it along the lines of: the body as it is experienced, the body that is perceived by others and the body that is in conflict with

the perception of others and its own struggle with its lack of ‘normality’. Bodies that are not given a privileged or recognized place by dominant discourses therefore invariably experience some level of emotional conflict. As Burkitt states such conflict “does not arise from internal states of ambivalence; instead, it emerges within social contexts which are themselves inherently ambivalent or filled with conflict” (1999:117).

Dualistic thinking has lead to the understanding that emotions are located in our own individual ‘inner’ worlds, separated from the social structures that surround us, thereby disguising the power relations involved. Theories of embodiment allow for the recognition that “emotion is to do with flesh and blood bodies and selves, actively bound in power relations and interdependencies, whose embodied expressions and feelings are primarily the outcome of those relations” (Burkitt 1999:128). The socio-historical emergence of emotion as an ‘inner’ process, I assert, is an effect of traditional thought and a product of disciplining bodies. Burkitt traces this disciplining of bodies to the Renaissance where there was a shift in understandings of what was acceptable bodily expression. Good manners, control over bodily functions and displays of difference from the Renaissance onwards became a sign of the characteristics of the person and an issue of public attention. Differences began to be equated with abnormality. A growing emphasis was placed on acceptable bodies. Burkitt further suggests:

Control of the body also contributes to its armoring, to the concealment of certain feelings and bodily needs, which are then experienced as having to be kept ‘inside’ the person. That is, they cannot find expression on the surface of the body and so are metaphorically perceived as being hidden in the ‘subjective’ realm, which is felt to be distinct from bodily being. It is through lack of opportunity for expression that emotions come to be experienced as private and subjective, and can become intensified experiences because of the regulations that surround them (1999:121).

This suggests that emotions are inseparably social and physical: they stem from the biological body but cannot be separated from cultural norms and values that regulate what can be expressed and how. Expressions of emotion according to Burkitt are “not then, the ‘outer’ signal of ‘inner’ feelings but are signs in the networks of social relations and interdependencies” (1999:119). However the process through which emotions are

constructed and the history of their production is concealed from view when we construct them as ‘internal’ (Ahmed 2004). Ahmed suggests: “emotions show us how power shapes the very surface of bodies as well as worlds that we ‘feel’ our way in” (2004:12). This indicates that emotions and feelings, far from being an individual and personal response, are deeply political and intercorporeal. It is through the interactions and bodies of others that we feel our inclusion or exclusion.

Within the context of heavily regulated binary constructions of sex and gender, any bodily expressions of gender or sexual ambiguity are met with a similar control and condemnation. The resulting emotions, which cannot be separated from the body, or the social and interpersonal relations and spaces within which they dwell, are not permitted expression and driven ‘inwards’. Expressive queer bodies or marginalized bodies bring to the surface the bodily expressions and differences that are forcibly obscured from view through societal values/rules of acceptable and normalized bodies. The normalized/proper body and its perceived lack of difference becomes, in a sense, a ‘disembodied’ body while the body that displays diversity over represents the physicality of the body. Yet as Merleau-Ponty suggests, “the body is not itself an instrument but a form of expression, a making visible of our intentions” (1964:5). Expressive queer bodies threaten the social order as they violate the disciplinary frameworks that allow some bodies to slip from view, and their ‘flagrant’ and inherently resistant presence demonstrates the intercorporeality of bodies as deeply political.

The potential of queer embodiment to challenge the internalization of emotions and bodily expressions is illustrated in the following experience of Jay. Jay, a drag performance artist, describes his reactions to viewing the film *Hedwig* and the impact this had on his transition². Drag performance, as I will explore, is an embodied means to

² “Adapted from the critically acclaimed off-Broadway rock theatre hit, *Hedwig and The Angry Inch* tells the story of an ‘internationally ignored’ rock singer, Hedwig and her search for stardom and love. Born a boy named Hansel whose life’s dream is to find his other half, Hedwig reluctantly submits to a sex change operation in order to marry an American G.I. and to get over the Berlin wall to freedom. The operation is botched, leaving her with the aforementioned ‘angry inch’. Finding herself high and dry and divorced in a Kansas trailer park, she pushed on to form a rock band and encounters a lover/protégé in you Tommy Gnosis, who eventually leaves her, steals her songs and becomes a huge rock star. A bitter yet witty *Hedwig* with her pan-Slavic band, The Angry Inch, shadows Tommy’s stadium tour, performing in near-

express the ambiguities and contradictions of existing in a culture which predominately recognizes only two distinct sexes: As Jay describes:

I just wandered into this movie it was like 10 o'clock on a Friday night and I just was walking past and decided to go see this movie. And like you know I had this huge emotional reaction to it. You know I cried my eyes out watching it and then I created a drag performance, which wasn't to that song it was to the Origins of love song, which is the one with the animations you know of people who used to be both male and female but it has a strip thing at the end. The first time I did it was when I hadn't had top surgery so I had like a rubber vest on that I undid and just hoped it didn't expose my chest too much, it was quite a risky thing to do, but I wanted to do it. I wanted to have that element of risk and exposure in it for me and um then I performed it after I had top surgery. Then I also did my drag queen before I had top surgery and I was pretty small so I still had a stuffed bra. But then I did it after my surgery and a mtf I know gave me her artificial boobies before she got a new set which was her own actually and you know, so it was nice to play both roles before and after.

Jay's huge emotional response and tears are an embodied reaction to this film and while they could be interpreted as an expression of 'inner' individual struggle and conflict, a more critical analysis suggests they are a response to societal repression of cross-identifications or multiple identifications across gender and sex. These bodily expressions are suppressed by "the binary logic that separates the natural from the cultural, the female from the male, the homosexual from the heterosexual, the black from the white" (Weiss 1999:78). Jay's emotions express his internalized conflict produced by a social formation that insists on the polarity and static nature of male and female bodies. As Weiss contends "the morphological indistinctness that blurs the boundaries between these opposition pairs is itself a distinguishing characteristic of our lived bodily experience, one that is belied whenever we are interpellated through a fixed subject position" (1999:78). As Rubin also argues, the supposed opposition of men and women is "far from being an expression of natural differences ... It is the suppression of natural similarities"

empty restaurants for bewildered diners and a few die-hard fans. Through a collage of songs, flashbacks and animation, Hedwig tells her life story while on a tour of chain strip-mall seafood restaurants, trying to capitalize on her tabloid celebrity as the supposed ex-lover of famed rock star, Tommy Gnosis. Somewhere between the crab cakes and the cramped motel rooms, between the anguish and the acid-wash she pursues her dreams and discovers the origin of love" www.get-hed.com.

(cited Laqueur 1990:241). This suppression of similarities between men and women leads to the queer body being labeled as ‘distressed’.

The character of *Hedwig*, however, defies a fixed subject position, which Jay recognizes, sparking the creation of a drag performance in which Jay bodily expresses the ambiguities elided by notions of binary sex. *Hedwig* provides the narrative and inspiration through which Jay can identify something that is imagined within his own corporeality. Throughout the film Hedwig is read as a male-to-female transsexual but in the scene that Jay talks of Hedwig strips to reveal a male chest. The body does not offer closure but leaves the audience with its ambiguity and provides a sense of liberation from the constraints of dogmatic constructions of sexual difference as oppositional. The political potential of queer is captured, working by contiguity and displacement it unnerves what is perceived as natural challenging the conceptual boundaries of the gendered body. In his performance Jay plays with this morphing body which continually re/interprets itself creating a counter-narrative of corporeality as experimental rather than fixed, a state of always ‘becoming’ rather than finished and complete. Prior to transitioning Jay was performing as a drag king. Hanson describes drag kinging as “the practice off female-to-male ‘cross-dressing’ [which] is predominantly practiced by lesbian/dyke and queer identified women” (Hanson 2007:62). During and after transition Jay performs as a drag queen moving from a performance of masculinity to femininity. This performance allows an embodied expression of the contradictions of binary relations and provides an outlet for making meaningful the ambiguity of sexual difference. Rather than closure of meaning the drag performance provides an opening for re-imagining different forms of embodiment. Jay plays with the masculine within the feminine and then the feminine within the masculine providing a corporeal openness to the other, in which the lived ‘reality’ of intersubjective existence is visually displayed. Jay demonstrates that bodies are what Hanson describes as a:

‘creative’ scene of production, where the ‘difference’ between the ‘immaterial’ and the ‘matter’ of the body is difficult to determine; where the body may (re)write and (re)inscribe it/self; where fantasies and desire of the other, and what is considered other to the body, are incarnated through bodily expression and embodied

experience; where the body takes it/self as its own object of creativity and becomes a literal metaphor (Hanson 2007:65).

The emotions that Jay experienced on seeing Hedwig are given the space/situation through which they can be expressed on the surface of the flesh. For Jay it is not a case of merely putting on the artifacts of the ‘other’ but incorporating the body of the ‘other’ into his embodied performance. As Barad points out:

Performativity, properly construed, is not an invitation to turn everything (including material bodies) into words; on the contrary, performativity is precisely a contestation of the excessive power granted to language to determine what is real. Hence, in ironic contrast to the misconception that would equate performativity with a form of linguistic monism that takes language to be the stuff of reality, performativity is actually a contestation of the unexamined habits of mind that grant language and other forms of representation more power in determining our ontologies than they deserve (2003:802).

Within this space of drag the disruptive potential of queer is utilized as Cohen argues, “there is something in the queer that prevents its full reintegration into whatever matrix of identity it arises to challenge with its perversity, its excess, its defiant joy” (2003:169). Perhaps the queer body displays what Diprose suggests is an “interworld of potentiality given to and opened onto others” (2002:71). This bodily generosity or intercorporeal openness suggests “the self is a lived body ambiguously caught between subject and object, inhabiting the world of the other’s body even with a lived distance between the two” (Diprose 2002:69). Bodies, as revealed in this queer space, are not finished products but innovative agents resisting the binary poles of traditional and straight thought that seek to sediment them. This innovation and creativity of the morphing tranz body is explored further in the following section where I look to the dynamics of queer bodies in space. The tranz body, within this context, does not transition in order to conform to the dictates of straight direction or normativity but creates alternative understandings of bodies and direction.

Queer Muscles: The Queering of Space

In this section I wish to explore the agency of queer bodies in the process of ‘becoming’ by looking at the ways in which they inhabit space and the directions they move. I will

also explore the idea that bodies are shaped by the direction they take. Traditional thought tends to make people ‘see straight’; that is, it tends to direct people to see life as following along certain lines or pathways of convention. As Ahmed suggests “lines are both created by being followed and are followed by being created. The lines that direct us, as lines of thought as well as lines of motion, are in this way performative: they depend on the repetition of norms and conventions, of routes and paths taken, but they are also created as an effect of this repetition” (2006:16). The power of convention is that it directs bodies or pressures bodies along these lines by making these pathways appear ‘natural’ and ‘normal’. The ‘recognizable’ life is one that follows the pathways set; that is the life that follows along a ‘straight line’ of predictable stages (for example, that man will remain man and direct himself towards woman and vice versa). Not only are people disciplined to move in this direction but also seek to ‘straighten’ any deviations of direction by looking at these deviations through a ‘straight’ lens. As discussed by Ahmed, Merleau-Ponty considers how normalized subjects ‘straighten’ any queer effects and he asks what this tendency to ‘see straight’ suggests about the relationship between bodies and space. As Ahmed writes: “Merleau-Ponty answers this question not with a model of space as determined by objective coordinates (such that ‘up’ and ‘down’ exist independently of one’s bodily orientation), but as being shaped by the purposefulness of the body; the body does things, and space thus takes shape as a field of action” (2006:65).

The ordering of space takes shape by means of the movement of bodies and their direction. The purposefulness of the body changes the space around it and while bodies that follow straight lines are more dominant in the way they inhabit space and their pathways more recognized this does not totally inhibit the creative potential of queer bodies in space. The power of queer bodies is that they deviate off the straight line and create alternative pathways or alternative space for others to follow and occupy. Foucault (1984) suggests this when he talks of the disruptive potential of homosexuality in spatial terms such as ‘off-centre’ or ‘diagonal’. Through their bodies homosexuals forge alternative routes, formulating paths and spaces of pleasure and desire not premised on reproductive heterosexuality, situating themselves at an angle to the straight line. I would like to consider these ideas in connection to Jay’s experience of the process of transition.

I argue that, Jay does not become male in order to conform to the directives of straightness, but rather demonstrates the ambiguity and queerness of morphing bodies. As Jay explains:

My partner is doing this photographic piece where she has these faces that merge into each other, from one to the other. The eyes are matched up, (you know that morphing sort of stuff), and it was almost like a very slow process of that and the facial features, it does affect the shape of your face. I always had a sense of expecting things, a loss of things, the first thing I got was a sense of my arms the top of my shoulders around the top of my chest muscles. I used to be like if you draw a picture of someone like sticks really I was quite sticky and then I got shape you know, so it is very much like that morphing thing like something is starting to change and because I was determined to be in my body, with it because I had always been very physical. I danced and I played sports and stuff you know I wanted to be sexual through the time of my body changing.

Jay captures the shift in his corporeality as a morphing; his changing body becomes a process, a blending of his female embodiment into male embodiment giving the sense of this change as interconnected rather than strictly comparative. He does not experience a sense of loss, which would suggest something has gone or there is a longing for a missing piece, rather he takes his body in a new direction. By moving in a different direction the surfaces of the body acquire their shape. The sexed body, rather than binary, fixed and closed to outside forces, is presented as open and flowing from one place to another without disjunction. Unlike straightness, which denies the ambiguity between self and other, Jay defies the markers of difference. Like the photographic piece of his partner, which rethinks and embraces difference, Jay presents his transition as a ‘becoming’ of his more masculine self-perception. For Jay life is not suspended until he becomes the ‘other’ sex, but an ongoing journey of exploration of the different aspects of himself. This process blurs the distinction between female and male bodies, demonstrating the ‘matter’ of the body as mutable. It does not present an image of a discarded *wrong* body and a renewed and vamped up *right* body. Aspects of Jay’s body shape shift and are incorporated into a new image. Jay talks of ‘becoming’ bigger, ‘becoming’ more shapely, a sense of muscles develops, muscles which I will argue are not straight, nor do they resemble those of hegemonic masculinity.

Using the example of muscles in space, I wish to explore the ways in which the specifics of bodies affect space suggesting that queer is not located as an ‘inner’ essence or psychological component of the self but is a direction/orientation, displayed in every aspect of embodiment. As Merleau-Ponty suggests, “the body is not itself an instrument but a form of expression, a making visible of our intentions” (1964:5). Drawing on this concept of the body as a form of expression I contend that queer muscles disrupt the location of sexuality and desire as an inner essence. Sexual orientation and intention rather than a product of biological impulses and unresolved issues located in the unconscious could be better described as a surface affect. Queer muscles embody space, and direct themselves differently to straight muscles displaying their sexuality in ways which carry a different energy or intention. Hegemonic (straight) masculinity defines itself as everything that femininity is not in a strictly comparative fashion, and disavows any hint of the presence of femininity. Rather than this distinction being biologically inherent Whitehead argues, “masculinity is not a product or an entity that can be grasped by hand or discovered under the most powerful microscope” (2002:34). As such Whitehead points out that masculinity is an illusion and “any sense of masculinity’s embeddedness in men’s ‘inner selves’ comes only from fictional and superficial accounts of what a ‘man’ is” (2002: 34). He further suggests that while masculinity is in a sense illusionary it “remains fixed by one important consideration, that is, it exists in relation to femininity” (2002:34). It is within this dualistic understanding and direction that masculinity defines itself. If such masculinity is embodied in muscles then these are not the muscles that have metamorphosed out of female embodiment. Yet this is not the only possible construct of masculinity or masculine muscles. Muscles, like other parts of bodies, are potentially diverse and can carry different meanings and signification. Furthermore how a person perceives the world, directs him, her or hirself in it, is I contend, reflected at a bodily level. As such, I argue, that the ‘becoming’ muscles of Jay are ‘queer’. Ahmed has proposed:

What makes bodies different is how they inhabit space: space is not a container for the body; it does not contain the body as if the body “were in it”. Rather bodies are submerged, such that they become the space they inhabit; in taking up space, bodies

move through space and are affected by “the where” of that movement. It is through this movement that the surface of spaces as well as bodies take shape (2006:53).

Subversive forms of embodiment challenge dominant hegemonic masculinity, in particular, its insistence on polarized sex and the normalcy of heterosexuality. Saltman argues, “heterosexuality depends upon firmed-up notions of masculinity and femininity” (1998:49). Therefore I suggest that straight muscles are symbolic of such ‘firmed up’ notions of masculinity and therefore heterosexuality. If we consider this then it stands to reason that straight muscles inhabit and direct themselves in space differently to queer muscles. Queer muscles also aesthetically demonstrate a visual resistance to straight embodiment and sexuality potentially mixing up the normative signs of masculinity or femininity.

Becoming Female

The transgender body as a morphing body is also captured by the experience of Claire, a male to female transwoman who talks of the procedure for sex reassignment surgery and her preference for types of surgery. Employing the theories of Lyotard and the work of Laqueur I will explore Claire’s discussion of the medical procedure for sex reassignment. Many people in New Zealand wishing to change their sex opt for overseas surgery, being an easier and faster process. Claire also suggested that many mtf’s also choose to go to Taiwan, as the protocols surrounding surgery are different to those within New Zealand. In Taiwan doctors utilize the existing male genitalia to construct a vagina whereas the doctor who performs surgery in New Zealand, within the government-assisted programme, removes a section of the colon to create the vaginal canal. Funding was a problem for Claire and she wished to have the surgery, but she was reliant on government assistance and was not able to take up other options outside of New Zealand. Claire indicated to me, however, that she felt more comfortable with the procedure that Taiwanese doctors perform, which she knew about from friends who had taken up this option and who had been very happy with the results. Claire suggested that in Taiwan the doctors are both skilled and sensitive to diverse requirements. As Claire describes:

In Taiwan it involves skin grafts and they use the scrotal skin and I think they scrape all the hair follicles off from the inside. Somebody told me, one of the girls that had it done, said there were two nurses who had the scrotal skin pegged out on this board and were scraping the hair follicles off... Well you can imagine who wants a vagina with hair growing out of it?

When Claire talked about this process I was drawn to the work of Thomas Laqueur in which he traces the socio-historical emergence of two sexes. Prior to the eighteenth century there existed only one sex: the vagina was understood to be an inverted penis and masculinity and femininity were hierarchically organized characteristics of a single mode of the body. The concept of two biologically distinct bodies did not exist, as we know it today. As Laqueur traces how bodies are sexed bodies, and in particular viewed, is always historically specific. The concept of the two-sex model formulates how we see bodies and has had a major impact on how we consider such bodies functioning within society. Furthermore I contend that such knowledge infiltrates the reassignment technology and procedure. As I discussed in the introduction to my thesis, for Laqueur the “two sex model *was not* manifest in new knowledge about the body and its functions...it *was* produced through endless micro-confrontations over power in the public and private spheres” (1990:193).

Through rethinking the boundaries between male and female bodies as more ambiguous rather than strictly demarcated the transition from female to male takes on a more fluid meaning. However Claire is unable to access the procedure she prefers due to lack of financial resources and talks of the procedure that is government funded which involves seeing one particular surgeon and mandates undergoing the procedure that he performs.

[He] ... takes a section of the colon I am not sure what it is, anyway he takes a bit of colon and he uses that for the vaginal canal and I suppose he uses the other bits for sensitivity I would like to think so but you can see to cut a section of the bowel out.

Claire referred to this procedure several times in conversation revealing her bodily discomfort with the thought of this form of reassignment. While this was an issue for her, Claire was caught in the situation of wishing to access the technology to change her body and was faced with having to accept the New Zealand surgeon’s version of reassignment.

Reflecting on Claire's response, I also felt there was something counterintuitive about cutting a section of the bowel that the 'thinking body' responds to. The cutting of the bowel creates a bodily imagery and feeling that the Taiwanese version of surgery does not cultivate in the same sense. In Taiwan the genital tissue is refolded to create the genitals that Claire desires. Given that male and female genitals derive from the same tissue in utero and formulate in a *variety* of ways, I would argue, the Taiwanese method on a bodily level captures a certain flow. While there may be 'real' medical reasons why bowel tissue is used, for example tissue compatibility, it is difficult to separate understandings of the functioning of the bowel, for example defecation from the stigma attached to the vagina. Negative social understandings attached to the vagina such as the common representation that it is a "part of the female body that is shameful, unclean, disgusting" (Braun & Wilkinson 2001:21) add to the degradation and undervaluing of the female body. Furthermore it supports the belief that the vagina is a modifiable organ, which does not require vast characteristics (hence the saying 'it is easier to make a hole than a pole'). It could be interpreted that the various social meanings attributed to genitals, specifically the honoring of the perceived more complex penis and subsequent dismissal of the vagina as powerful and dynamic, play an invisible and unacknowledged part in the process and technology surrounding reassignment. Furthermore if we shift the dogmatic image of male and female bodies as polarized and replace it with the fluidity of bodily morphology then the process of sex change takes on a different meaning/feeling. I suggest that by reconfiguring the space between male and female bodies a movement or flow is produced which does not negate the value of the organs being created. I draw on the concept of "quantum flows: fluid identities that arise from a chaotic and often unpredictable folding, unfolding, and refolding of matter" (May 2005:127). Male genitalia becomes female, and contextually female male, not in the binary sense of the moving from external to internal space or vice versa, but rather an unfolding and refolding of inherently malleable matter and energy. Lyotard (1993) in *Libidinal Economy* introduces an alternative formulation of the corporeal, which is helpful for rethinking the transitioning body, in terms of a Mobius strip, which does away with a distinct division between the interiority and exteriority of the body:

Open the so-called body and spread out all its surfaces: ...dismantle and lay out the bundles of the encephalon; and then the network of veins and arteries, intact, on an immense mattress, and then the lymphatic network, and the fine bony pieces of the wrist, the ankle, take them apart and put them end to end with all the layers of nerve tissue which surround the aqueous humours and the cavernous body of the penis, and extract the great muscles, the great dorsal nets, spread them out like smooth sleeping dolphins... All these zones are joined end to end in a band which has no back to it, a Moebius band which interests us not because it is closed, but because it is one-sided, a Moebian skin which, rather than being smooth, is on the contrary (is this topologically possible?) covered with roughness, corners, creases, cavities which when it passes on the 'first' turn will be cavities, but perhaps on the 'second' lumps. The interminable band with variable geometry...has not got two sides, but only one, and therefore neither exterior nor interior (1993:1-3).

Within this interpretation it is possible to frame the 'becoming' female body as a dynamic energy. A continuous inflection of one body into the other and vice versa, meaning that neither is ultimately reducible to one thing or the other, and that there can never really be any intrinsic separation between them. This continuous inflection, as I have pointed out, when applied to genital organs discredits the disparate value attributed to binary genitals through which male genitalia is equated with the powerful phallus. As Buchbinder points out, "in popular thought, especially amongst men, the penis is always imagined erect, powerful emulating the archetypal phallus" (1998:51). Yet as Dyer observes "male genitals are fragile, squishy, delicate things; even when erect, the penis is spongy, seldom straight, and rounded at the tip, while the testicles are imperfect spheres, always vulnerable, never still" (1985:30). The process of sex reassignment subverts the myth of the powerful penis revealing that it is tissue that can be molded into a vagina, discrediting the cultural over investment in its signification.

Conclusion

This chapter has been an exploration into the creative and ongoing project of corporeal transformation embodied in the experiences of transgendered people. By disrupting the mind/body division and reconfiguring faculties often conceived of as situated solely in the brain, such as imagination, perception and emotion, I have demonstrated the way in which innovative bodies, their movements, practices and desires, are highly political and fundamental to creating resistive and alternative forms of embodiment. Such resistive bodies, I have suggested, espouse an intercorporeal openness or bodily generosity

towards difference that is often denied through dominant practices of disembodiment, corporeal rigidity and the pressure to confirm to normative straightness. I have sought to illuminate that bodies have the ability to merge and flow into different bodily formations disrupting attempts to rigidly map body identities. Furthermore I have pointed out that while bodies are personal they cannot be totally separated from the bodies of others and therefore the choices that are made, the movements and directions that are taken, are not as singular as dominant notions of individualism would suggest. Scientific accounts seek to constrain the body's spontaneity and creative force by reducing its capacities to notions of binary sex. Yet as participants' accounts demonstrate bodily exuberance is experienced once these myths are transgressed. In the following chapter I continue with this theme of intercorporeality and look to the spaces that direct bodies in a straight line: specifically, the physicality of family space.

Chapter Three

Disruptive Bodies: Theorizing Family Space

Introduction

In the last chapter I explored the ambiguity of sexual difference and the innovation of queer embodiment whose production was, I argued, an ongoing process of ‘becoming’. It is my contention that, while personal, this notion of the becoming body is always carried out in relation to the bodies of others in specific spaces, which influence how and what a body can become. In this chapter my focus is on the space of the family and I explore the ways in which family directs bodies along recognized pathways monitoring and constricting bodily diversity. This chapter furthers a queer exploration into the de-individualization through deconstructing the concept that autonomous, independent individuals have absolute control and choice over the direction of their lives. In examining the spaces in which bodies are individualized, regulated, directed and controlled it is possible to map the ways in which power functions to construct and limit bodies. The traditional family, I suggest, is central to the reproduction of a social order that restricts the presence of queer bodies and produces corporeal rigidity and straight space. Alternatively, spaces of resistance that allow for new ways of becoming, I will argue, involve an ongoing and acknowledged intercorporeal exchange between bodies and indicate radical ways of understanding embodiment. Looking to the micro-dynamics of bodies and queer spaces it is possible to glimpse less oppressive forms of being a body amongst others.

In order to capture the intercorporeality and openness of bodies in relation to family space, I suggest that space is a dynamic composition of the bodies within it. As such specific spaces are significant in the shaping of bodies. By drawing on a combination of theoretical insights I wish to heighten the sense of the actuality of the body and bring the micro-dynamics of embodiment to the forefront of this analysis. This chapter, by paying attention to how bodies engage in space, looks at a reconfiguration of the body by challenging the assumption that what defines the normative human subject is rational self-containment (Csordas 2002). By disrupting humanist constructions of the body as self-contained it is possible to further rethink the body as always in a process ‘becoming’ through interchange with other bodies and things. As Weiss suggests, “to describe embodiment as intercorporeality is to emphasize the experience of being embodied is never a private affair, but is always already mediated by our continual interactions with other human and nonhuman bodies” (1999:5). To recap for Deleuze and Guattari (1987), ‘becomings’ are ‘transgressive movements’ which involve specific forms of ‘motion and rest’, speed and slowness’, flows of intensity and multiplicity that both shatter and scatter former binarized modes of Western thought. The only way to get outside the dualism, they suggest, is “to be-between, to pass between, the intermezzo” (Deleuze & Guattari 1987:277). Becoming “involves always making connections and transforming those things that are connected in ways which are radically other” (Potts 2001:155). Therefore the ‘becoming’ body can be understood as a force and an energy that extends beyond the surfaces of its skin, shifting the contours of other bodies and space. The body therefore is potentially resistive; however, it is also easily directed and shaped.

I begin by looking at a major site where bodies are molded, individualized and directed: the family institution. Drawing again on Deleuze and Guattari, and their concepts of stratified and smooth space, as well as the molar and the molecular, I investigate the role of families and their effects on corporeality. I look to the ways in which the hegemonic family (that is the white, heterosexual, nuclear and middle class family³), is idealized as the acceptable family formation and as such is an institution complicit in the production of conforming and regulated bodies. Through exploring the family’s role in the

³ Unless stated otherwise my use of the term ‘family’ refers to traditional family structures

individualization and molding of bodies, I will demonstrate the significance of the rupture to the family form from the presence of bodies that do not fit, and how attempts are made to manage this rupture. Drawing on the theoretical insights of phenomenology, I will utilize the work of Merleau-Ponty and the recent *Queering of Phenomenology* by Sara Ahmed to highlight the significance of bodies in space and the ways in which bodies are directed as a form of control along certain lines or pathways. The space of disorientation (that is, when bodies cannot find a space that is comfortable), will be investigated as a potential space that prompts new actualizations of becoming. I will look to Deleuze and Guattari's concept of 'nomadic wanderings' to capture the subversive nature of this space. Furthermore, employing the work of Mikhail Bakhtin, and especially his theorizing of the medieval carnival, I will investigate spaces of resistance which expand the queer body; I use the term expand to suggest that rather than diminishing its presence in space, the queer body makes its presence felt, potentially creating new directions which acknowledge the intercorporeality and hybridity of bodies.

While the combination of theoretical frameworks may be somewhat unconventional, I do so as a political means to bring a visceral element to this work in order to honor the lived experience of queer subjects and to reconceptualise queer subjectivity; phenomenology and the mode of post-humanism presented by Deleuze and Guattari provide the tools to do so. Phenomenology brings the lived and felt aspects of embodiment to attention, which have been either trivialized or obscured from view due to the valorization of the mind and subsequent corporeal repression. The radical post-humanist theorizing of Deleuze and Guattari provide a political tool to develop ways of living differently. Deleuze and Guattari's theories do "not seek to regiment individuals according to a totalitarian system of norms, but to de-normalize and de-individualize through a multiplicity of new, collective arrangements against power" (Seem 1983: xxi). They promote concepts of collective subjectivity that point to new ways of resisting the effects of power that subjugate humans. Power is implicit within the spaces of conventional family structures, as I pointed out in the introduction to this thesis. I briefly traced the historical development of the psychology of families and family imaginary against which I now develop an alternative view of subjectivity such as that

promoted by Deleuze and Guattari. In the following section I explore the presence of the queer child in family space.

Family Space and Values: The Production of Straight Bodies

The ‘blacksheep’ or deviant/different child that does not ‘fit’ or fails to conform to the family structure is not an uncommon phenomenon. While there is a range of terms circulating within our culture to identify children that do not blend in, I suggest such a rupture is ‘queer’. The *queer sheep* seems ‘out of line’ or ‘strange’ as s/he disturbs the sense of unity through which the family reproduces sameness and conformity. This child often fails to follow the family lines, namely the preconceived milestones that mark progression through life which are based on the presumption that bodies maintain fixed, straight identities. I will also engage with the queer adult that destabilizes the family form through challenging identity as fixed, revealing the intercorporeal and fluid nature of adulthood. Delving into the subversive space of alternative family forms, I will suggest that these spaces work on generosity of corporeality. While it is not just the ‘queer’ child/adult that may display such difference, (for example, the disabled child/adult may also appear out of line in a culture that prioritizes able-bodies and independence), for the purposes of this work I focus on the ambiguity of queerness. This queer presence represents a different way of being which is ‘disallowed’ within the constraints of heteronormativity and understandings of individuality. Such disavowal makes queer direction seem ‘inaccessible’ and may lead to subsequent feelings of disorientation, which accumulate in a point of crisis. This point/moment of crisis is talked about at various points through this work.

I begin with the family because it is the first, and arguably the foundational space, in which human bodies interact with other bodies and their corporeality is developed. While this analysis may seem like an attack on family values such as love and caring, traits that would be considered by most as positive, it is the intention of this chapter to critically engage with hegemonic thought and bodily practices which infiltrate expressions such as the ‘giving of love’. Such practices, I contend, may delimit diversity and the ‘becoming’ of queer desiring bodies while maintaining the dominant sexual order. As Adams and Coltrane explain:

The family typically is considered the main institution for both the production and reproduction of polarized gender values. Although individuals are socialized in many different contexts throughout their lives (school, neighborhood, community, peer group, workplace, Church, polity), family tends to be the primary initial socialization agent, acting as a microcosm of society and providing a child's first exposure to interaction with others (2005:233).

The family, as Adams and Coltrane suggest, plays a major role in how children develop their gendered identity, and, I would maintain, their embodiment. Warner argues:

the logic of the sexual order is so deeply embedded by now in an indescribably wide range of social institutions, and is embedded in the most standard accounts of the world, queer struggles aim not just at toleration or equal status but at challenging those institutions and accounts" (1993:xiii).

One of the key institutions that Warner refers to is the family. The internalization of such values is often so taken for granted that it becomes the only way of perceiving or 'seeing' life, indicating the process of perception involves perpetuating the traditional/intergenerational vision of others while blocking contradictions from view. In relation to bodies this implies that it is not *what* we are seeing but *how* we are seeing that needs to be addressed. On a macro level family values are a standardized account or vision of life put to use for a wide range of political purposes. As philosopher Todd May argues:

Family values have nothing to do with supporting families. They do not concern such issues as financial or social assistance for working mothers, nutrition and health care for children, education opportunities, or relief for impoverished families. They have to do with promoting what some consider the ideal structure of a family. That structure consists of a man, usually as the primary wage earner, a woman, and children (the Malthusian couple). Particularly anathema are single mothers (hysterical women) and gay couples (perverted adults) (2006:146).

May contends family values are attributed only to those who fit the dominant idealized model. Furthermore in order to be 'seen' to be in the possession of such values the family needs to produce offspring that also adhere to these values. This carries particular saliency in relation to the production of certain forms of embodiment, namely that children will be clearly identifiable as male or female, that their corporeal performances will display sufficiently the dominant traits of either masculinity or femininity, and that appropriate gender identification will remain stable and permanent throughout the life course. On a

macro level, family values work politically to promote the entitlement of only certain family forms and identities, namely those that adhere to dominant beliefs or belong to the dominant group, while on a more micro level, within the family structure itself, some bodies are prioritized above others. As Ahmed argues:

Fear of degeneration, decline and disintegration as mechanisms for preserving ‘what is’, become associated more with some bodies than others. The threat of such others to social forms (which are the materialization of norms) is represented as the threat of turning and being turned away from the values that will guarantee survival. These various others come to embody the failure of the norm to take form; it is the proximity of such other bodies that ‘causes’ the fear that forms of civilization (the family, the community, the nation, international civil society) have degenerated (2004:78).

Queer bodies pose a threat to ‘family values’ not because they literally threaten survival but because they illuminate the contradiction of how the red herring of ‘survival’ is utilized to maintain privilege, hierarchy and a social order that only legitimates rigid sexual categories and the channeling of desire into ‘acceptable’ forms of expression. The idealization of traditional family values, as well as the promotion of self-contained rational subjects and heterosexuality, makes some lives appear more ‘livable’, ‘purposeful’ and ‘normal’ while obscuring other ways of living from vision. When the queer child/adult is made visible s/he is often trivialized or admonished and sometimes ostracized completely. Families influence and create the way in which children live their embodiment through preconceived ideas of sex, gender and their own embodiment. Such embodiment is developed through intergenerational, often unspoken, lived bodily connections or in many cases disconnections. For example; the two sex model (discussed in chapter one), despite evidence to the contrary, is firmly upheld within the traditional structure of the family, and when a child is born that demonstrates ambiguity (or is intersexed) it is quickly ‘sexed’, sometimes surgically, according to a binary logic that can tolerate only unambiguous males and females. Binary sex, therefore, instructs the way in which bodies are interacted with within the family, and the family acts as an agent of control, monitoring and regulating any ambiguity.

When I suggest that sex instructs the way in which children are perceived I refer to this interaction as an intercorporeal exchange through which decisions are made (for example, about the anatomy of the intersex child based on, to a certain extent the anatomy of the

parents). Diprose points out that: “[the] perception of the other’s body … is not the capacity to intellectualize its needs across the gulf that would seem to separate us. All perception, knowing, and understanding are informed by prereflective intertwining of corporeality” (2002:117). Diprose makes this conclusion; that perception is intercorporeal through drawing on the work of Merleau-Ponty when he states: “Whether it is a question of another’s body or my own, I have no means of knowing the human body other than that of living it, which means taking up on my own account the drama which is being played out in it, and losing myself in it” (Merleau-Ponty 1962, 198). Parents and practitioners bodily, albeit unconsciously, enter into the ‘drama’ and sense of emergency that is created around the perceived bodily disruption of the intersex child who displays anatomical differences. I utilize the term drama as a means to highlight the way in which any bodily difference is automatically compared to the normative body and registered as an immediate problem and even a ‘tragedy’ seen to require urgent attention. Furthermore, idealized assumptions of how that child will function sexually as an adult, and specifically as a heterosexual adult, infiltrate such interactions. Steele argues that “the hegemonic construction of the sexual act comprise the active penetrative heterosexual male and specifies the orifice or bodily site of sexual expression as the vagina hence the female” (2005:18). When genitals blur the boundaries between notions of interior or exterior sexed bodies it is registered, at some level perhaps physically, as a threat to the normative body. As this suggests, one’s own bodily knowledge is invested in the body of the other. In the interpersonal exchange with medical professionals, parents and the practitioner make decisions about the future physicality of the child based on their own anatomy, sexual practices and levels of comfort/discomfort with difference.

As I posited in the introduction of this thesis, the space of the medical clinic is shaped by the bodies that inhabit it and as such is predominately a heterosexual space, which directs bodies in straight directions. Mainstream medical practitioners, because their bodies cannot be separated from the spaces they inhabit and their domination of such spheres, bring their embodied understandings of family to bear on the bodies of their clients, surgically modifying them to fit the family form. Within this space the bodies of the practitioner and the parents, due to their normalcy and the lack of acknowledgement of any difference as healthy and acceptable, slip from view while the body of the intersex child becomes a hyper-

embodied ‘spectacle/drama’. This ‘spectacle’ or ‘drama’ is created around what is seen as ‘ambiguous’ genitalia yet as Morland suggests they are not ambiguous in the sense that “they intermittently change shape into other body parts” (2005:335). They are seen as ‘ambiguous’ because they differ from the bodies of those people with whom they first come into contact. The intersex body disrupts the family’s role, which is to produce and integrate children into society whose bodies ‘fit’ the idealized assumptions of normative bodies and replicate the bodies of those with whom they dwell. The family therefore is an institution which seeks to produce ‘straight’/‘normal’ bodies. In order to do so the threat of the hyper-embodied/visible child needs to be contained through surgical methods of genital normalization. Through such procedures the difference of the child is normalized and rendered invisible, slipping from view. While this surgically produced invisibility may be only a temporary ‘fix’, initially it works to straighten any deviations from the norm and obscures difference from view. For example in a recent newsletter for the Congenital Adrenal Hyperplasia (CAH) Support Group of New Zealand, CAH being the diagnostic label for one form of intersexuality⁴, Mann, an important advocate and invaluable support person for the families of intersex children in New Zealand, suggests that questions need to be raised by families regarding genital surgery. She contends parents need to ask:

As a parent of a newborn CAH girl, if I delay genital surgery until my child is old enough to offer consent, how does this impact on the psychological life of our family and our feelings and attitudes toward the child? Without surgery, how would our child/pre-teen negotiate his/her identity in a binary society that only legitimates male or female options? Does this not solve one problem for us and create one that’s worse? (August 2007).

As Mann captures, the pressures and complexities of conventional family life infiltrate choices, and despite genuine empathy and concern for people these discourses impact on the decisions made regarding the care of intersex children. While Mann acknowledges the psychological affect of people within families she only does so in relation to the child who displays embodied differences. Difference is registered as an embodied disruption to the psyche of the other normalized bodies within this space and the child is compared to their

⁴ Congenital Adrenal Hyperplasia is one definition derived from the medical construction of intersex as a condition

perceived normality. The family space is understood to be separate or neutral, perhaps even a vulnerable space, in context to broader society. The bodily affect on the intersex child from other members is not registered and the role of the family as a normalizing agent/space is unacknowledged. This understanding of the family is a product of dualisms central to Western thought, as Gatens argues:

only culture, the mind and reason, social production, the state and society are understood as having a dynamic and developmental character. The body and its passions, reproduction, the family and the individual are often conceived as timeless and unvarying aspects of nature (1996:61).

Through the construction of the family as an inherently natural unit the bodily knowledge/perception that parents, through intercorporeal exchange, install in their children is disguised. The traditional family space produces individualistic and naturalistic accounts of embodiment that conceptualize the body as a unified and absolutely independent organism that is stable, coherent, and maintains its body integrity at all times. However, as this work argues, alternatively we can conceive of the body, its identity and passions as never fixed, but rather as situated and historically produced through the bodies of others, demonstrating that sex, rather than simply being a biological ‘fact’ is a matter of ontological beliefs and therefore a matter of politics. Sexual variance is evident in ‘nature’, yet the presence of a child that displays difference is seen to affect or perhaps even ‘damage’ the psychological life of families. The damage, I suggest, is to the illusion or fantasy of the *normal* family and the bodies that form it. It is in this family space that the lived experience of the body, bodily expression and desire gets trapped and directed into heteronormativity and a belief in binary sex. The historical development of the psychology of families and family imaginary, laid out in the introduction to this thesis, are presented as the model against which I develop an alternative view of subjectivity explored throughout this thesis. Before going on to examine participants’ accounts of family experiences, I will explain the politics of space, which are important to any in-depth reading of the queer sheep in the straight family. In the following section, I examine the implications of family conventions on bodies.

Politics of Space

In order to approach the importance of family space as a political and complex site of power relations, I again look to both phenomenology and the radical theory of Deleuze and Guattari. Deleuze and Guattari's configuration of space suggests that it is comprised of a combination of stratified and smooth space that can be explained as either sedentary or nomadic, respectively. Deleuze and Guattari argue "in striated space, one closes off a surface and 'allocates' it according to determinate intervals, assigned breaks; in the smooth, one 'distributes' oneself in open space, according to frequencies and in the course of one's crossings (*logos* and *nomos*)" (1987:481). Striated space produces an order of distinct forms:

Smooth space is filled by events or haecceities, far more than by formed and perceived things. It is a space of affects, more than one of properties. It is haptic rather than optical perception...It is an intensive rather than extensive space, one of distances, not of measures and properties... Perception in it is based on symptoms and evaluations rather than measures and properties. That is why smooth space is occupied by intensities, wind and noise, forces, and sonorous and tactile qualities... Striated space, on the contrary, is canopied by the sky as measure and by the measurable visual qualities deriving from it (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987:479).

Smooth space opens itself to 'nomadic wanderings'; that is, the nature of the journey is not predetermined but spontaneous. If we relate this version of space to bodies, striated space is one in which the body is closed and directed towards certain already preconceived and ordered points or visually determined objects; for example woman towards man. Whereas in smooth space the body is open to potentialities of occurrences through the intensities and force of bodies in space not driven by what can be seen but what can be *felt* and is bodily *experimental*.

One of the radical potentials of smooth space is that it does not rely on optical perception, as the act of seeing is already regimented or colonized in striated space. Smooth space challenges the dominant place of the visual and replaces it with the visceral. As Merleau-Ponty wrote:

when I enter a room, I do not do so as an original constituting or synthesizing or formative, demiurgic, power, making a scene or a landscape out of what of itself is only hyletic data or amorphous sensory material. I enter a scene that is visible already, as though bathed immemorially by an anonymous and general look, and my eyes realize another variant or concretion of that look (1964:15-16).

Alphonso Lingis furthers this point when he writes, “the seeing of others is for us an institution of schemas and levels with which to focus our eyes, to direct and orient them, to move. We have learned to look from the way others look, as we have learned to assume a posture and mobilize our motility by capturing in ourselves postures and gaits of others” (1986:95-96). Seeing, therefore is an intercorporeal act derived from the bodily investment of others. This cumulative look, which I will call the ‘straight’ look, produces an order, direction and sequence of forms creating a reality based on ideals. From this perspective it can be argued that normative family space is a striated space creating a phantasmal vision of itself. This phantasmal vision or ordering becomes the ‘reality’ against which bodies are measured, deemed normal or abnormal and directed along the lines of ‘social good’. Within this space the multiplicities of ‘becoming’ bodies, their possible connections and linkages, are repressed and solidified into an individualized and coherent identity. As Alphonso Lingis argues, when speaking of the work of Deleuze and Guattari:

We are accustomed to look at ourselves as forming a whole, realizing an individual who bears a proper name; we look upon our members and parts and over our motor phases and think that their combination forms an individual produced out of a unitary center. In reality this is but the illusion of the dominant will in a chaos of forces in conflict. It is by grammatical fiction that one assembles and levels to the same I that says I think, and that which says I will, and I am sleeping, and I am hoping and I am dreaming. The center is nomadic and ephemeral; it is often but a stroboscopic effect. There are then not inherent synthesizing essences, but selective processes (which are themselves not finalities at work, but zigzag constructions formed by conjunctures and overlappings by chance) that form molar wholes, in the midst of auto-formative molecular functionings (1986:92).

The concept of a core essence, which validates psychological, traditional sexological and ‘therapeutic’ accounts of sexed and gendered bodies/identities, is displaced here to demonstrate the spontaneous and haptic potential of identity formation. This version of ambiguity and transgression of categories of body identity captures the infinite possibilities of bodies and exposes “identity as art not nature” (Diprose 2002:65). Within this version of the becoming body, identity is not derived from an inner self but cultivated through ongoing processes and exchanges in conjunction with other bodies. As Diprose points out “my body-identity, while based on perception by and therefore a distinction from others, arises through the organization of the body given to and by the corporeality of others” (2002:69). The body

therefore is never singular but intersubjective, incorporating the bodies of others and their social/ geographical location. The ramifications of this for developing a bodily identity are explored in the following section.

The Giving of Family Love and Direction – Participants’ Accounts

The queer child disrupts the family image and traditional role of families as it is seen as ‘out of line’: its ‘ambiguity’ suggests that bodies could be lived differently, move in different directions and that heterosexuality is not the inevitable function of bodies. The queer child’s ambiguity acts as a threat to the family form as it is seen to have failed in replicating the idealized ‘natural’ social order. As Ahmed argues “for life to count as a good life, then it must return the debt of its life by taking on the direction promised as a social good, which means imagining one’s futurity in terms of reaching certain points along a life course” (2006:21). In her book *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations Objects, Others*, Sara Ahmed argues in relation to race, that “phenomenology helps us to show how race is an effect of racialization, and to investigate how the invention of race as if it were ‘in’ bodies shapes what bodies ‘can do’” (2006:112). Likewise I suggest that phenomenology can help show us how heterosexuality, seen to reside ‘naturally’ ‘in’ bodies, is an effect of heterosexualization and the ‘straightening’ of bodies through the complex and historical practices which control the interaction between bodies, how bodies express themselves, and the spaces they inhabit. As May argues “practices are what people live. They determine who we are not by imposing a set of constraints from above but through historically given norms through which we think and act” (2006:18). Phenomenology allows us to investigate the action of the body in specific spaces and the intercorporeal exchange between bodies. This exchange, often left out of analysis, is integral in the production of ‘straight’ bodies and ‘straight spaces’. Within the family structure bodies are classified from birth or even before birth according to perceived qualities which, rather than inherent, are socially and historically produced. These ‘preconceived’ classifications formulate the practices that mould bodies into ‘appropriate’ ‘male’ or ‘female’ corporeality.

The authority of medicine in conjunction with family infiltrates the spaciality of the body, producing straight space it differentiates between the borders and markers of male and female bodies. The queer body is partitioned and measured according to such understandings yet, as I will explore, it may over time defy such directing and illuminate spatialities of resistance which rupture fixed borders and blur the edges of identities and bodies. The following is an example of the power of the family to temporarily straighten queer identities. Mani discusses how family norms are internalized and temporarily prevent hir⁵ from following an intersex direction. When I asked Mani if her parents were still alive s/he replied:

No, I wouldn't be sitting here talking to you if they were. It is interesting because of my love for them I could not have started this journey of exploration. I saw how much pain they were in when I came out as lesbian. I couldn't have done anymore.

As Mani explained when s/he came out as lesbian:

I can remember telling Mum and Dad who were absolutely devastated because from their point of view that was the worst possible outcome. They had spent all this money and I had all this surgery they thought I was fixed, which means I was going to be a heterosexual woman.

To be fixed as Mani suggests, is to be straight and hir family had invested a great deal, emotionally and financially, in this indication of normalcy. Mani, however, is not straight nor does s/he identify as strictly 'woman'. However the exploration outside of heterosexuality can only extend into the category of lesbian and while this is a space that is marginalized, unconventional, and works on alternative trajectories of desire, it may also produce forms of solidified identities. In order to conform to the category of lesbianism one has to be a 'woman', therefore this space, through its essentialist foundation excludes the 'maleness' that Mani embodies. Mani was unable to journey any further and, in Deleuzian terms hir current 'lines of flight' or nomadic wanderings into new and unrecognized terrain where s/he can embrace both female and maleness were subsequent to her parents' death. Compulsory heterosexuality, as I have suggested, infiltrates the choices made by parents surrounding surgery on intersex children. As is shown from Mani's experience the 'fixing' and 'straightening' of bodies to some extent occurs so they orientate themselves towards the

⁵ I use gender-neutral pronouns of hir and s/he to indicate Mani's intersex identity

opposite sex and follow a certain direction. Ahmed suggests “we can see the ‘tending toward’ certain objects and not others … produces what we could call ‘straight tendencies’, that is, a way of acting in the world that presumes the heterosexual couple as a social gift” (2006:91). Moving in such a direction allows the straight body and heterosexual couple to extend into space creating spaces as striated again (in Deleuze and Guattari’s terms) or straight spaces. From this viewing point, the queer body is registered as a bodily disruption and failure. Not only does the queer body not extend into this space, or fit comfortably within it but also seems at odds within that space because it is a striated and ‘straight’ space. When we relate this to surgical procedures carried out on intersex children it could be argued that surgery effectively attempts to prevent obviously queer bodies entering the family space.

Medicine, an institution, which occupies and produces striated space, draws on rigid measurable visual qualities through which to interpret intersex bodies and genitals. Body parts have to conform to perceived ‘normal’ measurements; for example, penises have to be of a certain length and vaginas of a certain depth. However while surgery might solve the ‘problem’ of the visually unruly and nonconforming body it may not be as ‘successful’ as surgeons would wish, and despite surgery or the ‘fixing’ of bodies some intersex bodies continue to be queer. The medical model/self, it could be argued, works in conjunction with (or along the trajectory) of family structure and love. The intersex child is modified not only to ‘conform’ to the rigid categories of broader society but also to ‘fit’ the family form. As Ahmed suggests “family love, expressed as the demand to return such love through how one loves; in other words, the love that you received, narrated as the gift of life, converts quickly into a pressure to continue the ‘good lines’ of the family” (Ahmed 2006:127-128). The ‘good lines’ of the family equate with bodies that conform to a heterosexual identity, practices and direction. Diprose furthers this argument and suggests, “an expression of non-conformity is taken as a hostile act, a refusal to return the gift” (2002:32). The return of the gift is the repetition of life in accordance with the dominant order.

Mani’s refusal to return the gift of heterosexuality causes pain for hir parents. Mani does not extend the family form within the conventions of the social order and as such the family is seen to have failed its conventional obligation of reproducing conforming bodies. This sense

of failure and sadness inhibits Mani's body from creating new directions. Returning love is to stay as much as possible 'in line'. To move out of line causes pain, a sense of loss of what is perceived as a 'livable' life; perhaps this could be even equated with the grief of death. The grief experienced, it could be argued, is due to the perceived death or end of a conventional direction and ordering of life. If no other way of being can be visualized, understood or articulated then that life is seen as less valuable and the outcome is pain. Like the medical model, which perceives the creation of idealized genitals as completing and fixing a body into a particular sex, the family seeks to sediment 'straightness' into bodies as an act of love and avoidance of pain. The giving of love is also the giving of a direction, which conforms to the Deleuzian notion of molar lines. Sometimes however it is the parent who disrupts family love and direction, as I explore in the following section.

Non-Conforming Parents

The conditions on the giving of love are not only related to the parent-child relationship but can work in reverse when a parent disturbs conventional parental roles/directions. In the following extract Carol, a transgendered woman, recalls her rejection by her daughter:

The daughter I had from my first marriage has disowned me ...As far as she was concerned I was just a freak and I was just a quirk of nature that I happened to be her father and all that stuff. Um that hurts but I can understand where it is all coming from

The dominant family structures work not only to constrain the options available to children, but children may also seek to maintain the conformity of parents. In Carol's case her daughter rejects a 'father' that has stepped out of line by becoming a woman. The family works on power relations that construct identities based on the dualistic separation of parent/child, female/male and father/mother through which the parent also always remains constrained in his or her assigned identity. While there is now some flexibility in gender roles of parents, particularly in relation to previous generations of mothers and fathers the normative family only retains its privileged position if the father and the mother permanently reinforce both polarized sex and heteronormativity. In this case the societal expectation is that fathers have to remain men. As Lingis states, in relation to psychoanalytic versions of the family, "psychoanalysis takes sexual desire to

be polarized by persons, the personages of the authoritative idealizing father, the enveloping-nourishing mother, and the always premature child who is always ahead of his forces" (1986:89). Carol is no longer the authoritative father and by becoming a woman shatters the illusion of the Oedipus triad. Carol is alienated from the patriarchal family and considered a freak. The giving of love in this case is based on the concept of fatherhood displaying significant demonstrations of hegemonic masculinity.

It is also important to note that this concept of one's sex/gender remaining static throughout the life course is not a universal given and in some non-western cultures as people age they may lose their maleness or femaleness. For example, the Hua people from the New Guinea highlands can become 'more' male or 'more' female through having or coming into contact with certain bodily substances which vary over the course of a life (Meigs 1990). This suggests that sex/gender is not viewed as permanent by Hua but situated, and sex is thus seen as mutable. However western thought (and construction of the individual) negates the possibilities of bodies shifting and flowing in different directions, and the blending of male into female or female into male is deemed abnormal. Carol's daughter draws on western historical constructions of what is considered characteristically human and normal and this affects how she 'sees' Carol. As May argues "abnormality need not be seen as a violation of the norms of human existence. It can, as well, be a refusal to conform to the 'ontological' requirements of a given historical moment" (2005:14). However the fantasy of the father is evoked, and because Carol no longer adheres to the hegemonic parental image, she is disowned and difference is subordinated to regulated identity. An alternative to father/man that embraces the differences that Carol embodies requires that we rethink identity and sex as situated and contextual. As May suggests:

Here is a way of seeing the world: it is composed not of identities that form and reform themselves, but of swarms of difference that actualize themselves into specific forms of identity. Those swarms are not outside the world; they are not transcendent creators. They are of the world, as material as the identities formed from them. And they continue to exist even within the identities they form, not as identities but as difference. From their place within identities, these swarms of difference assure that the future will be open to novelty; to new identities and new relationships among them (May 2005:114).

Carol, because of the swarm of differences that formed her masculine identity, creates a new identity that actualizes some of those differences. However becoming a woman also embodies differences that disrupt binary categorizes. The paradox of father/woman is created, as well as a subversive opportunity for developing new relationships with offspring outside of the traditional patriarchal family formation. Although in this instance this relationship is not developed, it does highlight the potential resistance to the traditional construct of the father figure and the possibilities for alternative family spaces. A subversive vision of fatherhood could be explored that acknowledges a multiplicity of differences and the fluidity of masculinity, allowing for the development of family space that is less oppressive and uni-directional.

With the giving of traditional family love as a ‘straight’ direction alternative pathways can often not be visualized as an option for queer children and adults. This lack of being able to imagine life following different lines causes the subsequent conflicting queer emotions and gestures to be driven inwards often resulting in the silencing and repression of any ambiguity. Burkitt argues that “emotions do not come from outside relations and impact upon them; they are constituted by the relations that compose social life” (1999:114). He further argues that emotions cannot be understood as ‘things’, and instead we must reconceptualize emotions as complexes composed of different dimensions of embodied, interdependent human existence (1999:115). Emotions therefore, rather than residing solely within the individual, are a product of intercorporeal relations and can only be understood within the context of such specific power relations. From this perspective any form of difference, transgendered reconfigurations of the body, are not individual problems but a clash between the body and society that seeks to prevent the queer body from entering and challenging the straightness of space. In striated space, however, it is extremely difficult to negotiate the presence of difference, as Carol points out when she talks of keeping the secret of her transgendered identity:

I was very good at keeping secrets and you know because I was attracted to females, that wasn't a problem. I didn't have to hide any sexuality because I was attracted to girls. I mean I was really shy and I didn't date anybody until I was

about seventeen, you know I was a late starter. I didn't actually have sex with anyone until I got married the first time, which was fairly disastrous and I kept the secret, the gender secret because I still didn't have a name for it or anything. Then it was just this desire to dress and I kept that through the first marriage which only lasted not quite three years but we had one child in that time. Then we separated and again I still had no way of dealing with the issues and I spent the next, god knows how many years, I don't know up until I met J, and god knows why I was able to share it with her and miracle of miracles it was ok and so essentially we have never looked back.

For Carol, not identifying as male and not having any way to make sense of this, caused her to keep her feelings and her alternative sense of embodiment a secret. As Carol is attracted to females her sexuality appeared 'in line', and by not seemingly disrupting the conventions of heteronormativity, Carol's sexuality was not questioned. However Carol does not actually experience that attraction as a straight male but as queer. Traditional family space disallows lines of flight from the molarized categories of male and female. The opportunity for exploring the multiplicity of differences that are hidden behind a coherent identity are inhibited as the space has taken the shape of the conventions it produces and as such it becomes an institution complicit in production of secrecy and silence. This demonstrates that what a body can become has more to do with the bodies and the spaces within which it dwells than being driven from an internal essence. Within this intercorporeal exchange between bodies in family space it becomes clear that the family is a powerful institution that has the ability to construct, deconstruct or reconstruct bodies according to the context.

The contradiction between the direction given by family and the queer differences that Carol embodies makes her first marriage a disaster and Carol's female embodiment in that space is restrained. It is not until Carol meets Jen that she is able to escape the molar lines, which directed her towards masculinity. The intercorporeal connection with Jen allows for a line of flight from familial conventions. Diprose suggests, "all production of identity and difference is not only social and corporeal but also passes through the bodies of others" (2002:75). It is through the specifics of Jen's embodiment and the space they create that Carol becomes woman. While some might argue that Carol's flight is from one molarized identity to another, I suggest this is perhaps an oversimplified account and the microscopic dynamics of such embodiment constantly threaten the boundaries of any

molar category. For Carol the change in direction is neither a failure nor a journey by default but a creative transformation. As Carol explains:

For me it has been a wonderfully enriching process and I am grateful for it, you know. There are some people that would probably, I think, regret being stuck with this but for me it has been a wonderful experience and you know I have learnt a hell of a lot about myself that I wouldn't if I hadn't, a lot of it is down to Jen. If I hadn't had met her I'd probably be this shy regressed male dressing up in secret still, you know even now. So it has been a wonderful experience. I may have got there eventually on my own but my honest belief is that it probably wouldn't have happened without Jen.

While in appearances the marriage between Carol and Jen, prior to Carol's transition, conforms to convention the embodied connection between them creates an alternative space in which Carol can explore aspects of her that have been suppressed. Diprose suggests that generosity is “an openness to others that not only precedes and establishes communal relations but constitutes the self as open to otherness. Primordially, generosity is not the expenditure of one’s possessions but the dispossession of oneself, the being-given to others that undercuts any self-contained ego, that undercuts self-possession” (Diprose 2002:4). Jen displays this generosity, through relinquishing her public status and identity as a heterosexual women she supports Carol’s change. This embodied generosity is creative and transforms Carol’s bodily situation revealing the fluidity of existence. While it may appear that this is a self-metamorphosis for Carol, it is also through the body of Jen (as Carol indicates) that such a transformation is possible. For Merleau-Ponty such lending to and borrowing from the bodies of others is a generosity lying not just at the core of the erotic encounter but also at the heart of existence itself (1962). Moving beyond one’s self and the concept of the self contained, independent individual makes possible any escape from molarized lines. Jen’s openness to Carol allows Carol to accept her differences that previously had been constrained by the corporeal rigidity of a molarized masculine identity.

Out of this transformation a different family structure is formed which functions on different energies, exchanges and spatial configurations than that of the patriarchal family. This I argue is a desiring-machine at work; through the intensities and flow of

their bodies an innovative process is set in motion. This is a reciprocal exchange which changes both Carol's and Jen's existence. Jen no longer conforms to the conventions of heterosexual marriage and both transgress the borders of identity categories, displaying differences that push the conceptual tools traditionally used to recognize and label people. While Carol suggests that it was Jen's support and love that enabled her to become more feminine, Jen also receives what she needs from this unconventional relationship in ways that a straight relationship did not deliver. As Jen describes her relationship experiences:

Well basically I grew up on the West Coast, had my first boyfriend at twelve married at nineteen and had three children. I had lots of affairs during that marriage, lots of sex. ... I know now why I was having so many other relationships, and we got divorced. Basically I woke up one day and thought this life sucks, I am virtually a solo mother with the kids and he is never home and all that sort of stuff. ... And I haven't had another relationship outside our relationship. You know all that stuff that I was actually needing, when I was having all that sex before, I am getting that now.

As Jen points out while the straight line and direction is seen as successful and for the good of society it does not always transpose that it is good for self and the reality conflicts with idealization of heteronormativity. Ingram (2004) suggests that heterosexuality is an institution that regulates far more than our erotic lives. Normative gender roles are also incorporated in to dominant family structures, which may curtail other possibilities of being. For Jen a straight relationship was not satisfying and did not live up to the fantasy of the family. Ahmed suggests, "if space is always orientated... then inhabiting spaces "decides" what comes into view" (2006:14). Traditional family space orientates bodies along straight lines because it only brings those directions into view. Ahmed captures this sentiment:

When we follow specific lines, some things become reachable and others remain or even become out of reach. Such exclusions – the constitution of a field of unreachable objects – are the indirect consequences of following lines that are before us: we do not have to consciously exclude those things that are not "on line." The direction we take excludes things for us, before we even get there (2006:14-15).

As Ahmed suggests following a certain direction often prevents us from seeing other paths that we might follow. Deviating from the straight path allows for a new openness to life and while this impacts the greatest on their relationship it has the potential to change space for others. However this process initially involves high levels of self-reflection. I suggest when bodies do not comfortably fit the contours of space there is often a period of time when the conflict between what is seen as normal and the experience felt causes self-doubt. At these times queer bodies have to self-examine their place within this system, through this high levels of critical insight are developed. As Carol reflects:

You know most people live their lives and go through and they never have to consider anything about themselves. When you are transgendered – yes you have to do an awful lot of self-examination and that may or may not include the sexuality as well.

Karen: So in that journey do you think it has made you more aware of all sorts of things.

Carol: Of hell yeh I am sure it has made me a better person I sort of think I am more open and more accepting of a wider range of people and possibilities that I would have been before.

Carol suggests that through the process of moving away from a normative identity she had to reflect on many of the things that most people take for granted. In this process I suggest, many of the conventional ways of seeing are challenged through lived experience. Instead of projecting this sense of vulnerability out onto the world, as hegemonic masculinity often does, Carol shifts her understandings of bodies and places. Moving in a different direction brings other aspects of living into view and creates openness to possibilities and people, which had been restricted by following a straight line. Living at an angle for Carol expands her world in a positive and profound way developing a sense of generosity towards others. In the following section I explore how generosity is also cultivated in non-western families.

The Collective ‘We’

The prevalent family structure, as I have argued, is seen as a ‘natural’ unit involved in reproducing life. However this unit and the values that it embodies are culturally specific

and formulated through social practices rather than ‘nature’. The acceptable and recognized identities available within the traditional Western family unit are father, mother, son and daughter. Such identities are generally considered fixed, irreversible and above all completely separate. However in the following section I look to the experience of Kelvin, a fa’afafine, born in Samoa, where he resided for nine years with his grandparents before moving to New Zealand to be with his parents. Being Samoan fa’afafine in New Zealand belies the exclusiveness of the aforementioned categories and highlights the fact that the meaning of ‘male’, ‘female’, ‘mother’, ‘father’, ‘son’ and ‘daughter’ are culturally determined. As Kelvin describes:

I remember vividly growing up in the Islands and it has held me so strong. Because, it is those early experiences that really determine who I am today, and the fact that I was absolutely nurtured as a fa’afafine because that is what I identified with. My culture calls me a fa’afafine, “like a woman” that is all it means and you know intrinsic in that definition there is a value system that says this society values me as a woman, but you know not under denigration of women and sadly in this society this has been colonized and therefore you have this very negative view of what it is to be a woman.

As Kelvin states the value attributed to him within Samoan culture is not recognized in dominant New Zealand culture; and rather than being viewed as a figure of power, as he is in his Samoan family, his being is denigrated under the norms of westernized patriarchy. The rules of patriarchy are such that masculinity defines itself through its opposition to femininity, not only to create itself as sexually different but as socially superior. In order to maintain the ‘reality’ of this distinction masculinity must disavow any sign of effeminacy both within itself, and achieves this, in part, through the devaluing of the ‘feminine’ in others. The power differential between men and women subsequently gets mapped onto the differential understandings of sons and daughters. Sons’ who identify as women, valued members of Samoan culture, are not recognized in the same way within a western context. In the following excerpt, Kelvin considers the cultural acceptance of difference in relation to concepts of the individual as opposed to a more generous understanding of the collective:

Sexuality in the context of Samoa for me it is quite a powerful thing because it is part of who you are, but also in terms of that remember I have come from a society that terms itself as a ‘we,’ as a collective, whereas in New Zealand it is independence, it is the ‘I’ you know very much singular, so that your sexuality is in the context of families.

Kelvin indicates that the significant difference between living as a ‘we’ and living as ‘I’ has a major impact on the construction of sexual identities. Within western culture emphasis is placed on the individual, which closes off the possibilities of recognizing the value of intercorporeal exchange and its value in human existence. This stands in contrast to the experience of fa’afafine coming from Samoa where existence is in a social world in which the bonds of relationships, generally considered to be above the desires of the individual and the bodies of others, are seen as fundamental to the social formation. There is a generosity that functions at the level of corporeality and feeling, unlike in western culture, which functions on an economy of exchange between individuals. As Diprose argues:

Generosity is not one virtue among others but the primordial condition of personal, interpersonal, and communal existence. And while understanding generosity as a prereflective corporeal openness to otherness may not guarantee social justice, it is a necessary move in that direction (2002:5).

The generosity of a collective understanding allows for the valuing of bodies which is not determined on their identity but on their physical contribution to the social group. In New Zealand this contribution is ignored and a person’s value is evaluated according to their perceived individual identity and orientation. In doing so the contribution and knowledge that fa’afafine bring to society is more likely to be subordinated to a marginalized and devalued identity.

Subversive Smooth Spaces and Queer Comfort: The Place of the Circus
Having discussed the striated space of the traditional family, in this section I now turn to the spaces that allow the queer body/ child to feel ‘comfortable’. As I have suggested above, many spaces, both private and public are dominated by ‘straight and directed bodies’ and as such can be places that may at times be ‘uncomfortable’ or potentially dangerous to the queer body, thereby shrinking the presence of queer embodiment. Spaces such as that of the family promote traditional concepts of the body as closed, bordered and fixed in identity categorizes

so as to offset the perceived threat of bodily ambiguity, difference and fluidity. Developing on these ideas, which I began with the connection between Carol and Jen, I explore the spaces that expand the queer body, and contend that the concept of the closed body produced through straight thought/bodies is disrupted within such spaces. When we look closely to how bodies respond in different contexts, the body's openness to its surroundings is revealed: the body as energy or intensity expands or retracts.

The space of the circus offers a place where certain types of bodies usually obscured from vision come into focus. Such places, I assert, are 'queer' spaces where the normative modes of bodily comportment are suspended. Drawing on Bakhtin's theories of the carnival and the grotesque I argue such spaces are potentially subversive; or, according to a Deleuzian perspective, they are operating against striated space; they are territories of the nomadic.

Bakhtin's (1985) vision of the medieval carnival was a world that challenged and opposed the official world; it was a space free from dogma, authority and the constraints of serious-mindedness. Carnival celebrated temporary liberation from the prevailing truth and from the established order; it marked the suspension of all hierarchical rank, privileges, norms and prohibitions. Carnival rejoiced change, renewal and the becoming body and was antagonistic towards all that was completed. The carnival was a space where official meanings attached to the body were suspended and aspects of embodiment normally repressed and controlled become the focus. It acted as a space through which to challenge and resist domination, normalization and control of bodies. In order to understand the significance of this resistance it is important to note the shifting meaning surrounding the body. The renaissance saw understandings of the body develop that were not present in the Middle Ages. Rather than being conceived of as part of cosmological order, the body began to be seen as a closed and completed product separated from other bodies and the non-physical world (Bakhtin 1985). Social codes surrounding bodily functions dictated that corporeal acts that revealed the body's openness to the world were strictly hidden from view. Bakhtin suggests that the grotesque image focused on the parts of the body that officialdom wanted to disavow, "the open mouth, genital organs, the breast, the phallus, the potbelly, and the nose" (1985:26). Such body parts threatened the concept of the closed body suggesting its borders were not so

sharply defined and contained. For Foucault “this shift is significant for the ‘classical age discovered the body as object and target of power’” (1979:136). With the ascendancy of scientific knowledge the body became an increasing site of discipline and control:

What was then being formed was a policy of coercions that act upon the body, a calculated manipulation of its elements, its gestures, its behavior. The human body was entering a machinery of power that explores it, breaks it down and rearranges it. A ‘political anatomy’, which was also a ‘mechanics of power’, was being born; it defined how one may have hold over others’ bodies, not only so that they may do what one wishes, but so that they may operate as one wishes, with the techniques, the speed and the efficiency that one determines. Thus discipline produces subjected and practiced bodies, ‘docile’ bodies (Foucault 1979:138).

The docile body became a strictly “divided, atomized and individualized, ‘private’ body” (Bakhtin 1985:23). As an individualized body separated from other human and non-human entities it could be held personally accountable for its choices and corporeal actions. Such scrutiny produced compliance through the process of normalization that is central to the exercise of disciplinary power. Bodies that did not conform to such regimentation or show sufficient signs of bodily self-control increasingly became the target of intervention from authorities. Carnival space existed at odds with such normalization and revealed a different world where bodies were not completely individualized, controlled and separated from the world. The body within this world was an unfinished and open body, which did not conceal its leakage into other bodies and spaces.

The circus is also such a space where the rules of conformity and normality are disrupted. In the following extract Mani talks of the circus as such a place that brings alternative ways of thinking and becoming into focus. In this account, Mani discusses how the circus offered him a potential haven and site of activism, as an intersexed child in New Zealand:

I had really big ears and I was identified as a crippled child, and as a crippled child I was entitled to have seats to go to a circus. I don’t know how old I would have been, probably six or seven and it probably wasn’t a wonderful circus but for me, as this kid growing up in rural New Zealand, it was. It was an old fashion canvas circus and we had front row seats, for me it was very powerful and it is in here (indicating heart) not out there (indicating outside the body): that recognition of difference. So, for the first time, being around people who weren’t like the people around me. Like little people, fat people, there may have been a lady with a beard, I don’t know, but I can remember

identifying with something about that circus that was of me or about me. And it fascinates me now because of course in the Victorian era it was one of the few places significantly ambiguous people could find a home, a place and employment. To work in the circus, so you have, I think there was something about the physicality and I think it was something about the circus as well, so the brightness, the exuberance, the laughter, yeah that really spoke to this conservative child.

Mani's 'large' ears are seen as a form of 'disability', non-conformity and difference making hir presence/body hyper-visible and a focus of attention. Any sign of bodily difference, which I will explore further in the following chapter, produces fear and anxiety in the normalized yet ironically disembodied citizen. As Shakespeare claims non-disabled people 'project their fear of death, their unease at their physicality and mortality onto disabled people, who represent all these difficult aspects of human existence' (1994:298). Hughes further suggests that the 'disabled' "figure is ubiquitously portrayed as a metaphor for embodied disruption and invariably represents the dependencies that a society based on the myth of the autonomous subject can only interpret as 'tragedy'"(2007:674). However rather than the circus providing a space to placate Mani's 'lack' of conformity, Mani experiences the space as a form of resistance and recognition of difference. The circus thereby opens up a queer space; the proximity of bodies that are different produces a queer effect that facilitates Mani's bodily recognition of a place that feels more comfortable and accepting, that was of hir. For Mani it is not just a 'spectacle' that is visually seen, but physically felt. I suggest that within this queer space the boundaries between bodies are not so tightly drawn, allowing for the recognition of the potential of the 'becoming' body in relation to other bodies, or perhaps a generosity between bodies as theorized by Diprose. The circus takes on the atmosphere like that of the medieval carnival where "the limits between the body and the world are erased, leading to the fusion of the one with the other and with surrounding objects" (Bakhtin 1985:310). Within this space there is an exchange between bodies and the division between performers and spectators, for Mani, is not rigidly demarcated. Such exchanges provide a feeling of being able to journey in different directions that are not necessarily 'straight'. It is a space and a moment where bodies are not cemented within the dogma of traditional thought; a queer moment in which the possibilities of non-conforming bodies are experienced. For Mani it is a feeling of being able to be different, a space that recognizes and extends hir, a space that transgresses the rigidity of normality and completion.

A place unlike the family, which embraces likeness and conformity through repression and conservatism, the circus space, celebrates diversity and ambiguity through exuberance. The presence of the grotesque produces a particular feeling of openness to the world, a place where difference is celebrated and exaggerated. The differences that straightness seeks to contain and bring into line become a source of transformation. Laughter provides an intensity and energy which flows between bodies. In this space the boundary between the world and the body is overcome and there is a process of an interchange and interorientation which challenges the normative controls placed on the body.

Within the resistive realm of the grotesque, smooth space is created for the expression of differences; however, simultaneously these displays also become marginalized spectacles. The straight world offsets the disruption of queer bodies and their hyper-visibility by creating the phenomena of the ‘freak’. The freak that challenges the social ordering of bodies and concepts of normalcy is spatially contained by confinement to the domain of the carnival/circus. However while the freak is excluded from the straight world a resistive world is created where *abnormal* bodies become *normal* and *normal* bodies appear hyper-straight. As Mani suggested, in the Victorian era it was one of the few places significantly ambiguous people could find a home, a place and employment. Perhaps this could be interpreted as a ‘queer’ world, which existed at an angle to the straight world of the time, providing acceptance, direction and comfort. This alternative world also created alternative family formations and alliances, which were not based on genealogy or inheritance but a shared understanding of existing outside the world of normative bodies.

Conclusion

I have argued in this chapter that the giving of love and direction within family space shapes both bodies and lives to conform to compulsory heterosexuality and molarized identities. This intergenerational shaping of bodies is obscured from view through the idealization of the white middle-class family as the only unit that promotes and produces lives for the good of society and for the survival of the culture. Depicted as morally virtuous and potentially vulnerable, the family unit requires protection from those bodies that do not fit its hegemonic form. Bodies that display difference, ambiguity or incoherence are seen to damage the healthy functioning of the family unit whose role is to produce individualized and normal

bodies. Such individualized and normal bodies experience a level of comfort and slip from view, simultaneously constructing non-conforming bodies as hyper-visible. Through this process, power, working at an intercorporeal level, is disguised by the fantasy of the ideal life. Queer bodies are seen at odds to this ideal life; pathologized as individually distressed or incomplete, their politically disruptive presence is minimized. Yet when queer bodies deviate off the straight line their agency and innovation has the power to change the shape of space and aid the transformation of other bodies. In the following chapter I expand on this analysis of the dynamics of space and extend this into public spheres.

Chapter Four

Queer Negotiation of Open Space

Introduction

In this chapter I continue an analysis of space focusing on the way in which direction and straightness constructed in family space are extended into broader public space, making spaces such as the street ‘straight’. It is not intended that these chapters be seen as endorsing a division between public and private space, more that the private flows into the public and vice versa. Rather than being clearly bounded and separated, each is affected by and affects the other. I suggest that spaces are shaped by the proximity of normative bodies and the exclusion of bodies deemed other through complex practices. Feminist geographer Doreen Massey suggests that space, rather than existing as an independent dimension, is “constructed out of social relations: that what is at issue is not social phenomena in space but both social phenomena and space as constituted out of social relations, that the spatial is social relations ‘stretched out’”(1994:2). Drawing on such concepts from feminist geography, and again from phenomenology and the theory of Deleuze and Guattari, I will expand on the ideas introduced in the previous chapter and look to the movement of bodies in broader public spaces such as the recreational space of rugby and dancing. I do so in order to illuminate the way in which power functions on micro and macro levels through the flow of bodies. Politicizing the micro dynamics of bodies in space and the intercorporeality of bodies I demonstrate the ways in which participants in this research produce disruptions to essentialized identities in a whole range of contexts.

I begin by looking at the ways in which queer bodies are excluded from public space, specifically how violence works to control the proximity of queer bodies in relation to straight bodies. I also explore how queer bodies are deflected from moving (or directing) toward other bodies, straight or queer. Furthermore, when queer bodies do ‘invade’ straight space I examine how such direction is contained to offset the perceived threat and realization of queer desiring bodies. I point to the ways that hegemonic masculinity works to maintain domination of space and monitor the manliness of other males. I suggest that such rigid cultural control of bodies may result in queer bodies attempting to act/pass as straight. I also highlight how maleness and femaleness are culturally specific through exploring the experiences of fa’afafine. Lastly, I briefly consider the queer spaces that provide comfort and a sense of place for queer bodies (for example, queer events), also suggesting that such spaces may nevertheless, still seek to sediment bodies into clearly demarcated identity categories. However I argue ultimately that through the presence of queer bodies such spaces may also expand over time to accommodate the contours of queer difference.

Recapping on the ideas that I have developed throughout this thesis, which provide the framework for further analysis in this chapter, I look to the significance of straight bodies in space. In the 1990s, Monique Wittig suggested “(t)o live in society is to live in heterosexuality … Heterosexuality is always already there within all mental categories. It has sneaked into dialectical thought (or thought of differences) as its main category” (1992:40-43). Wittig points out how heterosexuality, through its deep-seated normalization, is constructed as the unquestioned foundation of the social order and as such has infiltrated the way in which people think and perceive the world. However, as we are not just thought patterns but embodied beings, this concept can be extended to incorporate the heterosexual body and the ways in which power relations are conducted through the body and its embodied material practices. In other words, perception and meaning making are conducted and stored not only in the ‘mind’, but also at a bodily level. As I have mentioned in previous chapters, knowledge is embodied. This approach to embodiment allows for a more in-depth analysis of the way ‘straight bodies’ dominate not only thought, and therefore knowledge, but space, which involves looking at the way

in which bodies occupy space, the directions they take and the perceptions they make. I suggest that straightness then becomes a way of moving, becoming and perceiving in space that allows it (ie straightness) to be obscured from view.

Merleau-Ponty claims that the body, which is the bearer of orientation or position, is not ‘in’ the world after the advent of both: “our body is not primarily in space: it is of it” (1962:148). This version of the body suggests that it is the body that creates both orientations and space, neither being natural preexisting realities. Therefore the ‘straight body’, through its normalization, is able to move in space that has already taken the contours of such a body. By doing so the straight body creates what I will term ‘straight space’ in which it can move with ease and comfort. As Ahmed argues:

To be comfortable is to be so at ease with one’s environment that it is hard to distinguish where one’s body ends and the world begins. One fits, and by fitting, the surfaces of bodies disappear from view. The disappearance of the surface is instructive: in feelings of comfort, bodies extend into spaces, and spaces extend into bodies (2004:148)

Heteronormativity functions as a form of public comfort by allowing straight bodies to extend into spaces that have already taken their shape. Similar to the way in which whiteness dominates space as its unquestionable terrain, heteronormativity allows straight bodies to sink into space, to fit and to experience those spaces as comfortable. Feminist critical geographer Gill Valentine states: “repetitive performance of hegemonic asymmetrical gender identities and heterosexual desires congeal over time to produce the appearance that the street is normally a heterosexual space” (1996:150). While Valentine captures the importance of what bodies ‘do’ in the ‘appearance’ of the street I would like to emphasize the fact that the materiality of the body is also significant: the body itself has a presence, an energy that allows for the social recognition of what that body is and the bodily recognition of others. It is embodied straightness that makes the space of the street straight, Kirby argues, “traditional understandings of the individual present the body as ‘undivided’ within itself, and unquestionably separate from other subjects and the external environment as a whole” (1996:38). In contrast, alternative understandings of bodies that explore notions of intercorporeality suggest they seep beyond the contours of

their skin to intermingle with location and other embodied subjects. Therefore because space cannot be separated from the bodies within it, the pervasiveness of straight space disallows for the comfort of non-straight or queer bodies. Consequently while straight bodies disappear from attention, as a result of their perceived normality and shaping of space, the presence of queer bodies that do not take the form of that space is highly visible and felt as hyper-present. The queer body's hyper-presence is seen as an encroachment on or violation of the domain of the straight body. Because the space is 'invisibly' straight and formulated on sameness and not difference, the contact of the queer body with the spatial surfaces of straight bodies causes a ripple or a wave of intensity. I argue this intensity is registered at a bodily level and the straight/absent body is unable to slip from attention. The straight body, in particular the straight male body, becomes aware of itself within space. Secondly, it brings the intercorporeality of bodies also into consciousness: because the presence of the queer body is *felt*, the straight normal body cannot so easily distance itself from the body of the 'other' nor its own body. This brings to light the fragility of the straight body's assumption of dominance and normalcy, (hence rationality). Subsequently the domination of space is registered as provisional rather than natural, thus creating anxiety for the straight body.

As previously explored, Deleuze and Guattari's understanding of bodies suggest that they are not closed entities but a flux of energies and flows, and, as such, it could be argued that the queer body is not just visually encountered but physically felt as a surface affect and a force; even as a transgressive force that is capable of destabilizing the status quo. Subsequently the presence of the queer body in public space is registered as a threat. Warner suggests "historically we might say that queer sexuality is like gender or race in being a political form of embodiment that is defined as noise or interference in the disembodying form of citizenship" (1999: xix-xx). It is only because the white heteronormative body has comfortably sunk into space that it can situate itself as a disembodied citizen. As such the perceived closed boundaries of the 'straight body' are maintained and it is only when the 'foreign' queer body enters space that these boundaries appear vulnerable, insecure and penetrable. As I have previously mentioned it is not just the queer body that disturbs the stability of the straight body; bodies such as

the black body, the poor body, the disabled body or the big body all create a disturbance in the spaces that have taken the shape of the dominant body. Paradoxically, while the space remains ‘straight’ and the queer body is made to feel its ‘off-centeredness’ or displacement, it is the ‘straight’ body that often responds defensively and sometimes violently in order to maintain both hegemony and its comfortably taken-for-granted place in space. In the following section I explore how such power relations function through the movement of bodies.

Straight Space and Imminent Violence

As discussed previously when drawing on the work of Sara Ahmed, “it is not just that bodies are directed in specific ways, but that the world is shaped by the directions taken by some bodies more than others. It is thus possible to talk about the white world, the straight world, as a world that takes the shape of the motility of certain skins” (Ahmed 2006:159-160). This can be demonstrated in Mani’s account, below. During the interview, we talked about moving in public spaces; I asked if there was any risk of violence for hir. Mani’s response was as follows:

It is a reality, well I am careful with the physicality that I have, what I do in the city at night. It is an impending thing. And if there is a rugby match in the city, I wouldn’t come in unless I had to and if I did I would be damned careful about it. Because it is not safe... When I am working with transgendered clients in those early stages of transition and I say “have a safety plan, you are not passing”, it is about keeping ourselves safe.⁶

The space of the city, which extends the bodies of hegemonic masculinity and heterosexuality, controls the proximity of bodies that threaten its power. I suggest hegemonic bodies are extended, as their presence alters the contours of space due to their domination and is felt as somehow larger than the materiality of their bodies. This is sometimes accomplished through violence, or more accurately, the understanding or feeling that violence is impending. Because violence does not need to be physically enacted for it to control the proximity and movement of queer bodies, I will approach violence as a force, an energy that precedes its physical action and is inherent in

⁶ Mani talks about hir interactions with transgendered clients in hir capacity as a Counsellor.

heterosexual space. In the exchange between certain straight and queer bodies it acts as a destructive force/flow of energy. As I have argued previously, space takes the shape of the bodies that inhabit it and as Massey insists the “spatial is social relations ‘stretched out’” (1994:2). In its various forms, violence therefore is a component of striated space/straight space and is a strategy utilized as a means to dominate (and simultaneously create) marginalized bodies.

While violence is predominately depicted as enacted by individuals, a view informed by these insights would suggest that it is already present in the spaces we inhabit as a collective energy, which individuals act on. As anthropologists Schroder and Schmidt (2001) argue “violence as a social fact can be understood as a form of interpersonal relations in everyday cultural reality, as conflict, and as war... It is harnessed to strategies of social closure, of defining ‘us’ and ‘them’ as clearly and diametrically opposed entities” (2001:14). Violence therefore is an element in the construction of identities/worlds and the maintenance of the body as closed unit. It is a means and a response to the reality that the body is more vulnerable and open than traditional western thinking acknowledges. In order to maintain, in a sense, its privileged position of disembodied normality the hegemonic body must disavow any sign of bodily risk that its openness reveals. Violence, in other words, can be understood as a homophobic/transphobic strategic social practice carried out in response to queer bodies in order to offset the fear of the proximity of such bodies. Such practices then become incorporated into the spaces bodies inhabit. Weinberg refers to homophobia as an irrational fear of homosexuality, particularly the dread of being in close quarters with homosexuals (1972). Transphobic I take to be an irrational fear of the proximity of sexually ambiguous bodies and the challenge they make to the “apparently inconvertible truth of the body” (Buchbinder, 1998:148). Regardless of the particular term, however, it would appear that the irrational fear of bodily difference and the closeness of difference are built into the public space of the street. This fear for straight bodies of the closeness of queer bodies “raises the question of their own vulnerability and embodied coherence” (Hughes 2007:681) exposing the illusion of autonomy that underpins the fantasy of normative bodies. This fear or denial of the intercorporeal nature of bodies seeks to deflect the openness and possibilities of exchange between bodies. This flow is, therefore,

registered as a threat and rejected by the straight closed body. As Schroder and Schmidt suggest:

Violence – rather than being a performance in the course of which one integral entity (person, community, state) violates the integrity of another – may as well serve to generate integral identities by inscribing borders between something in the course of becoming an entity and its surroundings (2001:28).

Hegemonic masculinity, therefore, rather than pre-existing as an integral identity is created in part through the repetition of acts of violence or destructive flows of energy. Violence works as a means to reinstate the distance between masculinity and queerness that both haunts and threatens the naturalization of heterosexuality, normality and *real* men. Additionally the flow between queer and straight bodies is rejected, I suggest, because the *real* man only directs himself towards straight *real* women. Dominant understandings of sexuality dictate that real men are 100% straight. Buchbinder argues that the “dynamic of heterosexual desire emphasizes the alterity of the (male) active subject and the (female) passive object …which implies the subordination and objectification of the Other, woman –and the impenetrability of the male body” (1998:139). This understanding of the sexual exchange between men and women obscures the innovative capacities of desire not reduced to specifically sexed bodies or interpersonal power relations of domination and subordination. However in order for straight men to remain straight they must always appear sexually dominant and the penetrator of the passive other – woman. To be penetrated, therefore, in our culture implies passivity; as such, males who open their bodies to penetration are associated with effeminacy. This limited view simplifies the intercorporeal exchange between bodies, which may involve far more complex aspects of identity negotiation that go beyond the perceived spatiality of the body. Yet as I have explored throughout this work, in order to maintain a solidified and unchanging identity, the infinite differences that may be embodied and expressed which disrupt the male/female, heterosexual/homosexual and external/internal binaries must be denied and vigilantly monitored. Hegemonic masculinity simultaneously acts as a means to naturalize the belief that it is only biological men that can claim a masculine identity whilst denying the vast and varying forms of masculinity that may be embodied.

However there are times and spaces where the diversity of masculinity seeps beyond the rigid boundaries of social control. Kelvin, a fa'afafine participant, brings to our attention the complexity and ambiguity of male sexuality in the following extract:

I run into a lot of married men who you would never ever think, I mean as you get older you have three choices, especially if you are a career person like me, you either go for younger, same age as you, or older. Younger doesn't look good when they are only thirty...the interesting thing is the group four, the ones that are married, and you thought they were never in your scope. And I tell you what, one of the men had a wife and a girlfriend and he was coming to me. I said "if you have all that why would you want to come to me?" and he said "you know I am 98% of the time heterosexual but you know it is that 2% that no matter what I do I can't get rid of it". And I have been thinking about that, you know, therefore you could be 99% but you know that one point is just as powerful as that 99%.

Kelvin's experience presents quite a different understanding of masculinity, revealing the fluidity of male sexuality that dominant understandings suppress. Kelvin's very open expression of femininity allows for the creation of an alternative male space. While hegemonic male sexuality and its unrelenting monitoring of other men is pervasive, in subversive spaces men may negotiate and transgress the limitations placed on them. Kelvin, through his corporeal generosity and openness to connection, creates a queer space in which some heterosexual men may embody different forms of masculinity, sexuality and desire. In this space the male body is not constrained by biological determinism, and desire is not directed towards what it is not but rather becomes a body open to possibilities. In doing so the naturalization of heterosexuality, autonomy and male bodily integrity is destabilized.

Within this understanding masculine desire is described as fragmented rather than coherent and made up of varying components, which are enacted differently dependent upon the context/spaces within which they are expressed. As Lynne Segal comments:

Male sexuality is most certainly not any single shared experience for men. It is not any single or simple thing at all – but the site of any number of emotions of weakness and strength, pleasure and pain, anxiety, conflict, tension and struggle, none of them mapped out in such a way as to make the obliteration of the agency of women in heterosexual engagements inevitable. Male sexuality cannot be reduced to the most popular meanings of sex acts, let alone to sex acts themselves. It

becomes intelligible only if placed within actual histories of men's intimate relationships with others – or lack of them (1997:215).

Following on from Segal, I would argue that masculinity and male sexuality are a product of complex social relations and an intercorporeal exchange of the bodily knowledge of others, rather than simply a matter of levels of testosterone and the possession of a penis. However the production of male bodies as closed autonomous subjects prevents more radical understandings of desire from being generated. Situated desire and the concept of sexual identity as an ongoing project are subordinated to dominant depictions and directions of a singular manhood. According to the matrix of heterosexual desire a continuum between subject and object and masculinity and femininity is unacknowledged. The social production of bodies, their responses and expressions are virulently disguised through ongoing social practices, which make such behaviors appear natural. In the following section I explore the space of rugby and how this furthers the production of male bodies as closed, hard, emotionless and above all invulnerable and straight.

The Production of Hegemonic Masculinity and Concealment of Homoerotic Desire

Not only is space stratified according to visually polarized sexual difference, compulsory heterosexuality and concepts of night and day, it is also stratified to contain the potential threat of homoerotic desire. Dominant understandings of time ensure that space at night more poignantly belongs to and takes the shape of hegemonic male bodies. As Mani suggested, s/he is careful what s/he does in the city at night. The flow-over of bodies and energy from a rugby match extend into the space of the city, making it potentially dangerous for those displaying signs of ambiguity. Rugby, a sport associated with *real* and straight men, is a homosocial phenomenon through which the boundaries of hegemonic masculinity and heterosexuality are reinforced through acceptable displays of aggression and violence. Such displays reinforce normative understandings of bodily exchange between males, which dictate that contact is strictly competitive and aggressive, thereby displacing any signs of effeminacy. Such male bonding is characterized by “intense homophobia, fear and hatred of homosexuality” (Sedgewick 1985:1). Buchbinder suggests that; “homosociality is both an imperative and a set of

strategies that instruct and enable men to group together with one another, so that male solidarity emerges through the reciprocal effects of male bonding and the watchful observation by other men” (1998:65). Levels of masculinity or manliness are measured by the recognition of such by other men. Such recognition, however, is not achieved once and for all but is characterized by an ongoing need/pressure to prove one’s manliness in the eyes of other men, something which requires constant vigilance. Sedgwick argues homosocial relations among men are discontinuous: disrupted by rivalry, suspicion, competitiveness and fear (1985). When required levels of masculinity are seen as not being achieved men seek to regulate such behavior. Kelvin in the following extract provides an account of his experience of this monitoring of masculinity when his behavior is seen to violate the unspoken norm:

You know I always get told, Kelvin why do you have to wear such bright things, why can’t you tone it down? But what is wrong with it, is there damage, am I killing people with that you know? So how bizarre is society that will accept violence but to be caring and loving...they are killing each other on the football field but to hug each other, oh my god... I actually love watching it; they are so homoerotic the way they behave.

Despite Kelvin’s fa’afafine identity he is criticized for his flamboyance in New Zealand culture. Exuberance, bright colors and intimate contact between men challenge hegemonic masculinity. Acceptable contact between men must disavow any form of familiarity that might make the male body appear agreeable or yielding and open to exchange. The space between bodies is governed by unspoken codes, which restrict bodily displays of intimacy. Close bodies have the potential to generate a sense of familiarity. Male bodies therefore carefully regulate the proximity of other bodies, warding off such signs of closeness through aggression. Yet as Kelvin highlighted there are levels of homoeroticism implicit within the bodily displays of masculinity that are easily identifiable by those who are less invested in ‘manliness’. Buchbinder suggests that the “term ‘homoerotic’ indicates an often unacknowledged capacity for erotic arousal through the voyeuristic contemplation of, fantasizing about, or engagement in physical but not overtly sexual contact with others of one’s own sex” (1998:140-141).

While rugby is a means to demonstrate the strength and power of masculinity (heterosexuality) on an individual and national level, it also can be construed as an arena where the distance between the bodies of males is diminished and there is an intercorporeal exchange between men that can be read as homoerotic. Buchbinder points us to the fact that while homoeroticism is the precondition for homosexuality, it is widely dispersed throughout culture and its ubiquitous presence is evident within broad social structures such as sport (1998). However an expansive view of the bodily contact between men engaged in the game of rugby is marginalized through the official and cultural understanding of rugby as a *real* man's game, which serves politically to reinforce the power of hegemonic masculinity and the masculinity of the nation. This also acts to maintain the notion that heterosexual men do not desire/fantasize about other men. Sedgewick presents us with the notion that homosocial relations among men are founded on desire when she suggests:

To draw the ‘homosocial’ back into the orbit of ‘desire’, of the potentially erotic, then, is to hypothesize the potential unbrokenness of a continuum between homosocial and homosexual – a continuum whose visibility, for men, in our society is radically disrupted (1985:1-2).

As Kelvin recognizes, the line between homosocial and homoerotic is not so clearly demarcated and rugby is very much a game where men touch other men and from which viewers may derive pleasure. Hegemonic masculinity, in order to maintain its status as unequivocally male, must strictly be seen to be heterosexual whilst secretly desiring/needing the recognition of other men. Furthermore, as Plummer states “hegemonic male sexuality works to essentialize the male sexualities of some men into the sexualities of all” (Plummer 2005:180). This works to disparage other forms of masculinity that may be more able to negotiate this desire/need outside of the binary heterosexual/homosexual and may be able to create an identity that is not constructed through the distancing or denigration of the ‘other’. Given that hegemonic masculine identity is maintained through the ongoing recognition and observation of other men, (something Kelvin’s account also supports), I suggest this also produces a fear and an anxiety that such observation might extend to sexual recognition (indicating perhaps that sexual identity may not be distinctly separate from other aspects of bodily identity). For

example, gay men and queer tranzmen acknowledge that part of the attraction to men is the validation of their own maleness. As Jay (ftm) in the following extract captures:

When I first started to transition, because you want to be identified as male, if I went to a queer event it was hard for me to hang out with dykes because then I get read as butch dyke, or whatever. So I hung out a lot more with gay guys at the time. And there is that thing of you wanting them to see you as a guy. Then a whole dynamic happens around that which is, you know wanting them to be attracted to you, you wanting to be attracted to them. You know the whole dynamic; it is about the sexual energy and the charge of having your masculinity recognized by your own.

While Jay at the time of the interview was in a relationship with a lesbian woman, aspects of his masculinity were developed through the sexual recognition of gay men. Rather than being directed towards specific objects, desire is situational and queer direction brings bodies into connection that dominant culture seeks to keep apart. As Jay explained initially there was just the desire to be recognized as a male; however through opportunity, an exchange and flow of energy develops which shifts this need for recognition to a desire to be recognized sexually as a male by other men. This alternative development of masculinity is also captured in Schleifter's (2006) article *Make Me Feel Mighty Real: Gay Female-to Male Transgenderists Negotiating Sex, Gender and Sexuality* when he suggests; "female to male sexual encounters with gay men contributes to their conceptions of themselves as masculine" (2006:69). Yet this disruption to the boundary between heterosexuality and homosexuality and the complexity of sexual identity is vehemently denied in broader social contexts and dominant displays of masculinity unequivocally signify heterosexuality.

The straight body's need to maintain clearly defined identity boundaries effects the open space of the street, which is a place that requires careful monitoring and negotiation of heterosexuality's shadow, homosexuality. The street subsequently takes the shape of hegemonic male bodies and the need to fend off any threat of the encroaching 'other', which threatens its masculine boundaries, male integrity and unequivocal heterosexuality. This hegemonic body fills the street with a sense of ownership and entitlement yet ironically displays high levels of paranoia and an anxiety that its sense of 'natural' hierarchy, bodily containment and inherent heterosexuality may be undermined by any sign of difference. Paradoxically it is this process of constructing other bodies as

improper or deviant that is fundamental to the reaffirmation of the straight masculine self and the ideals on which it is founded; namely its distance from femininity and homosexuality. The street is thus *colonized* as a means to contain anxiety, either by acting as a straightening device that requires queer bodies to pass as ‘normal’, or by excluding queer bodies altogether. I suggest this works as a means to minimize the threat of the porous body that demonstrates its openness to change, other bodies and undirected desire. This pressure to pass as straight may force some transgendered people to uphold the polarity of sexual dimorphism, despite possible desire for, or contentment with, levels of ambiguity.

While some transgendered people find the ways to negotiate the continuum between sexes this often requires and is dependent on the levels of support from other people, for example partners or community. Given the level of critique of tranz people from various directions this requires huge resilience.⁷ Yet not clearly adhering to a fixed ‘normal’ sexual identity has severe ramifications both within family space and public spaces. The multitude of differences that transgendered people may embody is often regulated into presenting a unified identity as a matter of safety and ability to move comfortably in space. This demonstrates the way in which potential ‘lines of flight’ from molar identities become entrapped and grounded in closed bodies within striated space. It also highlights the challenge to individualistic concepts of ‘choice’, which suggest humans make independent and autonomous decisions. Alternatively, as I have pointed out, decisions about bodily identity are always made in the context and space of intercorporeal relationships, which can be either be restrictive (at the extreme of the continuum) or generous, allowing for levels of fluidity.

The rugby field, as I identified earlier, is a significant masculine space, producing distinct forms of male embodiment, highlighting the ways in which bodies are shaped by specific spaces. Sport is an influential institution in the development of bodily identity and plays a major role in the ordering and socializing of corporeal exchange between men. Guarding against any signs of male bodies as open or soft, it ensures boys become *real* men. As

⁷ Transgendered people, for example, have at times borne the brunt of feminist critique as well. Sheila Jeffreys (2003), for example, considers female to male surgery as a means to rid society of lesbians; Raymond (1979) and Steinem (1983) argue tranzwomen are impostors in the female domain.

Claire describes in her experiences of being a boy who didn't fit nor desire to become a real man:

I was always soft and into gentle pursuits, and games like kicking a leather covered bladder around some muddy field was you know not me. Yeh I was forced to do these things, you know I would rather play hop scotch. You know that sort of thing. I was sort of picked on, I was bullied. I learned to run like the wind to avoid beatings. I have had some severe beatings.

When 'male' bodies do not conform to the rigid requirements of 'straight' embodiment violence, which already circulates as energy or intensity, is materialized by individuals to enforce compliance. Preferring more feminine versions of sport Claire was identified as different and therefore a threat.

For Claire, violence is part of her experience of space and while she learned to 'run like the wind' to avoid beatings, the pressure to conform eventually leads Claire to pursue a 'flight to masculinity'. When faced with the domination of space by heterosexual and hegemonic masculinity (and the comfort such bodies experience through space taking the shape of their form), queer subjects may feel uncomfortable (the body does not 'sink into' a space that has already taken its shape). Discomfort is then registered as a feeling of disorientation: one's body feels out of place, awkward, unsettled (Ahmed 2004). The ongoing affect of being excluded from experiencing a sense of comfort results in Claire disguising her femininity and a 'flight to masculinity'. This involves seeking a place to fit, forcing one's body to take the form of hegemonic space. For Claire this took the path of a career in the Air Force where masculine behavior is strictly regulated and monitored by other men. For Claire this was not a choice but a means to survive, as she describes:

You risked being beaten to death, you know if you were in any way queer, you know in the current terms of the meaning of the word queer, being different...One tries to conform and I suppose what I did was to throw myself into the macho lifestyle you know...but you see the feelings never go away and they get stronger.

Claire captures how violence works spatially to eradicate the presence of queer bodies and as a result she represses any signs of ambiguity and becomes straight acting. Embodying a macho identity, Claire denies her more feminine self. Her inability to find

expression or a place of comfort and recognition of the differences that she experiences, cause Claire to internalize the embodied emotions of conflict and contradiction. This eventually leads to a crisis and after a series of tragedies (the loss of family members, a serious accident and the breakdown of her second marriage), Claire's male life crumbles:

You know, the accident made me realize what a tenuous hold we have on life and all the other things, all the other trauma. I lost the home I loved, I lost my family, you know my marriage, my home, my working life and I just thought I can't take anymore and um so I just want to be happy and be me. So that is when I decided that, you know, the person inside me was going to come out and I was going to live my life how I should and be happy and this is why I am as I am today.

Karen: And are you happier?

Absolutely, absolutely and when one does that, it is like the weight of the world comes off the shoulders, there is such a relief to say this is me, this is who I am.

It took a major crisis for Claire to feel free enough to move in a different direction, to nomadically engage with exploring aspects of herself that she had so deeply denied. I use the term nomadic, as to step off the path or line of straightness and its subsequent directed life course in many ways involves movement into the unknown. To be prepared to move with the flow and directions which are not clearly evident requires a letting go of the strict controls and vigilance that it takes to uphold a masculine self. It involves moving, in many ways, in undirected or unmapped terrain creating new pathways and places of comfort. However to wander nomadically, as Claire expresses, also brings with it a sense of freedom. For Claire 'the weight of the world comes off her shoulders' and while this is a common figure of speech to articulate a sense of liberation, alternative understandings of bodies and spaces, as leaking into one another, add an embodied component to this experience. The straight world/direction is experienced as a weight, which diminishes ones bodily presence and movement. As Ahmed states "the social pressure to follow a certain course, to live a certain kind of life, and even to reproduce that life can feel like a physical 'press' on the surface of the body, which creates its own impressions" (2006:17). Following a straight life for Claire is like a constant pressure on the surface of the skin. When Claire ceases to be 'in line' with straight direction she experiences a physical sense of release. The 'freedom' that Claire experiences when this

weight lifts, I suggest, contradicts traditional understandings that link freedom to autonomy, and subsequently the body-for-itself (Diprose 2002). Claire's freedom, I suggest, is experienced through openness, not only to her feminine self, but also to the possible connections/bodies of others which masculinity and a straight direction denied her.

Vulnerable Bodies

The threat posed by transgendered bodies, I assert, is that they illuminate the myth of bodies as closed and stable, thereby challenging the boundaries of other bodies by disrupting their sense of self-containment. Homophobia/transphobia is the resulting affect; as an energy and force it works as a means to limit the threat of open bodies, to contain nomadic wanderings and the creativity of becoming bodies, which disturb the social order. As Battersby states:

Those who are aware of themselves as centered 'inside' an insulated container – free from contamination by the threatening other which is located on the 'outside' – are captured by an illusion generated by the mechanisms of ego-protection, as well as by spatial models inherited from a classical science which is now outmoded. To imaginatively construct the self as inhabiting a 3D 'container' is to treat the self as a system that is closed: a form of narcissism. It means blocking out other systems (including other selves) (1993:33).

Battersby's key point here is that to occupy one's body as a container is to see the body as a protector of the inner self or padding from the outside world. The body, while acting within the world is seen in somewhat as separate and acts as a barrier or border mechanism of defense. Within this model, the body's purpose is to sustain and protect the self which is conceived of as an inner essence residing in the body. By definition, borders are spaces that are always carefully guarded, as they are perceived points of entry or exit and therefore potentially open to violation: they are stratified spaces between clearly demarcated regions, the point where one surface meets another. Douglas notes, "The body is a model which can stand for any bounded system. Its boundaries can represent any boundaries which are threatened or precarious" (1966:115). Through Western liberal humanist understandings of the individualized body as closed, the surface of the skin signifies the division between inner and outer worlds, and while it is experienced as a

point of sensation and pleasure it also becomes a place of vulnerability, anxiety and fear. Orifices are of particular concern: “we should expect the orifices of the body to symbolize its especially vulnerable points” (Douglas 1966:122). Hegemonic masculinity suffers the most from this anxiety, as it more than other bodies has been constructed and often experienced as strictly invulnerable and impenetrable, a hard and closed surface. In order to offset the fear of the fluid and vulnerable body, Antony Easthope in *What a man's gotta do*, suggests men understand and experience their bodies in the following way:

For the masculine ego the body can be used to draw a defensive line between inside and outside. So long as there is very little fat, tensed muscle and tight sinew can give a hard, clear outline to the body. Flesh and bone can pass itself off as a kind of armor. A hard body will ensure that there are no leakages across the edges between inner and outer worlds. Nature, it seems, has betrayed the perimeter of the male body. It has opened up there a number of gaps and orifices, though mercifully fewer than for the female body. What holes remain must be firmly shut... Tensed; the whole frontier can be kept on red alert (cited Buchbinder 1998:133-134).

In order to maintain its physical impenetrability masculinity presents its bodily self much like a suit of armor and becomes the body which penetrates/colonizes both spaces and other bodies. Female embodiment in its perceived opposition to masculinity is constructed and understood to be soft, passive, penetrable, a potential site of entry and colonization. As Sue Best argues:

Woman becomes the body-matter for philosophy as the necessary condition for man to appear to transcend his corporeal, material existence through reflection and speculation... Man is thus positioned as the transcendent subject whose only connection to the corporeal is his imprint left upon ‘his’ object – the body of woman... Woman is rendered as the necessary corporeal support for man’s subjectivity. So, in effect, both terms of the opposition subject/object are inscribed in the body matter of woman. This leaves woman as the sole guardian of body-matter (1995:187).

Man therefore requires woman as object/body in order to maintain his seemingly disembodied status. As feminists have argued women’s bodies have been perceived as ‘containers’ or as vessels that are ‘ready’ to be filled by men (Irigaray 1985; Dworkin 1989). Ahmed furthers this argument suggesting that, “woman’s body becomes the tool

in which the man ‘extends himself’” (Ahmed 2006:71). The female body therefore is alternatively understood and experienced as penetrable, and arguably does not react at the same embodied level to the presence in, and protection of, space from queer bodies. I am not suggesting that ‘females’ are not homophobic, or that they are not capable of acting violently rather that ‘males’ have more invested in the social production of closed bodies via the objectification and denigration of the bodies of others. Within the context of straight space, heterosexual women maintain and are complicit with their privileged status through the potential violence of men. Their role in the exclusion of queer bodies from straight space is more one of passive aggression and works at the level of denying the existence and feelings of queer bodies; whilst men act to deny their own bodies and seek to maintain ownership of the body/matter of women and space at large. Even though heterosexual women and men are also victims of violence from hegemonic males, my point is that males are more likely to register difference as a physical threat or fear and respond physically due to dominant conceptions of masculinity. Ahmed suggests:

Vulnerability involves a particular kind of bodily relation to the world, in which openness itself is read as a site of potential danger, and as demanding evasive action. Emotions may involve *readings of such openness*, as spaces where bodies and worlds meet and leak into each other. Fear involves reading such openings as dangerous; the openness of the body to the world involves a sense of danger (Ahmed 2004:69).

Vulnerability and fear work in different ways depending on access to power and the comfort of one’s body in space. As Ahmed further suggests; “in fear, the world presses against the body; the body shrinks back from the world in the desire to avoid the object of fear. Fear involves shrinking the body” (2004:69). However, as I have argued, responses to fear manifest differently in differently gendered bodies. Hegemonic masculinity’s response to fear and the threat posed to its boundaries by queer bodies, rather than shrinking, is to expand its presence and fill space with actual violence. Simultaneously queer bodies shrink back and inhibit their movement and bodily being in space, which consequently reinforces the normalization of space as straight. Thus it could be argued that homophobic violence is the result of the perceived threat to the boundaries of the closed body and serves as a tactile reminder that the body is in fact vulnerable and not a

closed entity; that the hierarchy and privilege experienced by straight bodies is tenuous and temporal rather than ‘natural’ and ahistorical.

In the West authoritative understandings of bodies, such as those derived from the medical model, make the normative body and its heterosexuality appear natural yet a cultural comparison demonstrates the indivisibility between bodies, culture and social relations. In the following extract Kelvin talks of the problem of moving from one culture where being fa’afafine is accepted and his presence in space is not inhibited, into another culture where space is closed down and fa’afafine embodiment is made to modify its presence to conform to straight space:

When you are fa’afafine it is really open because there is no closet, there is a penalty to pay for that if you come from Samoa to New Zealand. In New Zealand some people live like women. Everybody has to work and then you come to a society where you can’t work as you are. Then you have to cut your hair or things ... There is an absolute resilience to survive and only when you learn about people trying to kill you off, then you learn about survival.

In Samoa there is a recognized place for fa’afafine and there is no need to act straight or deny the woman in the man. However in New Zealand, despite a significant Pacific Island population, fa’afafine are forced to modify their embodied presence in order to gain employment and to offset violence. As Kelvin suggests some fa’afafine find it necessary to live like women; that is, conform to a solidified binary identity and to deny the ambiguity of their fa’afafine selves. This demonstrates yet again how queer bodies are forced to work on fitting into straight spaces not as a matter of choice but of survival. As Kelvin states, to exist as fa’afafine is survival at its most fundamental level and requires huge resilience in the face of social practices that function to eradicate such alternative existence.

The meaning associated to fa’afafine in Aotearoa (and hence their general marginalisation in New Zealand society) is a product of Western understandings of sex and sexuality; namely the division of male/female and heterosexual/homosexual. While fa’afafine are biological men who identify as women it does not necessarily correlate that they identify as gay in the Western sense of the term. Fa’afafine embrace their femininity

as an important component to their sense of self thereby resisting the western denigration of women. While fa'afafine may have sexual relationships with gay men and move in the gay community this is not necessarily exclusive and as Kelvin described in a previous section the boundary between heterosexuality and homosexuality is not as fixed as dominant western concepts would suggest. Fa'afafine identity is located in the specifics of Samoan culture and while “at times fa'afafine do engage in political and other affiliations with queer groups, they ground the uniqueness of their identities in their cultural history and their places within their families and society, rather than their sexual practices” (Schmit 2001:6). The cultural basis of the division between heterosexual and homosexual is demonstrated in the shift in Samoan culture due to Western influence. Schmit argues “homophobia is a recent development in Samoa and “concepts of ‘gay’ and ‘straight’ have not really been relevant in Samoa in the past, and there is no specific Samoan term for ‘homosexual’” (2001:8). The specific subtleties of fa'afafine identity and embodiment are better attributed to ethnicity and a collective understanding of identity rather than translated into Western understandings of sex, gender, sexuality and the individual.

However colonization and Christianity has had a major influence in Samoa and on the lives of fa'afafine living in New Zealand, which has resulted in the development of a hybridity of fa'afafine identity. As Wallace argues: “European and Polynesian sexual identities are not the same and neither are they utterly distinct, but what is of continued importance is the changing terms by which they are counterpoised” (2003:2). This demonstrates that bodily identity is never a singular affair but involves an ongoing intercorporeal exchange, which is specific to the spaces within which such bodies exist. As Kelvin points out fa'afafine demonstrate their agency and innovation in negotiating their bodily identities in the predominately straight spatial context of Aotearoa.

Queer Connections Disrupting the Straight and Narrow

In the previous section I explored the movement of queer bodies in public spaces, investigating the ways in which the visibility of queer bodies is registered as a threat to straight space and male bodies. I would now like to explore the way queer bodies are prevented from connecting with other bodies which, in turn, reinforces the binary of

normal/abnormal. Often queer bodies are prohibited from entering spaces where there is a potential possibility of connections with other bodies; especially of concern is the connection with straight bodies. The assumed naturalization of the coupling of straight bodies isolates queer bodies and limits their tending or movement towards all other bodies, as the following experience of Claire demonstrates:

Anyway as I told you, I tried the homosexual thing but at the time it really did nothing for me other than the pleasure it gave me to be treated like a woman...the guy was a friend anyway and I don't know he wasn't unattractive it was convenient. You know a convenient way to try it, but perhaps he wasn't very good at it. He certainly wasn't very well endowed...In theory I have always thought I am attracted to females and I suppose I still am but at the same token I do have sort of, have penis fantasies. It is hard, it is so hard you know see I am sixty five - who wants a sixty five year old. As for me you know I don't want a seventy-year old guy. You know so it is going to be very awkward. I did form an attachment to another tranz person once but I think it sort of frightened her and she began being nasty to me. Got rid of me so to speak, chased me away...I have a need to be loved and cherished and that is something that is missing from my life. I have got some girlfriends and they are nice and sweet to me, they are good but that is all, they are friends if I didn't have them I would go nuts. Because you can't live in the tranz community you have to live in the real world.

Claire's sexual orientation or tending towards other bodies is queer and not governed by polarized sex or a straight line that only brings certain bodies within reach. Through deviating from the straight line Claire opens up new lines of possible connection between bodies. As Ahmed argues:

Queer orientations are those that put within reach bodies that have been made unreachable by the lines of conventional genealogy. Queer orientations might be those that don't line up, which by seeing the world "slantwise" allow other objects to come into view. A queer orientation might be those that do not overcome what is "off line," and hence *acts out of line with others* (2006:107).

Claire does not restrict her attractions to specific identity categories and her desire expands beyond the limitations of male/female and heterosexual/homosexual demonstrating the transgressive potential of queer desire. Queer desire, in this instance, emphasizes the connection rather than the sex/gender of the object. However the opportunities to move in space that accommodates and allows for this unregimented

directing towards ‘other’ bodies is restricted. While the tranz community/world is an alternative space that embraces diversity and allows for the comfort of Claire’s embodiment it is not a space that Claire can occupy permanently and she must negotiate the real world. In the ‘real’ world only real men and women are seen to have the specific right/expectation to formulate sexual connections with those they are attracted to, and lines of desire are formulated in ‘appropriate’ straight directions. Claire is seen as out of line in such spaces and while she has girlfriends who keep her company, she does not have the intimate relationship she desires. In the following extract Claire talks of her attempts to move into spaces that may bring other bodies into contact in the search for a potential partner:

I tried to enroll in a ballroom dancing place a couple of years ago and they didn’t want me. They said no we don’t think it is a good idea for you to come because none of the guys would want to dance with you. So I went to belly dancing classes instead and I do belly dancing.

Ballroom dancing is a performance that extends the bodies of heterosexual couples and carries strong codes of ‘acceptable’ male and female corporeality. Buchbinder (1998) suggests that within such representations heterosexual coupling is figured as the social good of each individual and is also tied to notions of social and professional success. Ballroom dancing, a performance based on the perceived ‘natural’ opposition between the two sexes, presents an image that implies the coming together of opposites is a harmonious and perfect balance. As Ahmed contends, “the line of straight orientation takes the subject toward what it ‘is not’ and what it ‘is not’ then confirms what it ‘is’”(2006:71). The naturalization of heterosexuality as a line that directs bodies “depends on the construction of women’s bodies as being ‘made’ for men, such that women’s sexuality is seen as directed toward men” (Ahmed 2006:71). Thus the space of ballroom dancing is straight space and Claire’s embodied and directional ambiguity potentially disturbs the balance. Claire therefore is placed outside this space as she undermines the power of heterosexual coupling; space affects queer bodies but simultaneously queer bodies may affect space. Claire’s desire for connection is not governed by the directions

of heteronormativity; it is nomadic and governed by the ‘linkage and intensity’ between bodies not delimited by identity or sex. In their examples of nomadic movement, Deleuze and Guattari suggest “the nomads are there on the land, whenever there forms a smooth space that gnaws, and tends to grow, in all directions. The nomads inhabit these places; they remain in them, and they themselves make them grow” (1987:382). As previously conveyed the intercorporeality of bodies suggests that linkages and connections are shape shifting. Claire’s presence, while seen out of line with others, has the potential to grow, take up space and instigate change in others she comes into contact with through potentially shifting their direction/orientation. However the perceived anxiety or threat to male bodies and the directional space of heteronormativity is contained through the exclusion of ambiguity.

Claire’s embodied presence is not seen as a threat within the realm of belly- dancing, however, a forum that is perceived as an exclusive female space within the context of New Zealand. It is a dance performance that is conducted without the same bodily contact or coupling as ballroom dancing, and as such does not disrupt the perceived harmonious balance of the pairing of female and male bodies. Neither masculinity nor heteronormativity are visually challenged within this space. This, I suggest, is partly due to the fact that belly-dancing is not a traditional dance within Aotearoa and is seen as an ‘exotic’ performance. As an ‘exotic’ performance it carries with it hegemonic understandings of racialized bodies thereby placing it within the realm of the other and not a reflection of ‘us’. The threat that Claire’s bodily difference creates is deflected by the dance performance not being a true representation of New Zealand or its social relations. Like the queer body, the racialized body is seen as hyper-visible and as such is constructed as a ‘improper’ body. The white heterosexual male body can retain its status as rational and hence its distance from its own body through the construction of the ‘other’ as mere body devoid of consciousness and subjectivity. As Mohanram states: “the white man transcends and transforms the body into will and rationale, a perception and a perspective, whereas the black man embodies the Body” (1999:27). The combination, therefore, of belly-dancing as a space for women and other ethnicities, sufficiently distances it from the male body, subsequently deflating any threat to male integrity.

Again this points to the ways in which notions of “embodied and disembodied, are all social relationships of domination and exploitation” (Mohanram 1999:39).

However while I have argued that Claire’s presence within the context of belly-dancing does not pose a threat to heteronormativity and hence masculinity I do suggest that the category of woman, which is often essentialized, is disrupted. Fuss argues that essentialism “appeals to a pure or original femininity, a female essence, outside the boundaries of the social” (1989:2). Claire’s acceptance and presence within this dance performance demonstrates Butler’s (1999) idea of gender performativity in which gender is a stylized repetition of acts. Drawing on the work of Simone de Beauvoir, and in particular, her phrase “one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman” (1972:295) Butler has pointed to the way in which the body rather than a natural fact is an historical construct which is specific to the sociocultural context. Butler suggests that the body “becomes its gender through a series of acts which are renewed, revised, and consolidated through time” (1988:523). Butler’s work, which has been hugely influential in queer theorizing and for its decentering of identity, stands in sharp contrast to essentialist arguments which Fuss argues “frequently make recourse to an ontology which stands outside the sphere of cultural influence and historical change. ‘Man’ and ‘woman,’ to take one example, are assumed to be ontologically stable objects, coherent signs which derive their coherency from their unchangeability and predictability (there have *always* been men and women it is argued)” (1989:3). Claire’s presence therefore undermines the category of woman as stable and alludes to the concept of ‘becoming’ in which the body is never static but always in a process of exchange, which is always situated in a time and place. In the arena of belly dancing the intercorporeal exchange between women creates a space for Claire to be accepted as ‘woman’. Claire’s embodiment whilst being accepted as ‘woman’ simultaneously destabilizes the unified and essentialist identity of *woman* even within the exclusively feminine domain of belly-dancing.

Monitoring Queer Desire

Not only is the proximity of queer bodies in relation to straight bodies monitored, the space *between* queer bodies is also a site of anxiety and regulation. Displays of queer desire, as well as any possible closeness between queer bodies, are regulated within striated space. Jen and Carol (mtf), who I interviewed as a couple, experience this regulation in public spaces. I asked them if they felt they needed to restrict affection for one another on the street they responded with the following account:

Jen: oh absolutely, absolutely.

Carol Well I don't but Jen does right from when I transitioned. From that point, when we went anywhere, before we held hands just everywhere. But once I transitioned that pretty much stopped because Jen was really self-conscious about it and still is to a degree. You know there are times when we do, which is I don't know whenever we are just feeling really close or in a safe environment say the queer community.

Jen: Queer friendly stuff is just so easy to be ourselves you know.

Carol: But I will hold hands with her anytime but she still gets a bit queasy about it, but this is fine.

Jen: Yeh it is just an unsafe feeling, it is not about not wanting to do it, it is an unsafe feeling you know. Sometimes I can feel really confident you know walking around and holding her hand and that is fine. Other times I can't like school holidays and things like that, no way.

Karen: So, it is a self-protection thing?

Jen: Yeh it is absolutely. But you know when we first were going out I used to stop Carol in the middle of the road and kiss her in the middle of the road. When cars were coming past and stuff like that. Whereas I feel I can't do that now.

In line with dominant constructions of individualized, closed and completed bodies comes the monitoring of the sexual proximity between desiring queer bodies. The closeness or the space between bodies is of social concern and bodies that get too close and violate the straight norm are seen as a potential danger to the social order. As I explored with masculinity, the space where bodies meet is seen as potentially dangerous. Within the dualistic division of spaces, sexual expression is designated to the realm of the 'private' and within the 'public' only certain forms of affection are considered

appropriate for public display. Closeness and linkages between bodies are socially accepted as long as they are not explicit and are associated with and serve to validate normative heterosexuality. Open displays of affection between queer bodies potentially make such bodies more vulnerable to negative attention. This, in part, is a homophobic controlling of space, but also is a means to contain the threat of the openness of bodies which sexual desire brings into awareness. As Diprose argues “sexual desire is viewed as an exceptional affect that destabilizes an otherwise self-controlled, self-contained self” (2002:76). To secure the protection of the self and to minimize the openness of bodies, sexual desire is contained within designated spaces and between bodies that display sexual difference. Thus striated space works not only to minimize the potential chaos of visible desiring bodies but also to organize desire along straight lines through the exclusion of queer bodies and the strict control of the space between such bodies. When the space between queer bodies shrinks heteronormativity is disrupted, and the transformative potential of desire creating new realities is realized. The open display of queer connections has the capacity to shift traditional understandings of sexual expression. However the body’s capability for multiple forms of connecting is contained by the predominant cultural belief that heterosexuality is a natural requirement for the repetition of life and that sexual categorizes are fixed, unchanging and derive from a core essence. A public display of physical affection between heterosexuals is seen as more normal, and as such may slip from view and sink comfortably into space. Not only has space taken the shape of straight bodies but also of straight coupling and the disruptive potential of queer desire is contained. In the following section I explore how such monitoring may lead to some queer people trying to act straight.

Acting Straight on the Street

While gay men have challenged the public/private dichotomy, which supports heterosexuality and governs sexual expression by creating and occupying public places, which are known to be gay sexual arenas, the street still remains a site of heterosexual connection and coercion. Furthermore certain articulations of gay identity can also reinforce the exclusion of some overtly queer bodies and identities. In the following extract Kelvin talks of the way in which some gay men also conform to ‘straightness’ by

disavowing any aspect of effeminacy or softness and thus maintain binary sex/gender categorizes:

I don't identify with the American persona of gay because I think that gays have really done some damage, you know to me I would rather be called a fa'afafine because it is like a powerful woman. There is like a denigration of being woman that anything effeminate is considered to be distasteful. You only have to see the gay men what they say about straight acting. My god Karen, that is one thing I can't bear to be straight acting. For one it goes totally against my nature to be straight. I mean it is not in the sense if you are straight, a heterosexual but to be straight actor what are you doing you are playing a role and it is crap.

Kelvin suggests that despite gay men's challenges to the naturalization of heterosexuality there is a desire for and pressure for gay men to act straight disavowing any sign of effeminacy, softness and maintaining binary sex/gender. Buchbinder argues that "men who conform, whether they are homosexual or heterosexual, to the dictates of the discourse of patriarchal masculinity thus seem essentially masculine and therefore apparently heterosexual" (1998:131). White, straight-acting gay men within the space of the street are therefore difficult to distinguish from straight men. Gay men who 'act straight' are therefore able to slip comfortably into space and gain the same privilege as that of their disembodied (invisibilized) heterosexual counterparts. However, as Edwards suggests "the defining feature of the gay man is that he loves or simply eroticizes men as opposed to women and therefore, in some sense, the masculine as opposed to the feminine" (2005:51).⁸ This could suggest that some gay men rather than distancing themselves from traditional masculinity are desirous of it and the phallic power that is bestowed upon it. As I have argued earlier, the fact that homoeroticism has been distanced from homosocial bonding is a cultural rather than a 'natural' distinction. Gay men consequently also monitor the behavior of other gay men and as Kelvin points out there is sometimes a preference for straight acting gays.

For Kelvin this does not fit and he resides in the space between masculinity and femininity denying neither the woman in the man nor the man in the woman. The pressure to act straight, however, demonstrates how queer embodiment can be coerced

⁸ It is not my intention, to deny that gay men may desire openly effeminate men nor to deny the experiences of feminized men.

into becoming a version of molarized identity, thereby excluding and alienating those who are ‘too’ queer.

Expanding the Spaces of Queer Comfort

In this section I will explore the way in which comfort and conflict are sometimes interwoven within queer space, and are in Deleuzian terms, an effect of desiring machines pushing the boundaries of connections. Queer spaces and communities, because they have taken the shape and contours of the queer bodies that occupy them, and therefore are an extension of those bodies, provide comfort and a place that *fits*. Perhaps this can be likened to the sensation of clothing: when an article of clothing fits and is comfortable it slips from awareness and becomes part of one’s body. However when an article of clothing is too tight or the wrong shape it creates a sense of discomfort and awkwardness. The surface of the fabric does not slip from awareness. I suggest space is the same and in queer space queer bodies slip from awareness; the energy of that space is not registered as a discomfort at the surface of the skin; space is smooth and flows in and between bodies and allows for transgressive connections. As the participants have suggested throughout this chapter, queer spaces provide a sense of freedom or relief from the weight of the straight world and are a place where queer bodies are accepted and can be themselves.

However there are times when the mobility of such queer spaces is also challenged and the boundaries of the space are monitored to offset the threat of the ambiguity of the body that is *too* queer or not registered as queer. This is an inevitable component of queer embodiment/orientation and it is through this process of conflict that queer potentially has the power to expand the boundaries of worlds. Ahmed argues; “if orientation is a matter of how we reside or how we clear space that is familiar, then orientations also take time and require giving uptime” (2006:20). This taking and giving of time, I suggest, is a vital component to the agency of queer, and, as Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner suggest, “queer work is a space of entrances, exits, unsystematized lines of acquaintance, projecting horizons, typifying examples, alternate routes, blockages, noncommensurate geographies” (2002:198). Queer resists constraining categories and normalizing regimes and seeks to shift the limits of group formation; therefore the pathway to social change

may not be ‘straight’ forward. Rather than narrow either/or logic to resistance and domination, queer works on the conditions of possibility by creating a spaces/directions for queer to expand and move over time. As Berlant and Warner (2002) argue, its very resistance to assimilation makes ‘queer’ at odds with any systemized view of political movement such as gay liberation. This lack of cohesion and favoring of fluidity of sexual expression and embodiment brings queerness in to sharp contrast with political movements formed in the decades prior to its emergence. Queers’ focus on the ‘decentering’ of identity brings it in direct conflict with identity politics which were fundamental to the building of gay and lesbian identities and communities. Queer presence in certain gay or lesbian spaces might, on occasions, be unsettling and conflict may occur. For example, in the following extract Jay talks of being a tranz man entering a queer event run by lesbian women:

I think that there is stereotypes around tranz people amongst dykes and I think there are stereotypes that come from gay guys and while the most vocal anti-stuff has come from dykes I think some of the visibility, those of us a growing number of us although still pretty small, has created or started to create change in some small dyke worlds. We are still a bit, quite fragile like for instance we have an event in Wellington called Dykes on Mics, a karaoke night where dykes are meant to be able, well it was advertised as for any queer people and tranz people to come along and it explicitly said tranz on the invite. I do drag performance and so I went along and I got hassled a bit before I went in. I said “look I am performing and stuff” but the problem is even though it was on the invite they had two staunch dykes on the door that didn’t get it. They had interpreted the policy that people were allowed male family members with them if they came to support an individual person but they were going to keep male voyeurs out or something. So obviously under that there is some assumption that they will be able to tell who is, because it was a queer event who was a gay male, who is straight man and who is tranz like they are going to be able to tell who the tranz people are. And like none of the tranzguys had it easy going in there and the one who has been in a relationship for a long time and at that time the partner was pregnant they walked in and got read as what would be seen as a straight couple. They got hassled the most. There is a shift happening from people going ‘it is a lesbian only or woman only’ to saying ‘it is open to other people’ but they haven’t thought through what those terms are so people come along and get really hassled at they door about why they are there.

As Jay discovers on the karaoke evening, while some events are promoted as queer not everybody embraces the differences that queer might actually involve or embody.

Conflict arises between those who uphold identity politics and the notion of a gay and lesbian essence, and those who are challenging the foundations of such essentialized categories and their inevitable exclusions. Jay reveals that the event is actually lesbian and talks of the dyke world which is a space that has taken the shape of lesbian women. Within this space “The Woman-Identified Woman” is seen as the only valid body “insofar as the lesbian is the ultimate pariah of male society: not only a woman, but a woman-loving woman, a woman unattached to a man, a being bereft even of an auxiliary identity” (Phelan 1989:41). Whilst this version of lesbianism distances itself from ‘real women’ (namely, in this context, heterosexual women), it also draws on liberal humanist understandings of the individual as fixed and hence the category of ‘woman’ as biologically predetermined, and as such it distances itself from any sign of ambiguity or shape shifting. It also highlights the problems when queer and straight are taken up as oppositional, when in some cases there is a blurring of these distinctions. The entrance of tranzmen into this space and the inability to define who is man, woman, lesbian, gay, man, tranz, straight or queer causes such a disruption.

While the dyke world is created to offset the domination of the straight world and its exclusions, it also sometimes acts to diminish the presence of queer bodies that exceed the bounds of gay and lesbian identity politics. The entrance to this world is seen as a border and again is a point of policing. In this instance lesbian bodies guard the space against the perceived threat posed by tranzmen. An assumption is made that they are ‘imposters’ or ‘male-identified’. In order to move in the straight world tranzmen have to work hard at maintaining the appearance of binary sex. As I have explored throughout this work, this is enforced through complex and pervasive strategies. However, to move/survive in the straight world results in a confrontation with the dyke/queer world even though Jay is queer. Both these worlds in different forms and for different reasons seek to reduce the multiplicity of queer embodiment into rigidly demarcated categories. Within the dyke world, the ambiguity of the queer body, like in the straight world, is registered as a disruptive energy, and an ‘obstacle’ to essentialist versions of gender/sex, threatening to destabilize the boundaries of women identified women. The tranz couple, as Jay describes, perceived to be straight by the staunch dykes at the door pose the

biggest problem. Their presence is registered as an intrusion of straightness. While some tranzmen may embody hegemonic masculinity whilst simultaneously disrupting its essentialist foundations, others may identify as queer. This demonstrates the fluidity of tranz identities and their challenge to simplified accounts of identity categories.

Furthermore given the pressure to conform to reductive understandings of identity it is not surprising that some transgendered people may not wish to, or have the support to, embody queerness.

While there are moments where blockages occur and queer bodies have to make their presence expand over time, there are also moments/spaces when such presence becomes a familial energy. In such spaces queer bodies and their relationships have stretched out to create the space as comfortably queer. In the previous chapter I explored the intercorporeal generosity between Jen and Carol demonstrating the transformative potential of bodily connection; in the following extract I wish to highlight how the intercorporeal nature of their specific relationship also makes them a transgressive signpost in the queer community:

Jen: I have never identified as lesbian.

Carol: I think within the queer community some of them see you as lesbian but most times it is “oh yes that is that tranny couple”. You know because we are really not the same. We have a reasonable amount to do with the queer community in Wellington. Usually we are the token tranny people in all sorts of events and things that are going on. People just accept us as us. I think they know we are not exactly gay or lesbian and we are something a little bit other and they accept that.

Jen, who does not identify as lesbian, is accepted in the queer community because of her connection to Carol. Her openness and ability to embrace difference in relation to her own identity and that of Carol enables them both to sink comfortably into queer space. Not only do they sink comfortably but also they are recognized as the ‘tranny couple’, and, even though they are a minority within this marginalized group, their presence is transgressive and disrupts notions of the homosexual coupling of bodies. While there are obviously more difficulties for queer bodies to change the contours of straight space there is an ongoing shift within queer space/communities. Such space constantly has to stretch

and negotiate its borders to accommodate queer bodies as they continue to demonstrate their agency in defying recognized (for example, taken-for-granted) identities.

Conclusion

This focus of this chapter has been to direct awareness toward the ways in which the concept of the autonomous and disembodied individual work in complex and often unseen ways to maintain the domination and privilege of public space as belonging to hegemonic and straight bodies. I have suggested that the boundaries of bodies and identities, while seen as naturally closed and fixed, are socially constructed through the production and alienation of bodies that appear different and through the rejection of homoeroticism. Such alienation functions through the monitoring of public space, such as the street, sports and recreational spaces creating and maintaining a corporeal rigidity/normality under the guise of maintaining bodily integrity. Furthermore violence is utilized to protect such integrity and is often deemed to be the action of individuals. Alternatively I have argued that violence is a structured component of straight/male space created as a means to offset the danger/reality of porous and diverse bodies. Through this process of denying the embodiment of normalized subjects, perpetrators of violence and alienation are able to refute or fail to notice their oppression of others. Furthermore through exploring culturally diverse forms of embodiment the naturalization of inflexible forms of masculinity and femininity is disrupted. Queer embodiment alternatively creates new directions, spaces and relationships, which follow alternative trajectories that embrace and provide comfort and acceptance of ambiguity. Such directions open up the potential of intercorporeal relations often denied by binary sex/gender that are governed by connections rather than identities. Through looking to the micro-dynamics of embodiment and the importance of intercorporeal exchange and generosity, I suggest, new ways of politicizing embodied citizenship can be developed that have been previously overlooked.

Chapter Five

The Erotics of Queer Generosity

Introduction

This chapter draws upon the alternative theorizing of bodies established in the three previous chapters to investigate the way in which participants talk specifically about their sexual ‘becoming’. I use the concept of becoming to indicate that sexuality, like other aspects of embodiment, is an ongoing process; rather than fixed and focused on predetermined objects of desire, sexuality is potentially innovative, productive and transformative. The foundations I have laid out for rethinking the body and its capabilities formulate the way in which I approach the imaginative, expressive and erotic queer body. Through exploring the erotic as a process, which Diprose (2002) suggests is a production and transformation of the corporeal self through others, I will explore how accounts of the atomized sexual individual maintain the hegemonic social order and its oppressive spatialization of bodies. Alternatively I will argue that the queer body displays levels of bodily generosity that potentially move beyond such directing and traditional understandings of anatomy. Such generosity recognizes the giving and taking of bodily parts, functions and behaviors and creates interplay of ‘maleness’ and ‘femaleness’.

Dominant understandings of sexuality derived from traditional sexology, psychiatry and therapeutic culture suggest that sexual acts are an occasional disruption of bodily integrity and are moments when “an otherwise self-controlled, self-contained self” (Diprose 2002:76) breaches the boundaries between the body of the self and the body of the other. Within this understanding bodies are completely separate units, which are spatially compromised (their boundaries disturbed) temporarily within the sexual act according to understandings of sexual difference. In this chapter I question the validity of such understandings, proposing that the transgressive potential of bodies is realized when

we assume a position of bodily generosity and acknowledge that body is not so rigidly separated, viewing the “erotic encounter as one means of extending one’s own existence through others without entrapment” (Diprose 2002:78). By extending this argument I intend to explore the way in which queer embodiment reconfigures the spatial orientation of bodies illuminating diverse forms of intercorporeal exchange, which blur the distinction between male and female bodies. Furthermore, I contend that bodily function determines the realities of anatomy rather than anatomy determining how a body functions.

In theorizing the potential of the erotic encounter, I move away from simplistic and essentialist accounts of the spatiality of male and female sexualized bodies as either externally focused or internally focused respectively. Furthermore, I challenge the separation of the body from the environment often considered external to the self. In doing so I intend to demonstrate that dominant spatial understandings of bodies, explored earlier in this work, are directed and performed rather than natural and inevitable; and are the product of ideologies of individualism and heterosexism. Feminist geographer Kathleen Kirby argues:

The concept of the traditional individual expresses a coherent, consistent, rational space paired with a consistent, stable, organized environment. The relationship between the two is enabled by their separation: clear boundaries ensure the delimitation of inside and outside space, the order of each, and the elevation of the former over the latter (1996:40).

These understandings map the body according to inner and outer worlds, creating the boundary of the body as the surface of the skin. Furthermore these concepts then get imposed on sexual bodies/spaces whereby male sexuality is perceived as inherently separate, exteriorized, and superior to female sexuality which is, in turn, depicted as hidden and confined to the interiority of the female body (Potts 2002). However, I suggest this is a consequence of the way in which bodies are directed toward one another within the context of hegemonic practices, as well as a consequence of the construction of sexed bodies as clearly separated and hierarchically different bodies. Steve Pile argues, “that one of the ways power works...is through mapping social inequalities onto spatial

categories” (1997:91). While this applies to spaces such as public/private it is also pertinent to the spatiality of the body and its sexual interactions. In this chapter I wish to demonstrate that by embodying the politics of intercorporeal generosity (a theme that runs throughout this work and for which the frameworks are outlined in the introduction), a way forward is presented which allows for deeper understanding of the transgressive capabilities of bodies that defy conventional models of individuality and alternatively embody a giving and taking of subject positions and bodily parts. By doing so I wish to illuminate the idea that by adopting such forms of embodiment, sexuality may be pried loose from its appropriation to justify and maintain a social order, which glorifies normative bodies while vilifying any sign of difference and creating bodily diversity as abnormal. I have argued throughout this thesis sexuality plays a major role in the shaping of society and spaces. As Merleau-Ponty nicely states:

There is an interfusion between sexuality and existence, which means that existence permeates sexuality and vice versa, so that it is impossible to determine, in a given decision or action, the proportion of sexual to other motivations, impossible to label a decision or action, the proportion of sexual to other motivations, impossible to label a decision or act ‘sexual’ or ‘non-sexual’ (1962:169).

Merleau-Ponty implies sexuality seeps beyond designated parts, places and times and intermingles with all aspects of becoming. As I argued in previous chapters the medical management of transgendered bodies cannot be separated from the bodily knowledge of those making the decisions regarding such bodies. Sexuality therefore “is not a distinct domain that can be separated from bodily experience in general” (Ahmed 2006:67). I have also asserted throughout this work that sexuality influences the way in which people are directed and face the world. If sexuality is inseparable from other aspects of our lives then it plays a major role in how we perceive our own bodies, the bodies of others, and it also impacts on the way in which bodies are lived. As Ahmed proposes that within the context of heteronormativity this has very concrete consequences:

The normalization of heterosexuality as orientation toward “the other sex” can be redescribed in terms of the requirement to follow a straight line, whereby straightness gets attached to other values including decent, conventional, direct, and honest. The naturalization of heterosexuality involves the presumption that there is

a straight line that leads each sex toward the other sex, and that '*the line of desire*' is '*in line*' with one's sex. The alignment of sex with orientation goes as follows: being a man would mean desiring a woman, and being a woman would mean desiring a man. The line of straight orientation takes the subject toward what it 'is not' and what it 'is not' then confirms what it 'is' (2006:70-71, emphasis in original).

This 'straightline', according to Ahmed, therefore reconfirms the notion that men and women are biologically opposed and this line of desire towards the 'opposite' sex ensures that each sex 'sees' itself clearly defined and closed off from any threat of ambiguity. On the other hand, the power or innovation of the queer body is its bodily presence in space, 'twisting' and moving in different directions obscuring the line so it appears 'crooked'. Queer bodies blur the lines of distinction and coherence. Rather than being driven toward a specific and consistent object, the queer body moves and directs itself in space as energy through which objects become available to it through its varied directions. Ahmed suggests:

If we presume that sexuality is crucial to bodily orientation, to how we inhabit spaces, then the differences between how we are orientated sexually are not only a matter of "which" objects we are orientated toward, but also how we extend through our bodies into the world. Sexuality would not be seen as determined only by object choice, but as involving differences in one's very relation to the world – that is, in how one "faces" the world or is directed towards it. Or rather, we could say that orientations toward sexual objects affect other things that we do, such that different orientations, different ways of directing one's desires, means inhabiting different worlds (Ahmed 2006:68).

As Ahmed points out, when bodies deviate from the straight line new ways of living and alternative worlds are created that cannot be accessed when following the intergenerational straight directions that comprise the norm. This allows for seeing the world, and the bodies within it, in different and diverse ways. In queer directions bodies are drawn together that may not conform to the rigid sexual categories that have thus far been constructed. There is a potential to develop new forms of sexuality that do not require that bodies function according to normative lines of sexual practice nor that they aesthetically fit the fiction of two sexes. May points out:

Sexuality is itself embedded in a larger realm, a realm we might call erotics. When we enter that larger realm, we are no longer in the arena of communication – or better, we are no longer simply in that arena. Nor are we simply at the level of individuals. Instead we are at the level of sub-individual bodily parts (May 2005:167).

According to May the realm of erotics is no longer contained within the definitive grasp of articulation. It seeps beyond the language that tries to encapsulate it and cannot be mapped by stages and points of progression but has the ability to create smooth space (in Deleuzian terms), which destabilizes the unity of the self. This destabilization of the individual allows for the connections of bodily parts not governed by dogmatic understandings of identity and sex.

Elsewhere in this thesis I have pointed to the ways in which obviously sexed bodies are directed towards specific bodies in a straight line, whilst other bodies and ambiguous directions are obscured from view in order to maintain ideals of normative and individualized bodies. This is also apparent in the way bodies are directed in dominant understandings of sexual performance. In the introduction to this thesis I discussed the influence of psycho-medical accounts on the way in which bodies function and are directed sexually. Masters and Johnson's Human Sexual Response Cycle (HSRC), considered a universal and objective account of sexuality, suggests that the natural and linear progression of physiological sexual responses accumulates in and signifies the completion and resolution of the sexual act (specifically as orgasm and ejaculation). However, alternatively it could be argued that this cultural understanding of sexual bodies is developed through the perception and vision of straight or phallic eyes and works to maintain the myth of individuality, bodily integrity and compulsory heterosexuality. The HSRC maintains the myth of the individual and singular body by resolving the problem of the temporary loss of bodily integrity. Masters and Johnson's version of the sexual encounter starts from the basis of a closed, autonomous body separated from the situational context and the bodies of others, which momentarily relinquishes its bodily integrity through losing itself in the body of the other. May captures the disruptive potential, and hence danger of passion, which illuminates the body's tenuous hold on unification:

In the heat of sexual passion we say that people *lose* themselves. That is a good way to put it. In the erotics of the sexual moment, there are no longer two individuals. And this is not because there is a single individual that is the fusion of the two. There are not fewer beings there, but more. There are arms and genitals and ears and eyes and soles and hair and fingertips; there is a series of explorations and connections and experimentations that arise not as decisions but on both the near and far sides of decisions and the individuals who make them. They arise when individuals lose themselves (2005:168).

The intercorporeality of the body is recognized in this encounter as a loss of self and the ‘rational’ mind is subordinated to sensation conducted through fragmented bodily parts and the infinite connections they make. In a culture where autonomy and self-containment are valued as psychologically healthy, the loss of self poses a threat to the integrity of both the body and its identity. As Diprose contends “sex is not safe precisely insofar as it opens the self to indeterminate possibilities through exploiting the ambiguity of being a body-for-itself-for-others” (2002:88). This danger of the loss of bodily integrity is resolved through the sexual encounter, as constructed by scientific accounts, moving along set paths and progressing to an end that signifies completion and reinstates the integrity of the individual body and its separation from the body of others. Ejaculation, in this version, completes the act and returns man to his presupposed natural and separated state. Whereas, for women constructed already as porous and a space of entry, bodily integrity is already compromised and therefore coitus does not pose the same threat to the concept of the bounded body.

Any ambiguity or hint of ongoing intercorporeal exchange between bodies or transformation of the self is unacknowledged through the understanding that sex is a series of physiological responses that somehow pre-exist social relations, are biologically driven and take place in bodies that are spatially distinct. Not only does this version deny the ongoing intercorporeality of bodies but it also maintains the power and bodily differentiations between ‘men’ and ‘women’ through their perceived roles in sex. Furthermore, in line with compulsory heterosexuality it requires that bodily parts conform to very rigid and shortsighted understandings of anatomy. Pile suggests the “central strategy of authority is to force people to play its game; to make sure that the

game is played by its rules” (1997:15). This is evident in relation to sexuality where there is emphasis placed on notions of what constitutes healthy and normal sexual bodies/responses. However while medicine continues to physically create two sexes, partially to accommodate the requirements of heterosexual sex, queer bodies demonstrate their resistance by either defying this or creatively engaging with medical technology to create bodies that match diverse bodily imaginations. I argue that within the world of queer this has more to do with what a body *feels* rather than how it might look, and the erotic potential of bodies has very little to do with conforming to straight aesthetics. May contends:

We are taught what is to be thought of as erotic, what we should be aroused by. We all know the images: slim, flowing bodies for women, hard muscular bodies for men. Big breasts, big pecs, long legs, large quads. But it often does not happen like that. It is often that something else becomes erotic. The eye is caught by the glint of light from a knee. The roughness of a patch of skin becomes provocative to a finger... One part of a body calls out to another, not with information but with invitation. Or better, a relationship of eroticism occurs between them that creates both subjects and objects. There is an event, an event of erotics that arises across and between the surfaces of bodies. It may be a surprise to us to discover these sensations, these arousals (2005:169).

The traditional teaching of bodily arousal that May points out to us is another form of orientating the body to follow straight lines; however, as May contends, body parts have the ability to call out and rupture this directing. This calling of the body when it breaks free from compulsory heterosexuality and cultural understandings of monolithic genitals, has the potential to create lines of flight that take us beyond the limitations of scientific accounts of *normal* sex and bodies. Bodily calling has the capacity to radically move beyond the binary man/woman, and its transgressiveness lies in its spontaneity and generosity. Bodily generosity requires “an openness to others that not only precedes and establishes communal relations but constitutes the self as open to otherness” (Diprose 2002:4). As I pointed out in the introduction to this thesis, such generosity does not assume or promote the individual as “already constituted, prior to the act of giving” (Diprose 2002:4), nor is it based on the economy of exchange but rather the self is constituted through the bodily act of giving. This version of embodiment illuminates that bodies are constructed through this process. It is this spontaneity and generosity that is

carefully guarded against by straight directing as it undermines the foundations of major social institutions, their subordination of diverse embodiment/pleasure and highlights their fear of the vulnerability of straight bodies. In the following sections, with the aid of participants' accounts, desire is rethought through the politics of bodily generosity.

Queer Assemblages

Individualistic accounts of embodiment create an understanding of the body as clearly separated from matter that lies outside its borders. I argue that inherent in such renderings of the body is an anti-body sentiment, which seeks to curb and control the body's openness to possibilities. Alternatively, radical understandings of the body posit that such demarcations between object/subject and space are not so clearly defined. Not only is the body open to more than convention would allow us to see, but the body's openness to the world potentially allows it to incorporate 'outside' material objects into its sense of self, disrupting the opposition between subject and object and destabilizing spatial borders of bodies. Queer experiences and perceptions of bodies allow this openness to be recognized and imaginatively/bodily engaged with. Furthermore, I contend, that such openness is inherently part of a more generous understanding of the body's capacity to extend beyond its surfaces. To return to the participants informing this study, I now look to Jay's account of the ambiguity of bodily borders:

In terms of sexual stuff you know for a long time I had used dildos. I had words for different things I had, you know, I always called a dildo my cock but then I wanted a word to describe when you are on T⁹ what is your clit-dick or some people call it your dick-clit what ever you know. I wanted a word for that and that has always been my dick whereas I use a dildo a lot less, I used to always use it, it was probably always apart of how I had sex and now it is more just like something I put on sometimes if that is the particular sexual act I want to do. Maybe that is also connected with, you know, because I always packed and had that sense of a cock with me 24 hours of a day anyway and that is there if I am having sex as well. Like it doesn't represent my maleness in the same way as it did before, it represents a sex toy that I use and if I am using it, it is very much part of who I am, but it doesn't always have to be there even, that was an interesting process. At one point I thought ok do I want to move away from having that perception of having a ejaculating cock? Do I want to move away from that? Do I want to claim an image of when I come of my body as the way it

⁹ Testosterone

looks like now? You know but sometimes when it comes down to it I could try and control the imagery when it happens, it normally goes wherever it wants to go or it has its own familiar little route but I played with the images.

Before transitioning, Jay imagines the dildo as his cock and as a part of his embodied sexuality. This highlights the body's ability to incorporate physical objects into its self-perception. The object of the dildo is an incarnated 'becoming' part of that body suggesting a dynamic interaction between body and object and the body's ability to fuse with that which lies outside of itself; the dildo, an 'artifact', is embodied. Hanson suggests that "artifacts" might be considered carnal, as being part of the body, 'felt' through the body, and as having particular significance and meaning(s), because they are produced on and through the body" (2007:97); and, as Jay states, "it is very much part of who I am". Merleau-Ponty uses the example of objects that enable bodies to extend their motility, such as "the blind man's stick" (cited Ahmed 2006:131) to demonstrate the body's ability to incorporate what lies outside itself. The stick is no longer an object; it has become a regular part and an extension of the body. Ahmed suggests that this process of incorporation is about what is familiar: "when bodies are oriented toward objects, those objects may cease to be apprehended as objects, and instead become extensions of bodily skin" (2006:132).

This disturbs the concept of the unified singular subject, suggesting that not only are humans intercorporeal but also capable of integrating objects into their bodily imagination and schema. Power works through bodies to ensure that bodies imaginatively follow straight directions that reinforce the differences between man and woman, yet when bodies imaginatively take agency the myth of the unified and strictly polarized sexual subject collapses. The body's coherence is destabilized and there is a generous giving and taking of bodily 'parts' and functions. For example the penis, an organ considered to specifically and essentially male, which is highly protected, both literally and symbolically, by men, can be in fact be replicated and incorporated into bodily performance regardless of sex, as Jay demonstrates. This I suggest is another aspect of bodily generosity working at the level of openness to extending the body in ways denied by a more rigid and conservative form of embodiment. This alludes to the concept that

bodies are shaped through their function rather than functioning according to narrow understandings of anatomy.

After transition, Jay no longer sees the dildo as an essential part of his sexual expression and it no longer represents his masculinity. His clit dick or dick clit replaces the dildo/cock. Penis size is no longer central to Jay's sense of masculinity, which stands in sharp contrast to representations of hegemonic masculinity within dominant culture. The embodying of the dildo is either engaged or disengaged depending on the context. This transgressive embodiment of masculinity challenges the hegemonic emphasis on penis size, which works to create both anxieties within men, in terms of living up to the myth of the phallus and also works to negate the existence of micro-penis or diverse organs of sexual pleasure. As Dyer argues, "power is an integral part of the construction of masculinity within patriarchal ideology, sexual activity and prowess, together with a generous genital endowment, are important signs in the semiotic of patriarchal masculinity" (1985:107). Yet a 'clit dick' or 'dick clit' functions in such a way that Jay no longer requires the dildo as an essential part of his sexual performance and a small penis/large clit provides satisfaction according to the off-centre logics of queer. As I mentioned previously, it is not what we are seeing that needs attention but how we are seeing.

The queer body also demonstrates the contradictions inherent in medical discourses, where, for instance a tranzman's clit dick is affirmative, while the 'large clitoris' or micro-penis of an intersex person is seen as having no purpose and is detrimental to the psychological well being of both the individual and their and their family. In one context/space, the clit-dick is created via medical technology and in another it is removed. Depending on time and place the active and queer force of the body is either realized or undermined according to the contradictory rules of psycho-medicine. If we apply this understanding of perception to queer bodies then the orientation of the looker determines if a body is valued or negated, whether the body's erotic potential is realized or not.

Jay further captures straight perception that limits the queer body and its erotic potential when he talks about a negative experience he had when approaching a surgeon in Australia about top surgery (double mastectomy). He comes up against presumptions of normative male and female embodiment and a knowledge base that does not acknowledge bodily generosity. The surgeon creates a picture of sexual bodies that draws on stereotypical constructions of male sexuality and the male body. As Jay states:

I get in there and she just went oh well, and I was very small, and she went we will just chop them all off and throw the nipples away ...it wasn't what I wanted...it would have totally removed sensation, it would have been ugly, left scarring.

The surgeon's approach reveals the assumption of polarized sexual difference. Rather than incorporating parts of Jay's female body into his maleness, the surgeon takes a very dualistic approach. Detached from Jay's experience of his transition as a flow from one place to another, the surgeon's approach seems cold and calculated and one committed perhaps to the belief that men and women are fundamentally different. No attention or consideration is paid to the possibility that Jay might want to incorporate aspects of his current chest (his nipples) into his new embodiment, and that the process may be more one of merging rather than severance. Dissatisfied and disturbed by this approach Jay seeks another surgeon:

I saw a surgeon who one of the other guys had seen and had done quite a lot of education with and other guys had seen him and gradually he was understanding it more. But he was kind of funny at first when I said to him I said sensation was important to me he said "nipple sensation isn't important to men". I just said to him "it isn't to some of my friends but it is to me" um but it was at that point when he said that, all I could imagine, I had flickering images in my head of guys with nipple clamps on.

The surgeon draws on dominant constructions of masculine sexuality, which limit male erogenous zones to certain presumed regions of pleasure. Yet as Jay comments male nipples are recognized as part of erotica and one would presume that many men have nipple sensation, which is certainly recognized in gay culture. Again the queer body demands that sensation and feeling be valued above straight aesthetics. The surgeon's

response draws on culturally accepted notions of masculine pleasure, ignoring the diverse erotic capacities of bodies, thus he initially views Jay's body through 'straight eyes' seeking to contain any perceived deviations. In doing so he draws on the directed differences between men and women. However, while the surgeon does not recognize such potential pleasures himself, or more specifically the importance of incorporating aspects of Jay's female body/sexuality into his remodeled male body, he does listen to the personal desire of his client in this case and agrees to provide a surgical procedure that would allow for the retention of nipple sensation. Jay explained to me that he acquired information from surgeons overseas who were performing the surgery differently and he shared this information with his surgeon. Through the surgeon's interaction with tranzmen he begins to change his practice, demonstrating the agency of the queer body, which in this situation does not have its creativity or alterity altogether undermined. Queer generosity is demonstrated within this exchange whereby Jay shares his knowledge with the surgeon who extends his understanding of the tranz body. The queer body demonstrates its transgressive agency because it demands that sexuality be about bodies and pleasures, not strictly aesthetic or binary understandings of the sexual difference between male and female anatomies. Ahmed argues:

Pleasure is 'good' only if it is orientated towards some objects, not others. The 'orientation' of the pleasure economy is bound up with heterosexuality: women and men 'should' experience a surplus of pleasure, but only when exploring each other's bodies under the phallic sign of difference (pleasure as the enjoyment of sexual difference). Whilst sexual pleasure within the West may now be separated from the task or duty of reproduction, it remains tied in some way to *the fantasy of being reproductive*: one can enjoy sex with a body that it is imagined one *could be* reproductive with (2004:163 emphasis in original).

As Ahmed indicates, while pleasure is seemingly endorsed it is still bound to the logics of heterosexuality, the straight line and directed towards reproduction. Furthermore this most validated form of sexual pleasure is often seen within the contemporary western world as embracing sexual freedom, choice and subsequent concepts of success that adhere to such coupling. In comparison to this idealized version and economy of straight pleasures, queer desire and queer bodies are seen as out of line, deviant and somehow not

having the same levels of control, hence freedom, over their sexual choices as their heterosexual counterparts. However, the queer body demonstrates levels of bodily generosity, which disrupt the fantasy and glorification of heterosexual coupling and traditional understandings of freedom. Ahmed suggests, “pleasures open bodies to worlds through an opening up of the body to others. As such, pleasures can allow bodies to take up more space” (2004:164); and according to Leder “pleasure is expansive” (1990:75). The feminist geographer Doreen Massey argues, “we make our space/spatialities in the process of our various identities” (1994:285); therefore we make space through our sexual bodies/identities/pleasures. As proposed in the previous chapter, the monitoring of queer bodies is vigilant because such bodies can potentially be shape shifters, altering the contours of space and destabilizing the very foundations upon which a unified, individualized identity and heterosexual order is built, under the guise of sexual freedom. Deleuze and Guattari contend:

If a society is identical with its structures – an amusing hypothesis- then yes, desire threatens its very being. It is therefore of vital importance for a society to repress desire, and even to find something more efficient than repression, so that repression, hierarchy, exploitation, and servitude are themselves desired. It is quite troublesome to have to say such rudimentary things: desire does not threaten a society because it is a desire to sleep with the mother, but because it is revolutionary. And that does not mean that desire is something other than sexuality, but that sexuality and love do not live in the bedroom of Oedipus, they dream instead of wide-open spaces, and cause strange flows to circulate that do not let themselves be stocked within an established order. Desire does not “want” revolution, it is revolutionary in its own right, as though involuntarily, by wanting what it wants (1983:116).

The repression of desire manifested in multiple and complex forms across all spaces/institutions within which bodies exist are also interwoven with concepts of freedom and choice. Desire, as Deleuze and Guattari suggest, is revolutionary because it demands freedom to expand beyond the spaces that contain it: freedom not in the sense of the liberal humanist concept of absolute independence and choice (which requires the embodiment of individualism), but a freedom to break free of this ‘autonomy’. This radical version of freedom suggests that to be ‘free’ is to be capable of infinite connections (rather than separations), and alternative forms of alliance not based on straight orientation. Such connections do not require that bodies conform to regimented

understandings of the perceived functioning and directing of normative bodies.

According to Foucault, the concept of freedom as autonomy “requires self-discipline in which … the ideal of freedom induces us to produce ourselves through the norms of the human sciences” (Jakobsen, 2005:293). Autonomous freedom within this understanding is a directive that maintains a social order through which heteronormativity thrives whilst denying the existence and value of alternative ways of living. As Gatens argues, when discussing the work of Spinoza “an individual who thrives does not indicate a will that is both free and enlightened, but the determinate power of that particular thing to maintain itself in existence and to combine with those things that agree with and enhance its power” (1996: 111). This idealized understanding of freedom, within the concepts of the western individual, has effectively organized sexual life and the elevation of the heterosexual couple.

Alternatively Diprose explains [when discussing the work of Beauvoir (1972)] the erotic encounter and (its ‘freedom’) are not about self-control or body integrity. On the contrary, it is about the ‘body at risk’. This formulation implies that the body at risk is a body that is not desperately seeking to maintain its individuality and self-containment. Rather, as Diprose states, “it opens the self to indeterminate possibilities through exploiting the ambiguity of being a body-for-itself-for others” (2002:88). Absolute independence, Diprose argues, “is a posture that denies the ambiguity and therefore the generosity of existence, and in doing so it not only denies the other’s possibilities but also cuts off one’s own” (Diprose 2002:88). Individualism therefore maintains a hierarchy of bodies/social structures and conventions that function defensively to ward off the threat of the nearness of bodies that disturb its constructed sense of order, freedom and existence.

Existence for Merleau-Ponty “is not a set of acts (like ‘psychic facts’) capable of being reduced to others or to which they can reduce themselves, but the ambiguous setting of their inter-communication, the point at which their boundaries run into each other, or against their woven fabric” (1962:166). The potential of desire is that it demonstrates that the body is an assemblage, not a singular unit, but a link amongst a field of possible

linkages in which humans are not the center/subject of the universe/object but a partial component inextricably dependent on the bodies of others. As Merleau-Ponty states: “I cannot exist otherwise than by risking my body integrity in an ambiguous situation, and freedom is nothing more or less than this” (1962:439-440). The intertwining and generosity of bodies that Merleau-Ponty, Beauvoir, and Diprose advocate is one in which neither body is reducible to the other, nor is the aim self-possession; rather the potential transformation of the self occurs through a generous passion that expresses an openness to ‘other’ bodies, objects and spaces. The ideal of the completely atomized sexual being, therefore, is a product of power, convention and *truth* as perceived through hegemonic straight eyes. Rather than preexisting the social, strictly polarized and spatially distinct sexual bodies are a result of repeated bodily acts coaxed along straight lines to maintain the conventions of individualism and hierarchies of normalization. Queer bodies demand freedom by claiming/creating linkages off line destabilizing naturalized constructs of sexual practice, desire and normalized anatomy.

I draw again on the experiences of Jay to demonstrate the way socially recognized categories restrict desire and how desire may nevertheless seep beyond these boundaries. Prior to transitioning Jay identified as lesbian; his current partner is a woman and he now identifies as queer.

Queer in the people I know, the communities I know, the aesthetics of things I like and a whole lot of things. But also I am in a relationship with someone who is biologically female. She has lived in dyke communities, straight communities; she has been in a relationship with an ftm before and with a whole range of people. So, she lives in another city, although she lives here half the time and in the other city the other half. When she is living in her own city and she is hanging out with the dykes she knows, she has been around for quite a while, they would read her as a dyke. The same way, that if I go out somewhere, you know, I quite often get read as a gay guy. So if we go to something together we probably get read as a straight couple. So that whole thing about how do you define sexual orientation in terms of, if you are queer and you stay in the same relationship and you change your gender then suddenly do you no longer remain queer? Or how does it, is sexual orientation around sexual practice, sexual attraction you know? When I first started to transition because you want to be identified as male, if I went to a queer event it was hard for me to hang out with dykes because then I get read as a butch dyke, or whatever. ... And who is your own once you have started to transition? So I think

it is all just transitioning and playing around with gender, you know effects desire and effects whether it is desire that is acted on or sparks your sense of self or whatever. I think you know, I have always for a long time I have identified, I have had non-monogamous relationships a mixture, for me lucky to have that openness to explore other forms of sexual attraction. But it is just figuring out who I am, that is within the context, because it is mostly queer people who I hang around with yeh.

Within this openness Jay does not seek a unified subjectivity adhering to one version of recognized sexual identity but realizes that the body, while a body for itself, is always simultaneously a body for others; as such identity is situational and interwoven with the bodies of others within specific spaces. Desire, as Jay describes, does not strive for sexual difference, as in heterosexual desire, but is contextual and erotically charged through the play of sameness: queer sameness. This also extends to what Jay calls queer aesthetics which is a means of perceiving objects and bodies and the way in which they are taken up and given meaning which is dependent on a location and orientation that is not straight. This queer vision encapsulates more than the bodies of others but suggests that the way in which Jay faces the world is queer. Rather than thinking of desire in terms of fixed object choices, Jay demonstrates the expansiveness of erotic possibilities. Jay points out to us that desire, sexual practices and identities are not neatly aligned or easily comprehensible. As Merleau-Ponty has also argued, erotics is not an affair between two minds:

...through one body it aims at another body, and takes place in the world, not in a consciousness. A sight has a sexual significance for me, not when I consider, even confusedly, its possible relationship to the sexual organs or to pleasurable states, but when it exists for my body, for that power always available for bringing together into an erotic situation the stimuli applied, and adapting sexual conduct to it. There is an erotic 'comprehension' not of the order of understanding, since understanding subsumes an experience, once perceived, under some idea, while desire comprehends blindly by linking body to body (Merleau Ponty 1962:157).

Merleau-Ponty describes the way in which desire has the potential to create linkages that are not driven by the specifics of one's sexual anatomy. The correct or proper direction of desire is given by social structures, yet bodily interactions are potentially random and not driven by anatomy. Dominant understandings of sexual conduct burden desire with comprehension and pre-ordained directions, undermining its transgressive freedom. Masters and Johnson's account of sexual conduct subsumes feeling to a recognizable

order that can be easily mapped out by language. Yet as Barad points out: “language has been granted too much power” (2003:801). Desire does not require a format, or traceable points of difference in order to meet its lack or produce satisfaction; its potential is the ability to blur the boundaries on which sameness and difference (and thus men and women) are constituted. Within these erotics of generosity, man is not the subject extending himself through the body of woman, nor is woman the passive object of desire; neither is reducible to object or subject but negotiate the ambiguous space in-between (intermezzo¹⁰). Erotic generosity, within this model, is not reduced to conform to the power relations of polarized sexual difference or normalized bodies. As Deleuze and Guattari nicely state:

...everywhere a microscopic transsexuality, resulting in the woman containing as many men as man, and the man as many women, all capable of entering – men with women, women with men – into relations of production of desire that overturn the statistical order of the sexes. Making love is not just becoming as one, or even two, but becoming as a hundred thousand. Desiring-machines or the nonhuman sex: not one or even two sexes, but *n* sexes (1983:296).

Deleuze and Guattari offer a way forward to disturb the spatial structuring of bodies made comprehensive by traditional understandings of the presumed sexual functioning, anatomy and ordering of bodies. By suggesting that desire has been entrapped within the concept of two sexes Deleuze and Guattari provide us with a vision that enables us to see the expansive capabilities of bodies that are not filtered through constructed molarized sexual identities, bodies that are potentially – and significantly an *interplay* between male and female. Furthermore, that the body potentially is an interplay between male and female. Queer desire, as embodied and practiced by the participants of this study, makes moves in this direction, reconfiguring the possibilities of available pleasure. As Ahmed has suggested:

Queer pleasures put bodies into contact that have been kept apart by the scripts of compulsory heterosexuality. Queer pleasures in the enjoyment of forbidden or

¹⁰ Deleuze and Guattari’s (1987) term intermezzo is utilized to intervene in dualisms and undermine the concept of the unified subject, instead suggesting that we are always in a state of becoming, rather than fixed in identifiable and stable identities.

barred contact engender the possibility of different kinds of impressions. When bodies touch and give pleasure to bodies that have been barred from contact, then those bodies are reshaped. The hope of queer is that the reshaping of bodies through the enjoyment of what or who has been barred can ‘impress’ differently upon the surfaces of social space, creating the possibility of social forms that are not constrained by the form of the heterosexual couple (Ahmed 2004:165).

The transgressive resistance of queer is its ability to challenge and alter the structuring of social space and the bodies with whom it comes into contact. It does so by creating new connections and defying the normative controls that have kept some bodies apart. Queer desire disrupts the fantasy that bodies are naturally drawn to, and crave only the sexual difference of male/female, and reveals the workings of power that ignore multiple differences and promote a singular heteronormative difference as the only available locus of desire. Given this approach to the body and its capabilities, I suggest that heterosexual bodies are also capable of functioning in queer ways that do not conform to straightness. Queer heterosexuals while having the privilege of blending in space also create alternative pathways and radical forms of bodily exchange¹¹. In the next section I explore the potential of intersex sexuality to challenge the surgical construction that fulfils the fantasy of straight desire.

Intersex Erotics – Disruptions to the Spatially Sexed Body

I turn now to the experiences of Mani (born Bruce) in order to explore how bodies, unacknowledged by the dominant social order (or, as Judith Butler suggests, which have been constructed as “delegitimate bodies that fail to count as ‘bodies’ [Butler 1993:15]”), defy the secrecy surrounding their alterity and forge a path for intersex eroticism to emerge. Despite past attempts to eradicate the existence of this alternative sexual form, intersex people demonstrate their resilience and the power of the body to demand its place/space in the world. At various points in history, assumptions regarding the sexuality of intersex people have played a significant role in their ‘management’. In *Hermaphrodites and the Medical Invention of Sex*, Dreger (1998) traces medical attempts, in the late 19th century, to deal with ‘unnatural’ sexual conduct. There was a

¹¹ See Rosemary De Plessis (2004) and Annie Potts (2002) for further discussion of the potential radicalism of queer heterosexuality.

particular concern, at this time, surrounding the institution of marriage, and in situations where the sex of one of the partners was found to be unclear, the marriage was annulled. As one French physician in 1893 proclaimed:

The question of [mistaken sex] which occupies us has only a relative gravity if it concerns only contested heritages, electoral rights, or military service; but it is entirely otherwise when marriage intervenes. One can then be found in the presence of monstrous alliances, and see, for example, two men or two women united together, by a mistake which engenders social disorders, causes scandalous divorce, or creates some wretchedly equivocal situations (cited Dreger 1998:120).

Such marriages, through this lens, were assumed to be disastrously unhappy, yet as Dreger argues, “there was much evidence to the contrary” (1998:120), and many hermaphrodites lived in marital bliss when the authorities did not intervene. Foucault’s (1980) *Herculine Barbin* presents the tragedy of Alexina/Abel Barbin, a hermaphrodite forced to take the singular identity of a man when hir sexual connections were discovered, who committed suicide rather than live within the confines of a straight model. However, despite evidence to suggest that intersex people formed satisfying intimate alliances, the history of intersex sexuality is overwhelmed by dominant depictions of the unmodified intersex body doomed to a life of alienation and despair. As Cheryl Chase argues:

The prospect of emotional harm due to social rejection of the intersexual provides physicians with their most compelling argument to justify medically unnecessary surgical interventions. Intersex status is considered to be so incompatible with emotional health (1998:32).

I will explore such notions of alienation and despair, promoted by the medical model, through engaging with Mani’s story of struggling to develop a sexual identity in spite of the medical alteration of hir body through surgical and hormonal construction of ‘female’ genitals. I do so as a means to analyze the myth and the social structures that continue to promote the belief that to surgically modify intersex children allows them to fit into ‘normal’ identity categories and follow straight directions. I also question the belief that

intersex children, left to make their own choices over surgery, would experience alienation and despair. As Mani states:

These mutilated bodies don't work. They are badly damaged and that actually affects us. It is so sad because it was something so wonderful and we have the right to have.

The surgery that Mani received as a child to ensure that s/he fitted in fact had the opposite affect and Mani struggles because of the damage caused through surgical intervention. Mani talks of the difficulties of understanding hir emerging sexuality, which begins in a small rural town where s/he taught at a local school:

... so because I was one of the few single females there was lots of male attention. Finally I get brave enough to go along and see a doctor and I haven't got a clue what I am trying to say. My language skills are not good, this is the start of the sexual revolution so he is not understanding what I had to say. So his response was "what you need to do", I don't know if he actually used the words fuck around, but he just threw across this what was about a year's supply of birth control pills. He said "you just need to get out there and fuck around". So I was really confused about that and so I thought this is what I needed to do. This is what he told me to do. So I met a local guy and started going out with him and eventually one night and it was the most appalling thing. I completely froze, one I didn't have any sexual expression and I am a trauma survivor. So there is multiple things going on, so my body doesn't work right! So he was probably trying to do things he probably does with a woman and there is just nothing going on. So I have huge respect for the guy because he was probably embarrassed and probably frightened about what was going on and he was angry. He couldn't do anything to me so he got up and I can't even remember what he said. He left the house and I realized he probably could have done all sorts of things. I couldn't make sense of it. I absolutely couldn't make sense of it.

The doctor presumes that following the direction of societal convention can solve Mani's uncertainty regarding hir sexuality. The problems and complexities created by the literal construction of men and women, of only two sexes, are unacknowledged. Yet the surgery to make Mani's body fit does not create a heterosexual woman but a traumatized intersex body. Mani is left in a state/space of confusion: this confusion extends to the sexual partners Mani engages with. This highlights, I contend, that if understandings of the diversity of sexual anatomy were more wide ranging and culturally acknowledged then

potential sexual partners may be less confused by the difference of an intersex body that has not experienced the trauma of surgery than an intersex body that aesthetically conforms to the norm. Yet medical specialists insist that the only way to create a healthy and happy child is through surgery. Suzanne Kessler in *Lessons from the Intersexed* captures some of this medical sentiment:

The urologist summarized his criteria: “Happiness is the biggest factor, Anatomy is part of happiness”. Money states, “The primary deficit (of not having a sufficient penis) – and destroyer of morale – lies in being unable to satisfy the partner”. Another team of clinicians reveals its phallocentrism and argues that the most serious mistake in gender assignment is to create “an individual unable to engage in genital (heterosexual) sex (2000:26).

This thinking/perception predetermines the altering of intersex bodies yet as Mani has described it is not the intersex body that brings hir anguish but the surgery that destroyed any sexual sensation and silenced the knowledge of bodies that experience pleasure differently. This silencing leaves Mani in a space where s/he is unable to locate a familiar place, which embraces hir difference. Directed desire functions on the comprehension of how male and female bodies function differently. Yet Mani does not identify as woman or with the perceived spatial functioning of femininity associated with the interiority of the vagina or as heterosexual. Realizing s/he does not ‘fit’, Mani seeks an alternative understanding of sexual identity. Within the binary notions of sexual identity, the only other available sexual category to explore is homosexuality. As Mani explains:

I went to an international women’s convention in Hamilton and there were these large stroppy women wandering around the place in dungarees. I made the decision I must be a lesbian and I am so excited. I can remember telling Mum and Dad who were absolutely devastated. From their point of view, that was the worst possible outcome. They had spent all this money and I had all this surgery. They thought I was fixed, which means I was going to be a heterosexual woman. So um I came out as a lesbian before I had sex not really realizing. Then I came out publicly and it is not very long before I sleep with a woman and of course it doesn’t work very well either.

Sexuality for Mani is imbued with complexities; the surgery to create a straight body produces a lack of familiarity instead. Ahmed argues, “familiarity is what is, as it were, given, and which in being given ‘gives’ the body the capacity to be orientated in this way

or in that. The question of orientation becomes then a question not only about how we ‘find’ our way, but how we come to ‘feel at home’” (2006:7). For Mani there is no sense of familiarity because s/he is unable to embody hir sexuality, which has been denied. The familiar is a sense of comfort felt by those that can fit comfortably in their body, sexuality and in the spaces they inhabit when their embodiment is recognized. Yet Mani cannot fit these spaces because they are determined by the belief in the ‘natural’ categories of woman and man. However, as gender theorist Holmes argues:

There is an “upside” for intersexuals seeking community, voice and identity: we are able to insist that however hard they may have tried, the surgeons could not enforce their measures over time because who and what we are (becoming) is more complex than what we look like. The “downside” for many intersexuals is that sexual function, in terms of normal physical response, has been impaired by the surgery and so, in that sense also, sexual normalcy becomes a cultural fantasy. In fact, in the latter sense, the surgery creates sexual abnormality; it, however, is one that the dominant culture can live with, particularly in the case of the subjects that it overwhelmingly casts as female (2000:104).

The dominant culture, as Holmes suggests, can live with constructing aesthetically conforming ‘women’ because it cannot conceive of the sexual spatialization of bodies outside of heteronormativity, nor does it wish to be confronted by a challenge to hegemonic masculinity and its focus on the fantasy of the phallus. Medical professionals destroy intersex sexuality in order to maintain the myth of straight heterosexually functioning bodies. Intersex bodies are damaged according to the imperatives of hegemonic straightness because they radically display bodily difference, revealing the ‘natural’ ambiguity of sexuality and existence. Their bodily capability of bringing together bodies, spatially, in ways that disturb sexual categories is threatening to the security of identities formulated according to heteronormativity. As Holmes argues, all surgeries, whether they are feminizing or, more rarely, masculinizing, are implicitly heterosexualizing (2000:94).

Earlier in this thesis I looked to the ways in which rigid notions of masculinity are embodied in order to reinforce heterosexuality. Masculinity for example is constructed as an impenetrable, hard and closed entity (sexually externally focused), whereas femininity

is presumed to be a soft and an open space of entry (hence sexually internalized). These presumed understandings of male and female bodies are transferred onto correlating understandings of genitals. Scientific narratives do not allow for the cultural recognition of a continuum of genitals. In order to ‘firm-up’ notions of genitals, which support the myth of two sexes, genitals have to appear clearly and unequivocally one sex or the other. Furthermore they not only have to maintain cultural understandings of inherent difference but appear complimentary in presumed sexual function. Intersex bodies undermine the ‘natural’ assumption of the binary sex system. As Hester argues “one inescapable result of research into intersexed bodies is quite clear: there are lots of sexes. Hundreds of iterations of sexes” (2004:220). Morland describes the idealization of ‘normal’ genitalia as ‘nostalgic genitalia’ and suggests “the fantasy of the endlessly mammoth penis, of the immeasurably spacious vagina, of the infinitely delicate clitoris. Such body parts do not exist; they are fantasies about how genitals ought to be” (2005:339). Yet in her article ‘*Is It a Boy or a Girl?*’, Hendricks cites one surgeon’s response to intersexed genitals as purposeless – they’re “not going to be of use” (1993:10). One can only make the assumption that for genitals to be of ‘use’ they must be ‘used’ for heterosexual intercourse and procreation. Nature has been utilized to validate the logics of a straight world. As Morland argues:

The irony is that intersexual bodies show the reality of the great divide (that *is*) to be a construction (something that *should be*) – which is precisely why the sex divide demands its own reiteration. The distinction between real and constructed is forged – it is at once concretely manufactured and utterly phoney. This distinction between the real and the constructed is forged specifically by its own reiteration (2001:533 emphasis in original).

In contrast, queer perception/bodies allow for a rethinking of bodily aesthetics and acknowledge the possibilities of queer erotic generosity which refuses straight directing, the prioritizing of hegemonic coupling and normalized anatomy. Within the realm of queer, sexuality is not focused on the fantasy of reproduction or so-called natural sexual difference but on exuberance, diversity, experimentation and, most importantly, feeling. ‘Becoming’ intersex bodies exist beyond the simplified comprehension of straight aesthetics and sexual performance. In promoting the potential transgressiveness of queer

sexuality, I do not wish to imply that there are never struggles or complexities, or that all queer relationships are inherently ‘liberating’ in a positive sense, and/or problem-free, rather my point is: the more we understand bodies and their intercorporeal affects outside of regimented and individualized normality the more we are able to challenge the power relations that are conducted at levels often unacknowledged. Making explicit bodily power dynamics paves the way for increased bodily responsibility, accountability and the development of more caring ways of living, potentially destabilizing oppressive hierarchies. All human bodies are vulnerable and more open to the world than convention acknowledges and intercorporeal relations do place the ‘body at risk’. As Gatens explains:

Bodies of all sorts are in constant relation with other bodies; some of these relations are compatible and give rise to joyful affects which may in turn increase the intensive capacity of a body; others are incompatible relations which give rise to sad or debilitating affects which at their worst may entirely destroy a body’s integrity. A third sort of relation occurs when two bodies encounter one another in a non-reciprocal manner such that the more powerful body captures the less powerful. Such encounters enhance the capacities of the more powerful body at the expense of the powers of the weaker body (1996:170).

By acknowledging our bodily and spatial effects on others, less oppressive or dominating ways of interacting may be developed, both within sexual encounters and within all spheres of interaction. For example, rather than being disembodied authoritative voices, medical practitioners might take into account their own bodily knowledge and history when interacting with the bodies of others. However, this way of conceiving the body is outside of mainstream medical knowledge at the moment.

Unable to make sense of hir bodily differences Mani again has to engage with medical professionals. The medical reconfiguring of Mani’s intersex body enables medical practitioners to maintain their interpretation of hir body as female. Within this encounter, there is a certain amount of forgetting of the past, which allows medicine to create a truth of Mani’s adult sex. Part of the medical process of creating a clearly sexed individual out of the body of an intersex child is to maintain consistency in the secrecy surrounding its

beginnings. In order to maintain the silence surrounding intersex embodiment physicians carefully negotiate the terminologies utilized to deal with any obstacles that may arise in the assimilation into normativity. As Kessler argues:

Technically, these physicians are lying when, for example, they explain to an adolescent XY female with an intersexed history that her “ovaries...had to be removed because they were unhealthy or were producing ‘the wrong balance of hormones’” (2000:29).

Kessler captures the ways in which the embodied perception of a two-sex system influences medical ethics surrounding disclosure of medical histories. She further suggests that “we can presume that these lies are told in the service of what physicians consider a greater good – keeping individual/concrete genders as clear and uncontaminated as the notions of female and male are in the abstract” (2000:29). For Mani hirself, this forgetting is not possible and embodied memories play a major role in hir self-perception, however these memories are dislocated from the present as if they no longer bear relevance. Diprose points us to the way forgetting is a political action, which plays a role in oppression when she suggests, “forgetting, on the part of the colonizers, allows their own habitual perception to dominate without noticing and without the possibility of being open to the new and the different” (2002:157). While Diprose talks of this forgetting in relation to indigenous groups specifically, I suggest that the medical management of intersex bodies is also a form of colonization of the body. This process of forgetting the body of the intersex child furthers the materialization of Mani’s body as not only female but also heterosexual, making it extremely difficult to make intersex sexuality visible. As Mani describes:

They completely ignored the difference ... They continued to see me as a woman and they continued to say it is not too late to have children, because it seems like I do have a uterus and possibly one functioning ovary. So there was no questioning “how do you see yourself”. By then I was not seeing myself as a woman but I didn’t have the language but right from when I can first remember I have never wanted to have children.

Medical practitioners' own orientations, in combination with the disarticulation of the past, create Mani's body as female and heterosexual. The doctor's labor (that is his or her bodily impression on the intersex body), is rendered invisible and as a benevolent act of making a body more livable and purposeful. As Ahmed argues, "bodies take the shape of norms that are repeated over time and with force. The work of repetition involves the concealment of labor under the sign of nature" (2004:145). Acting under the sign of 'nature', the surgeon's hand performs physical incisions and removes tissue, simultaneously severing the potential of intersex eroticism, sensation and the cultural acknowledgement of multiple sexes. For intersex people, the outcome of such severance may lead to bodily disruption rather than coherence, disorientation and alienation rather than a sense of belonging and comfort. In the following section, with reference again to Mani's experience, I explore the repercussion of such feelings of despair.

Lines of Flight

For Mani the surgery she received as a child – while perhaps aesthetically *successful* in 'straight' terms, only damaged hir sense of bodily self and sexuality. Likewise as gender theorist Morgan Holmes states "having my genitals mutilated has made me no less intersexual; it has merely made me a mutilated intersexual" (1998:225). Throughout hir childhood, Mani experiences moments (like the circus) when the contradiction between the direction given and hir embodied sense of being come into focus. However such moments are few and there is a gap between the actuality of the life she experiences and sense of a different possible path. In adulthood Mani is unable to breach the gap as s/he explains:

My sense is I am on a cliff and if I don't belong to this, I don't belong anywhere so that knowledge and information is absolutely too terrifying so I make the decision that I will belong in this group and I do my best which is I cut off.

Mani uses the spatiality of the cliff to describe embodying a space that is not recognized by the social order. At the edge of the cliff there are no more paths or directions in sight and it appears that this is as far as one can go, that there is no place nor direction to take. To be at the edge of the cliff is a life and death space that results from the subjugation of difference:

not an individual pathology but a denial of the possibility of inhabiting space as a queer body. Alphonso Lingis describes such traumatic moments/places in this way:

Anxiety contains a non-discursive, immediate insight. It apprehends one's own nature as disconnected from universal nature, apprehends one's act, and, in Sartre's celebrated analysis of anxiety at the cliff's edge, one's subsistence, as not determined by the forces in the world. It perceives in one's own present state causal inefficacy with regard to its continuation – one will have to conjure up an act in order to ensure one's being there in the next moment. It is at the same time insight that the goals that lure, those inactualities, issue not out of the plenum of the actual, but out of the gap between the actual and the future which our existence has to project itself across (1986:103)

To live life at an angle or off-centre to the ‘straight’ line can mean that the edge of the cliff may be a space that is experienced. Like Lingis, Ahmed suggests “in such moments, when bodies do not extend into space, they might feel ‘out of place’ where they have been given ‘a place’. Such feelings in turn point to other places, even ones that have yet to be inhabited” (Ahmed 2006:12). However to get to uninhabited places involves nomadic wanderings which also depend on the interconnections with other bodies. For a time Mani, ‘cuts off’; to cut off is to disassociate from the body and not to follow its intensities and flows. Mani tries to follow a recognizable direction and enters the lesbian world/space and while it is easier for a while and offers more comfort than the heterosexual world this choice comes at the cost of suppressing aspects of difference that Mani embodies. The identity category of ‘lesbian’ dictates that Mani neglect hir maleness. Mani’s embodied subjectivity, which recognizes *both* femaleness *and* maleness yet again finds a space where there is no adequate path.

Ahmed argues:

Bodies that experience being out of place might need to be orientated, to find a place where they feel comfortable and safe in the world. The point is not whether we experience disorientation (for we will, and we do), but how such experiences can impact on the orientation of bodies and spaces, which is after all about how things are “directed” and how they are shaped by the lines they follow. The point is what we do with such moments of disorientation, as well as what such moments can do – whether they can offer us the hope of new directions, and whether new directions are reason enough for hope (2006:158).

Despite the ‘straightening’ of genitals via the surgeon’s knife, the agency and power of the intersexed body may prevail. Through claiming an intersex identity and a search for ‘belonging’ and the ‘familiar’, Mani’s off-centre direction brings other intersex bodies into contact with hir, in spite of medical interpretations of their bodies and the secrecy surrounding their existence. In the following extract Mani talks of such an experience of meeting up with other intersex people:

A retreat in North Carolina, it is about three o’clock in the morning and we have been talking for hours and there is a fire roaring in the fire place and we start talking about sex and sexuality. Six of us in that room, you know, had variously been identified and labeled male to female, some people had gone on a transgendered journey, some people were working on other realities. It didn’t matter who we were, everyone talked about in terms of sexuality it was something like a penis but clearly it wasn’t like a penis, it was having this part of the body that would respond sexually. It was about some kind of erection and some kind of penetration. It didn’t matter where you sat in terms of sexual orientation, gender whether or not you had surgery or not.

As Mani’s experience shows, despite surgery to construct ‘female’ genitals, hir embodied perception harks back to that which was removed. This points to the significant damage that is done to the intersex body (and its ability to locate the familiar) through the surgical removal of healthy body parts. Much like a phantom limb, intersex genitals, despite their removal/modification, are still felt, which results in feelings of loss rather than comfort. The mind/body split is destabilized within Mani’s story; memory, it could be argued, is clearly located *in the body*. As Lakoff and Johnson (1999) explain, memory has been represented as a kind of ‘mental entity’ according to the ‘folk model of faculty psychology’, where we find all the other (disembodied) faculties or citizens of the mind, like perception, the imagination, etc. However memory can be reconceptualised as originating in the body. For example Narvaez states that “in spanish, *Recorda (recordis)* means passing a segment of time back through the heart” (2006:51). This suggests that memory is embodied and can be stored in regions of the body. The past is grounded in the body: for Mani this manifests as a feeling or a sensation of felt memory, something embodied beyond the reach of the intellect but stored in the body, the memory of an intersex sexuality that defies the boundaries of male and female.

Intersexed bodies have their own eroticisms and modes of sexual expression. Such expression finds a place/space when bodies spontaneously come into contact with other bodies that demonstrate an intercorporeal openness and generosity. The means by which bodies have been made sexually comprehensible prevent the understanding of the intersex body and its capacity for a particular form of intersex eroticism. As Deleuze and Guattari suggest: “If desire is repressed, it is because every position of desire, no matter how small, is capable of calling into question the established order of a society: not that desire is asocial; on the contrary. But it is explosive; there is no desiring-machine capable of being assembled without demolishing entire social sectors” (1983:xxiii). Deleuze and Guattari’s version of desire does not require nostalgia or the fantasy of ideal genitals to enable bodies to connect intimately/sexually. Their alternative understanding allows us to clearly see the levels of control and suppression that dominant understandings of sexuality instigate, as well as how intersex bodies are denied bodily feeling and sensation of their own. Medical management of intersex bodies to maintain the fictive narrative of only two-sexes -and assumptions about ‘natural’ sexual difference - is defied by the shared experience of this group of intersex people. Despite varying gender identification all share a sense of something that has not been articulated within language. The prescribed narrative of two sexes inscribed on Mani’s body is shown to be a construction. Mani’s corporeal imagination has more agency than is acknowledged within medical accounts of the various ‘conditions’ that label an intersex body. Mani provides an alternative narrative that suggests that genitals are not dimorphic and that intersexuality is not just located in the genitals. The matter of Mani’s body remains intersexed. As Mani points out:

My sense is we are actually talking about a different kind of sexuality. And my sense would be if you got a group of intersex people who had not had surgery and had not had traumatic experiences because of having different bodies there would emerge from that a whole new sexuality and sexual expression. I think what we are going to do is salvage an element of it...Queer is a good umbrella it fits under, it is certainly not lesbian and certainly not gay male.

Mani captures the power and agency of the queer body, which despite the pressure to conform, rises above its alienation to demand its place in the world. While Mani highlights the difficulties of trying to explain and understand intersex sexuality within the restrictions of identity categorizes and dominant discourses of sexuality, queer theorizing opens up opportunities and possibilities for desire that strive to move outside of such restrictions.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have explored the way in which queer erotics may follow a kind of bodily generosity, inhabiting space and interacting with other bodies in ways that disturb the socially constructed categories that seek to maintain ‘real’ male and female bodies as naturally and spatially distinct. Despite the significant obstacles they have faced in expressing their queer sexualities, participants in this study demonstrate the power of their bodily agency. They testify to the queer body’s insistence on illuminating that bodies are not fixed but come into being through complex processes which are cultural, biological, emotional, experimental and above all developed through the bodies of others. Destabilizing the liberal humanist ideal of autonomy and bodily integrity the queer body shows that the body is always a body for- itself –for-others whose erotic potential cannot be foretold but is ongoing, explorative and innovative. This form of erotics resists the spatial directing of bodies towards predetermined object-choices and alternatively demonstrates the disruptive potential of desire when it follows its own lines of flight, refusing to adhere to normative concepts of anatomy, gender, and sexual orientation. This *becoming* sexuality cannot be comprehended through interpreting the queer body through a straight lens, but requires an openness to the bodies of others through relinquishing the over investment in the self. This version of desire requires that bodies creatively and freely engage in the space of intermezzo. In many ways this chapter functions as an accumulation of the previous spatial theorizing of bodies put forward in this thesis and is intended to highlight the agency and ingenuity of queer embodiment to potentially create less oppressive forms of existence.

Chapter Six

Conclusion

This thesis represents a queer exploration into an intercorporeal and de-individualized understanding of embodiment through investigating the experiences of transgendered people. A major focus of this work, and as expressed through the lives of participants', is a radical reconfiguring of subjectivity suggesting that the body and its identity are always in a process of what Deleuze and Guattari (1983) term *becoming*. The *becoming* body, as this thesis conveys disturbs many of the taken-for-granted and firmly upheld beliefs that form our social order and concepts of the individual. According to Annie Potts "Deleuze and Guattari re-conceive bodies no longer in terms of 'who' they are, or with reference to an essential underlying 'self', but according to *what they can do*, how they function, what they affect, and what they produce" (2001:143). Central to this reconfiguration is the destabilization of the mind/body split which maintains an anti-body logic and allows for the hyper-visibility and perceived negativity of non-normative bodies, such as the queer body, disabled body or any other body that displays significant signs of difference, whilst so-called normal bodies maintain power and domination through levels of disembodiment and/or invisibility. The normalization of some bodies, made possible by this mind/body division, is carried out within dominant institutional spaces such as the family and medicine. As Bacchi and Beasley argue:

If mind continues to be privileged over bodies, the voices of science will continue to be privileged around policy issues dealing with bodies and medical interventions. An insistence that bodies be listened to, that they are not simply inert brute matter, creates the grounds for demanding forums in which voices other than medical specialists can be heard (2002:345).

In keeping with Bacchi and Beasley's understanding - that it is imperative that bodies are listened to – my research utilizes participants' accounts as a means to explore queer

embodiment. Furthermore this work has sought to illuminate that not only do bodies need to be listened to but also bodily *presence* in spatial contexts is of particular political pertinence. Throughout this thesis I have suggested that the dominant social order is replicated through the directing of bodies along straight lines. Furthermore that such directing maintains heteronormativity and the domination of space by straight bodies. This bodily dynamic subordinates bodies of difference within all major institutional spaces reinforcing their exclusion and presumed ‘abnormality’. The central theme of this work is to demonstrate that ‘bodies’ have a greater presence, physicality and affect than traditional accounts of the material body allow for. Furthermore the self cannot be separated from the social relations and spaces within which it exists and rather than located in an interior space or as a core essence, the bodily ‘self’ seeps beyond the surface of the skin to intermingle with the bodies of others. The capacity and force of bodies, which includes their knowledge of the world, therefore creates spatial contexts within which all bodies have to negotiate their place either conforming to or disrupting the contours of such spatial environments.

In general space is dominated and shaped by ‘normal’ bodies that have a vested interest in maintaining the status quo in order to maintain their privileged status within particular spaces. In order to maintain the space as ‘straight’ and contain the threat of bodies that disrupt this privilege, difference is perceived as ‘defective’ or ‘flawed’, however, as I have argued this has nothing to do with inherent qualities, rather the socially produced myth of the idealized body against which the queer body is compared. The frameworks, through which I have developed my analysis and especially the issue of the political significance of the de-individualization of bodies, are also being utilized in other political arenas where bodies are marginalized, such as disability politics. As Myriam Winance states “‘normality’ or ‘difference’ are no longer objective characteristics that depend on whether or not one has a given attribute, but are relative qualities, built through interaction” (2007:634). The interactions between bodies at all levels and situations are therefore dynamic and involve complex power relations. This critical view disrupts concepts of objectivity that institutions such as medicine promote and reveals that the boundary between professional and personal is a contentious division. Such a division is

reliant on concepts of disembodiment and the valuing of the rational mind, which I have through out this work challenged, demonstrating that knowledge cannot be separated from bodies.

Through this process of reconfiguring the limitations imposed on bodily existence alternative forms of embodiment, as participants demonstrated, are being negotiated that are creating what Halberstam terms “queer space” (2005:6). Within such spaces, bodies are engaging in bodily ‘freedom’ that has been denied by a rigid two-sex system and Western concepts of the individual. This innovation, I have suggested, relies on an intercorporeal approach to embodiment, which displays levels of generosity denied within a social system that values an economy of exchange between individuals, who are seen to be constituted prior to the act of giving. The intercorporeal generosity (Diprose 2002) promoted by this work suggests that bodies are constructed through the bodily act of giving. Politicizing the intercorporeality of bodies, this work seeks to illuminate the potential resistance, from queer bodies, to the hegemonic directing of bodies and demonstrate the innovative capabilities of bodies. In Chapter two, I explored the creativity of the transgendered embodiment challenging dominant understandings of pathology by relocating faculties thought to reside in the mind as being located simultaneously in the body. Imagination, fantasy and emotion developed through intercorporeal connections, I suggested, play a major role in the production of bodily identity. Exploring the ways in which queer bodies experience and engage with such sensations and feelings I sought to demonstrate the transgressive aspects of transitioning/*becoming*. For example, Jay’s changing body involved a metamorphosing in a different direction, one that coincided with his bodily imagination and comportment rather than a complete separation of one body and the adopting of another. Claire’s experience also alluded to certain bodily parts potentially blending into new parts whilst for Carol it was a process of becoming more feminine. This chapter traced the capacity of the body to take on different forms and innovatively engage with the multiplicity of differences that at points congeal into an identity.

In Chapter Three I examined the ways in which hegemonic family space and the bodies within that space create and direct children along conventional lines of normality through the giving of love. I investigated the idea that traditional beliefs (such as the concept that the family is a natural formation containing predominantly straight bodies, rather than a socially produced group) allow the bodily investment that parents have in the ‘conventional’ bodies of their children to be obscured from view. This bodily knowledge, I argued, determines the perception of the child as either conforming and therefore resembling the family or non-conforming and potentially disrupting the family unit. I pointed out that rather than being separate from broader society, family space is an institution that formulates the basis for the dominant social order. As sociologist Steven Seidmen argues; “the making of embodied selves and codes has been interlaced with the making of the cultural and institutional life of western societies” (1997:82). The family space is fundamental to the making of embodied selves and hugely influential in how we embrace or deny levels of embodiment that may challenge concepts of the normalized body and normative social structures. In addition to exploring the queer child in family space I also considered the experiences of the queer parent, investigating the disruption non-normative ‘fathers’ and ‘mothers’ make to dominant understandings of parental roles/bodies. Within this context of disruption I explored the notion of intercorporeal generosity, suggesting that when the presumed equilibrium of traditional family space is shaken alternative spaces are potentially created allowing for more open forms of bodily exchange. Looking to the experiences of Kelvin I discussed the way culture informs understandings of family formation, bodily identity and concepts of collectivity. In Kelvin’s experience, growing up as a young child in Samoa, where bodily difference was embraced in ways that do not exist within Aotearoa, the identity of fa’afafine was part of the social formation.

In keeping with this theme of intercorporeality I utilized Bakhtin’s concept of the carnivalesque and grotesque to explore Mani’s childhood experiences of the circus. For Bakhtin the grotesque world offered up an alternative way of seeing and experiencing embodiment; the body rather than being defensively bounded and closed existed in an open and reciprocal exchange between the environment and other bodies. The carnival represented an ontology of corporeal intersubjectivity, where hierarchical understandings of individual

bodies and conventions of bodily comportment were mocked and the workings of power exposed. Linking this to the space of the circus and to the alternative bodies associated with the circus I explored Mani's experience of finding a place of comfort where s/he could glimpse existing at an angle or off-center to the directional straight line. I suggested this was a queer moment which for Mani became an embodied memory of recognition. While it was an event residing in the past it was recalled into the present as means to propel alternative directions and activism.

In Chapter Four I extended the analysis of queer bodies in family space into the context of other more public spaces, such as the street and various recreational spaces. Focusing on the ways in which power functions at the micro level of bodily movement, I demonstrated, with recourse to participants' own experiences, how queer bodies are at times coerced into shrinking their presence (especially in spaces such as the street) through the sensation that violence was imminently present. I explored the socially produced understanding of bodies as closed, completed and separate unities, and how this plays out in relations of domination and subordination, specifically through the bodies of hegemonic heterosexual men. As bodies are never in fact completely separate, nor bounded entities this somehow felt realization creates levels of vulnerability for those invested in maintaining bodily hierarchy. Pointing to the way that violence is normalized within space I suggested that this is a component in the production of straight bodies and the drive to contain bodily borders. While bodies are directed to follow straight lines and the directions of heterosexuality I also drew attention to the spatialization of anatomy. Dominant understandings of female and male anatomy dictate that the body is divided up according to spatial concepts of interiority and exteriority respectively. Furthermore such spatial understandings get mapped onto differentiated sexual functioning of male and female bodies.

Chapter Five entailed an accumulation of aspects of all previous chapters, exploring the disruptive potential of queer sexual practices and bodily generosity. Such generosity I suggested has the capacity to seep beyond the directed straightness and individualization of bodies, embracing the ambiguity of sexual bodily boundaries. In the previous chapters I demonstrated the ways in which bodies are directed along straight lines within specific

spaces. In this last chapter I furthered this exploration to incorporate the way in which bodies are spatially directed within the sexual act according to the logics of individualism and heteronormativity. Extending my critique of the individual and the singular body I looked to the ways in which queer bodily generosity potentially destabilizes normative understandings of the sexual act and the division between male and female bodies. Rather than focusing on hegemonic spatial understandings of anatomy, in particular the presumed inevitability of penile/vaginal intercourse, I suggested the body has the capacity to innovatively connect in a multitude of ways transgressing the entrapment of desire within dominant understandings of heteronormativity. The prevalent discourse surrounding transgendered derived from the authoritative medical model suggests that unless a body can function according to the spatial logics of heterosexual coitus, quality of life will be seriously undermined. However as participants have clearly voiced this is not the case; and queer bodies are most definitely forging new directions and becomings.

Given the exploratory nature of this thesis, it is difficult to produce a single concluding paragraph summing up findings. My research was not an attempt to find answers but a process of raising questions about queer embodiment in context to particular spaces. Drawing upon the lives of the participants that formulate the ‘body’ of this thesis I sort to articulate the gravity of the challenges they face whilst demonstrating the creative and courageous lives they lead. In the process of doing so this work demonstrates how bodily identity and physicality is developed through ongoing intercorporeal interactions; dynamic and innovative the people in this research demonstrated the body’s potential exuberance and ability to create *lines of flight*. To conclude I wish to reemphasize that *queer* is a spatial way of *becoming*, as a sexual orientation it “queers’ more than sex” (Ahmed 2006); is a way of facing, moving and perceiving the world at an angle, politically embodied, queer is a refusal to reduce life to a single and straight line. Disrupting and rattling social mores, queer bodies innovatively create intermezzo spaces, for their own embodiment and for the bodies of other ‘queers’ to occupy in the future.

APPENDIX A: INFORMATION SHEET

Te Whare Wananga o Waitaha/University of Canterbury
Gender Studies Programme
School of Culture, Literature and Society

Date 27 September 2005

Kia ora
Hi

My name is Karen Saunders and I am studying queer sexualities in mid to later life as a part of a M.A. Thesis. My title of my research is “Queering mid to later life sexuality”.

For this study, I would like to talk with people who identify as transgender or intersex who are in their mid to later life (40 years of age onwards). In recent years there has been an increase in research on ageing and sexuality, however, with respect to ‘queer’ sexualities there appears to be a gap in knowledge and representation. I’m particularly keen to hear how ‘queer’ people have experienced their sexuality over their life course and the influences that have shaped their sexual identity.

If you agree to participate, you will meet with me either in the local University or at your home (whichever you prefer). The discussion will be informal and open ended. The discussion will be taped and later transcribed. The results of this project will be used in my Masters Thesis and may also be used in articles for publication, but you can be assured of complete confidentiality of any data gathered in this research. The identity of any participants in this study will not be made public. To ensure anonymity and confidentiality, anything you say that appears in my Thesis or in future articles will appear under a pseudonym.

My supervisors are Dr Tiina Vares Phone (03) 364 2987 ext 7969 email tiina.vares@canterbury.ac.nz and Dr Annie Potts phone (03) 364 2987 ext 7967 email annie.potts@canterbury.ac.nz

Should you agree to take part in this study, you have the right to withdraw from the project at any time within 3 months following your contribution (including withdrawal of any information provided by correspondence, ie email). After 3 months your contribution will be part of a broader analysis and difficult to exclude from the study.

If you are interested in taking part, I would be delighted to hear from you, and would be pleased to answer any questions or discuss any concerns you may have about

participating in this project. Please contact me via email:
kls28@student.canterbury.ac.nz. Or phone me on (03) 364 2987 ext 8659.

Thank you for your time.

Karen Saunders

Gender Studies Programme
School of Culture, Literature and Society
Te Whare Wananga o Waitaha/University of Canterbury
Otautahi Christchurch
Aotearoa New Zealand

This project has been reviewed and approved by the University of Canterbury Human Ethics Committee for a period of XXX years from XXX

APPENDIX B: CONSENT FORM

Karen Saunders
Gender Studies Programme
School of Culture, Literature and Society
Te Whare Wananga o Waitaha/University of Canterbury
Private Bag 4800
Otautahi Christchurch

“Queering mid to later life sexuality”

I have read and understood the description of the above-named project. On this basis I agree to participate in this research. I consent to the use of interview material from discussions with Karen Saunders for this research and any possible publication of articles arising from this.

I understand that anonymity will be preserved in this project and any publications that may come out of this research. I also recognise that I have the right to withdraw this information from the project at any time within 3 months of my participation should I wish to do so.

NAME: (please fill in)

Date:

Signature:

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