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'Queer Theory':
intellectual and ethical *milieux* of 1990s sexual dissidence.

David Francis Adair B.A. (Hons) University of South Australia

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Faculty
of Arts, Griffith University.

Date of Submission: November 2002
Statement of Authorship

This work has never previously been submitted for a degree or diploma in any University and to the best of my knowledge and belief, this thesis contains no material published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the thesis itself.

David Adair
Acknowledgments

Dugald Williamson was my principal supervisor for much of this project. I thank him for his wise counsel, good humour and patience. I also appreciate Colin Mercer's contribution in the early stages, prior to Denise Meredyth joining Dugald in supervising me. I have benefited from Denise's insight, support and friendship since. After Dugald left the University my principal supervisor was Jeffrey Minson. Jeffrey's enthusiasm for teaching was a great help to me and I am grateful for his many astute comments and suggestions during the year in which he supervised me. I also thank Kay Ferres, who made room in her busy schedule for the principal supervisor's role, after Jeffrey's departure. It is due to Kay's sound advice that this thesis took its final form; her sensitive encouragement kept me focused on the finishing line. Any problems in the thesis are, of course, my responsibility.

The support of friends and colleagues helped me complete this project. I would like to thank Louise Goebel for her useful comments, and for kindly volunteering to edit a draft of the first chapter. For being there when I needed coffee and company, and for knowing when to let me get on with it, I thank Gary Deane. I am grateful to Anne McGuinness, without whom I would not have started this project. I also thank Cathy Greenfield and Peter Williams, who inspired me to take up the challenge.

My involvement with gay and lesbian cultural and political life dates back to the late 1970s. I am grateful to my friend and housemate at that time, Tim Carrigan, and to John Lee, whose scholarly examples still motivate me. Thanks are also due to David Broker, for many hours of lively conversation and laughter. I would also like to thank Phillip Jacobs, Doug Raethel, Andrew Giles, Donal Raethel and Dave Kirikino, for their friendship and inspiration.

This thesis is dedicated to David Adair (1927-75), Dora Adair, and Agnes McLaren (n. Adair).
**Synopsis**

The main problem addressed by this thesis is the question of how to assess the politics and the cultural effects and implications of 'Queer Theory' during the period of the 1990s. 'Queer' was invoked in numerous institutions, spaces, and cultural practices over this period, and yet queer-identified theorists – and many of their critics – have often assumed that this term refers to a relatively unified object. I ask if it is appropriate to treat these ‘queer’ occasions in this manner, and whether this 'dispersed' object requires a different approach: one that sets out to describe means and routes by which it became possible and desirable to pose 'queer' problems across so many diverse sites and practices. In addition, if there are discernible patterns to these distributed cultural capacities and inclinations, what political significance do they have? These questions inform my account of the career of 'Queer Theory' during the 1990s.

A post-humanist approach to these matters is not premised on an essential or a socially constituted general category of 'subjectivity'. Instead, it addresses 'Queer Theory' as a problem, without automatically critiquing it; it is sceptical of the perfectionist pulsion that has treated this critical practice as either a good or a bad object: dual roles that are mandated by the logic of dialectical criticism. These roles are exemplified by the frequent relegation of 'queer' in the relevant literature to the 'innately political' or the 'merely aesthetic'. In this thesis I identify ethical, cultural, and political yields of these conventional choices and the modes of problematisation in which they operate; I positively redescribe them as aesthetico-political practices. My approach therefore not only deviates from the 'good' or 'bad' critical options, but also from a third option: the equally rationalist response of assuming that 'Queer Theory' is fundamentally a problem of under-theorisation.
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Introduction

During the 1990's 'queer' became a problem of a broad range of academic and other practices and milieux. In the middle of the keenly felt disputes over the cultural implications and political status of 'queer', Peter Horne and Reina Lewis wrote that it has sometimes been defined by its transgressive difference from what are perceived as heterosexist norms. It has also been taken to encompass a variety of desires and hybrid identities, countenancing elements of play and sexual practice, which also transgress the norms of what some have seen as more ostensibly 'politically correct' forms of gay and lesbian identity (Horne & Lewis 1996, p. 1).

Advocates of 'queer' identified two main strategies of established identitarian theories and politics of sexual dissidence: the securing of minority sexual identities' civil rights within the liberal-pluralist status quo; and the maximising of those identities' contributions to projects of radical cultural and social transformation. It was a standard response among queer-identified theorists to argue that both of these strategies seriously curtailed the possibilities for sexual dissidence.

There are various critical reactions to queer theorists and their 'postmodern' and 'post-structural' colleagues claiming a political status. One response is to embrace queer theorists' deconstructive methodology more or less on its own terms; to treat 'queer culture' as a fundamental, if necessarily localised, challenge to the symbolic order that underwrites heteronormative social relations (Watney 1994, p. 23). Sometimes this supportive position is inverted, either to reject claims for the political significance of 'queer' outright, or to depict it as an instrument of oppression (Nussbaum 2000, pp. 1-2). In these counter-critiques, the advocates of 'queer' as a theoretical and a political practice have been identified as mistakenly assuming that their aesthetic manipulations break decisively from late capitalism's underlying socio-economic realities; their aesthetico-political aspirations are seen as symbolic posturing with doubtful connections to 'real' politics, and as symptomatic of a contemporary economic, cultural, and political malaise. Some variants of this response make the related argument that not only does queer theorising pose no threat to the cultural and political status quo, but that it is actively involved in its reproduction (Derbyshire 1994, p. 44).

Other critical responses have deferred making a final judgment on the political potential of 'queer', pending further theoretical clarifications. Here the emphasis tends to

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1 The title of Steven Seidman's 'Deconstructing queer theory or the under-theorization of the social and the ethical' implied this 'under-theorised' response (1995, p. 139). He subsequently corrected this implication in a version of the article that was published as 'Deconstructing queer
be placed on the process of refining queer theorists' claims to have effected a fundamental epistemological and political break from heteronormative culture and politics. Horne and Lewis respond in this manner when they write that although they share queer theorists' belief that sexual identities are 'contingent and transitory', and that 'dominant identificatory norms ... need to be deconstructed', they must nevertheless acknowledge the stubborn endurance of the identities denoted by the terms 'lesbian' and 'gay'; their own work, they write, 'is poised at this particular cusp' (1996, pp. 1-2).

My central problem is the question of how to assess the politics and the cultural effects and implications of queer theorising during the 1990s. Framing this problem are questions prompted by the observation that 'queer' was invoked in numerous institutional locations and cultural practices over that period. What are the peculiar features of these occasions? What are the relations between them? Is it appropriate to treat them as local manifestations of a relatively unified object? Or does 'queer', as a 'dispersed' object, require a different approach? How can one account for the means and routes by which it became possible to pose 'queer' problems across so many sites and practices? Finally, if there are discernible patterns to this distribution of queer capacities and inclinations, what is their political significance? These questions inform my account of the career of 'queer' during the 1990s.

Not all critical receptions of 'queer' are equally opposed to it, or do so on the same grounds. As I noted, some see it as a displacement of political concerns onto the aesthetic domain. The more 'anti-aesthetic' of these critics base their responses on the emergence of a distinctive practice of 'Queer Theory' as a phenomenon of 'superstructural' or 'cultural' institutions. Others problematise queer theorists' characteristic applications of anti-essentialist political principles: their imperative to critique all social identities. One variation of this assessment questions whether 'Queer Theory' can be differentiated by its challenge to Gay Liberation's 'fixed and essentialist notions of sex/gender identity', since this predecessor of 'queer' also possessed anti-essentialist features (Altman 1996, p. 9). In a related argument that also raises the issue of continuity, anti-essentialism is claimed to be compatible with lesbian-feminism, and 1970s lesbian feminists' adoption of an essentialist model of lesbian identity is seen as only a temporary political tactic (Goodloe 1994, p. 3).

Other critical responses to 'Queer Theory' question its anti-identitarian impulse, its compulsive rejection of the minority model identified with established political theories and practices, because this impulse runs counter to the very basis on which political claims can be made in a liberal-democratic system: a form of identity stable enough to be recognisable (Seidman 1997, p. 219, p. 225; Watney 1994, pp. 24-25; cf theory, or, some difficulties in a theory and politics of difference', in his Difference Troubles: Queering Social Theory and Sexual Politics (Seidman 1997a, pp. 139-161).
Cohen 1991, p. 81). In a similar line of questioning, queer theorists' compulsive assertions of 'difference' are problematised because they offer no relatively stable points of identification, no subjects of political change (Seidman 1997, pp. 154-155). Related arguments emphasise the problem of queer theorists' debt to a philosophical tradition that ignores its own intellectual and ethical conditions of possibility: an inherited myopia that causes queer theorists to impose a spurious symbolic unity across vaguely defined 'historical' periods, as well as otherwise discrete sites and cultural practices (Seidman 1997, p. 161).

Where critical responses to 'Queer Theory' have often judged it according to the perceived failures or successes of its apparently defining accomplishment — its critique of the prevailing but demonstrably inadequate order of cultural and political pluralism — I propose to address this problem more positively. My strategy is to redescribe it, not only to note the debt owed by queer theorists to earlier intellectual traditions, nor to generalise their 'aesthetic' distance from concrete political realities, but in order to critically appreciate 'queer' as a particular ethos and practice of sexual dissidence. This strategy of redescription means addressing the problem of the abstract nature of queer theorists' critiques, while also developing a corresponding account of their critical receptions. Yet while this project sets me the historicising task of describing ways in which the variegated queer efflorescence of the 1990s has been accounted for, it is not confined to strictly textual-theoretical concerns (cf Mercer 1987, p. 184).

The sexual dissidents who have expressed divergent and strongly held opinions on the problem of 'Queer Theory' have differing stakes in the academic and related domains and practices in which queer-as-politics has been asserted and received. The newly constituted field of 1990s queer sexual dissidence was built up in reference to these precedents and contemporaries. For example, many of these disputes have been played out within cultural studies: the broad range of critically oppositional approaches and areas of study that includes film and media studies, communications courses, and a more formally defined 'cultural studies' itself. 'Queer' has at times been a controversial addition to existing cultural studies approaches and areas of specialisation. On other occasions, however, advocates of queer studies have joined their interdisciplinary colleagues, in disputes with adherents of the more established disciplines.

Prior to the 1990s, the disciplines had been settled by persons committed to including gay and lesbian cultures, interests and agendas among the matters considered of legitimate academic concern (Blasius 1994, p. 48; Seidman 1997, pp. 143-144). These newly developed semi-public spaces within the existing disciplines were both the grounds and the stakes of a series of complex, protracted struggles over the 'politicianing' of the academy. These disputes became more pronounced with the rise to prominence of interdisciplinary cultural studies, many of whose practitioners elevated
this project of politicisation to a *raison d'être* (Storey 1996, pp. 3-4). Interdisciplinary gay and lesbian activist-scholars could look to this history of colleagues who had sought, through combining their functions of theory-representation and political-representation, to advance a project to 'democratise' tertiary education (Nelson et al. 1992, pp. 5-6). In the 1990s, this vocational balance of the academic-intellectual and the democratic-political, which interdisciplinary activist-scholars had hitherto found serviceable, seemed to some to be threatened by what they saw as academic queer theorists' proclaimed 'higher' calling: their devotion to the process of criticism itself (cf Fuss 1991, p. 6).

The disputes within and between the established disciplines and the proliferating varieties of interdisciplinary cultural studies were not the only tensions characterising the academic career of 1990s 'Queer Theory'. There were related tensions involving, on the one hand, the New Left and lesbian-feminist critical traditions of post-1960s academic and extramural gay and lesbian 'movement' politics; and, on the other hand, the post-structuralist and postmodernist versions of critical intellectual culture, which had been major influences on the newly emerged cultural formation 'Queer Theory' (cf Jeffreys 1994; cf Bravman 1997, pp. 17-21). Despite sharing some of their theoretical features, social goals, and even personnel, these camps were locked into often acrimonious disputes (Bravman 1997, p. 24). Perhaps the most obvious of these disagreements were those between these coalitions, over the issue of which was better placed to provide a theory and politics that could realise their common goals. But as I shall argue, there were also disputes internal to these alliances, between their radical perfectionist strains and those more concerned with working up political possibilities from the existing pluralist order.

Queer theorists have been prominent advocates of a post-identitarian political rationality. They have consequently been embroiled in polarising debates between supporters of identity-based models of sexual dissidence that tend to subordinate the question of 'difference' to that of 'identity', and those who are committed to a more ambitious model. This tradition of problematisation rejects what it sees as a compromised identitarian or minority model of sexual dissidence and instead sets out to include the differences *between* and *within* human subjects among its objects of 'scrutiny and possible change' (Blasius 1994, p. 13). My tasks include describing examples of these mutually antagonistic assertions of the primacy of 'identity' and 'difference', proposing a genealogy of their 1990s currency in sexually dissident critical circles, and identifying what the queer versions of post-identitarian social thought have counted as 'difference'.

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1 See: Jagose 1996, pp. 82-83; Britzman 1995, p. 6; Watney 1994, p. 19
My final addition to the list of disputes involving 1990s 'Queer Theory' concerns developments in social thought that problematised the traditional model of citizenship — the one most famously associated with the work of T. H. Marshall — that is focused on citizens' civil, political, and social attributes of rights and obligations (Lipset 1964, p. x; cf Marshall 1964). The historical emergence of a queer anti-identitarian literature and ethical stance was bound up with debates, undertaken within and across a variety of sites and practices, over attempts to extend this Marshallian definition to include citizenship 'as a feature of culture, operative as a dimension of individual and collective identities' (Meijer 1998, p. 235; cf Meadows 1998, p. 96). To the extent that anti-identitarian social thought in general, and 'Queer Theory' in particular, have pursued radical critiques of all subjectivities and their social conditions, they provide opportunities — and pose problems — for these attempts to theorise cultural citizenship as a field of 'inter-subjectivities'.

Queer theorists have tended to distinguish their own mode of sexual dissidence from identitarianism by following the rationalist model that was established by post-Saussurean linguistics and which was subsequently given 'political' applications in the tradition of post-structuralist criticism (Seidman 1997a, p. 147). Thus 'Queer Theory' has tended to be assessed by its post-structuralist proponents and critics alike, on the basis of its claims to better articulate a shift in the focus of political rationality, from 'identity' to 'difference' (Bristow & Wilson 1993, pp. 1-2). Identitarian and even nominally identitarian opponents of 'Queer Theory' have used these claims as the bases of their own counter-critiques. Some see queer theorists' privileging of the differences between categories of sexuality as underestimating the importance of differences of gender, class, and race, and as therefore striking a less judicious balance between key social categories than that struck by other available modes of political criticism (Stein 1992, p. 50; Goodloe 1994, p. 7). In this dissertation I redescribe the rationalist foci of these assertions and counter-assertions, without celebrating the principle of 'difference' for its own sake — as if it had an unvarying political significance — and without adopting the opposing option of ignoring the differences between the objects recognised in political thought. I treat queer theorists' practice of difference-assertion as an ethical practice of the self and a socio-political gesture: an ethos that is indebted to the tradition of Kantian-Foucauldian criticism.

Michel Foucault's theoretical and ethical legacy loomed large in the critical literature of the 1990s, among critics of the discourses — especially, although not exclusively, those of sexuality — those critics saw as having dominated the post-Enlightenment era (cf Pratt 1987, p.4). I argue that queer cultural critics' 'transgressive' stance owes much to Foucault's earlier project to revise Immanuel Kant's efforts to

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include the human subject's *a priori* among the objects of historical inquiry: Foucault's project to better resist the regimes of power and knowledge within which subjects are formed and contained (cf Faubion 1995, p. 5; Miller 1993, pp. 139-140). Queer theorists' characteristic ethical stance continues this tradition of 'materialist' alternatives to Kant's transcendental subject (cf Faubion 1995, p. 9; cf Morrow 1995, p. 25).

Having made the point that queer theorists owe an intellectual and ethical debt to Foucault, I also acknowledge that even within the broad ranks of post-Foucauldian scholarship, there are disputes that, if taken seriously, can unsettle any tendency to equate 'queer' with a Kantian reading of Foucault's numerous matters of concern. My project is therefore informed by a positive and descriptive strain in Foucault's *oeuvre*, in post-Foucauldian scholarship, and in social thought more broadly. It departs from the Kantian critical intellectualism of the emancipatory or perfectionist procedures and rationales dominating the *milieux* where the problem of 'Queer Theory' emerged (Foucault in Raulet 1988, p. 28; Hunter 1994, pp. 80-81; Faubion 1995, pp. 10-12).

What is distinctive about my manner of conceptualising 'Queer Theory'? How does it differ from other approaches to this object? Through a combination of analyses and positive historical descriptions and exemplifications, I am working towards a post-humanist way of treating this problem; a way that is not premised on an essential or a socially constituted category of 'subjectivity' (cf Nightingale 1994, p. 40; cf Hunter 1988, p. 212). This involves describing 'Queer Theory' as a problem, while being sceptical of the perfectionist pulsion that has typically treated it as either a good or a bad object: dual roles that are mandated by dialectical critical logic (Koselleck 1988, p. 100). These roles are exemplified in the manner in which 'queer' has frequently been relegated in the relevant literature to the 'innately political' or the 'merely aesthetic'. By positively redescribing these conventional choices and the modes of problematisation in which they operate, as aesthetico-political practices, I aim to identify their particular ethical, cultural, and political yields. My approach therefore not only deviates from the 'good' or 'bad' critical options, but also from the third option that I mentioned previously: the equally rationalist response of assuming that 'Queer Theory' is fundamentally a problem of under-theorisation.

I have two main methodological responses to the problem of 'Queer Theory'. The first is to positively describe and analyse specific examples of 'queer' being invoked. These examples include: a queer capacity for ironic or camp sexual self-representations that academic queer theorists recommend as components of a civic virtue of composure (Alexander 1997, p. 2); a practice of social distinction deployed by the publishers, writers and readers of queer-identified magazines (cf Bourdieu 1986, p. 2); communications theorists' revisions of the social constructionist accounts of
sexual and gender identities that inform their models of audiences (Burston & Richardson 1995, pp. 1-2); and other instances of structuralist writings that represent gay and lesbian forms of sexual dissidence in order to ritually uncover and transcend their conceptual frames (Martin 1995, p. 157).

My second main methodological response is to refer these queer occasions to a variable 'post-structuralist' ethos that was installed in cultural studies well before the 1990s emergence of a recognisable 'Queer Theory'. By 'variable', I do not only mean that this is an ethos capable of operating in different institutions and spaces, but that it can accommodate degrees of moral enthusiasm for its own practice of critical judgement. My examples of this ethos are drawn from a range of imbricated cultural studies variants and fields (gay and lesbian, queer, feminist, 'straight'), and theoretico-ethical schools ('post-structuralist', 'postmodernist'). When describing and analysing them, I follow an 'applied' approach that does not assume that they inhere in a single, unvarying domain of 'Ethics', but which instead focuses on specific modes of acting upon conduct (cf Minson 1993, p. 6). As a consequence, when I identify examples of theorising as particular modes of ethical self-care, I do not automatically refer them to one of the totalities favoured in the humanist ethical tradition or its broadly structuralist counterpart: the master capacity of socially constructed consciousness that remains the defining feature of the post-Kantian human subject; or the Symbolic order of binary terms, whose positing provides queer 'post-structuralists' with a heteronormative field to ritually disrupt.

One of my main reasons for making these intellectual and ethical deviations from more conventional approaches to this field is that a trust in philosophical fiat is not unique to, or unchallenged within, 'Queer Theory'. I do not assume as the 'merely aesthetic', and the 'theoretically clarifying' responses do that my main object must be redeemed for Politics. Instead of assuming that (queer) criticism and politics are antithetical or equivalent terms, I set out to identify specific relations between them. I am adopting this positive or applied approach to the issue of 'queer' as an aesthetico-political practice and ethos in an attempt to take its plurality seriously, since, like any other cultural formation, 'Queer Theory' does not have a single, unvarying ethical or political significance. This is neither a relativistic approach to the problem, nor a normative critical stance. I assume that one can make informed assessments concerning the potential political, ethical, and cultural significance of 'queer', without reproducing these conventional responses. To study specific occasions when individuals have formed themselves into the subjects of a queer sexually dissident politics is to assume that theoretical writing and reading can operate as political resources. If this is so, it is important to identify these resources, the relations
they make possible with other modes of sexual dissidence, and to suggest where these 
modes compliment each other and how they have come into conflict.

Since the queering of persons' 'ethical substance' can involve the use of a broad 
range of aesthetic objects, not all of which are to be found among the queer theoretical 
literature, my primary and secondary sources extend beyond the queer canon that 
coalesced during the 1990s (cf Foucault 1985, p. 26). Some of these sources are drawn 
from the archives of the Gay Liberation or the lesbian-feminist movements that 
preceded the early 1990s flowering of 'Queer Theory', and which were its 
contemporaries. Other examples are from 19th and 20th century Romantic literary 
genres, and a variety of 1990s academic disciplines and interdisciplinary fields of 
study: cultural studies, cultural history, screen studies, sociology, political philosophy, 
and gender studies. I chose this selection for the obvious reason that these are among 
the academic modes most identified with cultural criticism more generally, and queer 
criticism in particular. In addition, my primary sources include a selection of films, 
plays and television programs, while academic and journalistic critical commentaries 
on these are among my primary and secondary sources.

The positive manner in which I assemble and use these sources differentiates 
my approach from the rationalist critical paradigm within which queer assertions have 
typically been made and countered. Rationalist traditions have assumed that 'Queer 
Theory's' difference from other cultural formations hinges on the positive knowledges 
it produces, or on those 'queer' trainings in recognition that determine such 
knowledges. By taking queer plurality seriously, in the manner I have described, I 
seek to build into my approach a break on the precipitous bent of critical discourse 
analyses, as this is exemplified in their procedure of initially positing contingency as 
an 'organising principle' of their objects, and then reinstating totality, in the form of a 
theory that resolves the rupture on a 'higher' level. This rationalism is common in the 
critical literature on 'Queer Theory', most notably in those intellectual histories that set 
out to explain their object in terms of the influence of Foucault's theories of sexuality, 
power and subjectivity (cf Spargo 1999). Having noted this, however, I should add 
that such theoretical influences do, of course, deserve historical study; my own project 
will hopefully serve as a useful adjunct to them.

Mine is not an unsympathetic critique of 'queer'. My project is not motivated 
by an assumption that queer theorists' critical ambitions were necessarily misguided, or 
that they have had no concrete political or pedagogical impacts. Instead, my argument 
is that these possible yields may be better identified, assessed, and even anticipated, if 
we do not assume that queer criticism is synonymous with its own more radically 
perfectionist rationales; and that to judge it by such rationales is problematic. The rise 
of 'queer' in cultural studies over the period of the 1990s is not just a testament to queer
theorists' capacity to be enthralled by their own expert rhetoric, or their ability to trade in popular radical pulsions. Instead, it can be explained, in large part, by their critical intellectual stance having been firmly established in cultural studies and associated domains and practices prior to queer criticism's emergence as a practice of sexual dissidence. It is more useful to assess queer theorising in reference to its contributions to these aesthetico-political milieux, than by an a priori conception of 'the political' (cf Blasius 1994, pp. 12-14).

Having made this case for a pragmatic approach to the problem, I should add, first, that queer theorists' critically perfectionist pulsions may be responsible for some of their theoretical, ethical, and political difficulties; and second, that the particular cultural competences and enthusiasms that 'Queer Theory' assumes and produces in its adherents are relatively specialised forms of cultural capital, which may not be readily exportable. Since one of my tasks is to account for these ambiguous institutional and historical circumstances, I aim to keep my account open to a sense of how 'queer' has operated as an aesthetico-political practice – part means of working upon the self, and part socio-political gesture – by focusing on the interaction of the theoretical and the ethical aspects of queer criticism. This strategy informs my third chapter's descriptions of the scandalous careers of certain films and plays and their associated apparati of critical commentary. It also guides my other discussions of the assertions and receptions of 'queer' in academic milieux and practices. Rather than search for, or bemoan the absence of, a unified theory of sexual politics, I aim to remain sensitive to the contingencies making queer theorising a variable aesthetico-political practice of sexual dissidence.

My interest in describing relations between academic cultural criticism and politics draws me towards the question of how academic queer theorists have taken the fields and major concerns of earlier forms of cultural studies as their points of reference and departure when choosing objects to queer. But as I shall argue, this 'external' orientation also has its 'internal' corollary: the question of how, having been taken up into technologies of tertiary education, these critical commentaries on cultural objects and fields have been used to queer teachers' and students' own cultural capacities. One can see this double process at work in the queer inflections of academic cultural studies' traditional problematising of its own ability to build and to secure for itself a public (cf Bertlant & Warner 1995, p. 2).

One response to the problem of how best to account for the relations between academic cultural criticism and politics sees it as an issue of cultural studies activist-scholars needing to acquire positive knowledges of the many fields their prospective audiences or constituencies must negotiate. Another emphasises an imperative to resolve the contradictions of a multiplicity of life worlds and subjects, through activist-
scholars representing the cultural and political interests of their prospective constituencies. As I shall demonstrate, these emphases frequently appear within the same piece of theoretical writing, *oeuvre*, or genre of critical commentary. I argue that cultural studies academics' vocation — expressed as a project to reconcile the contradictions within and between these emphases — is capable of accommodating a variety of such critical responses.

Some critics of 'Queer Theory' have opposed it on the grounds that it is oblivious to cultural studies academics' traditional imperative to connect themselves and their work to extramural constituencies. This response is erroneous, since there have, in fact, been a range of queer cultural studies positions on this issue. Queer-identified cultural studies academics have held a number of convictions in common with their non-queer colleagues. They have argued that in order for academic cultural criticism to be politically effective, it must be married to a broader popular-democratic 'politics of interest' (cf Fuss in Seidman 1997a, pp. 154-155); that the path to political relevance lies in learning to speak more clearly to potential extramural constituencies (Duggan 1992, p. 26; cf Sartelle 1992); and that an academic community of conscience can resolve the contradictions facing isolated critics who confront the fractured field of political Reason (Sandell 1995, p. 5). As these responses demonstrate, when academic 'queer' critics address the problem of how to justify their practice in political terms, they are not spared the reflexive doubts experienced by their 'straight' colleagues (cf Faubion 1995, p. 9).

While it is true that there are academic queer theorists whose 'hyper-ethical' aspirations have precluded them from showing more than a token interest in this problem, others have demonstrated a more serious attitude. Typically, they have understood the problem — if not the solution — in terms familiar to their 'straight' contemporaries: that tertiary education is currently undemocratic, and that this is compounded by a misplaced faith in 'identity' as the basis of a pluralistic politics. It was in response to this problem that some queer theorists in the 1990s argued for reforms in curricula that reflected refinements in the existing but inadequate identitarian models of cultural politics prevalent in studies of popular culture. The aim of these reforms was to transform those heteronormative pedagogies that tactically marginalise and centralise particular discourses and their subjects (Burston & Richardson 1995, pp. 1-2).

In order to identify and discuss the major foci of queered cultural studies, I adapt two key concepts from the cultural studies theorist Lawrence Grossberg. The first of these is the notion of the 'pedagogy of culture', Grossberg's term for cultural studies academics' interest in the more or less formal means by which persons acquire their cultural capacities (1994, p. 11). Marcel Mauss (1973) had expressed a similar
interest in his writings on those 'techniques and work of individual and practical reason' that do not derive from subjects, but which constitute the objective conditions for the patterned transmission of mental, somatic, and behavioural modes of life (1973, p. 73). In my reading of Grossberg's version of the concept, I take it to refer to an interest in understanding how a broad range of instituted practices form, reform and distribute cultural attributes. This concern with the 'pedagogy of culture' is perhaps the most familiar mode of cultural studies work. The second, and possibly less well known mode is what Grossberg calls the 'culture of pedagogy': a more chastened or reflexive cultural studies focus on formal teaching's roles in the processes forming, reforming and distributing cultural attributes (1994, p. 11; Gibson 2001, pp. 121-124). When considered together, these concepts provide a bifocal vision of immediate and broad fields of life instruction. My challenge is to use them in a positive manner that is cognisant of these fields' contingency and plurality.

By acknowledging the variability of the objects, practices, and personal capacities that have been designated 'queer', I question the assumption that there is a single locus — such as 'Queer Theory' — where the problem of connecting criticism and politics is manifested and properly resolved. 'Queer' has been invoked in numerous academic domains and fields, as well as in related sites and practices, such as academic journal writing and reading, and print and electronic journalism. Therefore, a consequence of taking this plurality seriously is that the historical emergence of a queer theoretical literature and ethos cannot be convincingly treated as if they are actually or potentially unitary or linear: a matter of a general shift in political rationality — or in the consciousness of its normal subject — from 'identity' to 'difference'.

I propose that it is not only possible to account for a distinctive mode of queered activist-scholarship through positive descriptions of the institutions, spaces, and cultural practices that shape it and which take shape around it, but that this strategy has advantages over the more conventional critical approaches that have so far dominated the field. Lisa Wolford (1997) defines 'critical pedagogy' in this conventional manner when she recommends it is an overtly politicized, liberatory educational practice that highlights the dynamics of power inherent in any process of knowledge construction, [and which] aims to reconfigure education as a form of social activism, emphasizing the partiality of all knowledge claims and the validity of different voices and viewpoints (1997, pp. 188-189).

By contrast, an account of academic 'Queer Theory' that follows a positive and descriptive strategy can acknowledge sites, problems and solutions beyond the order of theoretical criticism or of 'critical pedagogy'; it can address specific relations between a
practice and ethos of queer critical pedagogy and those aspects of tertiary education, such as the teacher's administrative duties, which elude the attentions of activist-scholars who routinely equate their teaching practice with its critical aspects alone.

To describe academic queer theorists' relations with the 'pedagogy of culture' and the 'culture of pedagogy' is to inquire into how they conducted themselves across diverse sites and forms of cultural citizenship. For instance, 'queer' has operated in theatre and film criticisms as a variant of their practitioners' traditional search for the progressive text (cf Rich 1993; Chin 1993). On the theoretical level, it has helped to prise these critics' concerns with questions of textual form and of aesthetic techniques from a traditional grounding in the more 'essentialist' modes of 'ethnographic' audience studies. When deployed in the technology of tertiary education, however, this anti-essentialist tradition of queer commentary has not only made the aesthetic forms and techniques of otherwise marginalised audiences into central objects of historical study, but its pedagogical disciplines have secured these objects as matters for ethico-political emulation. By describing specific examples of the operations of 'Queer Theory' within tertiary education, one can gain a sense of how it has assisted in developing and distributing some of the characteristic features of contemporary cultural citizenship, such as the popular ethos that Michael Hurley (2002) has called an 'ethic of uncertainty' (2002, p. 38).

The academic queer ethos can be understood as a variant of cultural studies' post-structuralist ethos, which has itself been identified as a version of the Romantic ethos and its characteristic dialectic: its practice of working on the self through the posing of exemplary oppositions (Williamson 1997, p. 178; Hunter 1988). I have already argued that no less than its 'straight' or differently-focused post-structuralist counterparts, the queer version sets out to 'politically' reconcile self and academic structure, theoretical expertise and extramural politics. Queer commentaries on the binary coding apparently underwriting heteronormative culture emerged into these longstanding aesthetico-political negotiations, in the form of the 1990s movement to queer pedagogy (cf Britzman 1995, p. 6).

As an historical practice and ethos, 1990s 'queer pedagogy' had necessary limits. However, my raising of this matter of limitation is not meant as a dismissive gesture, but as a step towards understanding how academic queer theorists' vocation to mediate their external and internal orientations can operate as one mode of social and political life, among others. This work of positive redescription is only possible if one does not define 'Queer Theory' solely by its own perfectionist pulsions, or by those of other critical practices and ethoi. My concern with queer pedagogy consequently includes the question of how it made students the bearers of certain positive knowledges, without confining myself to that line of inquiry. This dissertation also
addresses questions that are at once broader and more specific: how the queering of pedagogy can tactically form teachers' and students' inclinations to produce and consume certain kinds of cultural capital; and how the advocates of a queer education have assumed, produced and distributed the relevant capacities for specific types of action and affective response.

I begin the first chapter by describing the field of sexual dissidence that queer theorists inherited from earlier critical traditions, and which they subsequently developed in association with some of their contemporaries. This chapter identifies key objects that have attracted the sobriquet 'queer': a self-reflexive gendered subject; an ethnography of cultural consumption; a ‘post-structural’ strategy of theoretical representation; and a particular practice of social distinction. I describe these in relation to specific domains and practices, including magazine and academic journal publishing and various milieux of a broadly defined cultural studies, each with peculiar ethical and political imperatives significant for queerly comported persons. By maintaining a sense of the continuities and differences between these domains and practices, this chapter questions the burden imposed on 'queer' by the totalising imperative characterising general theories of subjectivity and politics; in particular, their assumptions that 'Queer Theory' can or should carry the weight of its own perfectionist expectations.

In the second chapter I build on the first's strategy of redescribing the reciprocal relations between 'Queer Theory' and other critical traditions; notably, feminist versions that use psychoanalytic and socio-linguistic theories of subjectivity, and the structuralist-Marxist tradition of critical theory. I discuss specific occasions on which queer-identified theorists have distinguished themselves and their practice from these modes of criticism, and in which some of these established participants in intellectual politics have turned temporarily, if not permanently, queer. Through these discussions of instances of theoretical and ethical reciprocity I make a case for queer critical theorists being the inheritors of a Romantic practice of self-care. I cite examples of gay and feminist commentaries on the cultural practice of drag to demonstrate similarities and differences between these parties with an interest in 'queer'. I also develop this theme of queer commentary's complexity and variability by describing its ambiguous relations with the structuralist-Marxist tradition of aesthetic criticism, as well as its intellectual and ethical debts to the Kantian-Foucauldian project to historically account for the a priori of subjectivity.

During the 1990s interdisciplinary cultural studies offered a fertile ground for the expansion of an identifiable 'Queer Theory'. My third chapter therefore focuses on the role of cultural studies in providing queer critics with institutional locations from which to make their cultural commentaries, and a repertoire of aesthetico-ethical
techniques for using those commentaries to transform themselves into subjects of a particular kind of sexually dissident 'politics of difference'. In this chapter I also develop my previous discussions of the queering of the reflexivity that cultural studies' personnel had worked up prior to the emergence of 'Queer Theory' in the late 1980s; most notably, the problem of how to reconcile commitments to exceeding disciplinary, institutional constraints, while also securing one's socio-political effectiveness. My discussions of these ethical and political dilemmas emphasise the ways in which integrating activist-scholars – not all of whom are queer-identified – have mediated their critical ideal of moral autonomy and their aspiration to historicise their practice of cultural commentary. I inquire into the question of how, in positioning themselves within the field of cultural politics, they have leavened their perfectionist pulsions with reflexive restraints. This chapter questions the more rationalist or programmatic accounts of a queer 'politics of difference' by redescribing it as a means of tactically cultivating capacities for certain kinds of sensitivity and indifference.

In the fourth chapter I discuss Reinhart Koselleck's (1988) genealogical history of criticism as a practice of reasoned judgement, and consider the repercussions of this account of the critical process for 'queer' as an intellectual practice and ethos of sexual dissidence. Through these comparative descriptions I argue that queer critics' aspirations to transform self and society are not 'immanent', in the sense of expressing the Kantian subject's 'aesthetic' or 'cultural' condition. I demonstrate how they can instead be conceived of in a more particular sense, as specific features of a practice with a long history in communities of critical conscience. I compare queer critics' conscientious orientations with those characterising older secular and Christian disciplines of self-care. By discussing similarities and differences between these aesthetico-ethical practices – including the broad Marxian tradition of aesthetic criticism that has served both as a complimentary resource for, and a rival locus of commitment to, queer deconstructive criticism – I aim to identify features peculiar to the queer variant.

It has been argued elsewhere that contemporary criticism gained a political significance as a socially transformative gesture when deployed in a pedagogical apparatus that introduced it to 'an educable being' (Hunter 1988, pp. 211-212). In other words, the kind of heightened concern with self-modification characterising the critical process developed a broad socio-political significance once formal education ensured its popular distribution (Hunter et al. 1993, p. 96). After glossing this argument in the first chapter, I return to it in the fifth, where I consider its repercussions for understanding the emergence of 'queer' over the late 1990s, as a problem of the field of teaching. These discussions mean revisiting matters I had
explored in earlier chapters, this time emphasising their institutional-pedagogical significance.

This fifth chapter develops my earlier concern with queer critics' commitments to a process of on-going critique. I describe some effects of this ethic: its impacts on how queer activist-scholars calculate and advocate teaching tactics and outcomes; and how it helps them position themselves within the pedagogical apparatus by allowing them to anticipate trends in education and be seen to do so. Within this particular ethos of 'queer pedagogy', realigning the pedagogical apparatus so that it queers sensibilities, promises to fulfil a longstanding goal of critical education: the production of an individual committed to a life-long process of continuous learning (cf Reich 1996, p. 2). In this chapter I describe examples of the queering of teachers' consciences that have acted as preliminary stages in projects to transform the 'educable being' of contemporary tertiary education.

The sixth and final chapter addresses a set of related occasions when academic proponents of 'anti-foundationalist' or anti-identitarian cultural materialism who figured prominently in queer studies, confronted colleagues possessing a rival mode of aesthetico-political conscience: that of 'traditional' Marxian aesthetic criticism. An important focus of these discussions is a description of a key figure in 1990s queer criticism – Judith Butler – performing in her hybrid capacity of activist-scholar. I use this opportunity to examine a specific problem facing the class of Kantian political critics: the question of how to reconcile one's commitments to theoretical expertise and a 'modest' acceptance of the principle of cultural plurality. I redescribe the polarised ethico-political positions that proponents of 'anti-foundationalist' cultural materialism and their Marxian opponents staked out relative to each other, and consider how accurate it is to describe these rivals' stances as having been adopted to the exclusion of their own non-critical duties and functions. My aim is to gain a sense of the limits and problems that were entailed in the making of these critical discriminations. If these are not simply theoretical issues that a better understanding can overcome, what are the repercussions for sexual dissidents who try to make this or any subsequent form of rationalist approach into a viable practice of intellectual politics?
Chapter 1: Sexual dissidence.

Introduction.

The term 'queer' has long been part of popular parlance. However, 'Queer Theory' gained currency and notoriety only relatively recently, as a term for a specific practice and field of sexual dissidence (cf Dollimore 1991, pp. 26-7). 'Queer Theory' has been variously received: attributed emancipatory promise, embraced for spurning political correctness, and rejected as an aesthetic distraction from real politics. I begin my descriptions of this nascent theoretical and ethical practice and field of sexual dissidence in two interconnected ways: a brief survey of the queer theoretical literature and a discussion of some of the more or less critical receptions given to academic queer studies; in particular, David M. Halperin's (1996) qualified support and Wayne R. Dynes's (1995) highly critical assessment.

In this chapter I address the problem of how to account for differences and continuities between the champions and opponents of academic queer studies. For example, Halperin and Dynes are in agreement over the approximate date of historical emergence of 'queer' in the academy, even as they disagree over what it was that actually emerged at this founding moment, and thus over its cultural and political significance (cf Jagose 1996, p. 76). I describe aspects of the intellectual and ethical milieux in which 'queer' is problematised, and various objects that have been designated 'queer'. These objects include: a self-reflexive gendered subject; a tactically sensitised 'ethnography' of cultural consumption that refines traditional identity-based models within audience studies; a critical strategy of theoretical representation with 'postmodern' and 'post-structural' variants; and certain practices by which the publishers and readers of queer-identified magazines distinguish themselves from others.

Pierre Bourdieu (1986) uses the concept 'social distinction' with the related concept 'cultural capital' — those forms of rationality, body techniques, and codes of conduct by which cultural groupings socially differentiate themselves — to redescribe 'taste' as an attribute of specific populations. For Bourdieu, 'taste' is an attribute whose social and political significance lies in its cultural variability and in its specific deployments within systems of prestige (1986, p. 12; cf Hunter 1993-4, p. 100).

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4 See: The Truth 1918, p. 7; The Truth 1919, p. 2; Lonie 1979, p. 7; Watney 1994, p. 14
Bourdieu argues that a 'work of art has meaning and interest only for someone who possesses the cultural competence, that is, the code, into which it is encoded' (1986, p. 2). However, his concerns with 'aesthetics' are not confined to ethnographic mapping and the celebration of discovered differences for their own sake. Instead, they extend to the roles played by social institutions such as schools, families, and 'the arts', in predisposing persons to the hierarchically-ordered social regimes of aesthetic appreciation and affective response that we call 'taste'; as well as to the conditions and effects of using such attributes to distinguish one class of persons from another (cf. Allen 1997, p. 27). The main focus of Bourdieu's work was the socio-economic classes of traditional Marxian scholarship. Since my own aim is to re-describe 'Queer Theory' in reference to the contemporary field of sexual dissidence, and to better critically appreciate this field's variable intellectual and ethical features, I must modify Bourdieu's concepts by considering social categories with more 'queer' pertinences, such as 'gender' and 'sexuality'. I conclude this chapter with a discussion of some examples of queer strategies of social distinction.

**A practice and field of sexual dissidence.**

Queer's critics and supporters have contested its origins, as part of their disputes over the legitimacy of 'Queer Theory' as a practice and field of sexual politics. For some critics, such as Dynes (1995), queer's moment of emergence within the academy dates from the brief post-1990 upsurge of a 'queer' populist social movement that was as critical of the 'gay establishment' as it was of the 'heterosexist mainstream'. He looks to the organisation Queer Nation as an example of the radical, extramural activist origins of 'queer' as a term of identification for some academics (Dynes 1995, p. 2). Unlike the gay liberationist and the lesbian feminist forms of activism, the loose coalition of groups making up Queer Nation were not advocates for existing 'gay' or 'lesbian' models of identity. Instead of asserting these traditional identities as the bases of their politics, they drew on the post-structuralist theoretical tradition for models that were focused on issues of power and resistance (Jagose 1996, pp. 76-77). For Dynes, the origin of academic 'Queer Theory' in these post-identitarian circles is sufficient reason to oppose it, on the grounds that it is an incursion by extramural forces that have not demonstrated any success in fighting gay and lesbian oppressions, and which have scant sympathy for academic proprieties.

Halperin (1996) agrees with Dynes on the question of queer studies' extramural activist origins, while disagreeing with him over the nature of the threat posed by the 'queering' of the academy (cf. Wiegman 1997, p. 3). Halperin traces the term 'Queer
Theory' to a particular moment in academic history — a 1990 conference at the University of California Santa Cruz — and attributes the coining of the term to Teresa de Lauretis. However, unlike Dynes, he does not see this development as threatening academic integrity. Instead, he describes post-1990 'Queer Theory' as

the branch of lesbian and gay studies that conducts its work in the register of critical theory. In practice, it refers specifically to work that concentrates on the analysis of sexual discourse and that explores such topics as the production and circulation of sexual meanings in society, the operation of sexual norms (homophobia), and the construction of subjectivity. Queer theory often deals with popular media, such as film and video, or social institutions, such as science and law, or cultural practices, such as dance parties and parenting. But queer theory is also at home in such traditional departments of knowledge as literature or history or anthropology (Halperin 1996, p. 1).

In this passage Halperin briefly surveys a broad range of practices and interests covered by the rubric 'Queer Theory'. But what criteria can differentiate this 'particular, historical development within the practice of lesbian and gay studies' from other forms of these studies? There are other kinds of gay and lesbian studies that also address 'popular media', 'social institutions', and 'cultural practices'; others which also deconstruct 'sexual discourse', the 'production and circulation of sexual meanings', the 'operation of sexual norms (homophobia)', and the 'construction of subjectivity' (1996, p. 1).

One characteristic feature of queer theorists is that they take the widely distributed literary-derived practice of deconstructive reading that Halperin identifies, and apply it to the problems of a modern epistemology of sexuality and the power relations securing such an order of 'heteronormativity'. Halperin attributes the coining of this concept 'heteronormativity' to Michael Warner's Fear of a Queer Planet (1993), where it is used to 'distinguish the political and cultural functioning of heterosexual norms from heterosexuality as a sexual practice' (1996, p. 1). However, references to concepts similar to 'heteronormativity' recur across the field of contemporary sexual dissidence. Before Warner, the feminist academic Carole-Anne Tyler (1991) took drag's reflexive performances of the conventions of gender and sexuality as examples of a problematic cultural and political practice: one that gestures to liberation yet remains part of a 'symbolic which is really a white, bourgeois, and masculine fetishistic imaginary' (1991, p. 62). Earlier still, Judith Butler (1990) advocated the critique of a similar formation: 'the heterosexual matrix' (1990, p. 151).

To deconstruct heteronormativity is to set oneself against existing forms of human subjectivity associated with that cultural and political order. It also means interrogating those modes of study that treat such 'identities' as either the origins or the necessary loci of experience, and which thereby reinforce them (cf Seidman 1997a, pp.
How have queer critics differentiated their own 'transgressive' personal comportment and post-identitarian version of 'ethnography' from these problematic intellectual traditions? One of the most popular ways appears in the anthology *A Queer Romance*, where the editors, Paul Burston and Colin Richardson (1995), describe the project shared by its authors as a radical 'post-structural' interrogation of existing sexual identities (1995, pp. 1-2). Annamarie Jagose (1996) likewise writes of 'queer' as having developed from debates over current forms of 'gay and lesbian identity'; in particular, 'the problematising by post-structuralism of gay liberationist and lesbian feminist understandings of identity and the operations of power' (1996, p. 76). For Jagose, queer differs from these identitarian accounts of culture and politics due to it 'ceaselessly interrogating both the preconditions of identity and its effects' (Jagose 1996, pp. 131-132). In the early 1990s, the feminist critic Diana Fuss (1991) advocated a similar on-going critique: what she called, in a gesture to Freud, an 'analysis interminable' (1991, p. 6).

As an author and editor of numerous histories of homosexuality⁵, Dynes would appear to be committed to the kind of historically-focused studies that academic queer studies' theory-focused notoriety threatens to overshadow. His response to this perceived threat is to argue that 'queer' is a crudely theorised concept, whose translation to the academy has formed a convenient rubric for reordering pedagogic practices and theoretical writings across gay and lesbian studies, literary studies, and cultural studies. For Dynes, the danger in this development is that a cabal of queer theorists has been reconstituting the academy along 'ideological' lines, a state of affairs he equates with 'politics'. In this argument, queer studies must be resisted because it produces an intellectual and ethical haemorrhaging of the academic and extramural spheres, which causes academics to abrogate their scientific responsibility for theoretical clarification and ethical disinterestedness. By compounding and legitimising false or inappropriate concepts within the very sphere invested with the responsibility to neutralise them, 'Queer Theory' recontaminates the extra-academic realm (Dynes 1995, p. 8). Dynes seizes upon queer studies' lack of a unified and disciplined object of analysis and construes what I have called its 'dispersed' nature as being in itself a problem; in his account, 'interdisciplinarity' is a synonym for a lack of theoretical rigour, and an invitation to the Left's 'political' corruption of academic life.

Dynes and Halperin inflect the problem of 'Queer Theory' through existing debates concerning the human sciences and their relations with extramural political movements. In Dynes's account, queer scholarship is assessed in terms of the

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⁵ Dynes has edited a number of books in the field of homosexual history. Among those he has edited with Stephen Donaldson are: *Homosexuality in the Ancient World* (1992), and *History of Homosexuality in Europe and America* (1992). He has also edited the two volume *Encyclopedia of Homosexuality* (1990) with Warren Johansson and William A. Percy.
translation or diffusion of 'queer' as an inappropriate philosophical category, from one integrated sphere to another. In doing so, he subordinates the cultural practices and political imperatives that are peculiar to the intellectual and ethical milieux making up these 'spheres', to the acts of making and assessing theoretical truth claims. Yet as the examples of Jagose, Fuss, and Burston and Richardson demonstrate, this tendency to reduce modes of scholarship to their theoretical components is not unique to Dynes's anti-queer stance. As a consequence, while I agree with Halperin that one of the problems with the term 'Queer Theory' is that it can 'reduce the multidisciplinary range of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender studies to the practice of critical theory', I would also suggest that it can be useful to refer this rationalism to descriptions of the debts that the parties disputing the problem of 'Queer Theory' owe to the tradition of philosophical inquiry that routinely makes these rationalist reductions (1996, p. 2; cf Hunter 1994, p. 8, pp. 158-160).

In the neo-Kantian tradition that I refer to 'the political' is typically equated with the repair of a bifurcated Reason and its subjects (Raulet 1988, pp. 26-27). My argument is that in its applications in the more critically polarised modes of contemporary sexual dissidence, one side of this intellectual practice and ethos is occupied by hostile critics such as Dynes, who call for the restoration of the fractured human subject's rational birthright, through the objective and subjective purging of the 'politics' compromising that subject's potential for authentic self-representation (cf Sullivan 1993, p. 11). On the inverse side, the advocates of 'Queer Theory' look to the proper internalisation of 'politics' by teacher and student alike as their alternative path to reconciliation. Halperin does not make explicit reference to the neo-Kantian genealogy of these debates, but he nevertheless expresses his disquiet with those debates' tendency to produce 'tensions in the field between "theory" and "politics"', unlike 'most work in lesbian and gay studies', which, he argues, is 'both conceptual and practical, at once speculative and engaged' (1996, p. 2).

While Halperin criticises what he sees as a tendency by queer critical theorists to unify 'popular media', 'social institutions', 'cultural practices', and 'traditional departments of knowledge' at the level of a peculiarly abstract queer critical logic, this is precisely the reifying tactic that he himself uses when he equates 'sexual norms' and the overarching system of 'homophobia'. Because he assumes that these two terms are equivalent, it is hard to derive from his description an explanation of how other norms could play effective roles in a queer ethos. Halperin does not raise the implicit normativity of the neo-Kantian critical ethos and ideal of the person as potential problems, only academic queer studies' tendency to disengage from 'non-normative' sexual identities and the politics associated with them. Without a grounding in these established identities, he argues, 'Queer Theory' runs the risk of forming a bridgehead
in the academy for what he calls 'heterosexual presumption' to assimilate the relatively new oppositional modes of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender scholarship (Halperin 1996, pp. 1-2). Other critics of 'queer' likewise argue that its emergence as a distinct academic practice devoted to critiquing all identities threatens to dislodge existing political subjects from their hard-won but tenuously held places in the academy (cf Martin 1995, p. 155; cf Jeffreys 1994, p. 459). These opponents share Halperin's concern that an enthusiasm for queer scholarship might undermine genuine threats to 'academic business-as-usual' and to the 'heterosexual institutions of knowledge' (Halperin 1996; cf Warner 1993, p. xxvi).

Like the queer theorists they comment upon, Dynes and Halperin assume that socio-political marginality guarantees the authority of cultural criticism. Following Ian Hunter's 'post-critical' approach to the problem of cultural criticism, Tony Bennett (1993) identifies this assumption as being embodied in two related rules of contemporary criticism with a particular leverage in academic cultural studies. The first is what he calls the rule of 'wholeness via marginality'; the second is the rule that a knowledge gained outside of the disciplines 'will also be a knowledge without limits or constraints' (1993. pp. 218-219). The former rule is common to subject-centred conceptions of interdisciplinarity, in which the experience of cultural marginality is believed to ensure a form of moral wholeness, a point of true opposition embodied in the person of the cultural critic. Halperin's indifference to the normativity of conventional 'transgressive' comportments exemplifies this rule. One can see the second rule expressed in Jagose's and Fuss's common assumption that interdisciplinary 'Queer Theory' evades cooption by straight rationality (Jagose 1996, pp. 131-132; Fuss 1991, p. 6).

In Dynes's version of a critical rush to the margins he approaches the historical emergence of queer studies from the stance of a critical intellectual locked in struggle with an ideology threatening to befuddle the community of scholars to which he has a professional, moral commitment. His objections to this perceived threat are in part inflected theoretically, on the grounds of the vagueness with which 'queer' is typically applied; ranging from the 'minimalist' application that is used as a synonym for traditional identity categories like 'gay' and 'lesbian', to 'maximalist' versions applied to entertainers like Alice Cooper, who appropriate certain feminine traits (Dynes 1995, p. 6). As I have noted, for Dynes this lack of a unified object is a typical weakness of what he regards as intellectually suspect interdisciplinary modes of study.

Another of Dynes's main objections to what he sees as the new orthodoxy of 'Queer Theory' arises out of his identification of ethical problems inherent in it as a form of politicised scholarship. He sees these problems expressed in the struggle
between what he calls the Left's\textsuperscript{6} exclusivity and pursuit of 'social change by an Orwellian program of thought control', and the centrist and conservative upholding of professional ethics (1995, pp. 7-8). Identifying with the latter positions, he opts for an alternative to queer studies, in the form of a 'nonideological' scholarship that he finds in a more history-based and 'older concept of gay and lesbian studies, perhaps better termed homophile studies'. He likens this to the sexological work conducted in Germany's Weimar republic by Magnus Hirschfeld's Scientific-Humanitarian Committee (1995, pp. 8-10). Dynes's appeal to pure 'ethics' as a counter to 'politically' contaminated queer enthusiasms is therefore inflected through a scientific humanism, in which the authenticity of objects is guaranteed by the ethical disinterest of the scholar.

Dynes's other objection to queer studies is a political one, in which he mourns what he sees as the loss of the political resource of a relatively coherent sexual identity. He argues that current Western academic orthodoxy – the traditions of post-structuralist and postmodernist scholarship – relegates the concept of an integrated identity to the status of a 'politically necessary' fiction. For Dynes, to the extent that queer theorists have contributed to this relegation, they have pursued elitist, ahistorical and Western preoccupations; academic 'Queer Theory' is consequently unable to recognise and advocate the real interests, the manifest social and political requirements, of inchoate gay and lesbian peoples of the Third World, whose historical circumstances impel them to prioritise identity-building (1995, pp. 6-7; cf Fuss 1989, p. 104). However, in making this counter-critique, he does not say why a sense of social identities' contingency is incompatible with 'fostering ... an emergent sense of identity and community' in the Third World (Dynes 1995, p. 7). There is no room in his scenario for the academic Third World and the extramural West. Neither does his description of 'queer' as a form of cultural imperialism explain why exported 'gay' and 'lesbian' identities apparently escape an identical fate (cf Altman 1996b). Dynes does not address the complexity and multiplicity of the ethical and intellectual milieux where 'queer' is a problem.

Dynes' act of ethical transcendence interprets a traditionally Kantian concern with the relations between the disinterested philosophy faculty and politics (cf Hunter 1994, pp. 174-175). I look to this inheritance of the Kantian intellectual and ethical tradition to explain what impels him to advocate rituals of purification for raising intellectual endeavour from the mire of 'politics'. For Dynes, 'Queer Theory' is a recent manifestation of the 'political' forces that have long haunted this autonomous academic sphere. Prompted by his vision of this incursion, Dynes takes local ethical issues and

\textsuperscript{6} Dynes' main example of this leftist incursion into the academy is the Center on Lesbian and Gay Studies (CLAGS).
organisational problems that operate at a faculty level and theoretically unifies them, as examples of a threat to what he sees as the academy's unique role: its ability to realise the full development of human subjects. Thus, in a response that echoes the Right's role in the American 'culture wars', he argues that the 'politicised scholarship' of the Left must be resisted, where possible by mobilising a constituency for denying funds to academic queer studies and those departments tainted by it; and by re-examining hiring criteria of university faculties, in order to weed out what he sees as the intellectual charlatans of queer postmodernism (Dynes 1995, p. 8).

Not all critics of academic 'Queer Theory' share Dynes's neo-conservative inflection of the Kantian intellectual stance. For example, Robert K. Martin (1995) adopts a leftist version when he adapts Steven Seidman's argument that since queer studies is 'a poststructuralist politics that can only be enacted in discourse', it threatens 'the expansive social and political potential of liberation theory' (1995, p. 157). Despite disagreeing over the relative merits of 'politicised scholarship' and the apparently disinterested academy, Martin and Dynes consequently agree that queer theorists' postmodern and post-structural critiques of 'the subject' inhibit critical thought's social mission. Martin's leftist response differs from Dynes's neo-conservative variant, in placing its faith in

a kind of contingent identity not unlike that proposed by some feminists. In such a situation, one can recognise that one's identity is not 'natural' but socially produced, that it is contingent not essential, that it is strategic not constitutive, and that it is dynamically balanced and contested not fixed. For Seidman this is a position that 'fram[es] identity as a social positioning' (Martin 1995, p. 157; cf Traub 1995, p. 115).

Martin reads Seidman as a 'dynamically balanced' alternative to the essentialist and the queer models of subjectivity that he finds problematic (cf Rorty 1989a, p. xv).

As an ethical salve for the disfiguring abstractions of 'Queer Theory', Martin recommends a self-transcending dialectic mediated by 'liberation theory': a practice found in a 'return to a study of sexuality that includes "institutional and historical analysis" ' (1995, p. 157). He also argues that gay and lesbian studies should be grounded in 'archival work' rendering visible 'the production of sexual identities in the texts of the lives we study' (ibid). It is on the basis of the queer practice of discourse analysis being prone to theoretical abstraction, that he appeals to – suitably cautioned – critical intellectuals to refine their interpretations of the social-as-text. But unlike Seidman himself, Martin is content with a literary-aesthetic 'situation' in which sexual dissidence is enacted through exemplary readings of canonical writings; his social constructionist alternative to essentialism and to discourse analysis alike amounts to re-

The problem of determining the relations between the academic and the political has dominated the debates over the nature and legitimacy of 'queer' as a practice and field of sexual dissidence. But when Halperin criticises these debates, on the grounds that they 'conceal' the already-integrated nature of gay and lesbian studies, he reproduces their neo-Kantian features. This a common problem among academic queer theorists and at least some of their relatively supportive colleagues and opponents alike. The following passage by Jillian Sandell – author of 'The Cultural Necessity of Queer Families' (1994) – illustrates the 'secular-spiritual' nature of this problem. It is taken from Sandell's 'Living the Political' (1995).

What constitutes a 'political' act? And how do we know when we are being 'political'? Over the last decade, for example, I have been involved in a number of political organisations, yet I rarely consider myself ... an overtly 'political' person. ... [These] acts have frequently seemed isolated from my everyday life. Too often I was left with the sense that despite being important and necessary, such political gestures served me more than they served the organisations themselves ... Indeed some of my more 'grand' political gestures now seem to me to perfectly demonstrate the dangers of visiting ... rather than living in ... the realm of the political (Sandell 1995, p. 1).

The points to note here are the watchfulness with which Sandell regards herself, the care with which she unearths, examines, judges, and moderates her own motives and actions. These responses to the problem of how one can live with integrity take the form of a reconciliation of the 'personal' and the 'political', subjective conscience and the perceived duty of a citizen (Sandell 1995, p. 4). For Sandell, the answer lies in ' politicised scholarship', as exemplified in Bad Subjects, the journal that published her article. By merging with the community of the Bad Subjects Collective, she claims to have reached what she calls a 'place where I can more meaningfully integrate my political beliefs with my work as an academic and put into action my desire to work with others outside of academia' (Sandell 1995, p. 6).

Sandell's imperative to balance the competing demands of her commitments to self-care and to the human community can be identified, following Pierre Hadot (1995), with wisdom, the telos of a philosophical ethos (1995, p. 265). Far from being an exercise in the befuddling of critical thought, 'Living the Political' is an example of a particular type of ordering of thought and conduct; it is a leftist variant of the intellectual and ethical procedures familiar to Dynes. By unifying the strands of her recounted experiences in bifurcated realms, and by dialectically mediating the meanings and identities of those fragmentary worlds to which she catches herself paying moral lip-service, Sandell is practising a form of secular-spiritual exercise. The
anguish that accompanies this quite specific professional exercise in self-monitoring is, in her estimation, the expression of a grand conflict played out across the human soul, or at least its secular equivalent, the Kantian transcendental subject (cf Faubion 1995, p. 9). For Sandell, this discomfort is the expression of fundamental contradictions that only a properly attuned critical thought can resolve.

When Sandell asks herself how it is possible to 'live the political' she identifies the multiplicity of academic and extramural domains and practices as contradicted fragments of a potentially reconcilable political rationality. This assumed responsibility for mediating the vast and diverse historical conditions of human subjectivity is not, of course, borne by academic queer theorists alone. No less than the spiritual and mental equanimity that Sandell seeks, her anxiety is an effect of a mode of conscience-production that is peculiar to the University itself: a practice of self-shaping that some academics use to confirm themselves as subjects of 'Politics'. While this dialectical practice may be more ethical than 'political' – to the extent that it is relatively disconnected from institutionalised forms of politics – its adherents' struggles to balance their descriptions and analyses of their dispersed object are nevertheless parts of a particular practice and field of sexual dissidence.

**Personal comportments and 'the performative'.**

Queer critical endeavours to identify and transform the cultural field within which human subjects are constituted have been undertaken in the gaps between 'essentialist' and 'constructionist' accounts of sexual identity, and 'identity politics' and a 'politics of difference' (cf Newitz 1992). For queer theorists, this has typically meant drawing on existing theories in which the field of 'culture' is understood as being marked by relations of power and knowledge. Among the most notable of these theoretical contributions are those by Michel Foucault, in which 'sexuality is not an essential personal attribute but an available cultural category ... the effect of power rather than simply its object' (Jagose 1996, p. 79). Foucault's historicising account of the relations between human subject, power and sex has been a key fillip for the subsequent development of an identifiable 'Queer Theory'.

Queerly comported persons have typically been understood by queer theorists in either 'post-structural' or 'postmodern' terms. Their adaptations of these particular traditions have consequently been embroiled in existing disputes over these intellectual paradigms. For example, in order to negotiate the required shift from essentialist approaches to identity to one in which social agency is theoretically disengaged from a normative notion of human nature, some cultural critics have taken as their own
ethico-political ideal what Stuart Hall has called the postmodern 'endlessly performative self' (1996a, p. 1). This was, of course, Dynes's *bête noire* in his polemic against queer studies. However, unlike Dynes's neo-conservative and globally-pitched criticism, Hall's is not motivated by a vision of restoring the damaged integrity of the apparently disinterested academy. Instead, he takes a leftist and more specific focus and argues that the versions of cultural criticism in question — those drawing on Foucault's theories of the 'desiring subject' — are frequently theoretically flawed.

Hall notes that the ethical works of self-regulation and self-fashioning that Foucault had gathered under the rubric 'technologies of the self' were never intended to imply a 'single switch to "agency", to intention and volition' (1996a, p. 13). Nevertheless, and as we have seen, there are nominally 'Foucauldian' queer critiques of subjectivity that make this assumption when they elevate their neo-Kantian critical ethos above any normative system. Similarly, in the deconstructive strain of queer theorising, the reflexive critical ideal of the person is the norm for analysing democratic — because 'popular' — cultural forms and practices (cf Williamson 1997, p. 177). However, those who delve into the historical unconscious of a heteronormative epistemological order, while taking as their own ethical ideal a critical awareness of the forces (re)producing subjectivity, are in danger of imagining that they direct the ebb and flow of identity (cf Hall 1996a, p. 14). Hall's qualification of erstwhile 'Foucauldian' criticisms therefore begs the question of how, in the face of their theoretical problems, such enterprises have endured, and even prospered.

One way to account for the peculiar strain of erotics characterising queer studies' aesthetic practices — the textual emphasis that Martin problematically takes for granted — is to refer them to histories of the pedagogical relationship and the sexualising of the dialectical practice deployed within that relationship (1995, p. 157). For this historical background I look to Hunter et al. (1993), who have argued that in the early 20th century this dialectic was increasingly sexualised in literary education, as books previously classed as 'pornographic' were redeemed for 'secular-spiritual' purposes; and that it was through these channels of popular education that a formerly elite Romantic aesthetic was able to achieve a wider social distribution (1993, p. 96). Following this argument, I would add that the subsequent development of screen and cultural studies — which made the late 20th century vogue for textual analyses of materials such as Madonna videos possible — can help to explain the development and rapid expansion of queer critics' modes of self-fashioning; notably, their characteristically Romantic dialectic of norm/desire.

A yield from considering 'queer' in terms of ethical practices of the self and a pedagogical technology that has served as their vehicle, is that one need not then feel a need to assess 'Queer Theory' solely on the basis of its perceived successes or failures.
in living up to the emancipatory promise of the broader tradition of critical theory. The significance of this 'promise' can instead be referred to descriptions of particular occasions on which it is made, broken, and commented upon; it can, for example, be understood as a telos of the practices and techniques of self-care that are peculiar to what are necessarily delimited academic and related milieux. This strategy of positively describing the institutional conditions under which students and teachers form themselves as subjects of sexual politics is useful for my own project, since it provides a circumspect way of accounting for how queer persons have been able to catch glimpses of themselves and their queer colleagues 'behind the scenes' of heteronormative culture. Following it, one can identify specific relations that academic queer theorists have maintained within and among themselves, as well as with others who share their milieux. I can use examples to demonstrate features and yields of these 'emancipatory' and 'positive' options.

In *A Queer Romance: Lesbians, Gay Men and Popular Culture* (1995), the editors, Burston and Richardson, describe their queer practice, its objects, and imperatives as an anti-identitarian expression of 'the performative'.

By shifting the focus away from the question of what it means to be lesbian or gay within the culture, and onto the various performances of heterosexuality created by the culture, Queer Theory seeks to locate Queerness in places that had previously been thought of as strictly for the straights ... [A *Queer Romance* therefore addresses] ... how lesbians and gay men might position themselves as spectators of popular culture (Burston & Richardson 1995, pp. 1-2).

Following this anti-essentialist approach to the study of popular culture, Burston and Richardson go on to ask if there is 'a specifically "lesbian" or "gay" way of looking, and if so, is it the exclusive preserve of people who call themselves "lesbian" or "gay"?' (ibid). By shifting their concerns from 'a monolithic gay or lesbian identity' and its presumed inherent attributes, their queered commentary on modes of identification aims to approximate the practice of critical commentary itself; the logic of deconstructive analysis would presumably lead them to give a (qualified) affirmative response to their first question, and a negative response to the second (Burston & Richardson 1995, p. 5).

After having raised the problem of 'essentialist' popular culture studies, Burston and Richardson differentiate their own 'Queer Theory' from other critiques of essentialism by writing that

Queer Theory is both 'Political' and 'Cultural': political, because it seeks to expose and problematise the means by which 'sexuality' is reduced to the definitions and relations of gender; cultural, because just about everything we
might call Queer Theory concerns itself with the ways in which cultural texts – books, films, television, magazines, etc. – condition understandings of sexuality (Burston & Richardson 1995, p. 1).

As described by Burston and Richardson, queer sexual dissidence inheres in an uneasy intertextual relay with those feminist and other dissidents who have also pursued an agenda to refine critical theory: rivals who vie with 'Queer Theory' to take theoretical possession of the cultural field and its dialectic of textual structures and active audiences. When Burston and Richardson follow the adage that 'identification is never simply a matter of believing what you are seeing', they survey their field, in a search for signs of queerness hidden among the myriad forms and audiences of popular culture (1995, p. 1; cf Jenkins 1992; cf Doty 1995, p. 73). Other contributors to A Queer Romance focus their second sight on specific aspects of this field. For example, Caroline Evans and Lorraine Gammon (1995) comment on those anti-essentialist viewing strategies of queer audiences that disrupt the complacency of apparently stable subject positions; in particular, a strategy of 'genderfuck [that] is about play and performance ... with binary opposition [and which] moves towards a model of gender as simulacrum (without an original)' (1995, p. 49; cf Butler 1990, p. 138). Cherry Smyth (1995) addresses a similar object: 'alternative readings' of heteronormatively structured films, that allow 'room for the transgressive subjectivity of the lesbian spectator – the queer dyke who can laugh at herself in all her dis/guises' (1995, p. 142). These self-reflexive concerns are not confined to these authors of A Queer Romance. In her contribution to the anthology Out in Culture: Gay, Lesbian, and Queer Essays on Popular Culture, Valerie Traub (1995) likewise addresses the topic of 'lesbian' spectator strategies of self-identification in cinema. She declares her own key assumption to be that these audiences' lesbian identities are 'constantly negotiated' or performed (Traub 1995, p. 115).

It is common for queer cultural studies academics to argue that since the bases for a theoretical and political practice are conventionally, but erroneously, held to be experience and identity, there is an urgent need for the power relations and knowledge effects underlying these apparent foundations to be properly acknowledged (cf Burston & Richardson 1995, pp. 1-2). They look to queered interpretations of popular culture and social identities for the means to achieve the necessary conceptual shift from the expressive model to the performative. In practice, this means asserting their unconventional version of cultural studies by pursuing a conventional post-structuralist

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strategy of re-presentation: ritually presenting a reading of a current state of affairs and then offering to transcend it by bringing its hidden conditions to light.

In the cases of Smyth, Evans and Gammon, 'queer' is equated with a knowing, critical stance towards essentialist theories of gender and sexuality. This is a problematic basis for asserting queer's difference, since it seems to equate feminist, gay and lesbian versions of criticism with essentialism, while reserving the unsettling powers and prestige of the more difficult anti-essentialist developments in the field for 'Queer Theory'. In order to bolster their claim for queer's difference from the strains of anti-essentialist criticism in these other traditions, Smyth, Evans and Gammon adopt two tactics: they strike an ethical pose that, as I mentioned earlier, Hall has associated with the playful, performative self of postmodernist cultural commentary; and they appropriate the 'democratic' authority of marginalised extramural camp culture. The first tactic appeals to an image of the person as a subject forever remaking or inventing itself: a peripatetic artistry that Jonathan Dollimore (1991) identifies in 'post-modernity' and a corresponding move 'away from the misleading language of entities and towards social process and representation' (1991, p. 27; cf Burston & Richardson 1995, pp. 1-2). The second tactic confirms queer theorists' claims to a special power to democratise the academy, to integrate theoretical expertise and democratic politics.

Some queer-identified critics have looked to earlier camp culture for their model of a knowing stance. This potential of 'camp' is foreshadowed in Susan Sontag's classic 1966 essay 'Notes on Camp', where she calls it a sensibility 'that is alive to a double sense' or double coding: 'things as meaning something' and an awareness of 'pure artifice' (1966, p. 281). This was a sensibility possessed -- for a time -- by the 19th century poet Arthur Rimbaud, who expressed it in the following passage from Délires II: Alchimie du verbe, a section of his posthumously published prose poem Une Saison en Enfer:


The rubric 'queer' can include an ethnography of cultural consumption with a particular interest in the sexually and socially marginalised and their 'strategies of survival', such as 'gender-swapping and drag' (Boney 1996, p. 36). In Smyth's article, she appropriates camp culture for her project to queer cultural commentary, by using it as a key criterion of her 'alternative readings'. She writes of an 'identification against the grain' that is characterised by 'a sly humour that operates in much the same way as gay male camp has done' (Smyth 1995, p. 142). However, this assertive practice of queer
erotics is not confined to the celebration of the apparently inherently democratic nature of popular culture. There are, in fact, theorists who have undertaken queered readings of the non-heterosexual audiences of 'high' culture: opera, painting, and poetry (cf Koestenbaum 1991; cf Morgan 1996). As a consequence, a 'democratising' imperative cannot in itself differentiate 'Queer Theory' from other versions of cultural criticism. Instead, what is distinctive about 'queer' as an ethnography of aesthetic practices, is that it stages or enacts a personal comportment that takes off from a view of subjectivity-as-process.

The most prominent theorist of queer personal comportment, Judith Butler (1990), has asserted her 'performativity' thesis as a theoretical counter to the rationality of the ideal subject of the 'heterosexual matrix [:] ... that grid of cultural intelligibility through which bodies, gender, and desires are naturalized' (1990, p. 151). The main focus of Butler's influential Gender Trouble (1990) is the performative nature of gender identity: the epistemological conditions strategically determining the comprehensibility of some identities and the inconceivability of others. For Butler, the 'subject is a consequence of certain rule-governed discourses' (1990, p. 145). Gender identity, she writes, 'is the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being' (Butler 1990, p. 33). Here her emphasis is on subjectivity as a reified effect of a law or a grammar of conceptual terms demanding to be properly repeated: an 'injunction to be a given gender' (1990, p. 145). This injunction is what she means by 'the performative' (cf Nussbaum 2000, p. 8).

Butler's critique of normative gender and of the 'natural' status of heterosexuality had a major influence on 1990s queer studies, especially in the United States. However, there are certain problems with this influential critique. One of these is a theoretical problem of Butler's manner of conceiving of moral agency. As presented in Gender Trouble (1990), non-normative subjectivities are mistakes in the signifying process, failures to repeat the required injunction. Butler's 'transgressive' tendency to emphasise the repetition/failure of the law, at the expense of the practice of self-stylisation that she gestures to, makes it difficult to conceive of moral agency in anything other than the terms familiar from the Romantic mode of dialectical criticism; as forever played out in reference to a structure than would contain it. In Martha Nussbaum's (2000) critique of Butler's performativity thesis, she argues that it is implicitly pessimistic, that in Butler's thesis, we are 'doomed to repetition of the power structures into which we are born, but we can at least make fun of them; and some ways of making fun are subversive assaults on the original norms' (2000, p. 8). Nussbaum also makes the related point that, in taking this general 'transgressive' stance, Butler's theory of performativity offers no criteria for adjudicating between
rival subversions: 'What should be resisted, and on what basis' (*ibid*; cf Seidman 1997a, p. 161; cf Dynes 1995, p. 1)?

Apart from these theoretical and ethical problems, there is another, related problem with Butler's thesis: persistent misreadings of it by those cultural critics who align themselves and their practice with the 'transgressive' side of the dialectic, and who, to use Nussbaum's words, 'naively imagine that there is a pristine self that stands behind society, ready to emerge all pure and liberated' (*ibid*). Butler has been at pains to counter these voluntarist misreadings. In *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex* (1993), she responds to them by differentiating between 'performativity' and 'performance', on the basis of the former being a process of repetition that is not performed by a pre-existing subject, but is 'what enables a subject and constitutes the temporal conditions for a subject' (1993, p. 95; cf Butler 1992, p. 84).

Notwithstanding such theoretical clarifications, however, voluntarist interpretations of 'Queer Theory' have continued to be repeated in at least some quarters of anti-essentialist cultural criticism (Burston & Richardson 1995, pp. 1-2). Emmanuel Cooper's (1996) position on the 'transgressive' contributions of 'Queer Theory' to cultural criticism is typical in this regard. Cooper writes that in 'an area which has tended to be seen as essentially objective, that is disembodied and universal rather than personal and specific, queer culture insists that discussion is about the freedom of individuals to choose whatever sexuality they wish' (1996, p. 14). Considering my previous discussions of the difficulties inherent in confining the issue of 'Queer Theory' to the theoretical level, of the universalising currents that can waylay critics of a general order of heteronormativity, and of the specific historical and institutional conditions of the practice of queer textual erotics, the intractable nature of this problem is not surprising; clearly, the queerly comported person's 'transgressive' imperative is not driven by theoretical considerations alone.

Butler's performativity thesis offers, at one level, an alternative to those conventional conceptions in which 'identity' is treated either as an unchanging datum of 'consciousness', or a structural effect of the Symbolic order. By making a proper appreciation of 'performativity' their measure, her followers can theoretically differentiate their own account from theories of the 'substantive self', and even from the theories of merely 'constructed' subjects that have critiqued this normative rationality. At another level, however, asserting the thesis has provided these followers with opportunities to differentiate themselves from the sexually and socially normative cultural practices and reified 'identities' of the prevailing order (cf Butler 1990, p. 33; cf Dentata & Rawe 1998). These conscientious readers have been able to refine their own moral responses by internalising the exemplary paired categories that 'ethnographic' studies uncover in the Symbolic order, and then stage as 'the world' (cf
Williamson 1997, p. 178). For those who are adept in this self-conscious art, the forces and structures inscribed in it are properly organised as a dialectic of desire and cultural practice.

**Issues of cultural capital.**

Queer theorists' camp or parodic personal comportment and their 'ethnographic' concern with audiences' non-heteronormative textual strategies converge when they distinguish themselves and their mode of sexual dissidence from other persons and ethico-political practices. These distinctions have been made within and across the sorts of specialist intellectual *milieux* that Bourdieu (1986) called a 'cultural nobility' (1986, p. 2). Viewed in these terms, those who have been successfully induced into the disciplines associated with a queer sensibility can be said to have used their acquired mastery of post-structuralist and postmodernist theoretical frameworks to distinguish themselves from others, who cannot or will not defy the embrace of heteronormative subjectivity and sexuality. Possession of the appropriate cultural competences enables queer critics to equate the 'bind' against which they distinguish their own theoretical and ethical practice with what has elsewhere been called the modern 'epistemic/ontological regime' (Heath 1982, p. 3; cf Butler 1990, p. X; Sedgwick 1991, p. 3). This stance of ironic and apparently subversive detachment from an envisaged normative order can be described in terms of aesthetico-political techniques.

Bourdieu's paired concepts can be usefully applied to positive descriptions of some of the intellectual and ethical features of a queer mode of sexual dissidence. I can cite examples to demonstrate how this can be done. The first of these involves critical commentaries on a 'high culture' dance piece. Prominent among the problems that I raise in this discussion is the question of queer intellectual culture's social distribution. The second occasion likewise involves a critical commentary, but this time on a popular television situation comedy. In this second discussion I focus on the question of how queer theorists have invoked concepts from political activism and 'commonsense' essentialism. While I describe these aesthetic objects, my primary concern is with their uses and effects in particular practices of social distinction. Both of these exemplary sets of commentaries appeared in the magazine *(NOT ONLY) blue*.

*(NOT ONLY) blue* began in 1995 as a 'spin-off' of the figurative photography magazine *Black and White*. It retained its predecessor's focus on figurative photography, while adding other magazine elements, such as interviews, feature articles, and reviews.
In 1997, the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras Arts Festival featured a dance piece titled *Helmet*. Prior to the event, *Helmet* was described by Susan Redman (1997) in her magazine article 'Queer as Foucault', as a 'futuristic, multimedia dance experience' that uses contortion and 'cyberpunk costume designs which extend and distort body shape' (1997, p. 32). Redman quotes *Helmet*'s choreographer, Garry Stewart, as saying that he used a contorted dance style because these 'distentions make us reassess our ideas of what the dancing body looks like ... New perceptions will be further exaggerated by the use of video images' (ibid). This theme of the dialectics of the disciplined body is illustrated with a photograph of a human figure, in a contorted pose and wearing a metallic, mechanical costume. It is a notable theme in Foucault's *oeuvre*, and has been widely discussed in the queer theoretical literature (cf. Jagose 1996, p. 81; cf Butler 1990, pp. 129-130, 134-5).

As described by Redman and those she interviews, *Helmet* has two main aims. The first is to transpose queer theories of performativity – more specifically, Foucault's 'social theories of queer sex, identity and power' – into a theatrical art form. In order to do so, Redman writes, 'Foucault's text will be conveyed by three male and three female dancers through the creation of distorted, vocalised soundscapes'. *Helmet*'s principals are quoted as asserting somatic concerns as legitimate topics for contemporary cultural theory, and as expressing a wish to investigate the issue of how to realise the human subject's potential for embodied awareness (cf Grosz 1994, p. 140). In other words, *Helmet* is presented as a contribution to a broader cultural theory project to reinstate the body in the rightful place that it was apparently denied by Descartes' positing of a mind-centred conception of subjectivity (Redman 1997, p. 32).

The second of *Helmet*'s main aims was to achieve the alchemical feat of transforming this specialist theory-performance into 'box office gold' (ibid). By staging the relevant philosophical shift as a reconciliation of 'high theory' with mass appeal, and of the mind and body, 'Queer as Foucault' appeals to its audiences' queer sensibility, of which 'camp' is a prototype. This is the set of personal capacities that Sontag had seen as an awareness of the 'double sense' of the self-evident and the evidently artificial, and which I have identified as a model for academic queer theorists' own dialectic of the 'democratic' and the expert (1966, p. 281). The mix of 'shop talk', fashion photography, and French post-structuralist philosophy in 'Queer as Foucault' aims to appeal to an audience skilled in negotiating such disparate and complex shifts in identification and comprehension.

My previous brief discussion of Bourdieu prompts me to suggest possible costs imposed on *Helmet*'s transformative project by its freedom to comment on 'the body' as a site for the dialectics of discipline and freedom. One of these is the theoretical risk of reproducing the voluntarist reading of 'performativity' that I discussed earlier. An
example is choreographer Garry Stewart's Cartesian statement that *Helmet*'s title derives from the fact that '"the head is the place from where text and body commands are delivered"' (Stewart in Redman 1997, p. 32). A second risk faced by those responsible for *Helmet* is the possibility of embarrassing gaps opening up in their project. One kind of gap is that between the heightened intellectual state of reflexive contemplation those involved intended to invoke in their implied audience, and the kinds of experiences audiences might have actually had when attending the performance. There is also potential for a breach between audience factions, whose peculiar cultural capital equips them with varied capacities for aesthetic and intellectual appreciation, and emotional affect.

While the principals of *Helmet* and of 'Queer as Foucault' have sought to popularise specialist 'Queer Theory', other possessors of a queer sensibility have set out to queer 'popular culture'. Like Redman's 'Queer as Foucault', Christopher Powell's article 'Sprung!' was published in 1997 in *NOT ONLY* blue. 'Sprung!' was part of a series of similar articles of the same name. This instalment takes the form of a playful re-reading of the 1960s American television sitcom *My Favorite Martian*.

Bachelor boy Tim O'Hara adopts as 'uncle' a man who hails from out of town and who shows him glimpses of a world he never knew existed. They share a nicely decorated house and try desperately to hide the true nature of their relationship... In one episode [Martian] Martin's latest invention goes haywire and he and [landlady] Mrs Brown swap bodies. Martin is eventually returned unperturbed from his little adventure in high heels and a frock, but not before he's danced with Tim and been proposed to by redneck Detective Bill Brennan (Powell 1997, p. 38).

As an archaeological dig into the television archive, 'Sprung!' reinterprets narratives and 'straight' characters that are presumably familiar to its readers. In this respect, it is an example of the project that Bristow and Wilson also pursue: the queering of popular culture. But apart from its camp sensibility, what marks this redescription of *My Favorite Martian* 'queer'?

'Sprung!'s subtitle – 'Exploring the notion that fictional characters should be outed' – suggests a playful treatment of the 'outing' tactic that had been part of the repertoire of the groups that Dynes saw as an origin of queer studies. In Britain during the early 1990's, outing, or more properly the threat of outing, was used by radical queer-identified activists as part of a specific political campaign to expose the hypocrisy of the tabloid press, which routinely reserves to itself the moral authority to 'out' individuals (*Out*, 1991; Jarman 2001, p. 43, p. 45; cf Watney 1994, p. 20). The perceived potency of this tactic saw it subsequently given numerous and unforeseen political and rhetorical applications: some in the political campaigns of radical queer activist groups; others in the 'straight' and established gay and lesbian mass media,
where it quickly became a *cause célèbre* (Sanderson 1995, p. 57; Ware 1997, p. 4; Harlow & Austin 1997, p. 43). The parodic 'Sprung!' invokes these scandals, stages and celebrates an exemplary drag performance, and – through its regard for the tactic of confounding gendered identity – interferes in the television program's 'straight' reception. But as its citing of the tactic of 'outing' would suggest, this 'queerness' is ambivalent; while challenging the prevailing protocols of discretion surrounding sexual identities, it also re-enacts the very injunction that deconstructive queer theorists seek to resist at the level of practice and displace at the level of theory: the compulsory identification with traditional/heteronormative categories of sexual identity.

Queer hyperbolic enthusiasm for subverting heteronormative subjectivity does not find a pure expression in 'Sprung!'. In this article, queer features of playfulness and transgressive excess co-exist with a counter-strategy that invokes the apparent certainties of reified identity: the projection of contemporary gay male identities onto the fictional characters Tim and Uncle Martin. 'Sprung!' therefore inscribes a queered history into the archive, in the form of an exemplary counter-heteronormative reading of the television program and its characters – a comic recreation of an historical camp audience strategy – but it also assumes and celebrates an ahistorical gay male subjectivity. From a rigorously queer critical theory perspective, this ambivalence falls short of more properly queer questions concerning the ownership and peculiarity of 'gay' modes of spectatorship. Nevertheless, following my previous discussions of queer erotics, and of the concept cultural capital, the 'ahistorical' or 'essentialist' gay male subject that appears in 'Sprung!' can be described as a contingent element in its readers' cultural repertoire; it is a technical component of a particular aesthetic practice of self-fashioning that requires the bad object of 'identity' in order to proceed. What Butler's previously stated 'performative' theory of moral agency simply sees as a mistake can be redescribed in terms of the cultural capital of queerly comported persons (cf Doty 1995, p. 73; Evans & Gamman 1995, p. 39).

Approaching 'queer' as a contingent feature of magazine publishing opens it to an account of those strategies and tactics of social distinction that have been mobilised by magazine and readers alike. For the comparative newcomer (*NOT ONLY*) blue, the rubric 'queer' was helpful in distinguishing itself from established 'gay' and 'lesbian' players in the magazine market. Within this magazine, 'queer' has typically been deployed as an aesthetic and a moral category, and as a marker of the contemporary. It has thus helped to forge a readership with peculiarly queered tastes, moral attributes and enthusiasms. This sensibility or repertoire of cultural competences is poised between theorectico-aesthetic refinement and popular-democratic aspiration.
Conclusion

In this opening chapter I have raised a number of concerns that will inform subsequent discussions. I have argued that during the 1990s, academic queer theorists and certain of their critics disputed the composition and dynamics of the practice and field of sexual dissidence. I also suggested that there are yields to be gained from referring these differences of theoretical position on 'queer' to descriptions of the particular occasions and practices involved. To support these arguments I identified 'postmodern' and 'post-structural' versions of queer criticism in audience studies, and discussed the former's ethical ideal of moral agency and the latter's theoretical refinement of the traditional essentialist and structuralist identity-based models of sexual politics. Later, I developed these discussions by adapting Bourdieu's related concepts of 'cultural capital' and 'social distinction' to descriptions of queer strategies of social distinction that are pursued by the producers and audiences of the magazine (NOT ONLY)blue and the theatrical dance piece Helmet. These two concepts are useful for understanding 'Queer Theory', since they mitigate an exclusively rationalist focus on questions of theory that might otherwise exclude from consideration issues concerning (queer) aesthetic practices, their institutional conditions and effects.

The tradition of critical theory was well-established in numerous academic practices and milieux prior to the emergence of an identifiable 'Queer Theory'. However, its influences upon, and shared interests with, academic queer studies have not only been of a theoretical nature. One of the traits common to the adherents of these practices is an ethical imperative to register the power relations and knowledge effects underpinning the cultural field. Another, related trait is the assumption that an ability to mediate the academic and the political domains is the measure of those academic theoretical practices aiming to contribute to socio-political thought. As my discussion of Dynes's response to this 'politicised scholarship' indicated, some opponents of leftist critical theory projects have been prompted to make theoretical, ethical, and political objections to academic queer theorists' own post-identitarian versions of these projects.

Queer theorists have been caught up in long-standing disputes over critical theory's 'politicisation' of the academy. Like those disputes' more established participants, they have an ethical commitment to a practice of dialectical criticism. This is a manner of representing the cultural field as a set of exemplary opposed objects, internalising this field as a stage in the ethical work of forming oneself as its subject, and using this practice to differentiate oneself and one's practice from other persons and practices. The various repetitions of Butler's 'performativity thesis' are understandable as examples of this particular theorectico-ethical practice, given an inflection of 'queer' textual erotics. My examples of this 'secular-spiritual' practice
have also included redemptive 'ethnographic' readings of popular culture, through which cultural critics have been able to imbue 'drag' and 'camp' and their own responses to them with the proper mix of pleasure and political seriousness (cf Butler 1993, p. 95; cf Jenkins 1992, pp. 35-36).

Queer theorists' projects to expand and 'democratise' the cultural field typically deploy a specialist, literary-derived practice of deconstruction. These projects allow cultural critics to preside over alignments of the representative objects that they deconstruct and a principle of the 'performativ' self to which they aspire. However, my discussions of the problem of the enduring misreadings of Butler's articulation of this principle have shown that there are theoretical and ethical tensions in queered cultural commentary: tensions posing problems for attempts to equate critical theory's traditional 'democratising' project with a unitary object 'Queer Theory'. As I indicated in my discussions of examples like *Helmet* and 'Sprung!', whether queer commentaries address popular culture forms, such as television sitcoms, or 'high culture' theatrical dance pieces, they must trade upon a relatively specialised base of cultural capital. They cannot rely on being able to readily popularise or export this cultural capital beyond the circles of 'cultural nobility' in which it was developed. To the extent that this is the case, I question whether it is convincing to treat 'queer' as if it must either be a vehicle for introducing political-democratic values into the academy, or a threat to the future attainment of a cultural-ethical ordering of subjectivity. Both of these options have hitherto figured prominently in the critical assertions and receptions of 'Queer Theory'.

Rather than approach the problem of 'Queer Theory' through a critical theory 'politicising' account, or a neo-conservative appeal to academic 'ethical disinterest', it is possible to treat 'queer' positively, as a 'dispersed object'. To these ends, I have discussed examples in which 'queer' has been applied to a relatively broad range of objects, cultural practices, and relations: those within and between publishing industries, the genres and traditions of cultural commentary, their producers and audiences, and certain of those persons' cultural competences. I have adapted Bourdieu's account of 'aesthetics' to this task of redescription, with the aim of demonstrating that the question of the social and political significance of the queer practice and field of sexual dissidence can profit from being inflected through descriptions of 'queer' as a practice of social distinction (cf Dentata & Rawe 1998). I also adapted historical arguments about critical theory's debt to the tradition of Kantian philosophy, and the sexualising of 'aesthetic' education, to account for 'Queer Theory' as a theoretical practice by which persons ethically form themselves as subjects of a particular 'rational' understanding of 'the political'. In my next chapter I go on to develop this last point.
Chapter 2: Queer rationalism.

Introduction.

Commentators on 'queer' have argued that in the early 1990s the political paradigm of sexual dissidence underwent a shift in focus, from 'identity' to 'difference'. When Bristow and Wilson (1993) make this claim they recommend post-identitarian 'Queer Theory' to their academic readers, as a way to align one's professional practice with this pluralistic and democratic change (1993, pp. 1-2). Having located the impetus to 'difference' in the 'extramural' domain, Bristow and Wilson write that like 'women's studies and black studies, our teaching and our research remind the university that British culture is far more plural and diversified than the authorities have for decades been willing to admit' (1993, p. 2). The authors see the attempts to secure queer studies in the university in terms of these struggles to represent cultural and political diversity at the level of the nation (cf Bartos 1993, p. 174). For them, difference-sensitive activist-scholars are better able to perform this critical-democratic function than were their liberal-pluralist and radical predecessors, owing to their capacities for political imagination and action not being constrained by adherence to an outmoded theory and politics of identity-assertion (cf Britzman 1995, p. 6).

Like Sandell, Bristow and Wilson divide the ethical weight in their argument between academic critics' powers of mediation and extramural democratic politics. This theoretical allocation of responsibilities is not unique to the academic literature of the period; it is also a feature of other genres of commentary. Margaret Kwasnieswska's 'It's Academic!' (1995) is a journalistic example – a feature story – from the Australian gay and lesbian magazine Campaign. In this article Kwasnieswska writes that

Queer culture is now part of the curriculum at Australian universities, thanks to some rather assertive academics ... In the hallowed halls of academia, there's a quiet (and sometimes not so quiet) revolution going on. Universities have the dual reputation of being the bastions of conservatism and the hot bed of radicalism. Out gay and lesbian teachers, lecturers and professors are subverting the traditional conservative heterosexual norms in areas as diverse as design, health, art, social work, history and economics (Kwasnieswska 1995, pp. 46-8).

In this passage Kwasnieswska concurs with Sandell, Bristow and Wilson, in taking political activists' experiential wisdom as a template for projects to re-align the university's arcane internal organisation and external relations, so that they better
represent the plurality of the 'extramural' domain. Sandell writes in a journal of the Left with a target audience of graduate students and early career academics, Bristow and Wilson in an anthology of academic essays on the topic of 'politicising' the academy, and Kwasnieswska in a popular magazine. All see themselves as part of a broader movement to reform the institution of the university along 'democratic' lines, and in the services of a fully realised moral personality. If we are to critically appreciate these historical developments, it will be necessary to describe a sample of the deployments of their programmatic rationales.

When universities respond to their statutory obligations regarding anti discrimination and equal employment issues, they do so by coordinating their policies and procedures – including those seeking to invest students with the moral attributes considered important for social and cultural participation – with legally recognised categories of citizen (cf Bartos 1993, p. 157, p. 173). By raising these matters of categories of 'person' and the regimes within which they are administered, I am problematising any exclusive focus that queer theorists give to their 'transgressive' ethical stance: their flight from any 'containable' form of subject-status. I am also questioning the queer critical assumption that universities' responses to social and cultural plurality are matters of them being forced to subordinate their reactionary ethical, pedagogical and administrative-political functions to the demands of self-realising moral personality (cf Hunter 1994, p. 30, p. 98). I do not raise these issues in order to necessarily oppose those demands, but to understand their ethico-political significance: how they operate as features of particular intellectual and ethical milieux of sexual dissidence.

In this chapter I describe some of the conditions and possible effects of making the programmatic assumption that 'queer' effects a paradigm shift in political rationality, from 'identity' to 'difference'. I ask if the unidirectional schema common among academic sexual dissidents who make this assumption – their 'downloading' of models of ethical conduct from the 'extramural' domain – belied the principle of plurality that they claim to uphold. The chapter extends my earlier preliminary references to the queering of the Romantic dialectic, of the channels by which it has been socially distributed, and of the variety of queer constituencies, interests and agendas. These extended discussions develop my earlier argument that moves to 'politicise' the academy need not impel a response that either repeats the dialectical terms of such 'politicisations', or that critiques them, in the name of defending the University's apparent 'autonomy'.

My examples represent trends in the theorising of sexual politics that opened up conceptual distances within established forms of critical theory. I describe specific occasions when asserting these theories has provided points of theoretical, ethical and
political divergence and convergence between gay and various feminist strains of dialectical criticism, around common problems. These problems include the question of what role drag performers and performances can play in a 'politics of difference'. After discussing these issues and the practices of problematisation that give rise to them, I conclude by describing a particular 'post-structuralist' critical tradition of historicising the problem of subjectivity, and notable points of reference that this has provided for diverse yet distinctly queer versions of cultural criticism.

Witnessing to 'the Imaginary'.

From the 1970s and into the 1980s, syntheses and revisions of Marxian cultural theory and Lacanian psychoanalytic theory became common features of the academic fields in which queer studies later emerged; namely, the burgeoning range of 'cultural' studies. These new theoretical practices typically referred the problem of 'subjectivity' to analyses of socially effective structures of representation: the historically varying material practices of language, or language-like systems, such as 'discourse' (cf Woollacott 1986; cf Smith 1988). In his essay 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses', Louis Althusser (1971) quotes Karl Marx to the effect that

'every child knows that a social formation which did not reproduce the conditions of production at the same time as it produced would not last a year. The ultimate condition of production is therefore the reproduction of the conditions of production' (Marx in Althusser 1971, p. 123).


For Althusser, the production of subjects by what he calls the Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs) – institutions such as law, religion, and communications – is the key to the reproduction of the presumed social totality (1971, pp. 136-137). He argues that this is an issue of 'ideology' because the subjects of the ISAs are products of real but necessarily specific or limited practices, most notably the practice of 'hailing' subjects as subjects that he makes responsible for the 'interpellated' subject (1971, p. 156, p. 163). Catherine Greenfield (1984) describes this as the Althusserian critical tradition understanding such subjects as being cut off from the experience of the
'totality' of the real conditions of existence' (1984, p. 45). In this tradition, these relations with particular instances of the 'differentiated totality' constitute 'the Imaginary' (Althusser 1971, p. 139, p. 155). This notional differentiation-within-totality is how Althusser gives the cultural domain – the Marxian 'superstructure' – a 'relative autonomy' from economic relations; it is how he distinguishes his structural version of critical theory from Marxian economism (1971, p. 130).

As the central concept of pre-1990s Althusserian structural Marxism, 'the Imaginary' was a primary focus for subsequent attempts to queer the theories and practices of subjectivity (cf Thomas 1997, p. 105; cf Sikes 1997, p. 2). Thus, when Bristow and Wilson describe the new queer studies, they begin from the assumption that university education has an 'Imaginary' function, as part of the education ISA. They understand the normative forms of this institution as collaborating with other ISAs to produce what Althusser called 'good' subjects, and as thereby reproducing the prevailing socio-cultural order (1993, p. 2; cf Althusser 1971, pp. 136-137). Bristow and Wilson set out to expose their activist-scholar readers to the truth of their own subjection to these partial and limiting practices. In doing so, they act from their 'bad' subjects' conviction that a new sensitivity to the 'differences' occluded by the normative system is the key to disrupting its local subjecting effects.

This project to exceed the subject positions waiting in the representational structure of the University is what Bristow and Wilson mean by a 'politics of difference'. Similarly, when Sandell affirms her vocation to join the community of 'bad' subjects, she is following an Althusserian path of resisting the disciplinary academy's envisaged complicity in maintaining the Imaginary order. Sandell, Bristow and Wilson are therefore not only united in viewing the University as a prominent social institution that is responsible for forming 'good' subjects, but are in agreement over it being a social site in which the constitutive parts of the cultural totality, reconceived as instances of 'difference', can be comprehended and thus transformed.

Academic sexual dissidents' ethos of theoretical and ethical refinement has been useful in helping them accommodate themselves to the established Althusserian critiques of the Imaginary. For example, in a 1994 special edition devoted to 'Queer Theory', the trans-Atlantic journal Critical Quarterly published an article by the prominent British social commentator, AIDS and gay activist Simon Watney, titled 'Queer epistemology: activism, "outing", and the politics of sexual identities'. In 1990, Watney was Director of the Red Hot AIDS Charitable Trust. This organisation produced the music compact disk Red Hot and Blue, for which Watney wrote pamphlet notes, and a magazine format television program of the same name: a project of AIDS education (Red Hot & Blue 1990). The early 1990s saw him contribute to the gay and lesbian-targeted Channel Four television series Out. In an interview in a 1991
episode of that series Watney expressed his initial attitude to 'queer' in the following terms.

The importance of the word, for a very young generation of lesbians and gay men across [the United States] _teenagers and early 20s_ is that it offers what seems to me to be a sort of magical resolution to the issue of gender and to the issue of race. If the word 'gay' in America has increasingly come to mean, unstated, White, then 'queer' will mean Black, Hispanic, and White gay men. It will also cross the other historical bridge, between lesbians and gay men, and our overlapping, but sometimes very divergent experiences (Watney in *OUT* 1991).

'Queer epistemology' is worth considering in some detail, since it can show how this prominent gay public intellectual refined his initial assessment of the then relatively recent notion of a queer politics of representation.

Watney prefaces his 1994 article with a statement by Stuart Hall, that instead of identities being ' "fixed in some essentialised past, they are subject to the continuous 'play' of history, culture and power" ' (Hall in Watney 1994, p. 12). This quotation frames Watney's theoretical position relative to the 'essentialist' versus 'constructionist' debates of late 20th century social sciences and humanities disciplines (Richardson in Sprague 1984, pp. 30-31; Schippers 1989). In my last chapter I noted another example of these origin-focused debates, in which Dynes opposed queer theorists' assumption that unitary identity is at most a 'politically necessary' fiction. Dynes writes that he resents queer theorists charging opponents such as himself with advocating an 'essentialist' position on sexual identity. Despite denying this charge, he continues the debates by characterising the queer ethical norm of a contingent sense of sexual identity as an example of 'constructionism' (Dynes 1995, p. 4).

In the case of Watney's 'Queer epistemology', these debates are invoked in order to problematise the notion that he raised in the earlier television interview: the suggestion that the historical emergence of queer culture is explainable as a generational shift from 'gay' to 'queer' identifications. He argues that

the main conflict is not simply between older 'gay' assimilationists, who merely want admission to the American Dream, or to 'equal rights' with heterosexuals, and 'queers' asserting their 'queerness'. Rather, it is between those who think of the politics of sexuality as a matter of securing minority rights, and those who are contesting the overall validity and authenticity of the epistemology of sexuality itself (Watney 1994, p. 19; cf Thomas 1995, pp. 73-74).

In the above passage Watney splits contemporary sexual dissidence between a naive, limited tendency and a more sophisticated, ambitious one. And, as the contrasting of 'American Dream' and 'authenticity' suggests, this is an 'Imaginary' account in which it
is the practice of ideology-critique — here given the post-structuralist image of a dialectic of 'history, culture and power' — that largely defines effective sexual dissidence.

Watney uses the conceptual distance he establishes from the essentialist school of thought to judge 'queer' on its ability to translate its own anti-essentialist theoretical clarifications into socio-political action. Bristow and Wilson strike an aspirational tone when they look to a similar imperative for the title of their book *Activating Theory* (1997). For Watney, this imperative provides a political brief to co-ordinate a coalition of marginalised subjects without essentialising them. Success in this task is a key criterion for judging whether 'queer' is a worthy successor of earlier modes of sexual dissidence. Conversely, he sees queer culture's partisan moral enthusiasms as failures to live up to its own higher calling to critique the order of contemporary sexuality responsible for these marginalisations (Watney 1994, p. 16).

Watney's image of contemporary sexual politics revolves around a particular strategy of theoretical clarification and its subject (cf Weeks 1993, p. 86). This subject's key attribute is its capacity to mediate a compulsory epistemological order of sexuality and an imperative to exceed that order's terms. Like Bristow and Wilson, Watney gives this feat and those with the skill and inclination to perform it, central functions in sexual politics. He demonstrates his own ability to play this mediating role when he argues that the

up-side of 'queer' lies in its ability to articulate the complex, shifting contemporary alignments of class, race, gender, age and sexuality in the lives of individuals who frequently face multiple oppressions. The down-side of 'queer' lies in its tendency to romanticise such differences.

At the centre of this scenario are those who can mediate queer's

crucial unresolved conflict between an overall critique of the categories of sexuality and the unequal power relations they impose on *everyone*, and a kind of unthought-through separatism (Watney 1994, pp. 15-16).

In this example of dialectical criticism Watney ritually bisects an object that 'articulates' the multiple social locations of power within which cultural identities are formed, even as it 'romanticises' politics by trading on reified self-representations. For Watney, queer culture's terrain stretches across this rupture; 'queer' is a problem of how to theoretically represent a pluralistic epistemological order without essentialising or reifying it. As in the case of Bristow and Wilson, Watney's own competence in this dialectical self-shaping routine enables him to assess 'queer culture' according to the degree to which it succeeds in holding these 'historical differences' up to on-going critical scrutiny.
Queer mediations of 'identity', 'culture', and the role of the critical intellectual have precedents in earlier versions of sexual dissidence. Some Gay Liberation theorists had used a nexus of Marxian and psychoanalytic theories to differentiate 'gay' and 'homosexual' identities and politics. Through the 1970s, Herbert Marcuse's syntheses of Marx and Freud influenced gay cultural and political theorists. For example, in *Homosexual: Oppression and Liberation* (1973), Dennis Altman described Paul Robinson, author of *The Freudian Left*, as reading Marcuse as proposing that 'the social function of the homosexual was that of the critical philosopher' (Altman 1973, pp. 79-82, pp. 94-108). Marcuse's influence is readily apparent in Altman's own influential book, in a chapter titled 'Liberation: Towards the Polymorphous Whole', in which he discusses the Freudian-Marcusian notion that 'polymorphous perversity' is the natural condition of individuals, prior to the process of socialisation. The chapter includes a definition of 'liberation as a process rather than [as] an attainable goal', and a description of Marcuse's writings as 'providing us with aims for which we strive' (Altman 1973, p. 82, p. 108). The chapter does not elaborate on the ethical aspects of these points, and in this respect, too, it is a predecessor of Watney's article.

Marxian-Freudian theoretical hybrids continued to influence gay cultural and political writings into the 1980s. For instance, in 1985 Carrigan et al. were working in this tradition, when they looked to psychoanalytic knowledge to explain resistance to social change (1985, pp. 581-582). By the mid 1980s, however, these psychoanalytic accounts were increasingly being challenged by others, which recast the issue of the variability of human sexuality as a socio-political matter of 'plurality'. For example, the gay historian and cultural theorist Jeffrey Weeks rejected gay and lesbian critics' by-then established practice of appealing to the psychoanalysis-derived notion of 'the perverse', because 'its ostensibly scientific terminology obscures moral and political judgements'. Instead, he argued for a concept of 'diversity', which for him meant an acknowledgment of the current 'political balance of forces' (1993 (1986), p. 86; cf de Lauretis 1994).

As I noted earlier, when Watney addresses the state of contemporary sexual dissidence, he rejects a 'crude' generational explanation for the rise of 'queer' relative to 'gay', and instead describes this shift as a split between those who subscribe to the ideology of liberal pluralism and those who are dedicated to a suitably revised version of the 'perverse' tradition: one that emphasises a linguistics-indebted re-reading of Freudian psychoanalysis. In other words, rather than repeat the Freudian-Marcusian notion of the 'polymorphous perverse' as an historical potential of the human subject, Watney invokes a different tradition: a Freudian-Lacanian politics of desire. Donald Morton (1995) describes this tradition as treating desire as 'an autonomous entity outside history, an uncapturable, inexpressible, and actually meaninglessness remainder
left over when the person becomes a socialized participant in what Lacan calls the 'symbolic' (1995, p. 3; cf Dollimore 1991, p. 33). In a passage discussing the relative merits of 'homosexual', 'gay' and 'queer' cultures, Watney defines 'queer culture' as a critique of this symbolic order; he writes that 'queer' is 'that which aims to trouble and destabilize the overall discursive legitimacy of modern sexual classifications, and the power relations they sustain and protect'. He also clarifies the point that he had made in the OUT interview, regarding queer as a 'sort of magical resolution' of the issues of race and gender, when he argues that it 'articulates contradictions and tensions within the older lesbian and gay politics' (Watney 1994, p. 23). In Watney's post-structuralist account, then, relations between 'gay' and 'queer' play out an historical dialectic within sexual dissidence itself.

If Watney differs from Altman in forswearing Freudianism, he nevertheless echoes earlier Gay Liberation cultural commentaries – including Altman's own – in taking as his ideal subject a morally whole person whose subjecthood exceeds the power of the world of mere appearances or representation to contain it. In 1982 Altman wrote that, as

Edgar Freidenberg argued some years ago, homophobia is related to the social structure as a whole, and flourishes in a society 'that is dependent on [a] kind of self-mutilation to keep itself going and to keep people self-oppressing in the roles that they need to stay in if the society is to keep going' (Altman 1982, pp. 211-212).

Like Watney, Altman/Freidenberg focus their critical theory on 'the social structure as a whole' and the subject of that totality.

Watney follows a path surveyed by Gay Liberation writings of the late 1960s and early 1970s, whose authors refined their own intellectual and political stances relative to their 'homophile' predecessors and rivals. By 'homophile' I mean the reformist, 'homosexual'-identified sexual dissidents who were most active in the years between World War Two and the early 1970s (cf Heidenry 1997, pp. 106-107). In the United States, the self-declared 'homophile' activists were organised in groups like the Mattachine Society, which had a mixed male and female membership, and the exclusively lesbian Daughters of Bilitis (Altman 1973, pp. 115-127). Altman describes the Australian organisation CAMP (Campaign Against Moral Persecution), which was founded in 1970, as being initially organised 'along the lines of the traditional homophile groups; for a short time one of its state branches provided homosexual speakers who were, however, instructed to masquerade as heterosexual' (1973, p. 131). While these groups and their contributions to sexual dissidence deserve further study in their own right, my interest on this occasion is to describe how, and to what effect, they have been invoked in recent years.
During the 1990s, the Gay Liberation and the homophile movements became widespread tropes for understanding the history and contemporary state of sexual dissidence. Despite the groups making up these movements having shared some of their membership and political agendas, they have typically been represented in television documentaries and feature films through exemplary contrasts. The social *milieux* and events of Gay Liberation's early history have been represented by sharply contrasting the ideologies, personal comportments, and political styles of these overlapping activist movements. For example, in the feature film *Stonewall* (1995), these contrasts are presented through a metonymic treatment of a major character's activist career. In chronologically ordered scenes this character, Matty Dean, joins one of the homophile groups, becomes increasingly frustrated with its political and personal coyness, and finally abandons it for its more radical rival. The film uses metaphors of codes of dress and conduct to highlight the significance of the differences between the liberal-homophile and radical-Gay Liberation movements. Polite demonstrations by deliberately well-dressed and groomed homophile activists identify them with the civil rights movements of the early to mid 1960s, while the street fashions and anti-authoritarian comportments of the new Gay Liberation movement activists – not to mention the Stonewall riots themselves – identify them with the mid to late 1960s political climate of radicalisation.

The television documentary series *Over the Rainbow* (1994) likewise presents gay and homophile modes of political activism as related but often mutually antagonistic movements. In the episode *Out Rage '69*, gay and homophile witnesses to the events of the June 1969 Stonewall riots in New York City discuss these mythic 'foundations' of the Gay Liberation movement and recall the political ideologies and tactics of the times (*Over the Rainbow* 1994). In one sequence, a former homophile activist, Randy Wicker, states that

I think the homophile movement basically wanted to set the record straight, and that was: 'hey, wait a minute, we're like everyone else. We vary ... but also that we're respectable people, we're real people' (Wicker in *Over the Rainbow* 1994).

Wicker's statement of liberal-pluralist principles is followed immediately by the recollections of Jim Fouratt, who at the time had been a Gay Liberation activist.

I wasn't going to march in any picket line, with a sign saying 'we're just ... what I do in my own bedroom is my business'. I mean, I was the kind of hippy, anti-war movement, anti-Establishment person. I though 'No way'. I mean, we wanted to change the world, we wanted to get rid of the way things were. We didn't want to be a part of it (Fouratt in *Over the Rainbow* 1994).
Gay Liberation activists' assumption that the homophile movement had failed to produce an integrated theory of subjectivity was central to their rejection of their rivals' 'reformist' politics of civil rights. The leftist logic of an historical dialectic, inflected through Marxian-Freudian theoretical writings, enabled Gay Liberationists to rationalise the eclipsing of liberal-pluralist homophile activism by New Left-affiliated groups such as the Gay Liberation Front. However, as Fouratt's description of recoiling from 'the world' suggests, this Gay Liberation stance was profoundly ambivalent; its critical distance from mundane political matters framed 'politics' as an on-going critique of a 'world' that seemed to become more coherent ... and thus condemnable ... the more it receded.

For those proponents of sexual revolution who wrote the history of this period, the homophile movement lost its position at the forefront of American sexual dissidence because of its lack of theoretical and political connections with the ascending fortunes of the New Left (cf Altman 1982, p. 211). A similar fate awaited the Gay Liberation Front, when it split between those who were willing to align it with radical Black politics and lesbian feminism, and those mainly White, middle class gay men who retreated from such coalitions and formed 'mainstream' groups such as the Gay Activists' Alliance (Over the Rainbow 1994). It was in opposition to what they saw as failed critiques of the socio-cultural status quo that radical sects within the Gay Liberation movement set themselves more ambitious theoretical and political tasks. They were driven to expose the socio-cultural system's implicit ideological nature: its ability to reproduce itself by producing social subjects with psychological limitations or spiritual deformities which made them complicit in their own oppression (Altman 1973, p. 108, p. 125). From these radical critics' perspectives, their rivals' political failures were consequences of their inability to think their way out of the hegemonic Imaginary order.

The radical strain of ideology-critique that runs through late 1960s and early 1970s modes of sexual dissidence, and which is repeated in Altman's 1982 citing of Freidenberg, is also evident in Watney's 1994 article. One can see this when he argues that homosexual identity is a 'strategic position' privileging heterosexuality, and that it is extremely convenient to the power relations of sexuality that people should voluntarily accept its categories as if they derived from some timeless essence of personal being. In this manner the strategic relations of sexuality remain invisible and unchallenged (Watney 1994, pp. 16-17).

This scenario is part of the longer critical tradition of Gay Liberation activists assuming that 'subjectivity' is the key to the reproduction ... and hence disruption ... of the social order. This Marxian assumption was, as I have noted, comprehensively

In Watney's opinion, the current order of sexual epistemology is an imperfect knowledge of desire: imperfect because, as an 'irreducible element in human nature', desire is 'lived and sensuously experienced in a multitude of ever-changing social and historical circumstances' that defy representation (1994, p. 16). He sees sexual identity as an Imaginary effect of subjects' misrecognitions of the complexity of lived desire (cf Heath 1982, p. 3). Watney argues that, far from being scientific, descriptive categories, the classifications of desire within Western epistemology have profound political, ethical, and psychic implications ... The epistemology of sexuality should thus be recognised as a strategy which positions and aligns all human beings, in a basically dualistic theory of sexuality, which has little relation to the diversity and complexity of sexual desire as it is lived in the actual lives of individuals, or communities organised around shared sexual desires, or indeed of entire societies (Watney 1994, p. 16).

In this description, the relations between 'culture' and 'subjectivity' are conceived in terms of an ideological bind: a positioning of human subjects in a dualistic system of representation defining the cultural order. For Watney, this structural interpellation is responsible for the state of exile known as (homo)sexual identity; to be a homosexual subject is 'immediately to inhabit a pseudo-scientific theory of sexuality' that positions all sexual subjects (1994, p. 16). Following Althusser, Watney assumes that the critical theorist, as social scientist, 'accedes to' a comprehensive understanding of the otherwise hidden conditions of the system of sexual difference. Where Althusser reworks the Marxian metaphor of the base/superstructure relationship to open up a critical space for the subject of critical theory and its practice of cultural commentary, Watney reworks Althusser, to reconceive this subject's attributes and to extend the range and concerns of this critical space (1971, pp. 129-131).

As part of his reworking of the Althusserian critique of the Imaginary, Watney negotiates the critical tension between describing the multiplicity of the cultural practices responsible for subjectivity and interpreting these objects as instances of a functioning totality. He approaches this problem in two stages. First he acknowledges that critical consciousness is not guaranteed, once and for all, by a moment of scientific clarity that resolves the split between the 'pseudo-scientific theory of
sexuality' and desire, as an 'irreducible element of human nature'. Then he places his emphasis on cultural critics' powers to defer that resolution by diverting it through a philosophical practice of self-restraint (cf Heaton 2000, p. 30). For Watney, the truth that desire's Edenic potential is unable to find authentic expression in any 'scientific' system of philosophical classifications authorises this on-going but modulated critique of the epistemology of sexuality (1994, p. 16).

The subject of Watney's 'Mosaic' form of appreciation bears witness to a domain of desire, even as it accepts that it can never take full theoretical possession of it. Within the parameters he sets for this field, moral attributes are deemed to be properly disposed because they appreciate the special poignancy of desire's 'eternal' duality. Watney also has a corresponding expectation that a cultural theory and politics of sex will proceed by loosening subjects from those 'Imaginary' binds in which they are constituted and therefore contained. I have already shown that Watney makes possession of this particular dialectical facility his key criterion for judging queer culture (1994, p. 23). As a consequence, he is not hostile to queer culture per se, but rather sees it as a variant of, or tendency within, gay social thought: 'queer culture' is a formation with no exclusive claim to the problem of 'identity'. Like Bristow and Wilson, then, Watney is sympathetic to some features of queer cultural commentaries, notably their serious dedication to loosening subjects' epistemological binds by rationally abrading them. In this section I discussed some opposed terms that have been used to provide the dialectical 'friction' in similar projects: psychological 'perversity' versus social 'diversity', 'essentialism' versus 'constructionism', 'homophile' versus 'gay' identifications, and liberal-pluralist 'reformism' versus leftist 'sexual revolution'. Watney's pairing of a normative 'epistemology of sexuality' and 'queer desire' continues this tradition.

Communities of interest.

If, as I have argued, 'Queer Theory' does not constitute a coherent theoretical field, does it instead refer to a unified community or political constituency? In Watney's 1991 television interview he theoretically locates 'queer' in this problem-space when he says that it offers to resolve differences of race and of gender, and that it seeks to reconcile the historical fissures between constituencies struggling to realise their interests in coalitions of the politically marginalised (OUT 1991). One reason that these are such daunting tasks is that not all 'queer' constituencies correspond to the
traditional categories familiar from established gay and lesbian politics. Some of those claiming a 'queer' status even appear antithetical to those constituencies and politics.

In his contribution to *The Gay '90s* – an anthology of academic essays on queer studies – Calvin Thomas (1997) relates an autobiographical episode to demonstrate how it is possible for him, an 'otherwise "straight"' man, to claim a queer status. He begins by citing an argument of Butler's, that 'queer' is a term that '"derives its force precisely through the repeated invocation by which it has become linked to accusation, pathologization, insult"' (Butler in Thomas 1997, p. 104). He then recounts an incident from his teenage years, when he was accused of being queer after he confided to a group of heterosexual men that he did not 'really like children very much'. Thomas writes that the accuser

spoke the logic of heteronormativity with a relentless precision. For the imperative behind the norm is not simply to enjoy having sex with women but (since we're using the Althusserian language of interpellation here) to reproduce the conditions of production. Heteronormative sex is teleologically narrativized sex – sex with a goal, a purpose, and a product. The ends – children – justify the means, which are otherwise unjustifiable (Thomas 1997, p. 104-105).

He goes on to argue that the 'product' of heteronormative sex is not so much the child as the reproduction of the 'person', by which he means the subject of heteronormativity. On this basis, he argues that those 'otherwise "straight"' subjects, such as himself, for whom the main function of sex is pleasure, are 'queer'; conversely, those 'who fuck in the name of identity, who make an identity out of whom they fuck, who fuck to reproduce the "person", are fucking heteronormatively' *(ibid)*.

During the 1990s, critical theorists were able to use their powers of differentiation and totalisation to mediate the tensions between various communities with interests in queer theorising. By shifting their attention between these poles, they could make varied assessments of 'queer' as a viable practice of politics. Some emphasised the bewildering variety of queer objects, and argued that this multiplicity prevents one from speaking of an identifiably queer politics or program (Doty 1998, p. 151). Others were untroubled by this lack of coherence, whether because they treated 'queer' as a recently coined synonym for coalitions of existing sexual identities, or because for them it designated a more radical politics: 'queer' as a variant of an overarching critical theory program to 'politicise' academic or other 'cultural' institutions (cf Wiegman 1997, p. 16; cf Huntley 1995, p. 8). Thomas makes the latter assumption when he distinguishes his 'otherwise "straight"' queer subjectivity from 'some other form or forms of queerness'; in particular, those 'lesbian, gay, or bisexual [subjects who] fail to be sufficiently critically queer' (1997, p. 83; cf Butler 1993).
In *Queer Theory*, Jagose (1996) discusses Butler's account of queer politics in terms that not only parallel Thomas's critical exclusivity, but which advocate its political virtues. She writes that for Butler,

queer may be thought of as activating an identity politics so attuned to the constraining effects of naming, of delineating a foundational category which precedes and underwrites political intervention, that it may better be understood as promoting a non-identity – or even anti-identity – politics. If a potentially infinite coalition of sexual identities, discourses and sites might be identified as queer, what it betokens is not so much liberal pluralism as a negotiation of the very concept of identity itself (Jagose 1996, p. 130).

Jagose concurs with Butler's view of the contemporary field of identities as being deceptive, and with her previously discussed alternative of a 'performative' ethical norm. She writes that 'Queer Theory' mediates the existing field differently from the prevailing paradigm of liberal pluralism, since its adherents do not assume, as liberal theorists do, that this field is unified at the level of a foundational subject 'which precedes and underwrites political intervention'. Jagose argues that 'Queer Theory' is largely defined by its ability to delve below the level of subject-effects and to interrogate the plurality that underlies 'pluralism' (*ibid*).

This reading of Butler exhibits some of the typical tensions of queer thought. For example, earlier in *Queer Theory*, Jagose had identified objects that have been designated 'queer': a 'critical distance from the identity politics that underpin traditional notions of lesbian and gay community'; a 'stylistic' or 'fashionable' usage, in which the young deploy 'queer' to distinguish themselves from 'old-style lesbians and gays'; and – in a reference to the kind of 'otherwise "straight" ' queerness claimed by Thomas – 'an open-ended constituency, whose shared characteristic is not identity itself but an antinormative positioning with regard to sexuality' (Jagose 1996, p. 98; cf McQuarrie 1995, p. 14). But while these acknowledgments of queer's variability suggest the opening of a critical space for considering modes of 'queer' that do not pivot around the problem of 'subjectivity', Jagose nevertheless goes on to argue that like the 'theory of performativity, which to a large extent underwrites its project, queer opts for denaturalisation as its primary strategy' (*ibid*). This addition restores the dominance of rationalist critical commentary over positive description that her previous pluralising gesture had seemed poised to challenge. How were queer commentators able to maintain this 'lop-sided' tension?

To the extent that queer theorists followed an imperative to mediate the 'differentiated totality' of the Althusserian Imaginary, they needed to draw on theoretical and ethical resources that could give their own versions of such projects a critical distinctiveness. One of the most notable influences in this regard was Foucault's *oeuvre*, especially his writings on the historical relations between sex,
power and 'the subject'. Over the period of the 1980s, these works became established features of a number of academic fields (cf Patton 1995, p. 162; cf Rabinow 1991 (1984), p. 27). An example of the adaptation of Foucault's work to these fields — in this case, cinema studies and literary studies — is de Lauretis's *Technologies of Gender: Essays on Theory, Film, and Fiction* (1987). Along with other modes of cultural and media studies, such as post-colonial studies and gay and lesbian studies, these interdisciplinary academic practices provided key institutional sites for the development and distribution of the psycho-linguistic accounts of subjectivity prevalent in 1990s 'Queer Theory' (cf Traub 1995; cf Creekmur 1995).

In the previously cited passages from *Queer Theory*, Jagose writes that in 'Queer Theory' the liberal-pluralist 'foundational category which precedes and underwrites political intervention' — the unitary subject — is displaced by a 'theory of performativity, which to a large extent underwrites its project'. In de Lauretis's feminist film criticism, a similar shift in the theorising of subjectivity is achieved by adapting Foucault's characterisation of sexuality as a 'technology of sex' [in order] to propose that gender, too, both as representation and self-representation, is the product of various technologies, such as cinema, and of institutionalised discourses, epistemologies, and critical practices, as well as practices of daily life (1987, p. 2).

In this gesture to what, at another point, de Lauretis calls the sexual subject's 'relations to a heterogeneous social field', she establishes her theory's post-structuralist credentials (*ibid*). This is her alternative to what she considers to be more complacent essentialist and constructionist accounts of the relations between 'sexual difference' and 'gender': those accounts in which gender identity is either natural or the direct expression of the structures of language/discourse (cf Morrow 1995, p. 18).

I have described Watney's critical distance from earlier critiques of sexual identity as a kind of 'queering' of traditional Althusserian critiques of the Imaginary. When de Lauretis revises the concept 'gender' in 'Ideological' terms she also uses Althusser. Her stated aim is the emancipation of a 'radical epistemological potential': the ability to conceive of the social subject and of the relations of subjectivity to sociality [as] a subject constituted in gender, to be sure, though not by sexual difference alone, but rather across languages and cultural representations; a subject en-gendered in the experiencing of race and class, as well as sexual, relations; a subject, therefore, not unified but rather multiple, and not so much divided as contradicted (de Lauretis 1987, p. 2).

Like Watney and Thomas, de Lauretis sees a prevailing Imaginary order as interpellating individuals as subjects. In her feminist version of this problem, the
organisational logic of sexual differences is understood to distribute individuals into
the 'sex-gender system': a system that locks them into a 'bind, [a] mutual containment
of gender and sexual difference(s) [which] needs to be unravelled and deconstructed'

Althusser's social-semiotic approach shifted Marxian theories of Ideology from
a definition of 'false consciousness', to Ideology as being constituted in the material
practices of language; from the 'real relations which govern the existence of
individuals', to 'the imaginary relation of those individuals to the real relations in
which they 'live' (Althusser in de Lauretis 1987, p. 6). Following Althusser, de
Lauretis sees two ways in which gender-ideology is framed in some feminist critiques
of patriarchy: either 'whole' or 'pure imaginary — nothing to do with the real' (1987, p.
2). In the first mode, the gendered subject is understood as being derived
unproblematically from manifest sexual differences, while in the second, it is an
imaginary effect of language's construction of sexual difference (de Lauretis 1987, p.
1). Having rejected the first option outright, and following the Althusserian imperative
to revise the 'false consciousness' tendency of the latter account of Ideology, she
proposes a gendered subject secured as a subject in a gendering Imaginary constituted
in material — and therefore historically variable — cultural practices (de Lauretis 1987,

While de Lauretis states that Althusser's formulation of Ideology describes 'to
my mind exactly, the functioning of gender', she nevertheless finds it in need of
theoretical refinement. One of these clarifications is prompted by her observation that
Althusser's account has an insufficiently materialist understanding of the Imaginary.
She sees this theoretical confusion as being responsible for the second tendency in
some feminist writings that I have noted above: the tendency to separate the question
of gender from 'the real' (de Lauretis 1987, pp. 9-10). For de Lauretis, 'the real' is not
defined by the normative order's 'manifest sexual differences' — the field that
Jagose/Butler likewise find so problematically deceptive — but by 'language and
cultural representations' patterned in relation to social categories like race, class, and
sexuality, configurations she makes responsible for subjects' 'contradicted' experiences
(1987, pp. 1-2). In this definition of the symbolic field within which subjects are
formed, 'the real' is whatever is encountered as an obstacle to desire.

In order for de Lauretis to adapt an Althusserian account of the Imaginary to
feminist cinema studies and literary studies, she must address some of the tradition's
problems: an absence of gender as an issue, and a reliance on a dubious appeal to a
Marxian 'Science' of political economy that operates outside of Ideology (1987, p. 9).
At this point she looks to Foucault's work on the 'technology of sex' for her theory of
gender as a 'set of effects produced in bodies, behaviours, and social relations'.
Adapting this technical focus to the field of feminist cinema studies means going 'beyond Foucault', since Foucault did not take into account how male and female subjects are differently constituted by the technology of sex, or how those differences are manifested in the gendering of the discourses and practices of sexuality. In order to establish the required critical space for a gendered subject, de Lauretis pluralises the 'techno-social or biomedical apparati' that Foucault had seen as responsible for subjective experiences (1987, p. 3). When she mediates relations between the technology of sex and other cultural technologies, such as cinema or literature, she treats their 'technical' features as local manifestations of the Althusserian 'differentiated totality'. Her strategy is to use these technical descriptions of 'sexual differences' to draw her readers' attentions to the arbitrariness of the conventions of representation through which they are constituted as subjects (cf Williamson 1997, p. 178; cf Foucault 1970, p. 364).

In contrast to the fully interpellated Althusserian subject – the subject 'hailed' as a subject and thus constituted and contained in that moment of interpellation – de Lauretis's subject of feminism is 'at the same time inside and outside the ideology of gender, and conscious of being so' (1987, p. 10). While the Althusserian subject is locked into the bind of Ideology, her own is privy to a politically useful unsettling 'doubled vision' (ibid). In my previous chapter I discussed another version of this personal attribute: the 'double sense' that Sontag (1966) had identified in camp culture, and which some 1990s queer theorists used as a model for their anti-essentialist revisions of theories of subjectivity, as well as for their own 'transgressive' personal comportments (1966, p. 281; Smyth 1995, p. 142).

Through her commentaries on cinema and literature, de Lauretis specifies the key attributes of her subject of feminism and differentiates it from Althusser's subject of the Imaginary, as well as from a general category of 'women', or from an apparent essence of 'Woman'. By doing so, she aims to frustrate any subsequent attempts to appropriate this subject for existing modes of identity-based politics. Like Watney, de Lauretis subscribes to an ethical ideal that is 'in progress'; hers is a feminist version of the subject-as-process familiar from contemporary post-structuralism and from earlier Romantic thought. In this example, the project is to properly – technically – re-describe the relevant field of cultural technologies, so that the subjects of those re-descriptions can exceed the terms of the 'self-evident' identity categories imposed by the interpellation mechanism of the patriarchal Imaginary (1987, p. 5; cf Butler 1990, p. 3, p. 22; cf Cohen 1991, p. 81, p. 88).

Elsewhere in Technologies of Gender, de Lauretis gives examples of the kinds of techniques that are useful for her feminist project to reform cinema (1987, pp. 134-135). Some of these are modes of addressing audiences as female subjects. Others are
distancing devices that produce a self-conscious cinematic engagement in their subjects: techniques such as 'quick-paced shots and sound montage, the counterpoint of image and word, the diversity of voices and languages' (de Lauretis 1987, p. 137). She understands her feminist subject of cinema as existing across the contradictory spaces opened up by these techniques of identification and distanciation. By dint of its attribute of 'doubled vision', this subject exceeds gender ideology; it is capable of continually purging itself of the essentialising rationalities and associated moral enthusiasms successfully imposed on those who are completely locked into the normative order of the sex-gender system.

Adaptations of Foucault's 'technical' account of sexuality to the services of deconstructive critiques of the modern epistemological and political 'bind' continued to influence cultural critics through the 1990s (cf White 1993b, p. 278). The camp personal attribute of 'double sense' – conceived of in 'post-structuralist' terms, as an ability to reflexively oscillate across contradicted units of perception – was a recurring theme of those cultural critics who set out to deconstruct given gender and sexual identities (cf Fuss 1991). Among the other examples that I have discussed are Watney's 'Mosaic' vision of an on-going interrogation of sexual identity, and Jagose's reference to 'Queer Theory' as eschewing the apparent certainties of liberal-pluralist identity politics for 'a negotiation of the very concept of identity itself'.

In Butler's (1990) queer performativity thesis she makes a similar critique of the 'Imaginary', when she gives as the 'political reasons for the substantialising view of gender' the Imaginary order's need to produce and contain gendered and sexual identities through compulsory subject-constituting performances (1990, pp. 22-23). Butler argues that for the subject of the approved performances sex appears as a cause of sexual experience, behaviour and desire. This subject is bound up in a regime of modern sexuality 'that seeks to regulate sexual experience by instigating the discrete categories of sex as foundational and causal functions'. For Butler, the institution of a compulsory and naturalised heterosexuality requires and regulates gender as a binary relation in which the masculine term is differentiated from a feminine term, and this differentiation is accomplished through the practices of heterosexual desire. The act of differentiating the two oppositional moments of the binary results in a consolidation of each term, the respective internal coherence of sex, gender, and desire (ibid).

When Butler takes the deconstruction of this 'internal coherence' as the driving logic and rationale for her own critical practice, she parallels de Lauretis's own critique of the constraining epistemological order of patriarchal culture and its characteristic 'conceptual frame of a universal sex opposition' (1987, p. 2).
In my earlier discussion of Watney I described him as engaging in a particular dialectical practice of self-shaping — a 'Freudian-Lacanian politics of desire' — that works by positing, and then deconstructing, the opposing poles of a normative symbolic order and a desire that exceeds all attempts at representation. Queer deconstructive theorists took their own definitions of desire from the psycho-linguistic accounts of predecessors like Jacques Lacan and Julia Kristeva, for whom desire is the 'uncontainable excess that accompanies the production of meaning'; 'the excess produced at the moment of the human subject's entry into the codes and conventions of culture' (Morton 1995, p. 3). Similarly, when writing of the gendering Imaginary, de Lauretis argues that it is
effected by its deconstruction, that is to say, by any discourse, feminist or otherwise, that would discard it as ideological misrepresentation. For gender, like the real, is not only the effect of representation but also its excess, what remains outside discourse as a potential trauma which can rupture or destabilise, if not contained, any representation (de Lauretis 1987, p. 3).

Proponents of this deconstructive response to normative gender-Ideology have differentiated themselves and their practice from those who see gender as either given, or in 'purely' imaginary terms. I have previously noted that de Lauretis achieves this critical distance by re-presenting the binarised categories of language in 'technical' terms and then ritually exceeding them (1987, p. 2).

Projects to interrogate those conceptual orders making sexual and gender social 'identities' compulsory did not emerge with academic 'Queer Theory' (cf Fuss 1991, p. 2). Prior to their queer deployments, these projects had histories in psychoanalysis-influenced feminist cultural criticism. An example is Kristeva's literary theory of 'the semiotic as a (feminine) discourse of desire': a semiotics Kristeva saw as the disruption of the subjecting powers of the patriarchal Lacanian symbolic (Fuery 1995, p. 95; cf Williamson 1987, p. 25). Kristeva links her subject of desire with Derrida's notion of critical jouissance: the 'bliss' experienced in the process of unravelling the rationality of (patriarchal) culture (de Lauretis 1987, p. 114; Fuery 1995, p. 41, p. 95). Fuss's (1991) 'analysis interminable' and de Lauretis's (1987) deconstructive feminist 'deaesthetic' are versions of this schema (1991, p. 6; 1987, p. 146; cf Hunter 1991, p. 43). In each case, the theorist identifies and mediates local, representative instances of the cultural field — such as the techniques of the literary novel or the cinema film — while retaining from earlier modes of critical theory an imperative to demonstrate the significance of those techniques for 'subjectivity' (Hurley 1990, p. 156; cf de Lauretis 1987, p. 5, p. 10).

When de Lauretis identifies in Kristeva's re-reading of Lacan a failure to sufficiently historicise the 'subject of desire', she takes a step in her practice of
dialectical criticism. For Kristeva, literary writing and reading have the potential to invest the subject of desire with the metacapacity to work beyond social repression; properly organised, they can give their subject access to the socially 'disruptive function of the carnavalesque', to the transformative realms of 'dreams, language and the body' (Fuery 1995, p. 95). Since one of de Lauretis's stated tasks is to make feminist criticism more effective by correcting its universalising tendencies, she declares Kristeva's scenario problematically abstract, while simultaneously offering to find the Kristevan 'semiotic' feminist subject a better home on the firmer historicised ground of literature, reconceived as a technology. To make her point, de Lauretis offers an exemplary reading of Italo Calvino's *If on a winter's night a traveller*. She writes that

we know from Lacan as well as Calvino that writing is the masculine activity *par excellence*, because it exists in the order of the symbolic where language, the circulation of signifiers, and signification itself are subject to the name of the Father, to the structure of symbolic castration in which the phallus is the signifier of desire. Writing thus presupposes possession of the phallus—symbolically speaking, of course; and for a woman to write is to usurp a place, a discursive position, she does not have by nature or by culture (de Lauretis 1987, p. 80).

In her reading of Calvino's text, de Lauretis finds a specific subject position provided in and through the system of literary language: a position in literary discourse whose occupation by a woman constitutes conditions for resistance to patriarchal power. From this optimum point of leverage, she argues, it is possible to shift patriarchal literary discourse and its subject, if not overturn their current organisation entirely and permanently. Apart from the Calvino reading, de Lauretis demonstrates her deconstructive approach in a series of readings of other texts, such as Umberto Eco's novel *The Name of the Rose* and Federico Fellini's film *Juliet of the Spirits*. In each case, her goal is a corrected critical appreciation of historical differences: neither attuned to the 'biology and socialisation' lines of argument, nor receptive to the persuasive voices advocating a critique of 'signification and discursive effects' (1987, p. 5).

'Dialectical' corrections of feminist cultural theories are not, of course, confined to commentaries on art cinema and 'serious' literature. For example, Carole-Anne Tyler (1991) problematises a tendency for cultural commentaries on drag performances to either celebrate or condemn them *a priori*. She argues that in the latter responses drag has been seen as an irredeemably misogynous cultural practice that reconfirms the prevailing sex-gender system, while in the former responses it has been praised as a practice that is inherently subversive of that same sex-gender system. Tyler advocates
what she identifies as a more attuned and less abstract approach that pays due regard to historical differences. She writes that each instance of drag must be dealt with 'symptomatically rather than to insist it is always radical or conservative' (Tyler 1991, p. 33). However, this is how she goes on to discuss drag as a camp cultural practice:

Camp (like mimicry) functions complexly by dragging in many differences at once that are all too easily articulated with phallic narcissism in a symbolic which is really a white, bourgeois, and masculine fetishistic imaginary. I have suggested this narcissism needs to be analysed, its phallic impostures unveiled as such (Tyler 1991, p. 62).

Like de Lauretis, Tyler reveals an Imaginary or symbolic order to her implied readers and holds this order responsible for the normative subject of the status quo. Also like de Lauretis, Tyler accompanies this act of revelation with a moral edict; she enjoins her readers to open themselves to the play of forces they will encounter when they deconstruct the patriarchal Imaginary. In an echo of de Lauretis's 'double vision', she writes that gay theorists (like feminist theorists) must recognize their positioning in a number of discourses besides those of gender and sexuality and accept difference, including self-difference and lack ... Gayatri Spivak points out that 'knowledge is made possible and is sustained by irreducible difference, not identity.' The play of identification and dis-identification in drag could be the very condition of autocritique (ibid).

As with de Lauretis's 'technical' corrective to the conventional opposing claims of irreducible 'identity' or discursive 'difference', Tyler's stated pluralising intention is quickly subsumed within the drama of subjectivity. The differences she has posited as potential disruptions to problematic rival assessments of drag have fallen into a dialectical 'holding pattern'. In other words, for Tyler, 'drag' is both an instance of a patriarchal symbolic order whose ethical norm is a diminished subjectivity, and a stage for a 'bad' subject that practices 'autocritique': the reflexive 'play of identification and dis-identification'.

A 'politics of desire' does not, of course, have a single form or outcome. I have previously discussed Watney's version, in which he not only distinguishes a 'queer' critique of the current 'epistemology of sexuality' from less ambitious modes of sexual dissidence, but also theoretically positions this critique within contemporary sexually dissident milieux, as a mediator of their internal contradictions and tensions (Watney 1994, p. 23). In de Lauretis's case, advocating a version of a 'politics of desire' enables her to theoretically position her feminist subject of cinema in a 'technical' or 'materialist' field, while also differentiating a lesbian-feminist constituency and agendas from other constituencies of critical sexual dissidence and their interests. She
does so as part of her brief to free feminist critical thought from the dominant biological, philosophical, or literary discourses and 'master narratives' – a patriarchal 'political unconscious' – which routinely colonise it (1987, pp. 1-2). It is on the basis of what she sees as Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's aversion to the concept 'desire' as applied to relations between women – that de Lauretis criticises Sedgwick and some other 'straight feminists'; in particular, those 'for whom heterosexual female desire is apparently so impervious to theorization that they have turned to theorizing either men's stakes in feminism or male subjectivity itself, both gay and straight' (1994, pp. 115-116). This is a reference to Sedgwick's perceived role in 'Queer Theory', as an advocate of the gay and the non-normative 'straight' emphases in that practice (cf Sedgwick 1985). However, de Lauretis's advocacy for a 'politics of desire' is not confined to establishing a critical distance from 'straight' feminists and their interests. By making allegiance to a psychoanalytic framework a marker of commitment to a lesbian-feminist politics of representation she can also differentiate her own project from those undertaken by lesbian-feminist writers who may share her 'technical' stance, yet lack this allegiance and consequently fail to properly 'distinguish between desire and identification' (de Lauretis 1994, pp. 116-117).

Althusser's account of the interpellated subject was also useful for a male heterosexual dissident like Thomas, who has been hailed as 'queer', and for whom that hailing, recounted in an academic essay, can serve as a salutary lesson in the contingency of identities. As he puts this at the end of his article, '... I don't know in the name of what I would say that it wasn't "really me" who was really "meant by the hailing," that it wasn't "me" who was "really" being addressed' (Thomas 1997, p. 106). In Tyler's case, this post-structuralist sense of contingency is accompanied by a moral exhortation. She mediates differing feminist and gay/queer commentaries on drag, in order to urge her readers to 'recognise their positioning in a number of discourses' (1991, p. 62). For Tyler, this exercise in sensitising her readers to the technical limits of any single instance of interpellation is a relatively unproblematic matter of referring subjective experiences to a psychoanalytic metadiscourse. For de Lauretis, however, a proper appreciation of historical differences is one that has been diverted through a dialectical synthesis of the psychoanalytic category of 'desire' and a revised version of Foucault's 'technology of sex'.

Technical critiques of the Imaginary are sufficiently flexible to differentiate and elaborate a variety of fields. They have been used by various queer constituencies to develop and sustain a number of agendas: to advocate the structuralist model of the interpellated subject and so demonstrate the contingency of even a socially privileged

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9 This point is made by de Lauretis in reference to an argument of Fredric Jameson's on the 'political unconscious'.
heterosexual male subjectivity; to loosen the grip of structuralism on critics' political imaginations; to draw a distinction between those feminist critics committed to a psychoanalytic mediation of 'desire', and those for whom such a commitment is deemed to be either lacking or underdeveloped; and to bring resolution to critical theory's inter-factional disputes. In the next section I identify examples of this politics of representation and discuss some of their theoretical debts to the post-Kantian philosophical tradition of 'historicising' the problematic of representation.

The dialectics of culture.

How have queer critics theoretically positioned themselves, their practice and their interests relative to the abiding concerns of sexually dissident critical intellectual milieux? I can begin to answer this question by discussing an example from the theoretical archive. As an academic in the fields of literary, feminist, and lesbian and gay studies, and as a writer and editor for academic journals and anthologies, Diana Fuss was a prominent theoretical and organisational contributor to the 'Queer Theory' that emerged over the period of the late 1980s to early 1990s. In the opening passage of *Inside/Out: Lesbian Theories, Gay Theories* (1991), she identifies her field in reference to the

philosophical opposition between 'heterosexual' and 'homosexual', [which,] like so many other conventional binaries, has always been constructed on the foundations of another related opposition: the couple 'inside' and 'outside' (Fuss 1991, p. 1).

When Fuss mentions 'philosophical opposition' and 'conventional binaries', she is identifying her envisaged field as the linguistic-representational order of categories and codes. At this point the field appears as a structure of inter-connected linguistic terms. However, Fuss immediately goes on to write that the

metaphysics of identity that has governed discussion of sexual behaviour and libidinal object choice has, until now, depended on the structural symmetry of these seemingly fundamental distinctions and the inevitability of a symbolic order based on a logic of limits, margins, borders, and boundaries (*ibid*).

In this theoretical elaboration, the 'linguistic-representational order' no longer suffices as a definition of the field. The emphasis has shifted, to include what could be called
the 'dialectics of subjectivity': the mediation of a symbolic order that Freudian-Lacanian philosophy holds responsible for subjective experiences. Fuss declares her opposition to metaphysical formulations of this field that take its 'seemingly fundamental' terms as given. In their place she wants 'new orientations, new objectives, and especially new vocabularies' (1991, p. 1, p. 7). She advocates a project to analyse patterns of continuity and points of possible instability in the sexual subject's relations with its ersatz 'fundamental' historical determinants. However, her identification of this project with the 'now' that makes what went before it apparent, and thus redundant, suggests a third image of the field: the 'dialectics of culture'. For Fuss, the new criticism's 'transgressive' disregard for a 'logic of limits, margins, borders, and boundaries' makes it peculiarly capable of mediating this all-pervasive Imaginary cultural field (Fuss 1991, p. 1; cf Choi et al. 1995, p. 72, p. 143).

There are theoretical and methodological counterparts of Fuss's 'transgressive' academic cultural commentary in other literary genres. One example from the biography genre is James Miller's (1993) construct of 'Michel Foucault' as exemplary philosopher, paradigmatic political activist, sexual aesthete, psychological case study, and social and cultural critic. Like other filmic and literary biographies of philosophers, Miller's The Passion of Michel Foucault must deal with the problem of how to make the categories of 'life' and 'work' intelligible (cf Jarman 1992; cf Eribon 1993, pp. 310-321). Miller's solution is to alternate passages of theoretical discussion of the philosopher's oeuvre with passages of biographical narrative.

In one theoretical passage, Miller notes that Foucault associated his own project with Kant's Enlightenment stance. Miller illustrates this connection with a discussion of an introduction Foucault wrote for an edition of Kant’s *a l'anthropologie*. According to Miller, in Kant's philosophy of consciousness 'a number of the most essential categories of thought conform to a specific lawfulness of cognition' (1993, p. 139). For Foucault, this thesis was, to quote Miller, a revelation of the 'truly temporal dimension' of the *a priori* of human subjectivity: 'Kant’s book underlines for Foucault the many ways in which "the self, by becoming an object" of regulated social practices, "takes its place in the field of experience and finds there a concrete system of belonging" ' (1993, p. 140). Miller cites Foucault's *The Order of Things* (1970) as evidence of the importance of this Kantian theme to Foucault's wider oeuvre.

Miller correctly identifies Foucault's interest in addressing the Kantian problematic: the constitution of the human subject across empirical and metaphysical registers, between conceptions of the 'noumenal self' or 'eternal subject' and the 'phenomenal self' or 'object of history' (cf Greenfield 1984, p. 41). He also quotes Foucault as concurring with Martin Heidegger's view that Kant had succumbed to a
'failure of nerve' in his interrogation of subjectivity. Thus, while Foucault appreciated Kant’s attempt to differentiate the metaphysical from the empirical, he also criticised him for falling back into a metaphysical problematic: apparently innate and therefore historically inexplicable capacities, such as 'free will' (Miller 1993, pp. 140-142). As a consequence, Foucault saw the main responsibility of post-Kantian philosophers as the 'analytics of truth': an imperative to account for the *a priori* of experience through an empirical investigation of their tangled and often buried *de facto* roots in customs, habits, social institutions, scientific disciplines, and the specific language-games and styles of reasoning [informing] each of these different domains (Miller 1993, p. 142).

Miller identifies Foucault's *oeuvre* with this powerful critical imperative to disinter the concealed conditions of experience.

I make two related responses to Miller's argument. First, assuming that Miller is correct in identifying the Kantian strain in Foucault's work, how typical is it of the *oeuvre* overall? Second, what is the significance of this Kantian-Foucauldian strain for recent cultural commentaries in general, and 'queer' criticism in particular? I argue that Miller's Kantian reading of Foucault's *oeuvre* conflates two of Foucault's philosophical themes or projects. The first of these is a structuralist, linguistics-indebted project of referring the conditions of experience to descriptions of subject positions within discourse. From Miller's perspective, *The Order of Things* is an example of Foucault's concern with mapping the great 'epistemes' or general movements of coherence across the totality of culture (Foucault 1970, p. 345, p. 367; cf Hall 1996a, p. 10; cf Hunter 1991, p. 47). Paul Rabinow (1991) agrees with this reading, when he describes the epistemic project in terms of Foucault being 'temporarily caught up in some of the structuralist vocabulary of the moment', and as consequently bracketing the category 'discourse' off from 'the social practices and institutions in which it is embedded' (1991, pp. 9-10).

Theodore R. Schatski's and Wolfgang Natter's 'Sociocultural Bodies, Bodies Sociopolitical' (1996) exemplifies the enduring influence of Foucault's 1960s 'epistemic' project on some 'Foucauldian' cultural and political theorists of the 1990s (1996, pp. 6-7). This essay appears in their edited anthology *The Social and Political Body* (1996), which also includes Butler's essay 'Performativity's Social Magic'. In introducing the book, Schatzki and Natter discuss Butler's identification of a particular problem in Bourdieu's theories. They write that 'Bourdieu's separation of linguistic and social dimensions of speech acts, [is] a difference that mimes the opposition between subjective and objective ...' (1996, p. 16). This point parallels the one that Rabinow identifies above in the Foucault of *The Order of Things*: the tension between metaphysics and empiricism that has characterised Kantian philosophy (cf Jenkins
Schatski and Natter read Butler's own response to this problematic of representation as demonstrating 'both the presence of each [linguistic] term in its alleged opposite and the reification of the objective term involved ... Butler's essay concludes with intimations of a non-reifying analysis of bodily performativity that stresses the constitutive powers of repeated processes of interpellation' (Schatski & Natter 1996, p. 16). Butler's queer critique of Bourdieu is in this respect a theoretical hybridisation and refinement of Foucault's and Althusser's earlier 'historicising' theories of subjectivity.

It is not unusual for Foucault to be recruited to projects of dialectical criticism, at the price of reducing his whole *oeuvre* to what he himself called a repetitive Kantian ritual of 'unveiling' subjectivity's *a priori* (1970, p. 364; cf Williamson 1997, p. 178). When de Lauretis drew her readers' attentions to the 'technical' but nonetheless ultimately coherent conditions of their own subjective experiences, she engaged in this ritual; she opted to privilege the dialectics of culture over less glamorous alternatives in Foucault's work, such as those inspired by Ludwig Wittgenstein's positive descriptions and analyses of specific and contingently organised 'language-games' (Rabinow 1991, p. 9). The previously cited passage from Miller's biography of Foucault is another case in point. While Miller does mention 'language-games', he does so only in passing, and only in so far as he sees them as significant for the general category 'experience'.

Schatzki's and Natter's reading of Butler also continues the 'Kantian-Foucauldian' tradition. Like Miller, they draw on *The Order of Things*, in which Foucault set out to investigate the historical conditions that had led to the emergence of the anthropological figure of Man in the human sciences, and the ensuing consolidation of that figure in numerous social sites and practices. The object of this investigation — 'scientific practice' — is "a certain way of regulating and constructing discourses that defines, in turn, a particular domain of objects while simultaneously determining an ideal subject destined to know them" (Foucault in Miller 1993, pp. 142-143). These passages — including a passing reference elsewhere to the vast terrain of 'the Western episteme' — have subsequently provided some critics with precedents for their own projects to mediate the cultural field (Foucault 1970, p. 367; cf Fuss 1991, p. 7).

Sedgwick has looked to the Kantian-Foucauldian project for a precedent for her theories of a queer ethical grid of knowledges. During the 1990s, Sedgwick's *Epistemology of the Closet* (1991) achieved prominence in the literature on 'Queer Theory' (cf Jagose 1996, p. 19; cf Seidman 1997a, p. 151). In a passage from it that has attracted significant critical attention, she paraphrases Foucault's theory of
sexuality from the first volume of *The History of Sexuality* (1978). She writes that since the end of the 19th century there has been a

world-mapping by which every given person, just as he or she was necessarily assignable to a male or a female gender, was now considered necessarily assignable to a homo- or a hetero-sexuality, a binarised identity that was full of implications, however confusing, for even the ostensibly least sexual aspects of personal existence. It was this new development that left no space in the culture exempt from the potent incoherence of homo/heterosexual definition (Sedgwick 1991a, p. 2; cf Seidman 1997a, p. 151).

For Sedgwick, 'the culture' is a linguistic-representational order of binary philosophical terms that gain their values from other pairings; together they constitute the Imaginary conditions of subjectivity. Sedgwick uses her queer/feminist dialectics of culture to deconstruct the roles played by particular nodes in this epistemological order of heteronormativity/patriarchy. She consequently finds a place in her criticism for the queer 'heterosexual/homosexual' alongside the feminist 'masculine/feminine', as key determinants of normative subjectivity (Sedgwick 1991a, pp. 9-10; cf Fuss 1991, p. 1; cf Bland & Mort 1997, p. 23).

Biddy Martin (1994) argues that whereas Sedgwick tends to 'make sexuality irreducible to sex/gender by rendering sex/gender of bodies the more fixed, but also potentially irrelevant, ground', Butler has a tendency to 'make sex/gender and sexuality the effects of discursive practices, even at the level of the body' (1994, pp. 118-119). In the following passage Martin implicitly acknowledges that Butler's 'post-structuralist' refinement of Sedgwick's structuralism continues the Kantian-Foucauldian tradition's interest in the relations between power and subjectivity.

Butler's climactic challenges to identity politics, to ahistorical assumptions about the shape of the symbolic, have done the crucial ground-clearing work of opening the analysis of interiority to its construction in and through relations of power (Martin 1994, p. 119).

Martin also describes Butler as motivating further critical commentaries on the dialectics of culture: 'renewed and innovative approaches to the entanglements of organism/psyche/sociality' (*ibid*; cf Mauss 1973, p. 85).

For Sedgwick, as for other neo-Kantian critics, 'the culture' is an epistemological field riven with powerful contradictions, exclusions, on-going contestations and tactical manoeuvres between social groups with claims to rival systems of meaning. The French cultural historian Roger Chartier (1988) likewise writes of
classifications, divisions and groupings that serve as the basis for our apprehension of the social world ... [being] ... fundamental categories of the perception and evaluation of reality ... Rival representations are just as important as economic struggles for understanding the mechanisms by means of which a group imposes (or attempts to impose) its conception of the social world, its values and its dominion (1988, pp. 4-5).

Critics of the Imaginary often define their field as a differentiated totality and as an historically 'articulated' domain. Lawrence Grossberg et al. (1992) work in this conjunction between Gramscian 'articulation', Kantian-Foucauldian discourse analysis, and the Althusserian critique of the 'Imaginary', when they define 'articulation' as

a way of describing the continual severing, realignment, and recombination of discourses, social groups, political interests, and structures of power in a society. It provides as well a way of describing the distinctive processes by which objects and identities are formed or given meaning (Grossberg et al. 1992, p. 8).

Elsewhere, Grossberg (1994) expands on this description by writing that 'starting from the assumption that there are no guaranteed relations in history, ['articulation'] goes on to analyze history as the practice of deconstructing and reconstructing relations (contexts, effects, etc.)' (1994, p. 5). However, other writers have been concerned that to the extent the aforementioned conjunction treats 'all cultural activities [as being] bound into a struggle for hegemony', it is problematically lacking in a capacity for discrimination (Bennett 1992, p. 29).

Through their syntheses of key theoretical texts, Sedgwick, Fuss, and Martin/Butler have been able to mediate a complex play of signifiers retrieved from across their field. The concept 'articulation' straddles their dialectics of differentiation and totalisation: it guarantees the envisaged totality and its internal differentiation; and it prompts 'historicising' analyses of instances of difference, while recuperating them back into a metadiscourse of the articulated totality. The act of positing culture as a 'discursive' epistemological order provides contexts for subsequent acts of theoretical clarification revealing more of the currently obscured dynamic complexity (cf Foucault 1970, p. 364). Neo-Kantian critics' ethical commitment to mediating their field in this manner allows them to keep faith with each difference they identify, while also following their imperative to comment critically on any and all aspects of the cultural domain.

Notwithstanding the role of deconstructive cultural criticism in revealing new images of the codes that support the structures being 'historicised', its status as a break from structuralism lies precisely in the emphasis it places on the act of revelation itself. Where other versions of critique have sought to
supplant inadequate concepts with 'truer' ones ... the deconstructive approach puts concepts 'under erasure'. This indicates that they are no longer serviceable – 'good to think with' – in their originary and unreconstructed forms (Hall 1996a, p. 1).

This practice of referring demonstrably inadequate concepts to a process of on-going criticism has had applications among queer theorists, in efforts to induce a crisis in the prevailing epistemological order. In these queer accounts, heteronormative culture increasingly strains to contain the internal contradictions between its apparently fundamental units of perception.

As my discussions of de Lauretis demonstrated, her attempt to emancipate the 'radical epistemological potential' of feminist thought takes the form of advocating a model of the social subject as 'not unified but rather multiple, and not so much divided as contradicted'. On that occasion, the main concept that de Lauretis was deconstructing was the apparently integrated human subject, which she treated as a deception perpetrated by liberal pluralism. Similarly, Fuss describes the old cultural order traditionally associated with this subject as trembling on the brink of collapse, undermined by its inability to conceal its internal contradictions and a corresponding reduction in its capacity to produce compliant or 'good' subjects (1991, p. 1; cf Althusser 1971 p. 128, pp. 157-158). This mooted crisis of contradiction is also assumed in Sedgwick's description of 'many of the major nodes of thought and knowledge in twentieth-century Western culture as a whole' losing their integrity, due to 'a chronic, now endemic crisis of homo/heterosexual definition' (1991a, p. 1).

The previously discussed Gramscian concept of 'articulation' is relevant for these dialectics of culture, as is the related linguistics-derived term 'polysemy'. This refers to an argument concerning the relational nature of signifiers: that these apparently 'fundamental categories of the perception and evaluation of reality' – to use Chartier's overtly Kantian phrase – gain their meanings through their relations with other signifiers (cf During 1993, p. 6; cf Allen 1997, p. 38). Butler (1990) makes an appeal to 'polysemy' when she writes that the figures 'heterosexual' and 'homosexual' gain their significance relationally, polysemically: 'Thus, gay is to straight not as a copy is to original, but rather, as copy is to copy' (1990, p. 31). Her intention is to use 'polysemy' to ward off possible cultural and political claims to 'authenticity' that may be based on appeals to the apparent autonomy of the liberal-humanist individual. Fuss likewise argues that 'any identity is founded relationally, constituted in reference to an exterior or outside that defines the subject's own interior boundaries and corporeal surfaces' (1991, pp. 1-2). In this case, Fuss uses 'polysemy' to queer Cartesian dualism: to 'out' what she sees as the hidden complicity between the apparently antithetical concepts 'body' and 'soul'. As I noted earlier, Tyler makes use of the concept
'polysemy' when she urges her readers to be cognisant of their own positioning in 'a number of discourses besides those of gender and sexuality', since, to quote Spivak, 'knowledge is made possible and is sustained by irreducible difference, not identity'.'

Hunter (1984) argues that 'polysemic' sensitivity is a moral attribute of those practitioners of deconstructive criticism whose aim is to free subjects of language 'to explore the "plurality" of other possible meanings awaiting discovery in the chain (1984, p. 416). This is a reference to the practice of using 'polysemy' to theoretically slip between orders of 'promiscuity', or across the interconnected fields of 'signification' and 'desire'.

[It] only remains to identify the plurality of other meanings in the chain with 'desire' and we can start to imagine that this new critical practice will overcome the fixing of the subject in representation and ideology through a liberation of desire (ibid).

It is ironic that, as a correlate of this promise of mutability, the heteronormative order of queer criticism gains an 'eternal' image; that 'polysemy' not only ensures the interconnectedness of terms like 'homosexual/heterosexual', but frustrates attempts to displace them completely and permanently. Earlier I discussed the example of what I called Watney's 'Mosaic' appreciation of desire's 'eternal' duality. Now I add the example of Fuss's statement that the discursive figure 'inside/outside ... can only be worked on and worked over – itself turned inside out to expose its critical operations and interior machinery' (1991, p. 1; cf Hall 1991, p. 1). Following these earlier and more recent arguments and examples, I can say that when queer theorists have represented the relations between manifest and hidden truths for their readers, they have typically done so through a dialectics of culture: a specialist aesthetico-ethical practice of cultural commentary characterised by expansive powers of interpretation and a repetitious set of 'transgressive' gestures.

Conclusion.

In this chapter I identified a strategy of theoretical completion shared by adherents of queer cultural criticism. I argued that, following this strategy, some queer theorists hybridised and refined the structuralist arguments of Althusser's Marxian critical theory and Kantian-Foucauldian historicising commentaries on sexual subjectivity. Thus, when de Lauretis makes the personal attribute of 'doubled vision' the defining feature of her subject of feminism, she draws on, and establishes a degree of theoretical distance from, earlier structuralist accounts of subjectivity. By critically
appreciating Althusser's 'fully interpellated' subject and Foucault's 'technical' redescription of modern sexuality, de Lauretis stakes a claim to a more nuanced understanding of subjectivity's constitution in a social field of representation (cf Schatzki & Natter 1996, p. 16; cf Hunter 1991, pp. 42-43). As we saw, such theoretical claims accompany an ethical imperative to exceed the conceptual limits of structuralism, in the name of a variable subject-as-process. I have argued that one of the factors that identifies otherwise varied queer critics is their hitching of this theoretical move to the political interests of 'transgressive', non-normative sexual constituencies.

It is a common custom of neo-Kantian cultural critics to address their field as if it were poised on the brink of 'crisis', due to its difficulties in containing its own contradictions. Adherents to the broadly Marxian tradition of 'critical theory' have aspired to precipitate this crisis (cf Giroux 2000, p. 342, p. 354). I discussed the example of Fuss, who identifies the order of culture as having functioned 'until now': until this historical moment in which a viable epistemological alternative has emerged (1991, p. 1). When Fuss mediates the old and the new orders of 'culture' as corrosive discrepancies between dominant and subordinated systems of meaning, she continues this established social-semiotic tradition of theoretically dividing the epistemological field between rival and unequal identity-forming systems of 'language' or 'discourse', and deconstructing them (cf Schatzki & Natter 1996, pp. 6-7).

In this chapter I identified a variety of feminist, gay, lesbian-feminist, and non-normative heterosexual queer versions of this dialectics of culture. I described how their advocates have sought to use these 'counter-discourses' to widen what they see as fissures in the cultural field of representations. I discussed examples in which queer theorists mediate this apparent crisis of contradiction by holding opposed abstractions, such as 'inside/outside', 'masculine/feminine', and 'heterosexual/homosexual', in a state of tension (cf Hunter et al. 1993, p. 129). I also demonstrated how a particular 'Foucauldian' version of neo-Kantian philosophy helped to adapt this Romantic-derived dialectical practice of self-care to these 'political' deconstructive ends. Having cited these examples of relatively variable queer constituencies and agendas, I now go on to consider how it is possible to account for queer theorists' claims to difference — the 'politics of difference' they have typically attempted to secure through appeals to theoretical innovation — without such a guarantee.
Chapter 3: A cultural politics of difference?

Introduction.

Queer sexual dissidence is sometimes defined as a 'politics of difference' (Bristow & Wilson 1993, pp. 1-2). Iris Young (1990) describes 'queer' as a field whose subjects realise a reflexive goal of political philosophy: they 'conceive the social process in which we move as a multiplicity of actions and structures which cohere and contradict, some of them exploitative and some of them liberating' (Young in O'Donnell 1995, p. 3). By contrast, Jacinth Samuals (1999) sees this 'subjectivity which celebrates sexual difference without concern for achieved or ascribed characteristics' as a problem. Samuals argues that despite this apparently subversive subject having been theorised in an 'attempt to eschew the totalizing effects of the categories "gay" and "lesbian" ', its theorists have typically failed to differentiate it from a 'liberal humanist discourse whose purported universality requires the production of abstract, sovereign subjects without concern for their social location' (1999, p. 91). Samuals' sophisticated form of ideology-critique understands this failure to differentiate as seriously compromising queer theorists' capacities to develop queer studies and to forge political alliances 'with other marginalized subjectivities' (1999, p. 106). One of my main tasks in this chapter is to describe some of the particular circumstances and effects of this disputable queer 'politics of difference'.

Seidman's (1997a) response to deconstructive queer critics' hyperbolic tendencies is a useful precedent for my project to account for these disputes over 'difference'. At one point in this response, in a discussion of Fuss's 'analysis interminable', Seidman acknowledges that Fuss 'does not assume that [this] is sufficient to subvert the hetero/homo hierarchy. Cultural critique must be wedded to a politics of interest' (1997a, pp. 153-155). However, rather than see Fuss's making of this point as an aberration, he takes it as an example of how queer cultural critics' deconstructive commentaries have been offered as 'an alternative to, or supplement of, the paradigm of an identity-based politics of interest' (1997a, p. 154). In this chapter I develop this point by describing specific examples of 'post-identitarian' sexual dissidents' relations with their two main foci of interest: their 'ethical substance' — the term Foucault (1985) uses for 'the way in which the individual has to constitute this or that part of himself [sic] as the prime material of his moral conduct' — and the objective field of cultural politics (cf 1985, p. 26).
I argue that far from being an aberrant gesture, Fuss's concession to the limits of critical thought is not uncommon among 'post-identitarian' theorists. For example, it has a parallel in Lauren Bertlant's and Michael Warner's (1995) own problematising of the rubric 'Queer Theory'. They write that they wonder if queer commentary might not more accurately describe the things linked by the rubric ['Queer Theory'], most of which are not theory. The metadiscourse of 'queer theory' intends an academic object, but queer commentary has vital precedents and collaborations in aesthetic genres and journalism. It cannot be assimilated to a single discourse, let alone a propositional program (Bertlant & Warner 1995, p. 343).

As I noted in my first chapter, Halperin (1996) likewise expresses a reluctance to use the term 'Queer Theory', since this would reduce gay and lesbian studies to the practice of critical theory (1996, p. 2). However, when the 'otherwise "straight" ' Thomas (1997) comments on Bertlant's and Warner's qualifying redescription of 'Queer Theory', he does so without this sensitivity to the problem of assuming that 'Theory' refers to a unified object; he is prepared to attribute a primary status to this 'object', relative to the non-theoretical aspects of the practice of queer commentary. At one point, Thomas refers to 'queer theory (or, as Bertlant and Warner prefer to call it, "queer commentary")', thus occluding one of these authors' potentially most important observations: that this object is most convincingly and usefully understood as variable and 'dispersed' (1997, pp. 83-84). Unlike Thomas's argument, Bertlant's and Warner's stated position in the above passage accords with arguments I made earlier: that queer strategies are not confined to the championing of 'democratic' popular culture; and that 'queer culture' does not correspond to a unified field of objects.

Other writers in academic cultural studies share Bertlant's and Warner's concern to problematise rationalist reductionism. For example, in Mark Gibson's (2001) discussions of the relations between institutional cultural studies and the intellectual politics of the practice of 'critical theory', he questions what he calls Patrick Fuery's and Nick Mansfield's claims for the 'world-historical importance of poststructuralist theory' (2001, p. 123). Gibson cites these hyperbolic tendencies as examples of some of the problematically rationalist convictions held by these and other academic critical theorists: that earlier disciplines had 'assumed a "universal human nature" ', and that 'now, thanks to Barthes, Derrida, Irigaray and Lacan, our eyes have been opened to the reality of "difference" ' (ibid). Gibson questions this assumption that what distinguishes 'post-structuralist' academic cultural studies from older modes of study is its superior ability to mediate the principle of 'difference' (2001, p. 124; cf Hunter 1988, p. ix).
In this chapter I draw my examples from the literature on cultural politics. But while these may make disputable rationalist claims to 'difference', my main interest is in understanding how such claims function in specific institutional sites and ethico-political practices. I question whether these practices can be adequately assessed from a theoretical perspective that is largely focused on their self-perfectionist or socially-perfectionist orientations. In the final section of the chapter I develop my descriptions of queer commentary as a variable ethico-political practice further, using theatrical and filmic examples – together with their accompanying critical commentaries – which enjoyed more or less enduring careers in late 20th century sexually dissident circles.

**Conscientious orientations to 'difference'.**

Queer deconstructive critics have sought to disrupt the logic of a heteronormative gay and lesbian mainstream by uncovering currently elided differences in the field of cultural politics: differences that the contemporary order of sexual politics helps to efface. Halperin (1996) made this point when he noted that de Lauretis had tried to 'introduce a problematic of multiple differences into what had tended to be a comparatively monolithic, homogenizing discourse of (homo)sexual difference' (1996, p. 1). Similarly, Robin Maltz (1998) writes that 'all queer categories contain multiple, overlapping, and sometimes conflicting subjectivities' (1998, p. 1). What does 'difference' refer to when used in commentaries on queer as a 'politics of difference'? How has the principle of 'difference' been applied in a practice of sexual dissidence?

Some writers have sought the theoretical traction for a queer 'politics of difference' in analyses of specific representational techniques. B. Ruby Rich (1993) does this when she writes of contemporary films and videos whose formal qualities problematise heteronormative conventions of representation: those conventions that a gay and/or lesbian 'mainstream' has been either unwilling or unable to displace. Rich sees this mainstream as acknowledging and sanctioning only those conventions for representing differences of race, class, sexuality, generation and gender which reinforce essentialist notions of identity and the eroticisation of the Other (1993, p. 319). She consequently advocates a cinema and video practice with a provisional sense of subjectivity as its ethical norm, and a prominent role reserved for the strategy of displacing conventions that objectify non-normative subjects, with ones that maximise opportunities for reflexivity. For Rich, the designations 'gay' and 'lesbian'
are reified subject positions within, no less than without, cinematic discourse: positions imposing problematic limits on their occupants' experiences of differences. By contrast, she sees 'queerness', 'in its outsider guise', as a way to supplant a 'homosexuality' that is no longer 'the ultimate challenge to the bourgeois family' (Rich 1993, p. 336; cf Evans & Gammon 1995, p. 14).

Rich's assessments of contemporary sexual politics were common in her *milieux* during the early 1990s. The British artist-filmmaker Derek Jarman's posthumously published journal *Smiling in Slow Motion* (2001) includes a photograph of Jarman, taken at the 1992 Sundance Film Festival, and posing with Rich and other 'young queer film-makers ... there for a panel, which was obsessed with violating the political correctness of seventies gay lib' (2001, p. 74). During this period, Jarman was a noted critic of established gay and lesbian politics. His journal contains numerous references to his contempt for this 'assimilationist' Establishment, as well as expressions of his allegiance to a more radical queer politics (Jarman 2001, p. 181, p. 208). Thus, after watching the actor and gay activist Michael Cashman refer in a television interview to participants in a Pride demonstration as 'ratepayers' – a reference Jarman calls 'a horrible call to middle-of-the-road values' – he writes that if 'this is what gay has to offer I'm glad I'm queer' (2001, p. 10, cf Watney 1994, pp. 18-19).

Later in his journal, after dismissing the British magazine *Gay Times* for its commitment to an illusory politics of 'positive images', Jarman writes that

I didn't discover my sexuality to sell in – I want change. 'Gay' itself was a problem for the artists I knew, it did not describe us. If we had come up with 'difficult' that would have been better[:] *Difficult News, Difficult's The Word, thank God for Queer – Capital Queer, Queer Times* (Jarman 2001, pp. 168-169).

In my previous chapter I cited a similar statement made by Fouratt. However, on that occasion it was the gay liberation political consciousness of the late 1960s that was being distinguished from an older sexually dissident ethos: that of the 'homophile' activists (Fouratt in *Over the Rainbow*, 1994). Rich, Jarman and Fouratt are all of the opinion that homosexual politics seeks to found itself on a principle of 'tolerance', and believe that this amounts to supporting a spurious liberal pluralism (cf Goldstein 1994, p. 3). What differentiates Jarman and Rich from Fouratt is that in the early 1990s artistic *milieux* in which they lived and worked, it was customary to see queer culture and its subjects' provisional senses of 'identity' as together constituting the new 'ultimate challenge' to this limiting heteronormative 'pluralism' (cf Bertlant & Warner 1995, p. 2; cf Allen 1997, p. 39).
Rich encourages film and video makers to adopt representational techniques that defy reification by setting in motion an on-going play of identifications and distanciations that cannot be readily, if at all, appropriated by the heteronormative mainstream. Her prototypes for this post-identitarian era of cinema history are the radical formal qualities of certain films and videos of the 1980s, and the interpretive strategies of their audiences. She writes of these cultural formations that, in retrospect, they were 'the starting points toward a cinematic examination of cross-race dynamics for lesbians and gay men' (Rich 1993, p. 322, p. 336). Rich has great expectations for a 'new queer cinema' that adopts these conventions for representing differences.

Perhaps the dialogue surrounding cross-race alliances that broke off in the aftermath of integration's failure in the 1960s can be re-engaged, wiser for the years and struggles that have intervened, redefined as a negotiation of differing and even conflicting identities, and not as the melting-pot myth of the first time around (Rich 1993, pp. 335-336).

Rich conceives of her project as an art practice and commentary that are theoretically rigorous and popular, self-reflexive and socially transformative. I discussed this ambition to fuse queer critical expertise and democratic politics earlier, in reference to the theatrical performance Helmet and the journalistic feature article 'Queer as Foucault'. On those occasions I identified some of their principals' common assumptions: that their audience shared an integrated field of cultural capital; and that this coherence extended to the relationship between themselves and that audience. I queried these assumptions, particularly the notion that the latter 'coherence' guarantees a successful translation of a specialist theory of 'performativity' into a popular theatrical performance.

In Jarman's journal he expresses his own position on these assumptions, in a passage in which he first condemns the gay and lesbian political Establishment - 'who should be helping us' but do not - before pronouncing judgement on his critics and his own audience alike. He writes that I always believed in High Art, made my films in that Establishment - my critics were too stupid to understand this; and my audience just wanted to dance to Gloria Gaynor, not yawn through [my film] The Garden' (Jarman 2001, p. 28). Here Jarman conceives of two problematic audiences - one specialist but remiss in its critical duties, and the other popular and unable to appreciate his High Art references and aims - and a political Establishment that wilfully ignores him.

Among the films and videos Rich examines are: Lizzie Borden's Born in Flames (1983), Gus Van Sant's Mala Noche (1986), and Sheila McLaughlin's She Must Be Seeing Things (1987).
Jarman's indictment is further evidence of the variability of queer commentaries; raising it problematises images of a queer 'politics of difference' as the expression of queer-democratic aspirations. In fact, Jarman's frustrated outburst reaffirms a thoroughly conventional faith in a redemptive aesthetic dimension. This is the perfectionist cultural process famously theorised in the 19th century by the British cultural critic and education bureaucrat Matthew Arnold, when he recommended 'culture as the great help out of our present [1868] difficulties, culture being a pursuit of our total perfection ...' (Arnold in Connell 1971 (1950), p. 161). I suggest that the queer versions of this faith in culture's redemptive powers are made possible by the intervening years, in which _ as I argued in my first chapter _ previously 'base' texts were redeployed in certain secular-spiritual practices of formal education that distributed prestigious and formerly elite capacities for self-care (cf Hunter et al. 1993, p. 96). Jarman and Rich are united by their own versions of these conventional critical ambitions; frustrated in Jarman's case, and hopefully resurgent in Rich's.

A notable problem of Rich's perfectionist criticism derives from her manner of envisaging the subject of her 'new queer cinema'. In the conclusion of her article, Rich writes that 'as audience and critic and inescapable repository of lived experience, standing at the bus stop of my subject position, waiting for a ride, I eagerly anticipate the arrival of the next conveyance' (1993, p. 336). This description overlooks the possibility that the ethical and political demands that may be peculiar to the 'locations' to which she imagines herself being transported may differ from the ones she currently adheres to. As a consequence, the metaphor of the cinema projector is more appropriate for Rich's description of her 'new queer cinema' than is that of the queer 'bus'; it better signals that this cultural formation is a logical extension of the personal comportment to which she and her critical milieu are already committed.

Rich expects to follow the same ethical and political imperatives in each 'location' she inhabits. Thus, when she envisages her queer cinematic formation as realising the feminist adage that '[the] personal is political', she confines her interests in the 'personal' and the 'political' to their critical elements alone: elements like a sceptical stance towards institutions, or a horror of 'compartmentalising' conceptions of ethical domains (Rich 1993, p. 335). Quoting Lyle Ashton Harris, Rich describes her goal as a ' "liberatory space where we can all be vulnerable and fully interrogate our race, gender, and class positions in order to fully claim our decolonized sexual subjectivities" ' (Harris in Rich, 1993, p. 335; cf Bertsch 1992). For critical dialecticians like Rich, a discourse that opens out onto a process of endless self-interrogation is not a vaguely invoked, nightmarish tangle of ethico-political imperatives and onerous burden-adoption, but a vision of paradise.
Queer sensitivities and insensitivities regarding the ethical and political possibilities of film and video have their counterparts in queer commentaries on the medium of photography. An example is Jacqui Gabb's (1998) critical appreciation of Della Grace's photographs of lesbian 'drag kings': the lesbian counterparts to gay male 'drag queens'. Grace's photographs depict drag king performers in various erotically-charged and often sadomasochistic and fetishised poses. Gabb argues that these photographs were at first dismissed as lesbian pornography, before being redeemed by the upsurge of critical interest in transgressive sadomasochistic imagery in lesbian-feminist and queer art practices over the 1990s (1998, p. 298). She sees their 'gender fluidity' as denying any easy recourse to the reassuring heteronormative certainties familiar to heterosexual and homosexual viewers alike; in these photographs 'the tables are turned', non-queer viewers 'are now marginalised, (literally and metaphorically) excluded from the picture, whilst an "insider-knowledge" signifies our centrality' (1998, pp. 298-300).

Apart from their critical appreciation by Gabb, Grace's photographs figure prominently in Caroline Evans's and Lorraine Gamman's contribution to A Queer Romance (1995), while one appears as an illustration to Watney's 'Queer Epistemology' (1994). Jarman mentions in his journal that he knows Grace socially and that he owns a print of one of her photographs of 'lesbian boys with cocks' (2001, p. 97). He declares that these photographs 'are great and they confuse. Any queer is bound to look at the enormous dick before he [sic] realises it is a strap-on dildo worn by a boyish girl' (Jarman 2001, p. 199). Evans and Gamman make a similar observation, and describe how Grace's photographs have been used by some gay men to 'queer' their sexual responses. These men 'have celebrated finding images of lesbian women whom they mistake for "boys" as pervasively attractive' (1995, p. 41; cf Haver 1996, pp. 196-197). Evans and Gammon illustrate the inverse side of this queering technology of sex with a story of one of Grace's photographs being removed from the walls of a gay bar 'when the lesbian "object of desire" was revealed not to be a biological man ... [:] ... genderfuck was not to be allowed in this bar' (1995, p. 41).

What can the critical receptions of Grace's photographs tell us about the role of 'difference' in a queer 'politics of difference'? First, there is more than one 'difference' in evidence in the preceding examples. One is experienced by the subjects formed in a 'proper' contemplation of Grace's photographs, as the gap between the responses they have and those to which they aspire. In such circumstances, 'difference' marks the changes that must be wrought in their 'ethical substance' if the telos of this practice —

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11 This gender fluidity also applies to the photographer. Gabb notes that Grace identifies as ‘intersexual’, hence her references to 'Del LaGrace' and 'he' (1998, p. 304). I have used ‘Della Grace’ and ‘she’, as these are more common in the queer literature.
the goal of a suitably queered response is to be achieved. Other 'differences' are deployed in the strategies of socially distinguishing those who engage in this particular practice of textual erotics from those who do not. Some of these differences are deployed by the participants — those who hung Grace's queer photographs in the bar and those who objected — or by interpreters of their actions and motives. Another 'difference' in evidence is the one that Dennis Allen (1997) calls 'a multiplication of possible identity categories': a liberal-pluralist definition of 'difference' as 'consumer choice' (Allen 1997, p. 39). Needless to say, Grace's photography, its conditions of distribution, and its popular audiences and specialist critical receptions, are irreducible to any of these 'differences'.

Gabb's image of Grace’s queer technology of sex as a ‘site’ of cultural politics is problematic. She describes the formal qualities of Grace's photographs as allowing 'the body, as a "subject" ' to negotiate 'multifarious points of identification that are strategic and/or temporally specific'; 'within this dynamic environment, ego-boundaries become fluid, identities move freely inside a matrix of potentialities, and individuals seek interdependence rather than exclusivity' (1998, pp. 297). However, as I argued in reference to Rich's similar description of her 'political' goal, acting on this post-structuralist image of self-determination as self-invention may result in the ethical and political integrity of these envisaged 'points' being over-ridden by what is, in effect, a version of Arnold's pursuit of 'total perfection'. The reflexive ideal common to these commentaries on queer politics is the _telos_ of their specialised conscientious orientation to 'difference'.

When Seidman (1997a) compares a queer 'transgressive' ethos with those political _ethoi_ that are focused on questions of race or of gender, he argues that whereas the latter have 'often remained tied to the assertion of identity', deconstructive queer theorists follow a 'more insistent politics of difference' (Seidman 1997a, p. 157; cf Wiegman 1997, pp. 10-11). Warner (1993) gives the 'transgressive' critical ethos this inflection when he describes it as a pursuit of a 'more thorough resistance to regimes of the normal' than is possible by using the 'minoritizing logic of toleration or simple political interest-representation' (Warner in Jagose 1996, p. 98). Rich's queering of screen studies and Gabb's queer commentary on Grace's photography are examples of this insistently perfectionist pursuit. They are 'technical' but nonetheless rationalist accounts in which 'queer', as a genuinely resistant art practice and audience, is distinguished from a lesbian and gay mainstream, largely on the basis of the presence or absence of truly 'transgressive' aesthetic techniques of resistance.

Seidman models an alternative to critical perfectionism when he chooses not to identify a queer version of a 'politics of difference' by its anti-identitarian emphasis alone, and when he does not instead try to displace its terms with apparently more
'authentic' social categories (cf Allen 1997, p. 28; cf Pakulski & Waters 1996, p. 4). Instead, he problematises the manner in which its advocates' capacities for critical commentary exceed their other resources; he argues that queer theorists' radically perfectionist antipathy to anything that limits their 'transgressive' image of a queer subject of desire is a problem to the extent that it denies them the ethical and political criteria needed to assess the 'differences' that they themselves seek to uncover for a political economy of sexual dissidence (1997a, pp. 160-161).

The custom of striking a 'transgressive' critical stance has not been confined to Rich's early 1990s 'new queer cinema' milieu and those who 'queered' their own intellectual processes and emotional responses by exposing themselves to Grace's photography; it has also appeared in contemporary histories of the moral and political philosophies of sexual dissidence. For example, in Dollimore's (1991) literary history of these fields he describes sexual dissidence in relation to two key issues:

- the complex, often violent, sometimes murderous dialectic between dominant and subordinate cultures, groups, and identities ... [and] ... those conceptions of self, desire, and transgression which figure in the language, ideologies, and cultures of domination, and the diverse kinds of resistance to it. One kind of resistance, operating in terms of gender, repeatedly unsettles the very opposition between the dominant and the subordinate. I call this sexual dissidence (Dollimore 1991, p. 21).

Dollimore's preferred strategy for theorising sexual dissidence is to critically appreciate this fluid social dynamic. He recommends this to his readers, as a corrective to the abstract tendencies of some of the writings on postmodernity. The 'post-identitarian' nature of his preferred mode of sexual dissidence is evident when he describes it as exceeding the dominant cultural order by turning 'away from the misleading language of entities', and instead embracing the language of 'social process and representation' (Dollimore 1991, p. 27).

Dollimore's approach to the problem of 'identity' includes a caution against assuming that there is a 'straightforward opposition between unchanging, internally undifferentiated versions of the dominant and the subordinate, the central and the marginal' (ibid; cf Allen 1997, p. 36). He consequently defines his model sexual dissidents by their refined critical appreciation of the dialectics of culture. Warner (1991) gives an explicitly queer inflection to these sensitivities to 'difference' when he argues that they provide sexual politics with an opportunity to 'overcome [heteronormativity] by actively imagining a necessarily and desirably queer world' (1991, p. 8; cf Bertlant & Warner 1995, p. 344; cf Jagose 1996, p. 2, p. 6).

When Seidman (1997a) discusses the prefigurative function of queer commentaries he writes that 'whereas queer politics mobilizes against all normalized
hierarchies, queer theory put into permanent crisis the identity-based theory and discourses that have served as the unquestioned foundation of lesbian and gay life' (1997a, pp. 140-141). Quoting Fuss, Seidman describes this mooted queer theory and politics of difference as contrasting

conventional approaches to identity which view it as a property of an object with a poststructural approach which defines identity as a discursive relational figure. [For Fuss, deconstruction] 'dislocates the understanding of identity as self-presence and offers, instead, a view of identity as difference' (Fuss in Seidman 1995, p. 130).

Sedgwick (1991a) identifies her own 'politics of difference' in a similar manner to Fuss, as an interrogation of the modern normative sexual regime: the epistemological system that was inaugurated when a 'sudden, radical condensation of sexual categories' strategically elided all but a few possibilities for experiencing difference (1991a, p. 9). Like Fuss, Sedgwick describes her project as the restoration of lost possibilities — such as a 'preference for certain acts, certain zones of sensations, certain physical types, [or] a certain frequency' — to the political economy of sexual discourse (1991a, p. 8).

For Sedgwick, the radical foreclosing of possibilities that defined modern sexuality impels and sanctions a project to recover the differences denied when 'gender object choice' emerged as 'the dimension denoted by the now ubiquitous category "sexual orientation"' (ibid). Dollimore likewise describes his post-structuralist project as a way to 'retrieve the lost histories of perversion' (1991, p. 27). I have already cited Jagose's similarly post-structuralist definition of 'Queer Theory' as an interrogation of the 'preconditions of identity and its effects'. However, as my discussion of Fuss in the previous chapter demonstrated, the field that queer theorists aim to first break from and then reshape, through deconstructive methods of crisis-inducement, is not rationally coherent. Notwithstanding this lack of coherence, however, the rationalist model of a queer 'politics of difference' has gained historical depth, through many attempts to retrieve the 'differences' currently occluded in cultural politics.

Some commentators on the practice of cultural criticism question the veracity of the model of 'culture' as a signifying system that tactically conceals its structural contingency and power effects from its subjects. For example, Williamson (1987) describes anti-realist cinema studies — in whose company I include Rich's account of a 'new queer cinema' — as treating representational techniques, such as point-of-view editing, as the 'language' of cinema: the 'discursive' conditions for the subject of cinema misrecognising 'the process by which sense is constructed' (1987, pp. 23-24). The feminist film critic Laura Mulvey (1992) makes this problematic 'linguistic' assumption when she supports Miriam Hansen's call for a film criticism that addresses the '"irreducibly composite character of the hieroglyphic sign (consisting of
pictographic, ideogrammatic and phonetic elements) and its constitutive plurality of meanings" (Hansen in Mulvey 1992, p.17).

For Mulvey, a properly reflexive film criticism combines these elements of a 'polysemic' model of language-culture and a suitable sense of critical distance from the power of film to induce 'misrecognition'. She notes that Hansen 'draws attention to the connection made by Freud between hieroglyphic writing and the figurative script of dreams: "Both these textual phenomena in their own way resist immediate perception and understanding, requiring instead an activity of reading and interpretation"' (ibid). Williamson sees this mode of cinema studies as giving 'difference' a special significance, as an excess that ruptures the prevailing order of binary philosophical-linguistic categories responsible for the '"fixing" of identities in representation, a possibility to be achieved by means of a continual, progressive movement between polarities' (1987, p. 24). I have shown that a queer conscientious orientation to 'difference' enacts these identifications and self-modifications between the nominal poles of a system of heteronormative hegemony and the 'transgressive' ethical ideal that Butler equates with truancy from 'the law' (Butler 1990, p. 145; cf Allen 1997, p. 48).

**Negotiating burdens.**

While it can be useful to describe a queer 'politics of difference' in reference to the post-structuralist ethos, it would be a mistake to assume that all who adhere to this ethos are uniformly unrestrained in their enthusiasms for perfectionism. Queer sexual dissidents have disagreed over even so important a strategy as subverting or transgressing the arbitrary boundaries of normative sexual politics. I raised this matter of discontinuity between and within ethoi in my initial discussion of Butler's queer performativity thesis, where I noted that she theorises moral agency as a failure of 'the law'. I argued that by emphasising the repetition/failure of a dominant grid of ethical knowledges, Butler elides her own gesture to a less programmatic and potentially more discerning focus on contingently organised aesthetico-ethical practices. But I also noted that these theoretical difficulties have not precluded the thesis from being extensively repeated (cf Jagose 1996, p. 98; cf Sikes 1997, p. 2). Clearly, the traction enjoyed by this thesis in queer and related milieux is not derived from its theoretical cogency alone.
Radical political thought and numerous avant garde artistic and literary circles of the 19th and 20th centuries had an interest in 'transgressive' moral agency long before the emergence of an identifiable 'Queer Theory'. There is a sizeable corpus from which to choose. As a consequence, when Dollimore surveys the archive of the field of sexual dissidence he finds in the life and work of Oscar Wilde a prototype 'transgressive ethic' that he interprets, after Foucault, as a 'reverse or counter-discourse': a 'transgressive aesthetic working through a politics of inversion/perversion' (1991, pp. 67-68). Earlier, I discussed 'transgressive' moral agency in reference to Gramscian theories of 'hegemony' and 'resistance' which have circulated widely in cultural and media studies. I identified this ethical ideal, as a telos of the post-structuralist ethos, and demonstrated how different versions of Foucauldian scholarship deploy it to varying effect.

I have argued that where the Kantian-Foucauldian tradition gives its own 'transgressive' comportment the status of 'unfettered' moral freedom, another strain refers that 'freedom' to positive descriptions of its social and historical conditions and limits (cf Wark 1998a, p. 40; cf Hunter 1994, pp. 24-25). Foucault worked in the latter mode when he expressed an interest in shifting the theoretical focus of sexual dissidence from a fragmented Reason that emancipatory critical theorists set out to restore to wholeness by healing its contradictions, to descriptions of contingently organised ethical domains and 'forms of rationality' (Foucault in Raulet 1988, pp. 26-29). Now I expand on my initial discussions of the tensions peculiar to critical sexual dissidents' ethoi, using an example of a 'Foucauldian' critical commentary on this problem of the role of rationalism in sexual dissidence.

John V. Walker (1994) describes the contemporary field of post-Foucauldian scholarship as being caught in a rationalist impasse, between humanist and post-humanist factions of the adherents of critical theory. He questions whether it is tenable to continue routinely dividing this field into a radical, transgressive strain of Foucauldian thought, and a mainstream – mainly American – 'Foucauldian' liberal-humanist scholarship which recites 'currently fashionable dogma concerning the fate of the marginalised and disempowered in Western society' (1994, p. 2). Walker's main examples of this problem are Halperin's 'Foucauldian' writings, especially his One Hundred Years of Homosexuality (1990), and Camille Paglia's (1992) dismissive responses to them. Walker sees these responses as being admittedly justifiable in Halperin's case, but as nevertheless tactically misreading Foucault's oeuvre. He consequently looks for theoretical continuities between Paglia's and Foucault's theories of transgression, where others – including Paglia herself – see only differences. Synthesising their theories, Walker concludes that 'rather than opponents, they are actually comrades in transgression and decadence, fighting what is forever fated to be a
losing battle "against nature" ' (1994, p.2). By thus rethinking the apparent 'contradictions' that rend the field of contemporary post-Foucauldian sexual dissidence, Walker aims to reconfigure its warring forces.

After Walker dismisses a currently naturalised order of sexual identities coincident with liberal pluralism, and after he questions a reductive rationalist response to this strategic elision of differences, he looks to sexual experience for the genuinely disruptive solution. At this point, he gestures to the 'ethics' of sex as a way out of the rationalist impasse he sees as occluding that solution. He argues that this 'sexual aesthetic' is an appropriate alternative because the post-Enlightenment sexual subject straddles the Apollonian/Dionysian divide: the opposing realms into which Western culture has traditionally divided experience since the time of the ancient Greeks (Walker 1994, p. 5).

Walker is guided along what he calls Foucault's 'path to decadent enlightenment' by the examples of Sade and Nietzsche, whom he describes as having entered into the Dionysian domain that Nietzsche had called the 'chaotic realm of eternal motion and flux which form strives to control, obscure, and deny' (1994, pp. 4-5). For the second move in this dialectical practice, Walker cites Oscar Wilde and Charles Baudelaire, as examples of how to leave this realm of nature, chaos and instinct and return to Apollo's realm of culture, order and reason. Other writers who sought to make this profitable crossing include Arthur Rimbaud, who described it as a 'long, immense and rational derangement of all the senses' ' (Rimbaud (1875) in Robb 2000, p. xiv). In Paglia's 'daemonization of Apollo', Walker finds a contemporary theory of a subject that likewise 'seizes control of what Foucault calls the "author-function" and (re)creates itself as pure exteriority – an objet d'art' (1994, p. 6). For Walker, Paglia's theory is significant because a properly modulated appreciation of the opposing forces represented by the Dionysian/Apollonian dichotomy is essential if the newly 'sensitised' sexual dissident is to avoid reproducing the post-Enlightenment Apollonian rationalism that produces 'both society, on the macrocosmic level, and personality, or "the subject", on the level of the individual' (1994, p. 4; cf Hunter et al. 1993, p. 106, p. 110). As I noted in the previous chapter, the 'otherwise "straight" ' Thomas has a similar prophylactic interest in avoiding the reproduction of normative subjectivity and society (1997, pp. 104-105).

It may be tempting to assume that 'queer' and Walker's 'path to decadent enlightenment' are expressions of a unified ethos. However, there are advocates of 'queer' who deviate from this path and who thereby bring such an assumption into question. The quotations from Bristow and Wilson (1993) near the beginning of the previous chapter showed that for some of its advocates 'queer' embodies the values of community, democracy, and pluralism traditionally associated with liberal humanism
Earlier in the present chapter I cited another response that is not so much concerned with dismissing such 'values' as liberal-pluralist delusions, as it is in understanding how their repetitions by queer theorists function in a contemporary political economy. I refer to Samuels' (1999) argument that 'the liberal premises [of universality and sovereignty] that underlie queer subjectivity actually facilitate the reappropriation of "queer" ' (1999, p. 91). For Samuels, queer's apparent failure as a socially transformative force is a consequence of its failure to provide a subject – a mode of 'politicisation' – that can maintain the necessary critical distance from liberal humanist ideology (1999, p. 106).

Watney (1994) sees 'queer' as being internally conflicted between 'an overall critique of the categories of sexuality and the unequal power relations they impose on everyone', and a social constructionist version of identitarian 'separatism'. He argues that despite its theoretical and ethical refinements, this 'queer nationalist' strain remains as problematic as the naive essentialist identitarianism favoured in liberal pluralism (Watney 1994, pp. 15-16). While Bertlant and Warner (1995) likewise divide the field of sexual dissidence, for them 'queer' is an anti-heteronormative version of a humanist ethic of 'culture building', what Walker would call an 'Apollonian' ethos. They admit that this ethic has 'flourished in the disciplines where expert service to the state has been least familiar and where theory has consequently meant unsettlement rather than systematization' (1995, p. 4). However, they also write that rather than necessarily being a problem, this 'failure to systematize the world' ensures that queer theorising escapes becoming 'an apparatus for falsely translating systematic and random violence into normal states, administrative problems, or minor constituencies' (Bertlant & Warner 1995, pp. 4-5). These commentators who theoretically divide the field of sexual dissidence subscribe to varying degrees of radical perfectionism.

Walker notes Paglia's abiding interest in the self-conscious art of the dandy, and cites Foucault's life and work as the 'epitome of the aesthetic propounded in [Paglia's] Sexual Personae' (1994, p. 2). This is a reference to how the discursive figure 'Foucault' can function as an example of what Foucault (1985) himself calls an 'aesthetics of existence': a concept of ethical self-creation that Foucault developed from Nietzsche, as well as from his own theory of a system of morality in which it is ethical modes of subjectivation that are emphasised, rather than moral codes (1985, pp. 30-31; cf Blasius 1994, p. 205). In a 1984 interview, Foucault makes the contentious argument that 'the idea of a morality as obedience to a code of rules is now disappearing, has already disappeared. And to this absence of morality corresponds, must correspond, the search for an aesthetics of existence' (Foucault in Kritzman 1990, p. 49). When Mark Blasius (1994) writes on a gay and lesbian political ethos, he identifies this search with the concept 'ethos' itself. He argues that
just as ethos needs to be understood apart from its reduction by social science
to the individual as a carrier of moral interests and values, so it also needs to be
understood apart from mere [camp] aestheticism ... (Blasius 1994, p. 206).

This reformulation of the problem of structure and agency is a characteristic feature of
post-structuralist political thought (cf Hindess 1986, p. 117). In this example, Blasius
argues that even

though ethos incorporates such stylized comportment, it is ... an ethico-political
category [that is irreducible to either the] self-policing gay social code [or]
moral relativism or nihilism (1994, p. 206).

For Blasius, the balance that this gay and lesbian ethos maintains between 'aesthetics'
and 'politics' differentiates it from the 'homosexual sensibility' that writers such as
Sontag had described as a camp 'private code' (ibid). Blasius conceives of the former
mode of self-stylisation in terms of a 'process of entering into and creating oneself'
through the field of relationships that constitutes the gay and lesbian community'
(1994, p. 207). This aesthetico-social inflection differentiates his own account of a gay
and lesbian ethos of sexual dissidence from Bertlant's and Warner's obdurately
'transgressive' vision of 'Queer Theory', as well as from Walker's reading of Foucault's
'aesthetic' as a general and 'anti-social' indictment of 'those lines which constitute and
enclose the Western subject or personality' (1994, p. 6).

Walker's appeals to a shift in the historiography of morality are intended to help
post-Foucauldian sexual dissidents sensitise themselves to the gaps in credibility that
are opened up by their own rationalist tendencies, as well as to improve their control
over the forces producing and disrupting sexual subjectivity and social life. However,
the tensions implicit in his own conscientious orientation to this 'politics of difference'
become evident when he problematises both the radically post-humanist and the
humanist versions of critical rationalism, while maintaining his devotion to the radical
version's hyper-ethical treatment of 'difference' as an absolute value: the Kantian-
Foucauldian view of 'difference' as sexual subjectivity's condition of freedom from a
normative and repetitive fate (cf Patton 1995, p. 162). It is ironic that in joining
Foucault and Paglia in their 'losing battle against nature', Walker looks to a
problematically repetitive discourse on 'difference' to realise his ethical ideal of truancy
from 'the law'. His qualified transgressive ethic, no less than Rich's 'technologised'
conscientious orientation to 'difference', assumes that less self-perfecting ethoi are
compromises that it can and must surpass.

Some non-queer post-structuralist theorists have sought to restrain their own
and their colleagues' more radically perfectionist enthusiasms. Dollimore does this
when he uses the diverse examples of the writers Andre Gide, Radclyffe Hall, Rita
Mae Brown, and Monique Wittig, to make the point that 'while some literary theorists deplore essentialism in all its forms', essentialist understandings of sexual identity do not necessarily serve conservative or conventional interests (1991, p. 26). When Frank Pignatelli (1993) writes of the enthusiasm for Foucault's work on the relations between power, knowledge, and subjectivity among humanist critical theorists writing on education, he argues that there is a problem in how they distribute the weight of their self-imposed burden of perfection. What 'these critical theorists appear to have left unexamined is the attention Foucault paid to ethical considerations and the importance he placed upon these considerations as part of a larger ethico-political project' (Pignatelli 1993, p. 1).

While Pignatelli raises the issue of the 'ethico-political' as a way to qualify the perfectionist impetus of much 'Foucauldian' critical theory, other post-structuralist theorists have interrogated the model of difference typically associated with the practice of discourse analysis. For example, Paul Patton (1995) queries the kind of discourse-centred theories that I have discussed in reference to queer criticism: 'identity' as an unstable subject position in discourse; and philosophical categories as slipping their moorings as the apparently 'fundamental categories of the perception and evaluation of reality' (Chartier 1988, p. 37, p. 40; cf Seidman 1995, p. 130). Patton establishes the necessary theoretical distance for his reflexive post-structuralism by advocating a model of difference adapted from Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari: a positive conception in which philosophical categories are matters of specificity or variance, and not binary terms adhering in a totality (1995, p. 162). Sedgwick's Kantian-Foucauldian reference to the vast category of 'Western culture' and Walker's 'lines which constitute and contain the Western subject' are examples of the kind of precipitous bent that Patton attempts to restrain.

When Grossberg (1994) problematises this perfectionist impetus, in its cultural studies applications, he suggests as his alternative that cultural studies practitioners adopt

a weak notion of difference (simply asserting that 'X' is not the same as Y or Z) and a strong sense of otherness (which argues that each term exists somehow independently of its relationship to the other terms, that it has its own positivity which is not merely an excess)

Like Patton, Grossberg recommends a

sense of difference/otherness [which] is more akin to Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's (1987) notion of multiplicity, which they oppose to fragmentation since the latter still leaves the trace of totality and unity, the trace of 'the one' (1994, p. 15).
Grossberg's definition of difference as 'multiplicity', rather than as 'fragmentation', parallels Patton's own positivism. Like Bertlant's and Warner's comments on the critical distance between queer commentary and state politics, these interventions in post-structuralist theories of 'difference' are intended to restrain critical theorists' perfectionist pulsions. However, if Walker's and Bertlant's and Warner's treatments of 'difference' tend towards the Kantian-Foucauldian tradition of critical theory, Grossberg's and Patton's are closer to the more positive strain of post-Foucauldian scholarship.

Writers and readers of post-structuralist commentaries on sexual politics have sought to sensitise themselves to a provisional sense of 'identity', and have distinguished this personal attribute from the demonstrably insensitive chauvinisms of persons who remain tied to models of sexual politics predicated on a whole or a fragmented sense of being (cf Thomas 1997, p. 92). I have described specific applications and effects of this critical practice of discriminating between 'differences'. Rather than assess the problem of 'difference' a priori, I referred it to these descriptions of specific ethic-political practices. Having thus argued that the critical ethos of those who make these distinctions is not coherent – that there are tensions between their perfectionist enthusiasms and an accompanying imperative to restrain that impetus – I now develop this argument by discussing examples of this variable ethos and its tactical combinations of sensitivity and indifference.

**Some uses of problem-texts.**

The history of sexual dissidence is marked by the repeated appearances of certain problem-texts. By discussing some representative examples – Mart Crowley's play *The Boys in the Band* (1968), William Friedkin's film version of the same name (1970), and Cyril Collard's film *Les Nuits Fauves (Savage Nights)* (1992) – I aim to develop a sense of the variety of ethico-political yields that the producers and consumers of critical commentaries on sexual politics derive from such problematisations. Since these examples enjoyed their greatest notoriety at either end of what could be called the 'gay liberation era' – the decades of the 1970s and 1980s – redescribing them and their associated critical commentaries can provide opportunities to better understand aspects of the shifting conscientious orientations of different coteries of sexual dissidents to the field of cultural politics over that period.
The Boys in the Band is the more enduring of my examples, having scandalised generations of sexual dissidents (Crowley 1968). This play coincided with the early Gay Liberation phase of emancipatory sexual politics. It consequently attracted the hostile attentions of activists, who routinely criticised it – and the film later adapted from it – for misrepresenting gay lives through its stereotypical or stock characters and narratives (Russo 1981, p. 177; The Boys in the Band 1970). The Boys in the Band tells the story of a group of gay male friends who gather in a New York apartment for a birthday party. Their host, Michael, is a self-loathing Catholic and compulsive communicant. As the party proceeds, over the course of an evening of biting camp humour and mounting hysteria, the highly stereotyped characters torment themselves and each other. The melodramatic plot reaches its climax when a married male friend of Michael's, who had 'crashed' the party, recoils from his own troubling homosexual desires, reaffirms his love for his absent wife, and flees the party. This act prompts the by now distraught Michael to deliver one of the play's/film's most notorious lines of dialogue – 'You show me a happy homosexual and I'll show you a gay corpse' – before leaving to catch the midnight Mass (Russo 1981, p. 178).

In the gay activist circles of the period, it was a common ethico-political stance to condemn The Boys in the Band. Within these milieux, holding that stance across the more or less formal sites and genres of social life was even a prerequisite for claiming an activist status. In his influential Homosexual: Oppression and Liberation (1973), Altman unfavourably compares the 'self-hatred' of The Boys in the Band with the 'exaggerated sexual role-playing ... of Andy Warhol and his large group of camp followers', on the basis of the latter being truer to the reality of 'much of the social gay worlds' (1973, p. 31). In 1981, the gay activist and film critic/historian Vito Russo wrote in The Celluloid Closet – another key text of the growing gay liberation canon – of the ambivalence of the stereotypical conventions repeated in the 1970 film version of the play. To the existing charge of 'internalised guilt and self-hatred', he added a moderating recognition that the film supplied 'concrete and personalised examples of the negative effects of what homosexuals learn about themselves from the distortions of the media' (Russo 1981, pp. 176-177). Writing in the early 1990s, Thomas Waugh (1993) took an even more tempered stance. He looked back with regret at the 'fierce polemics' from gay male critics – including Russo and even himself – whose preoccupations with 'positive' images of homosexuality had blinded them to 'sensible discussion of stereotypes and a social typing strategically useful for the gay liberation project of self-definition' (1993. pp. 154-155). As I have noted, Jarman gives an explicitly queer-identified form to this critique of a politics of 'positive' imagery.

Over the period of the 1980s, a capacity for moderating one's moral responses to the stereotyping of sexual identities became an established part of many sexual
dissidents' cultural capital. Such a modified critical response is a feature of John Clum's *Acting Gay: Male Homosexuality in Modern Drama* (1994), in which he discusses the stage version of *The Boys in the Band* in terms of a complex mix of 'positive' and 'negative' effects. Clum writes that in the play

an outsider disrupts a hermetic, 'realistic' society and leaves the stage at the climax of the action ... He leaves voluntarily, rejecting the world presented on the stage. The play's point of view is both that of the self-hating gay man and that of the outsider, who represents the audience on the other side of the fourth wall. What the outsider and the audience see and hear is purported to be a slice of life, the 'off-stage' activities of closeted gay characters when they're not 'playing straight'.

Like Russo, Clum goes on to moderate his ideology critique, by noting that for the first time

mainstream audiences see gay men talk openly about their sexual predilections ... Characters acknowledge a common gay culture with their references to the plays of Tennessee Williams and Edward Albee and their homages to camp movie queens like Maria Montez (Clum 1994, p. 255).

Clum's assessment differs from Altman's earlier critique, in its treatment of the play's aesthetico-political innovations. Where Altman was willing to appreciate Warhol et al. for their roles as cultural intermediaries\(^{12}\) — their ability to promote to wider audiences a camp sensibility and its enthusiasm for certain popular 'entertainers, usually ageing movie queens' — he did not extend this appreciation to *The Boys in the Band* (1973, p. 31). Clum, by contrast, makes this concession and tempers his judgment of the limits imposed on the play by the theatrical tradition of 'American realism, in which aberrant behaviour has to be explained and cured' (1994, p. 259).

Clum criticises *The Boys in the Band* for lacking 'positive reinforcement', but not for distorting a full social world, and not because its moralising 'realism' limits its subjects' experiences of limitless 'differences'. The first of these rejected options had been taken up by Altman in 1973, when he made representativeness a criterion for rejecting Crowley's stereotypical characters and narrative. The second option is identified with more recent post-structuralist and queer criticisms, in which the realist text is seen as an apparatus of misrecognition: what stands between the human subject and its desire. Jagose (1996) takes up this critical option when she argues that queer 'differs from its [identitarian] predecessor by avoiding the delusion that its project is to uncover or invent some free, natural and primordial sexuality'; and that instead, queer

\(^{12}\) For a discussion of cultural intermediaries, as those persons who distribute cultural capital between locations, or between social groups, see: Daniel Roche 1996, p. 100, p. 116.
'demonstrates its understanding that sexuality is a discursive effect' (1996, p. 98). In the previous chapter I discussed Watney's similarly 'Mosaic' appreciation of desire's 'eternal' duality.

When Clum criticises the play he emphasises the kinds of symbolic and ethical resources that it can contribute to its audiences' reordering of their sensibilities and patterns of thought and social life. It is true that he argues that the 'realist' conventions mobilised by this particular play are inadequate to the task of representing 'what it means to act gay'. However, for him, the question of the play's political significance is not primarily mimetic, but is orientated towards a specific ethico-political problem: how 'to find forms more suited to the creation of a positive gay self' (Clum 1994, p. 253, p. 259). Clum identifies this question of the 'adequacy' of specific representational techniques with the aesthetico-political challenges facing a coterie of playwrights who aim to contribute to cultural politics: how gay and lesbian audiences can use a play to form themselves as subjects of a sexual politics; how to introduce non-gay audiences to ethico-political stances that are advantageous to that politics; and what responsibilities should be prioritised when contemplating aesthetic and political imperatives, and weighing one's options. By balancing his critical appreciations of identity assertion and of praxis when he considers these issues, Clum allows a broadly popular orientation to the question of 'identity' to jostle with criticism's specialist ethical ideal. This is how he retains a pragmatic sense of the 'adequacy' of representations for the ethical challenges that dramatists and their audiences must meet if they are to contribute to an effective aesthetico-political project (Clum 1994, p. 255).

Not all of the problem-texts that have generated and contributed to debates around issues of sexual and other kinds of plurality have the demonstrated longevity of the play and film versions of The Boys in the Band, or its associated critical commentaries. Where these have a long record of serving to distinguish subjects of gay milieux and politics from their camp subcultural predecessors and counterparts – a record of scandalous utility that has spanned the 'homosexual', 'gay' and 'queer' eras of sexual dissidence – there are others, with possibly more tenuous positions in the public archive of 'transgressive' problem-texts. My main examples are the 1992 French film Les Nuits Fauves (Savage Nights) and journalistic feature articles, reviews, and academic writings that accompanied it at the time of its release, and which have subsequently commented on it.

Les Nuits Fauves tells the semi-autobiographical story of Jean, a bisexual filmmaker and musician, played by the film's writer and director, Cyril Collard. Jean has AIDS, lives a fast-paced and self-destructive lifestyle, and is involved, simultaneously, in two sexual relationships. The first of these is with Laura, a seventeen year old aspiring actress. As presented in the film, this relationship largely
accords with the conventions of romantic love. The second relationship, which is more sadomasochistic and less conventionally romantic in tone, is with Samy: a football player, death-defying thrill-seeker, and sometime member of a neo-Fascist street gang. After Jean confesses his HIV status to Laura, some time after they have had unprotected sex, she accuses him of monstrous behaviour but cannot bring herself to give him up. The film follows this passionate triangle through a series of these emotionally fraught confrontations and dramatic episodes, exploring as it does so, the emotional, moral, and political issues raised by the characters' actions and reactions.

In a 1994 academic cinema studies article on *Les Nuits Fauves*, critic and filmmaker Mark Nash discusses it in relation to the then-current enthusiasm for 'new queer cinema'. Unlike his contemporary Rich, however, Nash is not an advocate for the transgressive aesthetico-political possibilities of queer cinema and culture. On the contrary, he writes that from the evidence of his viewing of some of the commonly cited key films in this moment in cinema history, 'queer' is problematic.

My reading of 'queer' films like *Swoon, To the Living End,* and *Poison,* or certainly of the discourse around 'queer', is that queer is bound up in the articulation of a new identity (queer as opposed to gay) but one which is also, perhaps inevitably, a fantasmatic recreation of gay/queer as other — gay/queer as handsome, aesthetic and criminal ... This is the world of Genet and existentialism translated and updated (Nash 1994, p. 100).

Nash rejects 'queer' because it is 'aestheticised'; in his criticism, 'the aesthetic' is used in a particular Marxian-derived pejorative sense, as a synonym for 'Ideology' (cf Allen 1997, pp. 26-27). From Nash's perspective, the kind of queer paradise anticipated by critical dialecticians like Rich and Gabb is not a conceptual projection of their own specialised ethical model of the integrating critical intellectual, with variable effects that need to be described and assessed from case to case, but is symptomatic of a general mode of subjection.

Nash sets out to make the principle of 'difference' his main criterion for assessing queer-as-ideology. For him, the problem of 'fantasmatic' queer identity and 'politics' is that rather than disinterring crucial cultural differences, they threaten to elide them; he argues that in France 'there isn't a gay community in the [Anglophone] sense, one which could enable film-makers to say "we" ' (1994, p. 100). Nash takes this absence of a gay social context as a compelling reason for finding readings of French films as 'queer' problematic; the social identity from which 'queer' is projected is not well established in France. He consequently questions the suitability of 'queer' as a designation for *Les Nuits Fauves* on these 'ideological' grounds.

Is *Les Nuits Fauves* a queer film? Some reviewers, e.g. Simon Watney, clearly think not. Queer is an Anglophone word and has developed a currency in
countries where the oppression of gay people has a very different history from
that in France (Nash 1994, p. 100).

While Nash does refer to differing social and political histories in the above passage,
the 'difference' that monopolises his attention is the one between the internally
consistent and exclusive Anglophone and Francophone cultures (cf Warner 1993, p.
xxvii). The former is the 'site' of a

gay imaginary which is white and masculine [and which] dominates the gay
lifestyle press of the major metropolitan cities of the overdeveloped world:
London, New York, Los Angeles. Preferred narratives repeat it ... It can also be
heterophobic. So Collard's narrative, which is about a bisexual character and is
dominated by a heterosexual romance, does not fit the bill for this audience at

Nash's concern with the ideological effects and conditions of cultural production and
consumption – condensed in the notion of a 'gay imaginary' – has an obvious
genealogy in Althusserian critical theory. In this version, it is the aestheticism of the
'gay lifestyle press' that exemplifies the general problem of 'Ideology'. Robyn
Wiegman (1997) writes in the same tradition of ideology-critique, when she declares
gay male subjects and their politics of interests problematic, on the grounds that they
'threaten to confirm instead of interrupt the interpellation of the bourgeois subject as
one for whom knowledge gains its value in a circuit of self-production and
consumption' (1997, p. 14). I have previously mentioned another example of this
concern, in Allen's (1997) rejection of a liberal-pluralist definition of 'difference' as
'consumer choice'.

In a variant on structuralist Marxism's traditional guarantee for its cultural
critiques, Nash looks to the anti-ideological powers of 'Science' for a solution.
However, in this instance, 'Science' is not embodied in Marxian political economy, but
in a 'major study of British sexual behaviour', the 'findings [of which] really blow the
whole idea of having separate homosexual and heterosexual boxes apart' (Nash 1994,
p. 102). For Nash, the problem of gay-queer aestheticism is that it occludes the
possibility of an anti-realist cinema that could otherwise challenge this Anglophone
gay Imaginary. He writes that the latter's 'homosexual and heterosexual boxes' express
a 'desire to categorise and essentialise sexual identity, often in the name of a politics,
that is most put in question by films such as Collard's' (1994, p. 102). This empirical
variation on Marxian critical theory parallels Watney's previously discussed concern
that empirical observation and lived experience do not find adequate expression in the
currently prevailing order of sexual identities.

As is suggested by Clum's specifying of the problem of the 'adequacy' of
representational techniques, Nash's 'anti-aesthetic' approach is not the only option
available to theorists of sexual dissidence. In Blasius's (1994) discussion of individuals whose self-crafted ethos did not take place within a gay and lesbian community — Jean Genet, Quentin Crisp, and Gertrude Stein — he takes yet another position on the problem of the relations between aesthetics and politics. For Blasius, these individuals are exemplars for his own lesbian and gay male contemporaries, who choose to be "militantly "queer" ... through participation, trans-locally and trans-nationally in what has been called lesbian and gay gesellschaft, or the "queer nation" ' (1994, pp. 207-208). Blasius can conceive of 'aesthetic' aspects of his examples' 'outsider' ethoi — Genet's 'defiant self-assertion', Crisp's 'flaunting', and Stein's 'cosmopolitan bohemianism' — as possibly recyclable resources for a sexually dissident politics, because, unlike Nash, he does not hitch his image of a gay and lesbian politics a priori to a function of social reproduction; he instead sees it as an 'historically structured and historically changing' ethos (ibid).

In order to establish the 'bisexual' aesthetic strategy of Les Nuits Fauves as a general characteristic of French culture, rather than as a personal 'aesthetic' peculiarity of Collard's, Nash compares the film to Hervé Guibert's novel To the Friend Who Did Not Save My Life. He writes that each has an aversion to 'the G word', and that like Collard's circle, the 'Parisian literary world which Guibert describes doesn't draw a boundary between straight and gay society' (1994, pp. 102-103). Other sexually dissident cultural critics and historians have made similar observations. For example, the American novelist and essayist Edmund White, who also lives and works in Parisian literary circles, likewise argues that there is a reluctance within these social milieux to confine sexual conducts and identifications to the gay/straight dichotomy (Todd 1995, p. 61).

Nash's 'Imaginary' logic takes these peculiarly Parisian literary mores to be representative of a wider French and Southern European sensibility. Thus, when he distinguishes Collard's 'bisexual' aesthetic strategy from those modes of audience identification favoured by the film's 'British critics' — most notably Watney — he argues that bisexuality 'is a disturbing sign for these critics'; while 'French (as opposed to Anglo-American/queer) AIDS narratives emphasise bisexuality', the Anglophone commentaries on Les Nuits Fauves try to contain this rupture under liberal applications of the Anglophone-identitarian noun 'bisexual' (Nash 1994, pp. 102-103). However, for an attempt to make 'difference' the key criterion by which to assess sexually dissident cinema, Nash's favouring of Francophone 'bisexuality' over the Anglophone gay/queer Imaginary has the unfortunate effect of eliding issues of social class, or of regional and urban/rural cultural variations, as well as the differences between cinematic and literary cultural formations. One need not assume that other social
categories are more 'authentic' than 'gay' or 'queer', to find those categories' routine exclusion from consideration in Nash's critical commentary problematic.

The tactic of valorising 'bisexual' aesthetic strategies for their transgressive potential is relatively common in the theoretical literature on queer culture. Alexander Doty (1998) notes that many queer films and cultural commentaries attempt to 'bring established sexuality and gender categories to a crisis point by exposing their limitations as accurate descriptive terms' (1998, p. 150). As an example, he cites the complex manner in which viewers respond to Katherine Hepburn dressed as a young man in the 1936 film Sylvia Scarlett: a complexity that conventional analytical terms such as 'masculine', 'feminine', 'straight', 'lesbian', or 'gay' do not adequately convey. After identifying these terms, he writes that he has deliberately left the terms 'bisexual' and 'androgynous' off the list ... as some theorists and critics working with queer-queerness feel that among established gender and sexuality concepts bisexuality and androgyny offer two of the best starting-points from which to develop theoretical and critical positions that will move film and popular culture criticism and theory beyond gender difference and orthodox sexual categories (Doty 1998, pp. 150-151).

Wark's 'Bisexuality: Beyond the Third Term' (1998b) is an example of the kind of faith in the disruptive potential of 'bisexuality' that Doty refers to. In this article Wark looks for the solution to the problem of heteronormativity in a qualified version of 'bisexuality'. He writes that 'pure' homosexuality presents itself at the opposite pole (to 'pure' heterosexuality) – only now it no longer needs sexologists, sociologists, psychologists, and the police to identify it. It has taken on the burden of bounding the category of straightness by identifying itself (Wark 1998b).

Like Nash, Wark believes that a self-reflexive 'bisexuality' can query and even bring to crisis the cultural logic of a system of mutual containment between the apparently exclusive identity categories 'heterosexual' and 'homosexual'. For Wark, this strategy is subversively effective only so long as it avoids becoming the stabilising 'third term' of an insidiously regenerating identitarian cultural and political logic. Nash's commentary on Les Nuits Fauves is kin to Wark's 'transgressive' ethos and project to demonstrate the inadequacies of the modern order of sexual categorisations. 'Bisexuality' serves similar critical purposes for Nash and Wark, as 'queer' does for others, such as Rich and Jarman.

The scandalous utility of Les Nuits Fauves is not confined to academics who work in cinema studies and cultural studies. This problem-text has also appeared in journalistic genres, such as newspaper feature articles, and in television film review
programs. These appearances have offered opportunities for press and television audiences to take up a variety of positions around the problems of the film's aesthetic, ethical and political aspects. Each of these occasions mobilised a number of aesthetico-political practices and governmental programs: those involved in HIV and AIDS management; debates on how to appropriately represent such issues in cinema; and questions of artistic and sexual morality and responsibility.

When Peter Thompson reviewed *Les Nuits Fauves* in the Australian television program *Sunday* (1994), he did so in terms reminiscent of Walker's description of Foucault's 'path to decadent enlightenment'.

> It's a high risk film about high risk people, who test the limits, toss out the rule book, who attempt to find a new kind of nobility in emotional excess. It's a chaotic, disturbing, sometimes funny, sometimes shocking film, which confronts some pressing contemporary moral issues in a fearless, uncompromising way (Thompson in *Sunday* 1994).

For Thompson, the film's emotional excessiveness and morally ambiguous representational strategies are redeemed by its integrity, its status as a serious work of art. He notes that 'Cyril Collard deliberately avoids condemning his own behaviour, or trying to justify it', and argues that while the film 'caused furious debate in France between people who felt compelled to take sides for or against it on moral grounds' ... 'that debate, as important as it is, obscures what Cyril Collard achieved on screen' (*ibid*).

The Australian film critic David Stratton has likewise defended the film on the grounds of artistic integrity. When reviewing the film in the television program *The Movie Show* (1994), Stratton stated that 'eyebrows have understandably been raised about Jean's selfish, destructive lifestyle. But the honesty, courage and skill with which Collard brings this story to the screen is quite extraordinary' (Stratton in *The Movie Show* 1994). Stratton's colleague, Margaret Pomeranz adopted a different stance in her own review, when she said of the film that 'I am appalled by a lot of it. And it's not just him: it's his treatment of her. OK, you can say this is a depiction of his anger over his actual state of being very ill', but I just wonder about the morality of this film so much. It really troubles me' (Pomeranz in *The Movie Show* 1994). In Pomeranz's feminist film criticism the principles of 'artistic integrity' and 'difference' do not outweigh or seriously qualify 'moral' considerations.

Nash's method for dealing with the more passionately critical receptions of *Les Nuits Fauves* is to relegate them to the category of 'the Imaginary'. He writes that what 'surprised me about the gay critical reaction was the ease with which, when it comes to...

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13 The film's director and star, Cyril Collard himself had AIDS during filming and died shortly before both he and *Les Nuits Fauves* won acclaim at the French film industry's Cesare Awards.
key issues, critical categories can be abandoned. Film as reality, not representation' (1994, p.98). Nash assumes that such critical receptions of the film are the results of critics mistaking the film's diegesis for the objective world. He does not consider that an audience's poise – its ability to abstractly and calmly consider the moral issues raised by a film – may be part of a particular ethos. Nash does not acknowledge that this personal capacity he assumes to be a general characteristic of Francophone culture must be developed and maintained; that it is not just an expression of the principle of 'difference', but the product of specific disciplines (cf Hunter 1994, pp. 7-8). Nash's own 'bisexual' polemic for breaking the spell of 'realism' can likewise be described as part of a particular aesthetico-political practice of self-modification; his statement of 'surprise' at audience naivete establishes the problem of 'realism', prior to him making a more 'elevated' and apparently disinterested critical response.

For Nash, Collard's deliberate strategy of moral problematisation, and the unsettling ambiguities audiences expose themselves to when negotiating this strategy, are guaranteed by their perfectionist goals. Like the queer theorists Gabb and Rich, Nash's ability to acknowledge his problem-text's combinations of 'outward' and 'inward' orientations differentiates his interest in aesthetic forms from a narrower formalism, or from 'purely aesthetic' appeals to 'artistic integrity'. Nash writes that these French films and books interest me because of the complexity with which they deal with the emotional response to AIDS and HIV. Their work involves complex aesthetic strategies which we can learn from... And if artists choose to make uncomfortable works out of their own dying, our first response should be to attend to that uncomfortableness (Nash 1994, p.103).

Citing the complex 'French' approach to representing sexuality is a way for Nash to alert his Anglophone readers to the possibility that beyond the cultural values they know, there is another and potentially more productive terrain of cultural politics. His praise for the 'discomforting' aesthetic strategies of Les Nuits Fauves, accompanies his recommendation to his readers that they moderate their affective responses to those strategies; that they adopt a measured stance when they encounter unfamiliar and possibly offensive differences of sexual, emotional, and ethical life.

As a consequence of Nash limiting his sensitivities to 'difference' to those between the Anglophone and Francophone cultural orders, his only way of accounting for the differences between Anglophone critics is to appeal to their varying degrees of exposure to, and internalisation of, Francophone mores. He is indifferent to other differences between, much less within, particular ethico-political comportments, such as those I identified between Thompson, Stratton, and Pomeranz. This insensitivity to particular differences is not just a matter of 'ideology', but a personal capacity for
tactical insensitivity. My comparative discussions of Clum's, Nash's and other commentaries on *The Boys in the Band* and *Les Nuits Fauves* indicate that the shifts in sexual dissidents' interests, between 'identity' and 'difference' are neither reducible to their theoretical elements, nor without their peculiar strains and anxieties. Yet while the programmatic accounts of this 'politics of difference' may not adequately explain the contingencies involved in such conscientious reorientations, they still need to be accounted for if those sexually dissident *ethoi* are to be convincingly and usefully redescribed as aesthetico-political resources.

**Conclusion:**

From the late 1980s and into the early 1990s, the rubric 'politics of difference' gained currency in sexually dissident communities of interest. Rich's advocacy for a 'new queer cinema' and its fully realised subject, and Gabb's critical appreciation of the 'transgressive' potential of Grace's photography, are products of these *milieux*. Those queer writers who subscribe to the rationalist model of cultural politics have routinely appealed to their own abilities to mediate the principle of 'difference', as a guarantee for their projects to bring heteronormative political rationality to crisis. But what weight can one reasonably give to the ability of 'critically queer' persons to mediate this principle? While it is difficult to answer this question from a rationalist perspective that is confined to the theoretical aspects of the practice of academic 'Queer Theory', we have nevertheless seen that it has been an enduring feature of a range of rationalist commentaries on sexual politics.

I have questioned the assumption that queer commentaries are reducible to critical theories, and showed that there is no one kind of 'difference' underlying a general shift from 'identity' to 'difference' in sexual dissidence; not all 'differences' are compatible with a 'discursive' model of cultural politics. Since queer conscientious reorientations away from an identity-based model of politics and towards a regard for a model of identity-as-difference are not theoretically coherent, I chose not to overburden the 'transgressive' personality with the ethical weight of the notional subject of cultural 'difference'. Instead, I described specific cultural attributes of persons subscribing to variable *ethoi*: adherence to a project to properly mediate a field of multiple 'differences'; and a conscience that is capable of 'suspending' its own perfectionist impetus when it threatens this propriety. These discussions show that while a critical post-structural ethos is often assumed to be internally unified around
the perfectionist ethical principle of 'transgression', such an ethos is actually capable of embracing a range of more or less restrained perfectionist pulsions.

My examples of conscientious orientations to the field of cultural politics combine self-problematisation and indifference to the ethical features of this field. These examples include Rich's call for cinema to take her to a 'liberatory space', and Gabb's description of Grace's photography as opening onto a similarly 'fully reflexive' destination. They also include Nash's dissenting commentary, in which he rejects queer cinema as a vehicle for this 'politics of difference', even as he reasserts a related version of the integrating critical intellectual of Kantian philosophy. My discussions of these examples suggest that not only have queer critics' pursuits of 'total perfection' and its suspension proceeded unevenly and uneasily, but that these imperatives and tensions were not the unique legacies of academic 'Queer Theory' to political thought and practice.
Chapter 4: The critical process.

Introduction.

Queer critics' 'transgressive' mode of personal comportment is understood by some of its champions as a subject position that exceeds the limits of state ideology (cf Sinfield 1997, p. 202). By contrast, some of its critics see it as a distraction from the main game of restoring to a broken political order its lost rational basis (cf Derbyshire 1994). In the previous chapter I discussed 'queer' critical commentators who assume that their political status is a function of their capacity to mediate differences in the social field. I argued that there are theoretical yields from describing this 'politics of difference' positively, and in ethico-political terms. These yields include a less unitary and programmatic image of contemporary cultural theorists' 'transgressive' imperative: one that acknowledges degrees of adherence to perfectionist goals.

In this chapter I refer these earlier descriptions and examples to a longer history of criticism; most notably, Reinhart Koselleck's (1988) history of the practice and ethos of dialectical criticism, its relations with religious perfectionist practices and milieux; and its manner of distribution within enclaves of secular critical conscience. I consider how some of Koselleck's key themes relate to 'queer', as a relatively variable ethico-political practice dedicated to the transformation of self and society. I also discuss some theoretical and ethical developments in moral philosophy and political philosophy — those concerning the relations between 'aesthetics' and 'politics' — that informed 1990s queer dialectical criticism and its receptions.

Moral critique and the problem of 'culturalism'.

In Critique and Crisis: Enlightenment and the Pathogenesis of Modern Society, Koselleck (1988) describes the historical emergence of Enlightenment criticism in Continental Europe in terms of a radical bipolarisation of certain intellectual enclaves and the politics of state. Koselleck sees this development as having inaugurated the
basic tenor of subsequent relations between the practice of dialectical criticism and state administration; he takes this bipolarisation as being responsible for 'the pressure on our post-theological age to justify politics and morals without us being able to reconcile the two' (1988, p. 3). In the previous chapter I noted an attempt to mediate this post-Enlightenment gap: Bertlant's and Warner's description of queer critics' devotion to 'unsettlement rather than systematization'. I noted that they see this as a form of resistance to becoming 'an apparatus for falsely translating systematic and random violence into normal states, administrative problems, or minor constituencies'.

Some of Koselleck's historical arguments have a bearing on these queer mediations.

David Saunders (1997) has identified two key themes in Koselleck's history that I can use to redescribe the practice of queer criticism. The first is the role played by 'Absolutism as a calculated response to religious slaughter', and 'the success of the Absolutist State in de-theologising politics in order to impose peace on warring confessions' (1997, p. 4). This theme describes historical shifts in administrative strategies for maintaining civil peace: a calculated expansion of the domains subject to the jurisdiction of the state; and a corresponding tactical withdrawal from other aspects of life that amounted to the historical emergence of privatised, 'non-political' spaces of moral discrimination, judgement and freedom (Koselleck 1988, p.100; cf Foucault in Rabinow 1984, p. 36). By means of these shifts, state agencies were able to confine themselves to mundane tasks, such as the provision of welfare and the coordination of law and order, while religious authorities — once they were shorn of 'political' functions — could enjoy a corresponding degree of freedom to govern their own dominions of conscience. Through this de-theologised system, the state could unburden itself of direct responsibility for ensuring the salvation or moral perfection of those it governed; civil compliance would suffice. For Koselleck, this was a concession made to 'that private inner realm [and its experience of absolute freedom] which the state had to grant man as man' (1988, p. 110).

The second of Koselleck's themes identified by Saunders is the 'emergence of Enlightenment as a compensating intellectual movement of critique', in which a class of critical intellectuals colonised and expanded the newly delimited spaces of 'non-political' conscience (1997, p. 4). To illustrate this point, Koselleck cites Friedrich Schiller, for whom the 'private' theatrical stage has a special anticipatory power to reveal the inadequacies of laws.

Koselleck makes a qualifying point in respect of the differences between the Continental historical experience and the British one. The former is a history of opposition between society and state, in which the 'de-theologising' of civil life involved the state denying a political role to religion; the latter experience is of state and society being 'sufficiently linked through Parliament and the judicial constitution' for there to have been no widespread assumption in Continental intellectual circles that moral and political questions were irreconcilable (Koselleck 1988, pp. 2-3; cf Saunders 1997, p. ix).
'Only here do the great men of the world get to hear' what in their role as politicians they 'never or only rarely get to hear _ truth; that which they never or only rarely get to see they can see here _ man' (Schiller in Koselleck 1988, p. 100).

For Schiller, 'the jurisdiction of the secular law does in fact obtain, but unjustly so, whereas the jurisdiction of the stage does not, although it has right on its side' (Koselleck 1988, p. 100).

If the first of Koselleck's themes is the consolidation of enclaves of sectarian opinion, such as those artistic and philosophical *milieux* in which Schiller lived and wrote, the second addresses a subsequent historical phase: the growth within those enclaves of a Utopian ambition to bring the political world to the bar of ultimate moral judgement. In discussing these themes, Koselleck describes a class of late 18th century intellectuals freed from the responsibilities of political office and consequently able to set themselves the goal of refashioning politics in the image of their own ethical ideal of 'full' personal development. He argues that this new class of critical intellectuals sought to re-theologise politics, to give it ultimate perfectionist aims. As Saunders puts this, whereas 'the Absolutist State had detached religious rule from civil government, Enlightenment critics of that state subsequently sought to rejoin government and law to morality. Moral critique was and is religion by other means' (1997, p. 3).

Koselleck defines criticism as an 'art of judging': a practice of reasoned judgement by which 'a separation takes place' (1988, p. 103). As an ethico-political practice of a secular-spiritual nature, this art contrasts the inner self and the external world; its main imperative is to subordinate these objects to its own judgements. *Critique and Crisis* traces the broadening application of this critical practice and ethos since the 17th and 18th centuries and follows its migration, from a hermeneutic spiritual practice of the Church _ one that took Scripture and the Christian intellectual's soul as its primary objects _ to new homes in secular literary and aesthetic applications, and eventually to a widespread art of judging the state, its laws, and sovereign power (Koselleck 1988, p. 105; cf Saunders 1997, p. ix).

Like their Church-specific forebears, Enlightenment and later Romantic literary and 'aesthetic' critics organised their double foci dualistically; they encountered their objects of analysis _ notably the self and world _ within a field of judgement organised in reference to dualisms, such as reason and revelation, decadence and progress (Koselleck 1988, p. 100). Thus humanist critics not only routinely conceived of their human nature as being split along such dualistic lines, but were driven by the imperatives of this dialectic to find equivalent structures in the greater world as well.
As a consequence, the political criticism developed from these Christian-derived ethical practices routinely mediated 'a sphere of morality and a sphere of politics' (*ibid*). As it was defined in this dialectical fashion, morality was the higher plane from which critics of politics delivered their verdicts. Indeed, for Schiller, the 'stage's moral competence to judge is assured only if it can evade the reach of the secular law' (Koselleck 1988, p. 101).

Koselleck describes secularised critics as expressing their autonomy through a series of 'separations': principled stances that accompanied the bringing of moral judgement to bear on the Church, the newly designated secular 'aesthetic' realm, and eventually, state and society (1988, pp. 113-114). In my second chapter I identified specific examples of principled stances in the history of sexual dissidence: those post-World War Two trends in the theorising of sexual politics through which gay and lesbian critics distinguished themselves from their 'coopted' homophile contemporaries and predecessors. I have also discussed more recent examples of queer critics using similar dialectical techniques to socially distinguish themselves from what they, in turn, saw as 'mainstream' assimilationist gays and lesbians.

In Hunter's (1994) history of modern schooling he addresses another contemporary example of ethical acts of self-distanciation from an identified centre of worldly power: a practice of abstraction that allows critics of the school system to 'withdraw from the domain of government and return as its "pure" critic' (1994, p. 31). For Hunter, this ritual of 'withdrawal and "transcendence" ' is symptomatic of the marginality of the Kantian critical philosopher to the 'new domain of technically managed government'. His examples of the relevant principled 'separations' include those ambivalent _ normative and descriptive _ theories of the purposes and consequences of popular education which posit 'the goal of the self-realising moral person as a moral ultimate', while simultaneously treating 'historical reality as a "social construction" ' (Hunter 1994, p. 171; cf Koselleck 1988, p. 114).

For Koselleck, contemporary critical ambivalence is the historical legacy of an ostensibly non-political criticism taking the sphere of 'politics' as its object. He describes this in terms of the proliferation of politicised 'intellectual fronts' between the 'rule of critique' and the 'rule of the State' (Koselleck 1988, p. 113). He argues that when criticism migrated from the Church and adapted itself to its new secular circumstances, it retained its 'unpolitical, that is, its rational, natural, moral claim to assure the primacy of truth'; and that as a consequence, more and more aspects of life were 'sucked into the maelstrom of the public gaze' (Koselleck 1988, p. 116). In my first chapter I discussed recent examples of these 'fronts' and described them, after Foucault, as treating 'politics' as if it were a formerly rational domain, now fractured by the powers of Reason, and thus capable of being reconciled by the clarifying powers of
critical thought. These examples ranged from supportive commentaries on the queer public theatrical performance *Helmet*, to Dynes's critique of queer studies in tertiary education. Foucault has questioned this post-Enlightenment tradition of dialectical political criticism that Koselleck has identified with a critical yearning for unity. On one occasion, Foucault argued for a positive alternative that can respond to contingent relations between specific 'forms of rationality' and 'techniques of the self' (Foucault in Raulet 1988, pp. 26-29).

In my previous discussions of the notion of the ethico-political I described examples of sexual dissidence without assuming that there is a general object to which 'politics' refers; instead, I assumed that 'the political' in sexual dissidence can be described from case to case (Foucault in Raulet 1988, p 35; cf Samuals 1999, p. 106). A similar pragmatism is advocated by social thinkers as different as Michel Maffesoli (1996) and Barry Hindess (1986). The former uses the term 'proxemics' for the 'relational component of social life' (Maffesoli 1996, p. 123). The latter argues that 'there is no essential structure that determines what politics, and therefore political analysis, must be about. In any given society there are definite connections between its various component parts, but no overall determining structure' (Hindess 1986, p. 115).

Hunter (1994) also adopts a 'relational' approach in his history of popular schooling, when he questions whether instances of state institutions attempting to morally program individuals' behaviour can be explained by a general principle or theory of subjectivity or politics. He reiterates the Foucauldian argument that 'government (as an ensemble of intellectual and administrative technologies) is irreducible to the state (as the principle of sovereignty)': 'government takes place through forms of technical expertise that delimit its domains' (1994, p. 175). Thus, while it is true that since the 17th and 18th centuries the ability to govern populations has often relied upon the secularising of those religious techniques of interrogation and confession that seek to form moral character, it is also the case that the techniques of the self that secular education appropriated from the Church for this purpose are contingently organised. One can also say that, conversely, the self-realising moral ideal of contemporary criticism forms only one part of the spectrum of expertise comprising the modern education system (Hunter 1983, p. 233; cf Foucault 1978, pp. 23-24). Many of schools' primary briefs – including equipping a population with skills, and differentiating the labour market – do not belong to the order of moral criticism (Hunter 1994, p. 30). In my next two chapters I address the related problem of how it is possible to account for a project to queer education, if the ethical goals of dialectical criticism, such as self-fulfilment, social justice, and opposition to
established institutions, cannot form the foundation for transforming school and society.

Koselleck's reference to the 'maelstrom of the public gaze' appears in a discussion of Diderot, in which he looks forward from Diderot's era to a day to come 'when even the type of trousers worn will assume political significance' (1988, p. 116). This is an allusion to the historical emergence and expansion over the 18th and early 19th centuries of institutions, spaces and practices in which sartorial codes could help distinguish an emerging Revolutionary ethos and its counter-Revolutionary counterpart. In Farid Chenoune's (1993) history of male sartorial aesthetico-political sensibilities, he describes these imbricated public spheres and modes of dress that became 'increasingly associated with moral and political values' (1993, p. 14). He gives as an example the following extract from a letter written in 1752 by a British traveller who, together with a friend, had recently purchased suits in Paris. This correspondent states that the suits

made complete Frenchmen of us. But for my part, Harry, I was so damned uneasy in a full dress Coat, with hellish long Skirts, which I had never been used to, that I thought myself as much deprived of my Liberty, as if I had been in the Bastile [sic]; and I frequently sighed for my little loose Frock, which I look upon as an Emblem of our happy Constitution; for it lays a man under no uneasy Restraint, but leaves it in his Power to do as he please (Anonymous in Chenoune 1993, p. 14).

The cultural capacities to treat one's frock coat as a marker of political affiliations and as a metaphor for personal liberty are specific ethico-political accomplishments. The same can be said for queer theorists' abilities and inclinations to read into such talk of 'skirts' and 'frocks' moral and political virtues of altogether different kinds.

Among other things, Koselleck writes of post-Enlightenmment changes in the administering of personal capacities that enabled 'art' — including sartorial codes — to be forged into weapons of political criticism (1988, p. 114). For some Marxian cultural critics this has meant exposing and interrogating bourgeois culture as a functional system of ideology, with the aim of disrupting its normative form of consciousness (cf Hunter 1984, pp. 425-426). Bob Nowlan (1994) adapts this traditional Marxian stance to the new cause of queer 'transgression', when he argues that these projects need to be focused on the task of producing a 'future communist human being that would ... be far more queer than straight'. Nowlan advocates struggling

15 The most notable of these during the French revolutionary period are the sans-culotte (trouser-wearing revolutionary) and the muscadin (Royalist fop) (Chenoune 1993, p. 19).
toward the accomplishment of this end by working with the materials at hand in present late capitalist society. We can struggle forward not only through disruption and subversion of capitalist hegemony, but also by means of the development of counterfactual models and anticipatory prototypes ... (Nowlan 1994, p. 13).

Mulvey's previously mentioned 'hieroglyphic' interpretation of the language of cinema is a nominally Freudian feminist variant of 'materialist' criticism in which the struggle is one of finding a way to reinterpret patriarchal-bourgeois culture by using the 'materials at hand': the techniques of contemporary cinema.

Mitchell Dean (1994) has identified a problem of 'culturalism' in some of these struggles to produce 'anticipatory prototypes'. He defines this as a problem of reducing politics to a matter of intervening in subjects' experiences, through altering the cultural field of representation. Dean associates this problem with certain aspects of the disciplines of the 'cultural sciences'. After Max Weber, he describes these as assuming that 'we are cultural beings, endowed with the capacity and the will to take a deliberate attitude toward the world and lend it significance' (Weber in Dean 1994, pp. 151-152). For Dean, political criticism is more than a practice of commenting on an integrated field of 'culture' and a human subject with an either innate or socially-determined consciousness. He argues that to assume otherwise constitutes a problem for political criticism, to the extent that it imposes unnecessary limits on its ability to account for self-formation and self-regulation (cf Hindess 1986, pp. 113-114). Dean describes the problem as a matter of theoretically confining politics to a process by which human subjects ... come to bestow meaning on or to represent their experience. [Culturalism] thus forecloses the analysis of the multiplicity of the practical, technical, and discursive means by which self-formation occurs (Dean 1994, p. 152; cf Hunter 1984, p. 425).

Rosemary Hennessy (1995) identifies this foreclosing of analytical possibilities with 'the reigning Foucauldian materialism that reduces the social to culture or discourse': a reference to what I have been calling the 'Kantian-Foucauldian' tradition of critical theory (1995, p. 143).

By identifying his problem as a powerfully placed epistemological emphasis within the domains and practices of the 'cultural sciences', Dean opens a theoretical space for positive redescriptions of a 'culturalism' that more general accounts of politics treat in 'Imaginary' terms. Thus, in a discussion of the normative subject of neo-liberal politics - a being that is analogous to Butler's 'substantive self' - Dean accepts Althusser's contention that 'the best that can be said is that certain historically given social and cultural practices may treat human beings as if they were such subjects' (1994, p. 152; cf Butler 1990, p. 22; cf Hirst & Woolley 1983, p. 131).
However, unlike Althusser, he does not claim a critical overview of an internally 'differentiated' totality; his epistemological modesty prevents him from theoretically unifying his objects of analysis in a general theory (cf Althusser 1971, p. 139). Dean deliberately makes no sustained attempt to unify the various 'cultural sciences' and their normal subjects in a totality that must then be interpreted for a waiting constituency (cf Hunter 1996a, p. 25; cf Mercer 1991, p. 63).

Dean's strategy is to emphasise the contingency and specificity of the institutional conditions under which one set of criteria invested in a form of personality with a peculiarly 'culturalist' significance and social prestige — the critical intellectual — has been broadly circulated as a standard for all other personal comportments (cf Hunter 1984, p. 426). Alongside the work of analysing the 'cultural sciences' as important generators of political theories, he can therefore leave open a theoretical space for describing their roles as channels distributing trainings, materials and ethical models for personal comportments and habits of social life. This pragmatism is a useful quality to cultivate when describing relations between queer 'transgressive' moral personality and the 'cultural sciences', since these disciplines not only form and distribute the cultural — and 'culturalist' — competences of cohorts of citizens, but act as grounds and stakes for individuals and groups with possibly conflicting interests in arranging those competences (cf Hunter 1992, p. 348; cf Hunter 1994, p. 117; cf Connell 1995, p. 66).

**Self-modification and spiritualised sex.**

When 1990s queer critics worked to align their theory-representations and their performance-representations they typically subjected persons and institutions to general moral-political evaluations. Butler (1990) does this when she argues, after Foucault and Althusser, that 'the subjects regulated by [juridical-political] structures are, by virtue of being subjected to them, formed, defined, and reproduced in accordance with the requirements of those structures' (1990, p. 2). For Butler, 'what the epistemological discourse refers to as "agency"', is actually a failure to reproduce the 'foundationalist fiction' characterising normative subjects' Imaginary state of being (1990, p. 145, p. 3, pp. 5-6). In this 'anti-foundationalist' critique of representationalist models of politics — those in which 'politics' expresses the moral qualities of pre-existing subjects — Butler first posits and then 'transcends' a totalised epistemological system (1990, pp. 2-5; Ankersmit 1996, p. 7; cf Piazza in *The Pride Divide* 1997).
However, by doing so, she can only account for moral agency negatively, as the presumed totality's failure to reproduce itself.

Koselleck's genealogy of dialectical criticism, Hunter's and Hindess' problematising of the notion of a general theory of subjectivity and politics, and Dean's specifying account of the problem of 'culturalism' can all be used to redescribe aspects of queer cultural criticism. Together they offer a repertoire of theories and methodologies useful for describing and understanding queer critics' debt to the series of historical displacements between religion, 'the aesthetic' and then 'the cultural', that saw each in turn become the main focus of spiritual or transformatory aspirations over the 19th and 20th centuries. For Hunter et al. (1993), there was a dialectical correlate of this institutionally-channelled 'spiritualising' of the sexual and secular domains (1993, pp. 96-98). I argue that queer critics' practice of dialectical criticism bears the marks of its histories in the social circles of enclave politics that accompanied these sexualising and spiritualising movements; and that the more hyperbolic aspects of queer critiques of the 'epistemological discourse' can be qualified by describing them in reference to particular secular-spiritual techniques of self care and pedagogic person-formation.

K. Ludwig Pfeiffer (1994) also discusses the history of 'aesthetics' in a way that is useful for my purposes. He writes of a broad shift in the concerns of 19th century German philosophy, from *Geist* (Spirit) to *Kultur* (Culture). Pfeiffer finds evidence of this shift in some of the key aspects of contemporary dialectical criticism: its adherents' interest in analysing instances of 'discourse', as the 'relics of hidden pillars of enchantment in the modern world'; and their focus on 'a subsidiary existence of spiritual-hermeneutic consciousness within or on the borderlines of established and accepted disciplines' (1994, p. 5). I dealt with these themes of discourse analysis and of the self-marginalising critical intellectual earlier, in my discussion of queer theorists' 'Foucauldian' model of 'discourse', and when I cited Bennett's identification of the relation between interdisciplinary cultural studies critics' social prestige and their perceived degrees of social and cultural marginalisation (cf Butler 1990, p. 145; cf Bennett 1993, pp. 218-219). For Pfeiffer, these enduring foci of contemporary dialectical criticism are the marks of a practice of socio-cultural interpretation that rose to prominence in philosophy faculties, and in other critical enclaves, over the period of the 19th century (1994, p. 13; cf Saunders 1997, p. 4).

Pfeiffer argues that in the work of some philosophers of the late 19th century, 'culture' was 'turned into a seeming sphere of its own, with the preeminently aesthetic embodiments of the spirit (in particular literature), at its center' (1994, p. 13). 'Aesthetic' criticism is, in this sense, a matter of summoning up these embodiments of the spirit in order to inform social life with their apparently autonomous and 'pure'
values. This was the social mission that I mentioned in the previous chapter, in reference to Jarman's queering of Arnold's traditional critical stance. In Pfeiffer's discussion of this mode of aesthetic criticism, he describes it as an idealist orthodoxy in academic disciplines such as philosophy and history; he writes that it attracted the attentions of critics who set out to integrate the errant aesthetic domain back into politics by identifying the underlying historical and social forces underpinning it and giving it political pertinence (1994, pp. 13-14).

Earlier, I identified 20th century examples of these 'materialist' counter-criticisms: Marxian-Freudian accounts of the human subject's relations with the socially located material practices of language-culture that were widely distributed in the post-1970s academic and related milieux of cultural studies and cinema and media studies. I argued that since the advocates of this 'historicising' tradition of Marxian 'anti-aesthetic' criticism assume that the current bourgeois socio-cultural hegemony reproduces itself by suppressing alternative knowledges of subjectivity's historical a priori, they see the raison d'être of intellectual politics as being the act of uncovering these hidden knowledges (cf Bennett 1992, p. 29). Mulvey's 'hieroglyphic' feminist cinema criticism is a more Freudian-focused variant of this culturalist tradition.

Pfeiffer redescribes the 'aesthetic sensibility' that some 19th century philosophers had seen as innate qualities vested by nature in a cultural aristocracy, and which their materialist critics interpreted as evidence of a socio-economic 'brokenness' in need of restoration (cf Ankersmit 1996, p. 18; cf Bourdieu 1986, p. 3). Thus the schools of Marxian-informed cultural criticism aimed to reverse traditional art historians’ and bourgeois cultural theorists’ attempts to strategically obscure the social nature and ideological effects of cultural forms. For Pfeiffer, this Marxian response is a 'laborious detour' that philosophers took in their attempts to displace the metaphysics of 'spirit' with the history of 'culture', as the ultimate ground of Man. Like Koselleck, in his history of the expansion of the range of dialectical criticism, from the religious, through the 'aesthetic', and into the 'cultural' fields, Pfeiffer addresses a 'transition from Geistes- to Kulturwissenschaften' (1994, pp. 12-13). He calls this shift in the fields and concerns of 19th century academic philosophy, from the metaphysics of 'spirit' to the history of 'culture', 'an exteriorization of ourselves into cultural media and shapes'; as he notes of the dialectical practice of criticism, '[e]xteriorization breeds interpretation' (1994, p. 15).

According to Pfeiffer, Marxian-informed cultural theorists typically assumed that prior to the rise of 'bourgeois aestheticism', the forms of 'high' culture were identified openly by 'specialized artistic procedures and techniques'. Art forms were subsequently defined by 'their increased "symbolic" distance from socio-economic production and ordinary forms of life' (Pfeiffer 1994, p. 13; cf Hunter 1996a, pp. 24-
Thus, in a discussion of Marx's contribution to the theorising of culture, Raymond Williams writes that Marx provides 'the real history [which] is always of human beings making art, from their own human resources'. Williams differentiates this 'real history' from

the history of a 'reified' Art — the sum of certain human activities seen as if it were ... an internally developing abstraction; [and also from a] specializing history which deliberately ignored the general conditions within which the specialized activity was practised (Williams 1983, p. 23).

For Williams, 'real' historians have a materialist grasp of the socially effective practices constituting authentic knowledges, while others possess an abstract, idealist understanding that obscures this reality (cf Marcuse 1974, p. 7).

Pfeiffer's and Hunter's histories of the critical process are alternatives to general theories of 'the aesthetic'. Hunter (1996a) redescribes the Romantic-realist theme of the 'alienation of the aesthetic from the rest of life — and from the domain of economic production in particular' — as part of a particular critical practice of 'dialectical-historicist aesthetics'. He calls this practice 'historicist' owing to its adherents' article of faith that there is a moment in time to which the alienation of the aesthetic from the social can be traced; and 'dialectical' because, as a practice of self-formation, the tradition works 'through a series of exemplary oppositions and reconciliations' (Hunter 1996a, pp. 23-25, p. 48). In keeping with Dean's previously mentioned acknowledgment of the role of the 'cultural sciences' in distributing cultural capacities, Hunter identifies and describes specific pedagogical occasions when aesthetic criticism operates in 'exemplary displays of ritual wisdom' (1996a, p. 49).

Pfeiffer also argues that the so-called 'dissociation of sensibility' that Marxian aesthetic critics had located at a moment marking the threshold of modernity, might better be referred to specific and variable occasions, when the procedure of hierarchically ordering art forms has operated as a mode of social distinction. Pfeiffer's rationale for treating these occasions positively is that such an approach challenges 'the attention paid to a type of cultural object like "literature" during the last 100 years' (1994, p. 16). This reductive attention has given 'literature' the status of a paradigmatic cultural form relative to 'other objects defined in some way as literary'; it has therefore occluded 'other forms of aesthetic behaviour with respect to other "media" '. In its place, Pfeiffer offers a model of 'a calculated dispersion ... of "reading" techniques' and prompts his readers to describe the specific relations within and between relevant cultural formations; he makes a point of rejecting a 'generalized deconstructive enterprise' (1994, p. 16; cf Hunter 1984, p. 421-423).

Within the tradition of Marxian aesthetic criticism, a proper knowledge of the prevailing order of 'culture' is considered a vital political resource, since without such
knowledge, subjects will be locked into a state of ignorance of, or alienation from, 'the real' (cf Kellner 1990, pp. 252-253); or they will never recognise the partiality of the institutionally located material practices of language constituting their conditions of existence as subjects (cf Althusser 1971, pp. 136-139). The institution of literature – in its normative bourgeois forms – is politically significant in these Marxian-informed interpretations of the rubric 'culture', as a key means by which modern capitalism's social subjects are constituted and contained. For those who work in this critical tradition, 'literature' can serve as a useful proxy for putting 'the aesthetic' on trial. By assuming that it is a primary 'aestheticising' site of contemporary society, the practitioners of 'dialectical-historicist aesthetics' can differentiate their own 'anti-aesthetic' version of aesthetic criticism from that of 'aestheticising' connoisseurship. They can expose the complicity and hypocrisy they find hiding behind the respectable facade of literary neutrality and the cult of the merely beautiful. This task is the writing of the 'real history' of art that Williams saw in Marx, and which, as I have noted, he differentiated from a 'history which deliberately ignored the general [socio-economic] conditions' (1983, p. 23). Marxian critics of 'anti-democratic' obscurantism have thus used their own model of an aesthetic totality – a suitably 'socialised' dialectics of culture – to critique the ethos of those for whom 'aesthetics' is synonymous with the contemplation of elite objects.

Pfeiffer and his Marxian counterparts share the theme of literature equipping an elite coterie of the clerisy with the cultural capital and prestige required of individuals and groups occupying the heights of the intellectual and social hierarchy. However, Pfeiffer does not hitch a legitimate need for clarity and specificity in political theory and practice to a questionable 'culturalist' project to reveal a general mechanism of social reproduction to its own normal subject (1994, p. 13). Instead, he takes as his object a set of 'aesthetic' techniques of reading, whose 'calculated dispersion' corresponds to specific personal dispositions or 'styles of devotion to types of cultural configurations' (Pfeiffer 1994, p. 17). He does not assume that these techniques and their related sensibilities cohere in a traditionally and more narrowly defined 'aesthetics', its 'literature' proxy, or a general 'aesthetic sensibility' (cf Bourdieu 1986, p. 3; cf Grossberg 1994, pp. 17-18).

If Pfeiffer is correct, 'aesthetic' techniques cannot be said to function in the manner assumed in the Marxian dialectical tradition. For Pfeiffer, this is because 'discourses of legitimization' have necessary limits, and because problems of cogency and consistency are expected companions to 'methodological and disciplinary organization' (1994, p. 15). This argument parallels a point of Hunter's that I raised earlier, concerning the governing of others' actions being limited by the necessarily technical and – from the point of view of perfectionist critique – imperfect means at
hand (1994, p. 175). These references to the necessarily specific nature of personal comportments and dispositions therefore suggest another reason for questioning those Marxian-informed cultural theorists who offer general accounts of politics: their downplaying of the ethical dimension of politics (Pfeiffer 1994, p. 17; cf Butler 1990, p. 145).

F. R. Ankersmit (1996) argues that what I have been calling 'hyper-ethical' dialectical commentaries can be usefully leavened with 'historical insight': the exercising of restraint over one's critical imperatives. In defiance of a critical imperative to unify phenomena, Ankersmit not only identifies specific personal comportments and capacities peculiar to political theorists, such as an ability to weigh the relative merits of potentially rewarding perspectives, but advocates that they be restrained (1996, pp. 15-16). Ankersmit's response parallels Michael Hurley's (1990) argument that the necessarily contingent organisation of literary techniques is incompatible with the hegemonic roles theoretically imposed on 'literature' by those who see in its features a general 'representational' system (1990, p. 156). For Ankersmit and for Hurley, treating one's internal and external objects of analysis as opposed categories is not a sign of the alienation of the aesthetic and the political, the cultural and the social, but a preparatory stage to a (problematic) act of 'realignment' on a 'higher'/critical level (cf Hunter 1994, p. 31). Pfeiffer sees in this particular style of devotion 'a consciousness of discrepancies and conflicts to be repaired at least symbolically' (1994, p. 16). Butler's critique of 'the epistemological discourse' is a queer example of this dialectical practice.

Cultural studies academics have willingly trained persons in the art of dialectical criticism (Morris 1996, pp. 156-157). For example, John Storey (1996) calls for cultural studies academics to adopt a critical practice 'grounded in Marxism' and dedicated to revealing the social conditions and effects of representation. He quotes Hall to the effect that such a cultural studies "has helped me to understand ... that the media (for example) play a part in the formation, in the constitution, of the things that they reflect. It is not that there is a world outside, "out there", which exists free of the discourses of representation. What is "out there" is, in part, constituted by how it is represented" (Hall in Storey 1996, p. 3).

Earlier, I noted Hunter's argument that such ambivalent accounts are principled separations that ensure Kantian philosophers' critical distance from an envisaged centre of power. Described in these ethico-political terms, Hall's constructionist thesis appears as part of a report on the changes wrought in its author's own capacities for critical comprehension; this truth statement is bound up with the particular 'aesthetic'
techniques of introspection and social commentary mobilised by institutional cultural studies (cf Ankersmit 1996, p. 18).

As I showed in my previous chapter's discussion of Jarman's journal entries, interdisciplinary cultural studies holds no monopoly on persons using autobiographical writing to form themselves as subjects of a sexual politics. Robert Reynolds (1996; 2002) addresses these aesthetico-political practices in his histories of the therapeutic exercises in consciencisation and spiritual transformation that were deployed by the sexual dissidents of the Gay Liberation movement. These writings parallel Pfeiffer's and Hunter's histories of those religious techniques of self-modification that were secularised and redeployed in a trend towards the spiritualising of sex (cf Hunter et al. 1993, p. 96).

Reynolds takes as an example a tract that was written by Bill Miller for an American newspaper and then republished by Sydney Gay Liberation in 1972. In 'Fear of Self', Miller describes how he attempted to purge himself of Western homophobic culture by combining a regime of meditative contemplation of the wilderness and the literary techniques of personal journal-keeping. Reynolds describes Miller's article in reference to a tradition of writing associated with therapeutic practices of confession: a tradition of political autobiography whose use by Gay Liberation activists saw them adopt theoretical models and techniques from earlier Romantic modes of self-care. In the case of Miller, the foci of therapy are external and internal forms of 'homophobia'.

Following the examples of generations of Romantic travellers, Miller treks into mountainous and 'unknown territories', while recording in a journal the movements he detects in his body and his spirit (cf Cardinal 1997, p. 135). He writes that when

I began writing yesterday, I felt afraid of camping in the Sierras. Now I feel there is no place I would rather be. Everything seems beautiful, especially the fuck I just got. Writing has really helped me change my internal being so that I can enjoy the external world. Writing has helped me sort out and discard the intellectual barriers between me and this wilderness experience (Miller in Reynolds 1996, pp. 149-150).

In this passage the spiritualising of sex is part of a parallel spiritualising of travel. By integrating these experiences in his journal, Miller can identify and then expel previously internalised homophobic norms and habits of thought associated with the wildernesses' logical and fearful other, 'civilisation'. Miller's dialectical work of self-modification aims for an exemplary exchange of attributes between self and external world; his broken self is to be restored, in contemplation of his experiences of communion with the integrated nature of wilderness and sex, and the external world is
to be symbolically reconstituted as a mirror of the now-integrated self (Reynolds 1996, p. 150).

Miller's exemplary aesthetico-political practice can be traced back to Romanticism's own adoption of certain Christian techniques of introspection and self-care. Within their Church *milieux*, these exercises had as their goal the transformation of the soul, in accordance with the models seen in God or the order of Creation. As Koselleck argues, the historical emergence of Romantic cultural criticism is in large part a product of the migration of these spiritual techniques into secularised 'aesthetic' applications and *milieux*. With this relatively piecemeal secularising migration the objects of criticism change: communion between Christian soul and God/Creation gives way to communion between the human subject and the sublimity of Nature (cf Cardinal 1997, p. 138). In Miller's case, this sense of the sublime infuses his sexual experience: first instilling him with fear, and then leading him to a new and elevated state of awareness of "the tyranny which my conscious, thinking mind holds over the rest of my existence" (Miller in Reynolds 1996, p. 149).

The canon of early 19th century Romantic literature contains numerous precedents for Miller's perilous ascent. Thus, in the poem *Mont Blanc*, Percy Bysshe Shelley writes

My own, my human mind, which passively  
Now renders and receives fast influencings,  
Holding an unremitting interchange  
With the clear Universe of Things around.

(Shelley in Cardinal 1997, p. 138)

Gay Liberation writers like Miller were indebted to the secularising of self-formation that had informed both Shelley's poem and Romantic travel itself (cf Cardinal 1997, p. 135). In addition, and as my discussions of Rich and Gabb showed, there are queer-identified individuals who have likewise found a quality of equanimity in the face of a sometimes frightening 'openness' to experience.

While queer theorists' disciplinary ensemble has a genealogy in the Romantic poets' sublime reveries, in secular therapeutic practices, and even in the Christian retreat, in what sense might the appropriations or migrations of aesthetic techniques and practices constitute a 'political' problem (cf Hunter 1996b, p. 1109)? In Reynolds' estimation, to use a humanistic mode of psychological commentary to claim an authenticity 'delivered through a return to the body', is to seriously limit the prospects for sexual politics (1996, p. 145). Gay Liberation activists' attempts to use Miller's account as a theoretical basis for a politics of the 'moral body' are consequently obstacles to them achieving a
broader sense of the political. If an insular body is the only authentic agent of change, then activism need not go beyond an internal journey into self. Altering the self now produces an imaginary of the external world that is indeed benign and complete (Reynolds 1996, p. 150).

Since despondency has traditionally been the companion of Romantic travellers, those who would follow Miller's search for the sublime take their disappointments with them on their journeys and unpack them when they return (Cardinal 1997, pp. 148-149). Miller's spiritual journey is thus like those 'peak' transfiguring experiences sought by his religious and 'aesthetic' predecessors; it is not so much a model for transforming mundane life, as a means of ritually 'transcending' it.

Reynolds does not deny that Miller secures a liberating sense of being at ease with himself through his aesthetic practice. Instead, he finds this practice politically problematic to the extent that it achieves its experience of liberation at the expense of a critical retreat from the 'external impingements' that make that experience possible and which mark its *milieux* and limits (1996, p. 150; cf Derbyshire 1994, p.44). In other words, Miller's political problem is not a failure to acknowledge objective factors; he does, for example, attribute his initially fearful response to the sexual-sublime to ' "the demands placed on me by the wilderness to be myself" ' (Miller in Reynolds 1996, p. 149). Instead, Miller's appeal to pure 'ethics' is a problem because it elides the circumstances under which phenomena – including one's sexuality – can count as 'political' objects of concern (Reynolds 1996, p. 145; cf Reynolds 2002, pp. 95-96)\(^\text{16}\).

Reynolds argues that Miller does not offer a sense of a self in relation to others: a necessary feature of any political stance (1996, p. 150). As Foucault put this, a relationship with the self 'is not simply "self-awareness" but [a social practice of] self-formation as an "ethical subject"' (1985, p. 28). By contrast, the American gay activist and committed Christian Tim McFeeley (1996) concurs with Miller's quest for 'authenticity', when he writes that coming out as gay or lesbian is an on-going and possibly painful process that is impelled by an 'unquenchable thirst for truth' (1996, p. 1).

If the secular-spiritual traditions of Romantic travel provided some Gay Liberation writers of the 1970s with examples of how to overcome the alienating effects of 'civilisation', others posed this problem in the more Marxian and urban terms of the 'fragmentation of our lives into different parts' by capitalism (Carrigan & Lee 1979, p 40). For these writers, the 'capitalist values' of sexism, competition and division were endemic in 'the subculture' of the gay 'commercial scene' of clubs, bars, and other venues. As a consequence, the highest priority for 'the movement' – the communal agent of socio-political change – was to heal this division by reconciling

itself with the 'subculture' (Carrigan & Lee 1979, p. 41). This socio-political orientation is, of course, no less a feature of a Romantic practice of dialectical self and social transformation than is Bill Miller's private-'aesthetic' one; for the internal focus of 'pure' ethics, it substitutes an externally-directed reconciliation of binarised pairings, such as 'movement' and 'subculture'.

Post-structuralist political theorists have routinely synthesised theories of the social body and of political economy (cf Schatzki & Wolfgang 1996). Hall, for instance, argues that 'the body has served to function as the signifier of the condensation of subjectivities in the individual', and that 'this function cannot simply be dismissed because, as Foucault effectively shows, it is not true' (1996a, p. 11; cf Hirst & Woolley 1983, p. 131). Reynolds' history of Gay Liberation activists' appropriations and redeployments of therapeutic and confessional techniques is close to the positive spirit of Hall's point on this issue, as well as to Foucault's later work on the 'ethico-political'. Like Hall, Reynolds balances his critical analyses and his historical descriptions of particular 'aesthetic' techniques as 'sites of productive (though often painful) contradiction, tension and politics' (1996, p. 151). It was in a similar positive spirit that I described these 'sites' as occasions of the sexualising and spiritualising of 'aesthetic' self-transformation, with peculiar ethico-political features and discernible limits.

In the first chapter I described Sandell's strategies for inducing and resolving anxiety over her own ethical commitment to the political life, as peculiar to a mode of 'hyper-ethical' conscientisation common in some academic circles. I have since cited similar self-interrogations and narratives of redemption culled from the archive of Gay Liberation: Bill Miller's memoir of passionate self-discovery in the wilderness; and Carrigan's and Lee's advocacy for a psychoanalysis-mediated reconciliation between 'movement' and 'subculture'. While these writers sought to induce their desired transformations through a combination of self-interrogation, binary coding, and ritual 'transcendence' – first sensitising through problematisation and then managing the responses – their institutional circumstances and agendas were distinctive. Carrigan and Lee made a traditional Marxian-Freudian case for the 'meta-discursive' status of psychoanalytic philosophy, at a time when this status was being contested in sexually dissident circles. Miller reported on his transfigured perceptions and re-traced the path to his state of wisdom back to a moment in which he faced his fears of camping in the mountains: a cathartic moment he documented in a persuasive literary form presumably familiar to his readers. Sandell's own story of isolated wanderings likewise ended with her entering into a state of communion; in her case, the just balance between self-care and socio-political conscience that she found in the collegial embrace of the Bad Subjects Collective. It is not a general form of subjectivity or of
Learning to live with disunity.

Hunter (1988) addresses two 'optional theoretical strategies' of contemporary literary criticism that have significance for the kinds of ethico-political disciplines that I have been discussing. The first of these strategies is found in empirical 'text-linguistics', which attempts to subject literary representation to an objective description of 'underlying' psycho-linguistic processes. The second tendency marks the site of 'deconstructive' criticism. The deconstructive movement looks to the 'textual process' for a reprieve from representation; finding in its allegedly open-ended character the means to defer 'sense-making' and to redeem subjectivity from finitude (Hunter 1988, p. 241).

Where the first strategy promises to deliver composure through referring the vagaries of the self/world relationship to a 'fundamental' lawfulness, the second seeks it in an analytical practice empowered to erode that 'law' itself.

Some sexual dissidents who cultivate composure while embarking on a process of reflexive analysis actively celebrate the disunity they uncover, as revealed truth; others problematise disunity as a painful, if temporary, stage on the path to the ultimate realisation of that truth. While the latter may see self-transformation as a means to attain the greater goal of reconciliation, in the celebratory mode of sexual dissidence the principles of transformation and contingency can have an inherent value, as the oppositional ideal of truancy from 'the Law'. The post-structuralist theorist Fuery (1995) adopts this attitude when he praises Kristeva's privileging of the literary text, on the grounds that her subjects of literature have a uniquely insightful access to "the operation of the semiotic as a disruption of the Law" (Kristeva in Fuery 1995, p. 95).

The materialist or profane 'postmodern' and 'post-structural' traditions have been key influences on queer theorists, but they are not the only strains of dialectical criticism implicated in contemporary sexual dissidence. There are explicitly religious critiques of heteronormativity which have survived the secularising movement identified by Koselleck and Hunter. An example appears in the 1997 American television documentary The Pride Divide. This program takes as its historical subject matter the difficulties that have beset relations between gay men and lesbian women in politics that unites these 'intellectual fronts', but a variable practice and ethos of sexual dissidence.
the post-Gay Liberation period: differences in political interests and patterns of social life that have typically been effaced when the rubric 'gay and lesbian' has been taken as referring to a unitary socio-political identity (cf Jeffreys 1994, p. 459). While these are important themes in contemporary philosophies of sexual politics, there are aspects of the manner in which they are handled in the program that are ethically and politically problematic.

Michael Piazza, a political activist and minister of religion, is interviewed in The Pride Divide and describes the politics of gender and of sexuality in overtly Christian and 'purely' ethical terms (cf Reynolds 1996, p. 150). He argues that the image of God is both masculine and feminine and that's portrayed throughout the Scriptures, 'though completely ignored in most mainline Churches. But what happens is that we have deified the masculine side of God and neglected the feminine side of God and the result has been ... rape and abuse and neglect of the environment and [a] whole list of evils ... What has resulted in human beings is a great brokenness because wholeness won't come until we all integrate the both sides of our selves (Piazza in The Pride Divide 1997; cf McFeeley 1996, p. 1). Piazza's moral imperative is to mend the divided and broken self by attending to the world's errant forces, as these appear in the individual. This religious-moral exhortation to mend internal division is consequently accompanied by a corresponding 'list of evils' characterising the external world. Seeing the political domain as a manifestation of humanity's divided nature, Piazza equates it with the fallen world familiar from Christian theology, and treats it as the social ground for an exemplary reconciliation of the soul and its Creator.

Piazza shares his redemptive imperative with other Christian critics, such as McFeeley (1996), who urges his readers to embark on a therapeutic program of reconciliation through 'coming out': 'Acknowledging our homosexuality is the beginning of a process of discarding [the mainstream Church's] superficial rules and looking for the essentials that underlie them'. For McFeeley, these 'essentials' are addressed by 'honoring the universe that God has created and by celebrating life itself ... In coming out, gay people enrich their spirits through self-knowledge, connect themselves to others with love, and extend the universe in yet another dimension' (1996, p. 3).

McFeeley can celebrate disunity because he has conceived of it as a pluralistic Creation. Piazza likewise seeks to bring the human world back into alignment with the moral order of the universe, from which it is currently alienated. Both assume that if humanity is to be embraced by the healing force of reconciliation and realigned with the moral Law, individuals must internalise the alienated sphere of external 'politics' and transform it from within; those who own their brokenness and take God's
integrated nature, expressed in Creation, as their ethical ideal, are acting as the instruments of morality's occupation of politics. It is clear that these models for sexual and gender 'politics' are heavily reliant on Christian concepts of redemption and righteous action.

Previously in this chapter I discussed Schiller's and Butler's anticipatory practices of self and social transformation (cf Schiller in Koselleck 1988, p. 100; cf Butler 1990, pp. 146-147). I argued that these bear certain marks of the enclaves of religious conscience: an assumption that the audiences being addressed are equally capable of engaging in demanding ascetic practices of ethical self-surveillance; and that these audiences are a moral community well-practised in ministering to their own souls. The Christian-pastoral precedents for such assumptions are evident in Piazza's case; they echo in his ascetic tone, as well as in his notional collapsing of morality and politics, the personal and the political.

This inheritance explains why Piazza's moralising description of politics seems overdetermined, out of proportion to the range and degrees of responsibilities that his audience could conceivably have; it explains why the sway of his envisaged moral jurisdiction exceeds the limits of his constituency's capacities for directed action. Piazza is continuing a tradition of religious-moral ascetics in which Creation is reduced to moral principles in order to weigh upon the internal deliberations of the individual soul. The lack of proportion between the weight of his moral imperative and the tenuousness of his political rationale is characteristic of moral criticism straining to project itself as political commentary. The sincerity of Piazza's argument, the rigidity of his dualism, and the under-differentiated vastness of his notional field of 'politics', are all components of Christian practices of consciencisation and of pastoral care.

If Piazza's interpretation-sermon is an example of one of Pfeiffer's specific 'styles of devotion to types of cultural configurations', what is its ethico-political significance (1994, p. 17; cf Maffesoli 1996, p. 83)? Piazza addresses his inferred constituency-congregation as if it possessed uniform ethical capacities to contemplate or to take politico-moral actions, based on the principle of integrating a bifurcated universe and self. The style of devotion that Piazza advocates effects ritual exchanges of attributes between the self and a greater totality; the proxy universe confers significance and universality on the self, while the self imbues an impersonal universe with an ultimate intelligibility or principle of reason, as a 'rational totality' (Hunter 1993-4, pp. 100-101; cf Foucault 1978, pp. 6-7). But this does not mean that Piazza's routine of positing the politics of gender and sexuality as a dualistic order, and his exhortation to rationally internalise this problem in order to transform it, have no ethico-political significance. Instead, it suggests that his interpretation-sermon is
politically significant to the extent that it contributes to his audiences' capacities for affective responses, social sympathies, and actions in the pursuit of their calculated interests.

After Hindess (1986), I argue that political issues and interests are variously formulated, assessed and acted upon by persons operating within specific sets of competences and across different rationalities and social sites (1986, p. 123). Thus the persons making up Piazza's audience-constituency will encounter difficulties, in the form of other political factors over which they have limited control. These limits may include the calculated interests and actions of other persons who inhabit, or who are attempting to inhabit, the institutions and sites occupied by Piazza and his audience (Hindess 1986, p. 121). Other limits could include the necessarily technical and temporal nature of all political rhetorics and mobilisations (Hunter 1990, pp. 416-417). To be effective as political factors, Piazza's broad schema and self-concerns must be co-ordinated with other kinds of expertise, forms of calculation, and common modes of action.

In my discussion of Bill Miller's aesthetico-political practice I argued, after Reynolds, that to be politically effective, moral exhortations need to be imbricated with other resources at hand in those sites in which cultural politics is possible. But as the case of Piazza's 'hyper-ethical' polemic demonstrates, when persons who exhort others to a particular course of action assume that the relevant resources are common to all human subjects, they must overcome the gap between their abstract model of moral agency and their imperative to stabilise that audience-constituency (cf Hindess 1986, pp. 124-125). Such tensions are typical of the principled stances that Koselleck describes as the legacies of dialectical criticism's historical emergence as an 'autonomous' art of judgement (1988, pp. 113-114). They are evident in a secular moralism that attributes importance to 'politics', as the ground upon which a newly restored order of gender and of sexuality is to be established, but which does not theoretically furnish that domain with discernible features. In the case of Piazza's interpretation-sermon, this critical ambivalence is expressed in the discrepancy between his righteous urgency and the absence of programs to give effect to the social transformations he advocates.

While Piazza claims a moral autonomy similar to the one that queer critics find in the drag critic-artiste – a consciousness capable of bringing 'the Law' before the court of moral judgement – he differs from his queer counterparts in his response to the envisaged process of transformation (cf Koselleck 1988, p. 101). Where Piazza treats self-transformation as an intermediate stage between fallen and redeemed states of being, queer responses typically celebrate the 'cultural process' itself. Queer critics share this celebratory stance with the adherents of some other secular versions of
aesthetic criticism. For example, Guillermo Zermeño Padilla (1996) makes a 'postmodern' critique of the reflexive subject of 20th century human sciences, in which the 'naive' subject is reconceived, 'following Adorno', as an individual moved by multiple influences, fragmented, part of a complex reality, relative and never as a final reality from which enlightenment occurs.

For Padilla, this 'decentering' analysis brings into consideration

the disintegration of the subject-object binary figure and forces [one] to consider subjectivity as fundamentally influenced by language and language and communication as the only means of access to what we call [the] 'world' or 'reality' (Padilla 1996).  

As we have seen, internalising such constructionist truths as an on-going interchange between the self and the world allows attentive readers of cultural criticism to adjust their own sensibilities. Managing these conceptual and ethical adjustments as a shift from the 'internal', biological, or 'naive' subject, to the 'external' — the domain of 'culture', as the totality of philosophico-linguistic categories — requires the specialised kinds of attentiveness and opportunity that I have discussed in this chapter under the rubric 'dialectical criticism'.

Padilla not only offers his readers a theoretical model of subjectivity, but provides them with an aesthetico-ethical practice for negotiating a reflexive encounter with experiences of disunity. This is to say that, following his example, his readers can monitor their responses to disconcerting problems as they generate them, learn to have a 'de-naturalised' relationship with their own 'decentred' cultural attributes, and strike a balance between their commitments to self-care and to social conscience.

Earlier in this chapter I cited a 'post-structuralist' counterpart of Padilla's 'postmodern' practice of self and social transformation: Hall's report on the changes wrought in his critical comprehension by his exposure to cultural studies' 'constitutive' model of the 'discourses of representation' (Hall in Storey 1996, p. 3). Like the transformations sought by Piazza and Padilla, these changes are the rewards for submitting to particular disciplines of introspection.

Fuery (1995) identifies Lacanian psychoanalytic theories — in particular, their concern with 'desire' — as key features of the 'post-structuralist' critical tradition that Hall adheres to. Fuery writes that since

for Lacan psychoanalysis is positioned as an analytic model which spreads across so many intellectual and social areas (literature, philosophy, history,  

17 I should note the parochial nature of Padilla's/Adorno's apparently universal concerns. As the examples of yogic breathing techniques attest, not all cultures privilege those forms of 'consciousness-raising' practices centred on linguistic techniques.
science, culture, linguistics), it is also a model that is ultimately concerned with interpretation itself. That is, it deals with what it is to mean, to signify, and how such constructions continue to operate (Fuery 1995, p. 8).

Fuery follows gay Marxian-Freudian critics like Carrigan and Lee, in asserting psychoanalytic knowledge's approximation to ubiquity, and in seeing in this the possibility of scientifically mediating all cultural fields of representations/identities (cf Thompson 1990, p. 323). In Fuery's 'post-structuralist' version of critical commentary, the focus is on how Lacan 'ties interpretation to desire; for him, desire is the essence of interpretation. At one point he states: "Desire, in fact, is interpretation itself" ' (1995, p. 8). For Fuery, critical thought is political because, guided by the psychoanalytic knowledges he calls 'analytic desire', its subjects can mediate instances of the cultural totality or the 'Law' (1995, p. 31, p. 41). He argues that psychoanalytic theory and deconstructive methodology are central to critical consciousness or 'transgressive desire' because desire and the Law exist in a relation he calls 'the dialectic of desire' (Fuery 1995, p. 31). This is similar to Butler's queer argument that mediating a super-abundance of meaning is a way to escape the heteronormative 'rule-bound discourse' producing and containing 'intelligible identity' (1990, p. 145; cf Morton 1995, p. 3).

Fuery holds other 'post-structuralist' aspirations to self and social transformation in common with his queer-identified colleagues. For example, like them, he places his faith in the power of public parody to invert the epistemological order (1990, p. 124). He shares this faith with Kristeva, whom he lauds for her description of 'desire as part of the disruptive function of the carnivalesque', with special 'links to dreams, language and the body' (Fuery 1995, p. 95). In Kristeva, Fuery finds an exemplary synthesis of psychoanalysis and literary criticism, in which psychoanalysis is valued because it is 'the only system to account for the practice of love and to provide it with a metalanguage, a discourse on the discourse'; and which applauds literary criticism for understanding that literary texts are uniquely capable of inducing reflexive wisdom (1995, p. 92, pp. 95-96; cf de Lauretis 1994). As an attentive reader of Kristeva, Fuery aspires to the status of a 'subject of desire': an aspiration other readers of Kristeva have felt the need to revise, in the name of more 'materialist' and less abstract versions of post-structuralism (cf de Lauretis 1987, p. 80).

Following Koselleck's description of the second phase of critique's history – critics setting themselves the task of judging the morally inadequate laws and politics of society and state – I have discussed examples of the rise of 'culture', relative to religion, as a key focus of aspirations for self-transformation in the 20th century (cf Hunter 1988, p 210). But as the examples of Piazza and McFeeley indicate, there are persistent religious strains in contemporary sexual dissidence which parallel, intersect with, and deviate from, its secular strains; most notably when self-transformation is
conducted across the envisaged gulf separating the mundane present from a harmonious unity to come.

**Conclusion.**

When adherents to the religious and the secularised versions of the critical art of self and social transformation theorise proficiency in moral agency and attribute corresponding responsibilities for cultural disruption, they cultivate a sense of equanimity in their exercising of judgement. Koselleck refers to this attribute of critical intellectuals in terms of their 'duty towards a future in which truth is found only through the exercise of criticism'; a 'self-assurance of criticism [which lies] in the connection of the critic to the yet-to-be-discovered truth' (1988, p. 109). In this chapter I compared some of the overtly Christian-religious versions of this ethos. In Piazza's case, 'disunity' is a problem to be endured, in the name of a promised future integration. By contrast, McFeeley not only conceives of 'disunity' in terms of social plurality, but gives it an aspirational value, as an expression of the multi-faceted 'universe that God has created' (McFeeley 1996, p. 3).

I also identified a secular form of this explicitly Christian critical ethos that differs significantly from both Piazza and McFeeley. This is a profane or 'materialist' strain in which the emphasis is placed on appreciating, and even celebrating, a life freed of 'foundations'. As I have shown, this profane tradition has various 'queer', 'post-structural', and 'postmodern' inflections (cf Butler 1990; cf Fuery 1995; cf Padilla 1996). Referring 'queer' theorising to a history of the practice of dialectical criticism gives it the appearance of a recent variant of this art of self and social transformation; it questions the bases on which a queer 'politics of difference' can be differentiated from representationalist models of 'politics' as the expression of pre-existing subjects (cf Butler 1990, p. 146).

Various traditions of cultural criticism see sexual dissidence as a disruption of the ideological process responsible for socio-cultural reproduction; a process of subject formation they have located in state or other 'instrumental' agencies and technologies. I give this assumption a history in the spaces of 'privatised' opinion that Koselleck saw as becoming possible once the politics of state had developed 'de-theologised' methods for regulating conducts, and could thus withdraw from intimate and direct involvement in conscience-direction (cf Saunders 1997, p. 4). As Koselleck argues in his second theme, these notional spaces of 'autonomous' moral judgement subsequently provided
critics with numerous platforms from which to launch their aesthetico-political commentaries on the world. In this chapter I identified some recent examples of these 'intellectual fronts'. I described them as versions of dialectical criticism's conventional treatment of morality as the primary term of a morality/politics pair, and discussed how this variable art of making rational judgements has been used to encourage and to sanction particular courses of action.

Adherents to queer cultural politics are not alone in engaging in secularised exercises in subjectivation: the means by which an aspect of the self is identified and then problematised, as a prelude to transforming it, and in accordance with an ethical model and goal (cf Foucault 1985, p. 28). These routines of self-care have found numerous applications since migrating from the Church and 'spiritualising' sex and secular life (cf Pfeiffer 1994, pp. 12-13; cf Hunter 1994, p. 31; cf Dean 1994, pp. 151-152). In this chapter I discussed their significance for the queer variant of aesthetic criticism and the transformatory aspirations associated with its characteristic 'transgressive' personal comportment.

My discussions identified a key feature of the queer variant of dialectical criticism as being its ability to provide sexual dissidents with strategies and tactics for embracing, rather than enduring, the experiences of disunity produced by their own 'decentering' critical practice. As we have seen, this celebratory mode of deconstructing the self/culture relationship is not unique to queer-identified critics, but is one option within the broad tradition of aesthetic criticism. It is available to members of the citizenry who have been trained in the appropriate aesthetico-political exercises, and who find in them the self-assurance to follow their calling to generate further epistemological uncertainties. In the next chapter I develop these discussions, in reference to the issue of 'queer' as a problem of 'critical pedagogy' during the 1990s.
Chapter 5: Queering the teacher's conscience.

Introduction:

By the mid 1990s the rubric 'queer' was well established across a variety of academic fields of study (cf Bertlant & Warner 1995, p. 1; cf Morton 1995, p. 1). In addition, 'queer' denoted a particular ethos of activist-scholarship with sometimes incompatible commitments to evading disciplinary restraint and to being socially and politically effective. How did this ethos become an established feature of these intellectual and ethical milieux over such a short period, and apparently in defiance of the incoherence of the field of 'Queer Theory'? In this chapter I discuss these issues, using examples of the critical receptions of 'queer' in the 1990s theoretical literature on education. I also describe specific ethical features of the 'cultural sciences' that contributed to some of their personnel enthusiastically queering their existing projects to further the interests of their academic and extramural constituencies.

What aspects of their professional practices did queer activist-scholars see as most useful for their projects? Stuart Hall (1996b) makes a point relevant to this question when he describes cultural studies academics' ethos as a 'worldly vocation' that is committed to reconciling textual practices and 'other questions that matter', such as gender and racial identities, institutions, agencies, and professions (1996b, pp. 271-272). Rather than deny possible incompatibilities between these commitments, Hall notionally places an acknowledgment of them as a kind of 'irritant' at the centre of what it is for cultural studies practitioners to be political; for Hall, practitioners of cultural studies are politically engaged to the extent they hold 'theoretical and political questions in an irresolvable but permanent tension' (1996b, p. 272).

In the Introduction to this thesis I mentioned that Grossberg (1994) uses the related terms 'pedagogy of culture' and 'culture of pedagogy' for the two main traditions or directions of academic cultural studies. In Grossberg's description of the 'tension' generated by cultural studies, the 'pedagogy of culture' is a pole that emphasises tropes such as 'popular culture', 'popular literacies', and 'popular logics'; the 'culture of pedagogy' refers to a reflexive concern with the 'institutional and technological conditions which regulate specific fields' (1994, p. 11; cf Giroux 2000, p. 354). This latter tradition addresses relations between education and culture, teachers and students, and the 'relation of the classroom to the outside world'; its adherents'
interests thus include those forms of schooling _ including cultural and media studies _ whose field is the 'pedagogy of culture' (ibid; cf Meredyth 1993).

In this chapter I describe how queer ethoi and projects have been interpreted by cultural studies academics. I also identify some of the intellectual and ethical features of academic cultural studies that had a bearing on the historical emergence of 'queer' as a problem of the 'culture of pedagogy' (cf Blasius 1994, pp. 179-180). I begin the chapter by discussing two examples of how cultural studies itself has been received. This discussion develops an image of intellectual and ethico-political aspects of academic life in the decade immediately before the emergence of a distinctive queer studies; it identifies a promise that some activist-scholars saw in cultural studies, as well as the manner in which some of their colleagues reassessed that promise. I then go on to consider how 'queer' was subsequently worked up and received as a variant of the now-problematised cultural studies project; what issues its advocates needed to address in order to be taken seriously by their activist-scholar colleagues; and what aspects of the new mode of study fed into existing projects of activist-scholarship.

Cultural studies and critical pedagogy.

Prior to the emergence of 'queer' as an issue of education theory, activist-scholars had seen in cultural studies the possibility of a sustainable 'political' intervention in the cultural domain. I have noted Koselleck's argument that the tradition of post-Enlightenment dialectical criticism had reconstituted 'politics' in a dualistic form requiring its continuing reconciling ministrations. Giroux et al. (1984) work in this critical mode when they assess interdisciplinary cultural studies' political significance by its capacity to mediate a currently fragmented public sphere of politics. For these advocates of the American 'critical pedagogy' movement, academic disciplines are more than mere metaphors for a greater fragmentation between culture and politics; they are instruments by which that bifurcation is actively maintained. In the following passage the authors attribute this hegemonic function to the disciplinary University. They argue that the

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18 The American 'critical pedagogy' movement developed parallel to, and in sympathy with, British cultural studies. Lawrence Grossberg discusses the relations between these two distinct yet imbricated traditions of activist-scholarship in his 'Introduction' to Henry Giroux's and Peter McLaren's edited anthology Between Borders: Pedagogy and the Politics of Cultural Studies (1994), p. 4.
historical development of insulated disciplines housed in segregated
departments has produced a legitimating ideology that in effect suppresses
critical thought. Rationalized as the protection of the integrity of specific
disciplines, the departmentalization of inquiry has contributed to the
reproduction of the dominant culture by isolating its critics from each other
(Giroux et al. 1984, p. 472).

This description of disciplinarity as functioning to reproduce the 'dominant culture'
presages a subsequent 'return' of critical thought and guarantees an interdisciplinary
mode of study as its vehicle (cf Althusser 1971, pp. 136-137).

At the beginning of my second chapter I cited Bristow's and Wilson's (1993)
argument that university authorities are reluctant to acknowledge cultural diversity and
that queer studies is an attempt to restore the principle of 'difference' to political
rationality (1993, p. 2). In the case of Giroux et al., this diagnosis of institutional and
social fragmentation clearly accompanies another, which is pitched at the level of
human personality (1984, p. 473). They adapt Max Weber's notion of an
instrumentalist rationality – the manner of reasoning attributed to the technical
intelligentsia – to the task of explaining the difficulties besetting politicised cultural
studies (cf Hunter 1994, pp. 150-151). In their synthesis of Weber's sociology and
Althusser's structural Marxism, 'uncultured experts' are the antitheses of 'intellectuals
in the traditional sense of thinkers concerned with the totality'; while the former's
rationality 'is only instrumental in character, and thus suitable mainly to perform partial
tasks', the latter's is uniquely capable of 'tackling substantial questions of social
146).

In my first chapter I used Hadot's (1995) identification of philosophy as a
practice of self-care that involves the making of truth-statements, to describe Sandell's
balance between her commitments to self-care and a human community as the telos of
a particular philosophical ethos (1995, p. 265). Hindess (1997b) likewise argues that
political philosophy involves more than the coining of new concepts; that it is also a
manner of working upon one's 'habits of thought and argument' (1997b, p. 259).
Following these earlier discussions I can also describe Giroux et al.'s 'critical
pedagogy' in terms of its particular professional, ethical, and political features. These
include a manner of judging the importance of an interdisciplinary mode of study
according to its approximation to a 'transformative critique' of the dominant culture: a
practice of critical judgement aiming to free students from the imposed partiality of
their interpellated state (Giroux et al. 1984, p. 473; cf Althusser 1971, p. 123; cf de
Lauretis 1987, p. 6). When Giroux et al. describe cultural studies they express this
notional equivalence between teaching and ideology-critique explicitly.
By investigating and teaching the claim that culture is in a real sense unfinished, Cultural Studies can secure its own political effectiveness. Students — particularly those marginalised by the values of the dominant culture — can be disabused of the notion that the culture they actually inhabit is somehow not theirs or available to them only through initiation into the values enshrined in representative texts (Giroux et al. 1984, p. 478).

These proponents of critical pedagogy see cultural studies as providing its subjects with a reflexive understanding of the conditions of their constitution as subjects; by developing their 'substantive' critical faculties, it enables them to exceed the partially realised or 'ideological' subjectivity characteristic of the increasingly technicist order.

Giroux et al. are acting in their joint capacities as teachers and as critics of this envisaged order when they urge the carving out of spaces — 'oppositional public spheres' — where experiences of complete self-realisation can be further developed, and from which such 'substantive' modes of being can be exported. Their 'critical pedagogy' project is to transform education so that it can restore the ethical condition of the 'fully human': an integrated moral and political personality. However, this comprehensive ambition strains between its two key assumptions: that the dialectic of critical consciousness and 'substantive' values is the foundation of politics; and that the rationality of 'critical pedagogy' is uniquely placed to carry this dialectic forward. The former assumption is rooted in a theory of politics as the process through which critical consciousness embraces presently 'exiled' forms of rationality. The latter, associated assumption, takes cultural studies' political significance to be a function of one of its characteristic features: the critical practice of ideology-critique (Williamson 1997, p. 177; cf Watney 1994, p. 19).

Hunter (1994) argues that the tension associated with such critical ambitions is more than a theoretical mistake that can be displaced through further theoretical refinements; it is a moral attribute of a particular mode of scholarly personality. He writes that the capacity for self-reflection in this milieu [of the school] is not a generic general-purpose 'human consciousness', capable of serving as the 'critical' organ of all walks of life and departments of existence. It is a highly specialised (and highly prestigious) comportment of the person. It is a moral deportment formed through initiation into the disciplines of self-problematisation and self-regulation, and spread widely in our societies by Christian pastoral pedagogy and state schooling (Hunter 1994, p. 82).

Hunter's response to the kind of critical intellectual politics advocated by Giroux et al. is to redescribe it, in order to understand how it functions alongside, although not necessarily in harmony with, other forms of moral personality and other ethico-political practices. The foci of his redescriptions are relations between critical
intellectuals and bureaucrats, the academy and the bureau, and pedagogical practices and governmental or administrative politics.

There are, of course, other ways to mediate the differing functions of aesthetic self-care and state administration than to positively describe them. For example, Richard Rorty (1989b) notionally divides education between its primary and secondary forms, which he makes responsible for socialisation, and its tertiary form, which produces individualised students. This quite artificial differentiation is Rorty's way of coping with public education's hybridity. It is his manner of negotiating the hyphen in 'aesthetico-political'; his way to mediate the 'instrumental' (governmental) and 'substantive' (cultural) emphases within schooling (1989b, p. 200; cf Samuels 1999, p. 173). For Rorty, tertiary education needs to be quarantined from instrumental rationality, since the 'proper business of the university is to offer a ... provocation to self-creation' (1989b, p. 200; cf Reich 1996, p. 4). As I have noted, Giroux et al. see such encounters as taking place between the mutually confirming truths of culture-as-process and subject-as-process, and as having their proper home in interdisciplinary studies, from which they can then be exported (1984, p. 473). For them, this 'critical pedagogy' evades the institutional power relations and disciplines of regulation securing the 'dominant culture' and can thus serve as the vehicle for a double reconciliation: between the partial or 'ideological' subject and culture-as-process or 'unfinished' culture; and between 'instrumental' and 'substantive' rationalities (Giroux et al. 1984, pp. 472-473; cf Hunter 1994, p. 146).

Giroux et al.'s sanguine assessment of interdisciplinary studies' promise to lead an export-led recovery of 'aesthetics' for 'politics' is not shared by all of their activist-scholar colleagues. For example, Joe Sartelle (1992) strikes a more chastened tone when he problematises what he calls the 'democratising' approach to the politics of academia' (1992, p. 4). Sartelle identifies a tendency among some of his fellow Left intellectuals to view this project as if it were simply a matter of the politicisation of a hitherto apolitical academy by extramural political activists. He rejects this assumption as simplistic and as incapable of accounting for the political functions of the University. Instead, he proposes that academic work is already political, and that in order to be most effective in their political role, academics must recognise this fact. John Storey (1996) concurs with Sartelle, and writes that

cultural texts ... do not simply reflect history, they make history and are part of its processes and practices and should, therefore, be studied for the (ideological) work that they do, rather than for the (ideological) work (always happening elsewhere) that they reflect (1996, p. 3; cf Ankersmit 1996, p. 18).

When Sartelle and Storey propose this 'constitutive' thesis they repeat some of the main questions raised by post-Althusserian media and cultural studies: having assumed
that, in its normative forms at least, the University operates hegemonically, how should one respond? In other words, how should one act upon the knowledge that the institution within which one works is an 'Ideological State Apparatus'? Similar questions are raised explicitly by Charles Reitz (1998), when he asks: 'Are we practicing [sic] a critical pedagogy? How are we grounded philosophically? Does our practice reflect the notion that resistance, not simply criticism, is the driving force of history?' (1998, p. 18).

Like Giroux et al., Sartelle draws the attention of his readers to the truth that they are implicated in an important apparatus of social control. However, he does not share these colleagues' faith that interdisciplinary cultural studies is the vehicle of oppositional conscience. On the contrary, he sees cultural studies as an example of the fate of political appropriation awaiting those potentially transformative interventions within the academy which fail to strike the proper 'irritating' balance between academic textual practices and the principle of democratic participation. He writes that

what started out as an arguably insurgent and political movement aimed at making academic work more relevant to the problems and concerns of people outside academia, particularly those we like to call 'the oppressed,' has increasingly become one more academic 'discipline' among all the others, in which academics with potentially disruptive political perspectives can be contained by providing them with their own journals, conferences, and faculty positions (Sartelle 1992, p. 4; cf Katz 1997, p. 13).

For Sartelle, the emancipatory promise of interdisciplinary cultural studies remains unfulfilled; it has been effectively thwarted and ideologically contained by entrenched disciplinary order (cf Dollimore 1991, pp. 26-27). He makes the possibility of renewing this interrupted project dependent on activist-scholars taking responsibility for maintaining the required balance between their commitments to their 'perspectives' and their constituencies (cf Hunter 1994, p. 146).

Sartelle's and Giroux et al.'s shared model of cultural politics hinges on the ambiguous term 'subjectivity': ambiguous because, as Greenfield (1983) writes, 'it indicates both a state of subjection and an apparent Subjecthood or autonomy' (1983, p. 45). In other words, this notional 'subject' has a dual constitution: first, it is produced in a relation of subjection to an objective structure; and second, it is a subject of knowledge (cf Foucault 1985, p. 29). Earlier, I discussed critical commentaries in which the objective structure is notionally given a material form in the practices of language-representation, and a social location in the ISAs (cf Althusser 1971, pp. 136-137). When Sartelle makes his central concern the problem of how to maximise opportunities for disrupting the disciplinary University's production of normative subjects, he is operating within the problem-space of this longstanding 'Imaginary' tradition.
Giroux et al. and Sartelle share a problem of the 'culturalist' critiques of citizenship: an exclusive identification of the political person with the integrated, self-realising moral personality of criticism (Williamson 1997, p.179). Their respective optimistic and disillusioned tones are consequences of making this assumption. These assessments are not simply matters of differences of personal opinion or of psychological proclivity, but constitute theoretical, ethical, and political problems: the reader they appeal to as the most likely candidate for the reflexive personality they take as their norm, is already adept in the ascetic and hermeneutic practices that they count as the bases of 'politics'. For Hunter (1994), these problems are peculiar to Kantian critics' reappropriations of the *a priori* of subjectivity and their tendency to identify integrated moral personality ... with an integrated democratic 'public sphere'. This sphere of democratic political discourse and participation is supposed capable of achieving the dialectical reconciliation of the technical and the substantive, administration and 'culture', the state and 'civil society' and, of course, political expertise and democratic decision (Hunter 1994, pp. 146-147).

The last of these pairings has an obvious pertinence for those occasions when academic politics takes the form of a reconciliation between the self-consciously suspect expertise of activist-scholars and 'authentically democratic' extramural social movements. Following my earlier discussions of the history of dialectical criticism, I propose that the critical practices of problematisation within which this 'restored' subject and its associated expansive 'democratic' sphere appear, are secularised adaptations of religious practices; and that in their secular forms they entail the ethico-political uses of Kantian philosophy. Giroux et al.'s internalised dialectic of Weberian 'substantive' versus 'technical' virtues is one example of this specialist critical practice of political commentary.

In the following passage Sartelle addresses those 'new' public intellectuals who share his aspiration to be 'a kind of translator: to make the insights and perspectives of our professional work accessible, meaningful and relevant to as broad a public as possible'.

I think that the progressive 'democratizing' approach to the politics of academia has accomplished enough that we can begin to assess its limitations. I am most interested here in the fact that while academics are now talking about a more diverse and truly representative range of subjects than before, we are still talking about them in much the same old exclusionary professional languages (Sartelle 1992, p. 4).

Sartelle identifies limits to cultural studies' strategy of 'democratising' its practices by extending its canon to the cultural forms of popular culture. When he cites the problems of 'exclusionary professional language' and 'specialisation', he demonstrates
his own sensitivity to the critical pedagogy project to reconcile 'political expertise and
democratic decision' (cf Hunter 1994, p. 147). He recommends to his readers that they
carry forward this project by learning to speak with a 'clearer voice', a less
'exclusionary' and specialised language, to a wider audience than at present.

Like Hall, Sartelle does not simply ignore the variety of statuses attributed to
his readers and himself; nor does he deny that these are located in more than one
domain of life. At one point he writes that, apart from being 'researchers ... [we] ... are
also teachers, as well as citizens, and those of us who work for public institutions like
the University of California are also public servants' (Sartelle 1992, p. 2). He also calls
for his readers to modestly articulate their specialised intellectual skills with those of
others: 'We must simply prove our value. We must be accountable' (ibid). However,
like Piazza's interpretation-sermon, Sartelle's polemic addresses the implied subject of
an 'integrated democratic "public sphere" ' (Hunter 1994, p. 146). I do not mean by
this that he sees his readers as 'the general public'. In fact, he is careful to describe
them in less populist terms, as the diverse 'Berkeley campus community' (Sartelle
1992, p. 6). Instead, I mean that his commentary on academic politics does not take
into account the multiplicity of ethoi within that University. Those he does identify are
treated as partial manifestations of, or roles played by, the integrating figure of the
self-reflexive person: the (potentially) whole moral personality apparently standing
behind these roles and waiting to emerge once the channels of communication between
activist-scholars and their natural constituencies are cleared of interference. Sartelle's
democratic advocacy is thus bounded by his own identification with a particular class
of public intellectuals and their unique capacity and inclination to tackle 'substantive'
questions.

I did not raise the problems in these two examples of political commentary in
order to make a teleological point that there is an arc of disillusionment between
Giroux et al. in 1984 and Sartelle in 1992: a pessimistic logic intrinsic to the art of
criticism that, once identified, can be turned against its advocates. I have instead
described a variable ethico-political practice that enabled some academics to stand
poised, between the emancipatory promise of their critical vocation and the normalised
—and normalising—fate they were convinced waited for individuals who failed to
meet their own exacting standards of self-interrogation. It is not the 'intensity' of this
practice of introspection that I question, but its notional condensing of all political and
moral virtues in one mode of personality and its 'oppositional public spheres'.
Irritating the culture of pedagogy.

The historical emergence of 'queer' as a concern of the culture of pedagogy in the early 1990's was foreshadowed by changes in studies of sexuality and gender in the 1980's. In that period, social-scientific approaches closely connected to, or undertaken within, established disciplines like history and sociology, ceded ground to 'post-structural' and 'postmodern' approaches undertaken, for the most part, in departments of literature, film, and cultural studies (Namaste 1996, p. 194, p. 202). How have advocates of queer 'critical pedagogy' understood these changes in divisions of labour, responsibilities, and systems of prestige within and between academic practices? How did activist-scholars working in the changing academic environments of this period account for these shifts in theoretical frameworks, objects, and personnel? What aspects of queer studies did they embrace as useful additions to their pedagogical repertoires and projects? I can start to answer these questions by offering a brief survey of the relevant fields.

Advocates of 'critical pedagogy' have a common goal of reforming teaching practices so that they disrupt students' current subjectivities; they treat teaching as the vehicle for an 'elevated' reconstitution of experience. Some of these advocates have seen new electronic technologies as potential channels for this queering of pedagogy. For example, Jonathan Alexander (1997) writes that he uses hypertext to initiate his students into the critical ethos that is his normal teaching outcome. He argues that the formal qualities of hypertext are open to a strategy that aspires to a "bending" of "normalized" consciousness into not just a tolerance of homosexuals but a reconsideration of how ALL sexual orientations are delimitations and reductions of the innumerable possibilities offered by the body' (Alexander 1997, p. 2; cf Rorty 1998b, p. 200)\textsuperscript{19}.

Alexander anticipates the public-political potential of 'queer' by drawing on some of the themes in the contemporary literature on moral philosophy. He argues that by directing the attention of students to the inadequacy of dominant systems of sexual representation, hypertextuality can secure their critical comprehension of a rapidly pluralising world. This had also been Jean-François Lyotard's theme, when he wrote that '

\textit{"[p]ost-modern knowledge ... refines our sensibility to difference and reinforces our ability to tolerate the incommensurable"}' (Lyotard in Dollimore 1991, p. 331).

\textsuperscript{19} Victoria Moon Joyce (1997) extends the term 'hypertext' further than its association with electronic media such as the Internet, to cover the intertextual manner in which a camp performer like Dolly Parton uses gender codes to 'mark her body as a hypertext female' (1997, p. 41).
Alexander sees his students as learning to be the kind of subjects that 'straight' postmodernists also aim to bring into being: subjects who reject the presumably familiar attractions of 'essentialist' experiences of sexual identity for the less familiar, more difficult, and consequently more critically valuable truths encountered in an 'anti-foundationalist' way of life.

Audrey Thompson (1997) works in performance studies, an academic-theatrical area adjacent to the one in which Alexander works. Thompson not only shares her colleague's interest in emancipating her students from their subjectivity, but is likewise devoted to a self-marginalising ethos that makes a virtue out of the act of recoiling from an envisaged 'political' centre (cf Bennett 1993, p 223, p. 227). This is evident when she approvingly quotes the cultural theorist bell hooks, to the effect that a 'space on the margins ... offers "the possibility of [a] radical perspective from which to see and create, to imagine alternatives, new worlds" ' (hooks in Thompson 1997, p. 7).

Having set her course on marginality, Thompson goes on to recommend 'performance pedagogy' to those who wish to follow her to 'other sites of political and cultural knowledge that call into question what seems obvious and realistic' (1997, p. 7).

In Glenn Burger's 1995 report on teaching Geoffrey Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales*, he applies the theories and methodologies of queer and postmodern theory to what he sees as key problems in his own fields of literary education and cultural history: the 'foundational' status of terms like 'gender' and 'sexuality', and the apparent integrity of the biological body (1995, p. 1; cf Mauss 1973, p. 73). Burger argues for an alternative teaching practice that is derived from Lee Edelman's notion of 'homographesis': the 'simultaneous processes of oppression and resistance' associated with modern reading strategies. He writes that for Edelman, 'homographesis' refers, first, to those modern 'dominant ideological strategies [which] assign to gay bodies a visible "difference" '; and second, to 'a reading and writing practice that counters the labour of disciplinary inscription by resisting categorisation' (Burger 1995, p. 1).

Burger argues that studies of the literature of the late medieval period can be usefully queered by teachers placing their emphasis on categories of (medieval) gender, rather than on those of (modern) sexuality. For Burger, weighting the relations between gender, sex, and subjectivity in this manner not only differentiates medieval and modern representational practices, but induces a queer mood of discontent with apparently stable sexual identities. His pedagogical goal – communicated through the professional channel of an academic conference paper – is for students to learn how

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20 Berger's report was delivered at a 1995 conference held at Georgetown University: Cultural Frictions: Medieval Cultural Studies in Post-Modern Contexts. Another relevant paper delivered at the same conference was Robert L. A. Clark's and Clair M. Sponsler's 'Queer Play: The Cultural Work of Crossdressing in Medieval Drama'. There are precedents for these writings in Sedgwick's (1990) work on Herman Melville, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Henry James, and in de Lauretis' (1987, pp. 51-83) writings on Umberto Eco and Italo Calvino.
to recognise their own internalised 'modernity' in supervised demonstrations of these
differences, and to work to overcome their habitual attraction to familiar patterns of
thought and action (cf Clark & Sponsler 1995, p. 1).

Burger recommends a 'queer' teaching strategy of confounding students' expectation of finding recognisable homosexual and gay subjects in the texts they study: subject-positions that are absent from medieval representational practices, since they are 'produced along modern not pre-modern axes of difference' (1995, p. 2). If students are to fully appreciate the peculiarity and contingency of familiar modern practices of self-representation, and hence maximise their own capacities for directed self-transformation, they must first recognise the foreignness of those practices' medieval counterparts. Burger writes that

the process of identification that happens in modern discursive regimes along parallel essentializing axes of sex (male/female), sexuality (homo/hetero), and race (white/black), in medieval practice might more likely take place along the axis of gender (masculine/feminine). Essentializing gender difference provides the stabilizing foundation by which medieval dominant culture regulates 'the natural.' In doing so, the suppressed/oppressed category of the feminine inscribes and identifies a greater variety of othered bodies – women's, heretics', Jews', Saracens', effeminate', sodomites' – than is the case in modern Western regimes of representation (Burger 1995, p. 2).

In this version of critical pedagogy, a methodology of late 20th century literary-criticism – deconstructive reading – is given new applications, in a bid to reform the self-transforming potential of scholarship of the medieval period. Burger's problematising of the power of modern modes of perception and evaluation to limit subjectivity is a stage in this dialectical practice of self-care.

Alexander, Thompson, and Burger anticipate changes in their fields of study – as well as changes in the moral personalities of those who work in these fields – in terms reminiscent of my earlier discussions of Rich and Gabb. As I noted in the third chapter, Rich is concerned to extend the scope of gay and lesbian screen studies beyond their traditional interest in the mimetic representation of pre-existing gay and lesbian subjectivities, or even with cinema as a structure constituting such identities. Gabb's corresponding concern is with the ethico-political potential of Grace's queer figurative photography practice; in particular, its foregrounding of anti-essentialist viewing strategies. Alexander displays similar interests, when he takes hypertextuality as the paradigmatic example of the queering of literary linear narrativity and its normal rational subject. Burger does likewise, when he submits a canonical literary text to a queer reading, with the intention of opening it to multiple interpretations which, he claims, conventional literary criticism strategically renders unthinkable. Thompson looks to a strategy of self-marginlichisation to secure 'substantive' values. As these
examples suggest, by the late 1990s, 'queer' was well established as a trope in those social sites where theories of education are produced, circulated, and consumed\(^{21}\).

'Queer' had become a fixture of the 'culture of pedagogy' by the end of the 20th century, without constituting a theoretically coherent front. If 'queer' designated a growing academic area of study, with its own canon, protocols, and imperative to secure itself within university departments, 'Queer Theory' was and remains a relatively diverse corpus of theoretical literature. As a variable ethos deployed in a specialist practice of self-formation and dedicated to exceeding disciplinary constraints, 'queer' was well-placed to join other traditions of activist-scholarship likewise committed to reconstituting relations between the self and the world. For some of its proponents, queer subjectivity had graduated to a normal ethical outcome of teaching practices; it had become a model for the reflexive citizen-subject of the new century.

While 'reification' is a key concern of recent queer versions of critical pedagogy, it has long been an issue in literary-critical circles. Alexander draws on this tradition when he recommends hypertext as a 'powerful pedagogical tool' for helping students break out of 'simple, often binary, hierarchical, and linear forms of thought', and as thus producing 'more sophisticated, polyvocal ways of understanding' (1997, p. 1, p. 3; cf Giroux et al. 1984, p. 478; cf Wolford 1997). Contrary to Alexander, however, Bertlant and Warner (1995) see the problem of reification as an issue of 'Theory' itself. It is their view that critics who posit 'Queer Theory' as an apparently stable context for projects to reconfigure their objects of analysis tend to reify those objects, due to their assumption that routine appeals to the intellectual authority of 'Theory' have a corresponding empirical value. Bertlant and Warner link this problem to a rationalist assumption common in activist-scholar circles: that relations between established and newer schools of thought are fundamentally ones of theoretical succession (Bertlant & Warner 1995, pp. 1-2; cf Choi et al. 1995, p. 72, p. 105; cf Sedgwick 1991a, p. 2).

Grossberg (1994) shares Bertlant's and Warner's reflexive concern that activist-scholars should monitor and moderate their own reifying tendencies, while also acknowledging that their studies of the politics of representations may require them to make general statements. He writes of those relations between forms of moral agency and social locations that we call 'communities', that they are 'temporary points of identification' which are 'determined, not merely by ideological practices of representation, but also by affective practices of investment' (Grossberg 1994, p. 15; cf

\(^{21}\) Other examples include: panels at academic conferences (Kuzmanovic 1999); specialist conferences (http://complit.rutgers.edu/queerpedagogy/index.html); and anthologies of essays (Ristock & Taylor 1998; Pinar 1998).
Maffesoli 1996, p. 139). Thus Grossberg notionally places a critical appreciation of 'context' at the centre of cultural studies as a theoretical and a political practice. In the former instance, cultural studies is a 'theory of contexts', while in the latter it is a 'practice of making contexts' (1994, p. 5).

Grossberg credits this 'radical contextualisation' with causing cultural studies practitioners to routinely reject both the application of a theory known in advance as well as an empiricism without theory. While [cultural studies] is committed to a detour through theory, it is not theory driven. Instead, it is driven by its own sense of history and politics. Theory is always a response to a particular context (ibid).

He shares this aspiration to a 'theory of contexts' with the tradition of post-Saussurean semiological analysis. In Malcolm Barnard's (1996) writing on fashion as semiological system, this tradition is expressed in the statement that 'semiology may be thought of as a theory of contexts' (1996, p. 89). Grossberg likewise believes that taking the problem of reification seriously means theoretically contextualising moral agency - including that of cultural studies theorists themselves - in relation to 'an organization of places and spaces, of people, practices, and commodities' (1994, p. 15). His modelling of a useful and responsible academic practice and subject thus reproduces social-semioticians' routines of identifying and notionally disrupting a set of subject-positions within an objective structure (cf Rose 1996, pp. 142-143). Grossberg acknowledges that 'people are always anchored or invested in specific sites', but he attributes political importance to these 'contexts' because 'the place determines from and to where one can speak (or act)' (1994, p. 15). Each identified 'context' is a structure accompanied by a corresponding subject-status.

Some of the notable contributions to problematising the theoretical and empirical aspects of teaching and academic research have been made at the interface of sociology and cultural studies (cf Namaste 1996, 1998; cf Wark 1998b; cf Newitz & Sandell 1994). Cross-disciplinary academics, such as Seidman (1996; 1997b) and Ki Namaste (1996; 1998) have helped to coordinate the relevant theoretical and methodological exchanges. When Namaste (1998) describes the 1980s changes in sexuality and gender studies that preceded the 1990s development of queer studies, she does so in terms of a shift from a well-established 'social scientific' scholarly tradition that takes 'gay politics, cultures, and communities' as its objects, to a 'new body of knowledge' vested in practices such as cultural studies, and concerning itself with 'the textual inscription of sexual and gender identities' (1998, p. 111). Namaste distinguishes her own approach to these developments from the approaches of her colleagues who have exclusive commitments to either the social scientific or the discursive traditions (1998, p. 128). She explains this difference by citing the issue of...
reification; more specifically, she identifies some of the difficulties that appeals to stable identities encounter in contemporary AIDS education and research: problems produced for these endeavours when the social identities being appealed to do not coincide with sexual practices (cf Haver 1996, p. 151; cf Dowsett 1996, pp. 18-20).

For Namaste, the polarising of academic approaches has resulted in the field being either notionally unified, as a discursive 'context' for the subjects of those discourses – the problem I identified above in Grossberg's approach – or else referred to an equally unsustainable empiricism (cf Bertlant & Warner 1995, pp. 2-3; cf Bordowitz 1993, pp. 222-223). Her own preference is for a form of research informed by empirical evidence without being empiricist; a research practice of theoretical rigour that resists being confined to a hermeneutics of discourse analysis (Namaste 1998, p. 132; cf Jenkins 1992, pp. 35-36; cf Grossberg 1994, p. 5). This response to historical changes in sexuality and gender studies expresses an understandable concern of those who work in these areas and who wish to avoid being impelled towards a hyper-ethical or exclusive interest in modelling a categorically 'transgressive' persona. Namaste calls this practice by which she balances her own powers of interpretation and her imperative to make historical descriptions, a 'socially-focused post-structuralism' (1998, p. 132). Through the medium of her commentary on the current state of her academic field, she models this stance – a version of Hall's 'worldly vocation' – for those of her colleagues and students counted among her readers (cf Patton 1995, pp. 162-163).

I have discussed occasions when activist-scholars have attempted to 'irritate' themselves and their colleagues. Yet as these discussions have shown, not all of these persons emphasise the same irritants, and neither do they agree on the degrees of irritation required. Some place their faith in their powers to induct students into new and unsettling knowledges, while others seek to apply a judicious restraint upon themselves in the exercising of those powers. The criteria for a proper degree of tension are important matters for consideration and contention among queer-identified academics and their activist-scholar colleagues. The historical emergence of 'queer' as a reflexive concern of some university teachers during the 1990s was marked by the problems and solutions, the promises and disappointments, that those who produced and consumed theories of education in this period routinely generated and responded to.
By the mid to late 1990s, projects to queer pedagogy were under way across all the writing genres in which education is theorised. For example, Victoria I. Muñoz (1999) offers a typical rationale for these projects when she writes that 'queer' is a way to help students 'truly unlearn this world' (1999, p. 7). As I have argued, such projects to restructure teaching and its ethical, cultural, and political outcomes are variants of cultural studies academics' traditional concern with securing their own socio-political effectiveness. Deborah Britzman's 'Queer Pedagogy and Its Strange Techniques' (1998) is one such attempt to theoretically queer pedagogy. In this contribution to the anthology *Inside the Academy and Out*, Britzman cites with approval Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's raising of a number of questions concerning pedagogy. She paraphrases these questions in the following manner.

Can the project of education become the gathering ground for 'deconstructive revolts'? Can pedagogy provoke ethical responses that can bear to refuse the normalizing terms of origin and of fundamentalism, those that refuse subjection (Britzman 1998a, p. 49)?

Britzman (1995) had earlier raised similar questions concerning the reflexive moral and political potentials of teaching. On that occasion, she wrote that a theory of pedagogy informed by the tradition of gay and lesbian studies has two important yields. The first of these is 'thinking ethically about what discourses of difference, choice, and visibility mean in classrooms, in pedagogy, and how education can be thought about'. The second is 'thinking through structures of disavowal within education, or the refusals – whether curricular, social, or pedagogical – to engage a traumatic perception that produces the subject of difference as a disruption, as the outside to normalcy' (Britzman 1995, p. 2).

Britzman argues that the most important factor that gay and lesbian activist-scholars can bring to teaching is their aesthetico-political project to appreciate 'difference as the grounds of politicality and community' (*ibid*; cf Rich 1993, p. 336). For her, this project to queer pedagogy is a matter of equipping teachers and students alike with the symbolic and ethical resources denied them by an Imaginary order that is structured by a 'pernicious production of such binaries as self/other and inside/outside' (Britzman 1995, p. 6). She argues that the pedagogical and curricular applications of a queer psycho-linguistic model of difference 'may be quite significant to the conceptualisation of education if part of that conceptualisation is concerned with studying what students and teachers cannot bear to know' (*ibid*). Thus, for Britzman, it
is axiomatic that teaching should be measured by the degree to which it emancipates its subjects from this normative fate (cf Thompson 1997, p. 7). Where Britzman looks to queer pedagogy to solve the problem of a systemic occlusion of subjects' possibilities for multiple identifications, Alexander offers a different rationale for applying hypertext to a practice of queer pedagogy. He argues that these applications enable teachers to instil in students a psychically and politically healthy orientation to 'an increasingly multicultural and diverse world in which we want ... [them] ... to have appropriately sophisticated understandings of human experiences' (1997, p. 2). It is Alexander's view that the queering of teaching is a way to build students' capacities for composure, as they negotiate the potentially bewildering effects of postmodern multiplicity.

While projects to queer teaching have been pursued enthusiastically across a number of politicised intellectual fronts – those persuasive rhetorics mobilised in and across the genres of social commentary, academic discussion groups, conferences, and other occasions devoted to theorising teaching – they are neither uniform, nor unfettered. As I noted in relation to Piazza, and after Hunter and Hindess, such projects are limited by the agendas of other social actors, as well as by the 'necessarily technical and temporal nature of all political rhetorics and mobilisations'. There are critical receptions of queer pedagogy projects that are not only cognisant of the need to acknowledge those projects’ limits, but which seek to moderate their own commentary.

In his review of the anthology *Inside the Academy and Out: Lesbian/Gay/Queer Studies and Social Action*, Alan D. Brown (1999) writes that the book's authors theoretically mediate relations between 'what can be known (research theory) and how and what can be taught (pedagogy)', and that they see in 'queer' the 'possibility of (un)learning about sexuality through critical pedagogy and research' (1999, p. 2; cf Hall 1996b, p. 272; cf Rorty 1989a, p. xiv). But Brown is careful to treat his readers and his reviewed authors as fellow members of a particular, and not general, 'public sphere' (cf McKee 1997, pp. 92-93; cf Hurley 1990, pp. 156-7). As a writer working in the review genre he must, of course, not only judge the texts he reviews, but make judgements concerning his readers being an at least potential community of communication, if not a moral community united in agreement on all issues. His 'public' comprises individuals and groups with a stake in theorising teaching, and who have a familiarity with that field's topical concepts, arguments, and stakes. He assumes that his readership have internalised certain precepts, that they possess particular intellectual and moral attributes. Thus, while he assumes that this public uses the critical-perfectionist term 'resistance', he also sees it as routinely accompanying these usages with the caveats of context, contingency, and sophistication (Brown 1999, p. 2). Crucially, for Brown, an appropriate ethical stance
of restraint in such matters is a criterion of membership in his identified community of interest. Within such a formation, to 'contextualise' the resistant norm of activist-scholarship is to demonstrate the attainment of a capacity for reining in one's critical powers of interpretation in the face of political, cultural, and ethical multiplicity.

Exemplary demonstrations of critical restraint are not confined to the review genre. In the 'Introduction' to *Manful Assertions: Masculinities in Britain since 1800*, the book's editors, Michael Roper and John Tosh (1991), express dissatisfaction with some recent British histories of masculinity that have pursued their object within institutions such as 19th century public schools and the 20th century Boy Scouts Movement. Roper and Tosh are troubled by what they see as distortions of the mundane political significance of manliness: its manner of functioning as a technology of power. They argue that by confining their analyses of masculine codes of conduct to public spheres that historically excluded women, these histories overlook the importance of the codes as points of articulation between public spheres and the 'private' spheres of family and home, where not only fathers, but women, too, helped to fashion masculine attributes (Roper & Tosh 1991, p. 3).

Roper and Tosh argue that to the extent 'masculine autonomy' is a key assumption of gender studies, it theoretically deprives codes of masculine conduct of their relational and social dimensions; it elides the codes' roles in the policing of gender boundaries; it misunderstands their importance to the politics of gender and of social class. They write that if the theoretical cogency and political impacts of gender studies are to be maximised, its practitioners need to reconsider this tendency to assume that in 'masculinity' they face a unified object; and that instead, they should acknowledge relational and pluralising histories of various masculinities which operate across different practices and domains of daily life. Such historicising studies are incompatible with treating particular masculinities as if they were constituted exclusively within the impermeable sphere of the 'public-political', as opposed to the sphere of the 'private-personal' (*ibid*).

Alan McKee (1997) follows a theoretical-pedagogical imperative in relation to the object 'homosexuality' that is in key respects comparable to Roper's and Tosh's approach to 'masculinity'. McKee argues that conservative and liberationist accounts of homosexuality typically position their object in relation to the 'private' sphere; the former account aims to consign it to that sphere, and the latter attempts to liberate it from its presumed confinement there (1997, pp. 86-87). Like Roper and Tosh, McKee seeks viable theoretical alternatives to those emancipatory histories that have

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emphasised the 'public' at the expense of its relations with the 'private'. Such emancipatory histories are not suitable candidates to be the vehicles of a revised practice of life instruction, argues McKee, because a convincing account of 'the multiplication and relativisation of "public spheres"' must also address 'the importance and openness of "private" spheres' (1997, p. 92). A yield from both McKee's and Roper's and Tosh's theoretical writings is that those who adopt their arguments may find it difficult to treat 'culture' and 'politics' as if they were either synonyms or antonyms.

Not all contextualising gestures give a positive focus to critical thought, and they do not necessarily modify or renounce perfectionist pulsions with equal vigour. There are more or less effective moderations of the art of judging that are profoundly ambivalent. For example, when Roper and Tosh praise the 'post-1977 histories' of John Boswell, Alan Bray, and Jeffrey Weeks, they do so on the basis of these gay historians having moved away from a linear dynamic towards a careful contextualising of homosexual experience in specific historical cultures, which revealed shifting patterns in the expression of desire. 'There is', Bray affirms, 'no linear history of homosexuality to be written at all' – nor, we would add, of masculinity (Roper & Tosh 1991, p. 5).

By valorising the 'careful contextualising of homosexual experience', the authors invoke the 'constitutive' tradition of cultural materialism: a tradition of critical commentary in which, as we have seen, there is a common but variously exercised imperative to 'contextualise'.

Roper's and Tosh's article is not, however, only a polemic for a positive treatment of their field; the kind of gay history it advocates be applied to the multiplicity of masculinities is one that '"propels us into a whirlwind of deconstruction"' (Weeks in Roper & Tosh 1991, p. 5). The authors argue that the main contribution of gay history to their gender studies field 'has been to dissolve the "essence" of homosexuality and by inference other sexual orientations too – and thus to undermine one of the planks of "commonsense" masculinity' (ibid). What is in some ways a 'positive' polemic thereby makes a more conventional 'hegemonic' argument, that an effective opposition to 'essentialism' must be the key criterion for assessing any theory and politics of gender and of sexuality (cf Bertlant & Warner 1995, p. 2).

The problem of 'abstraction' has figured prominently, if not consistently, in exhortations to adopt a rigorous critical-philosophical way of life. A familiar example

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23 Butler (1998a) has included in this category of 'cultural materialists' Raymond Williams, Stuart Hall, Gayatri Spivak, and Donna Haraway (1998a, p. 4).
is Roper's and Tosh's attempt to convince their readers that a propensity to abstraction can hinder their capacities for critical thought, political calculation and directed action. Another example is Reitz's 'Liberating the Critical in Critical Theory' (1998), in which he advocates that the dialectics of culture

be liberated from a restriction solely to the aesthetic form, as art is liberated from the commodity fetish. Our natural and social materiality must be liberated from the philosophy of mere sensuousness (and postmodernism's preoccupations with life-world and the body). Truth needs liberation from both empiricism and dematerialization (Reitz 1998, p. 18).

This is clearly a secular Marxian counterpart of Piazza's interpretation-sermon. It also shares features with Namaste's 'socially-focused post-structuralism'; notably, her attempt to balance her empirical and theoretical foci.

When described in procedural and ethico-political terms, 'abstraction' can be seen to operate as part of the traditional role of the 'cultural sciences' in forming capacities for scepticism or for moral equanimity; as a matter for attention in a variety of practices of self-problematisation; and in techniques of group-formation (Hunter 1991, p. 50). The abstract 'queer dialectic' and its counter-critiques have their own epistemological and ethico-political significances. Nevertheless, queer dialectical critics' capacities for self-restraint have typically been questioned on the grounds that these critics continue a 'discursive' fallacy; that they are irresponsibly preoccupied with 'aesthetic' objects, rather than with 'political' ones; and that they fail to maintain the proper balance between the empirical and the theoretical (cf McKee 1997, p. 98).

There are critiques of the practice of discourse analysis that have been keen to theoretically repudiate its key abstractions; most notably, the post-structural and postmodern theories of desire that secure the 'discursive' tradition's claims to intellectual authority (cf Reitz 1998, p. 18). In Philip Derbyshire's (1994) version of these corrective responses, he stakes his own claim to authority on an appeal to Marxian political economy (1994, pp. 44-45). Others look to the related tradition of Marxian-Freudian criticism to mount their counter-critiques of discourse analysis. In his review of Fuery's *Theories of Desire* (1995), Anthony Elliott (1995) writes that the

random pluralism of desire, with its multiple subject positions and fractured discourses, can be seen as less the result of post-modernism than an extension of capitalist exchange value into the mind itself. From this angle, all talk about the 'dislocating subversions of desire' is unlikely to generate too much anxiety at either IBM or Sony (Elliott 1995, p. 29).

Irritated by Fuery's wide-ranging and abstract commentary on 'desire', Elliott is moved to make the not unreasonable point that there is a lack of cogency in accounts which do not specify this object's social locations and limits.
Elliott's frustration with Fuery's abstractions is a response to a rival locus of critical conscience and knowledge in academic theoretical practice. However, in making his response he dismisses the 'pluralism', 'fractured discourses' and 'multiple subject positions' championed by Fuery, on the grounds that they are bogus: the distracting products of corporate capitalism. In order to provide the principle of unity missing from this problematic late capitalist culture, Elliott looks to the subject of the anti-capitalist struggle. This is the subject whose consciousness Marxian-Freudian critics of 'aesthetics' seek to free from a colonising symbolic order. Elliott's specifying counter-criticism of Fuery's abstract 'post-structuralism' therefore parallels a dismissive critic of 'Queer Theory' like Derbyshire, who rejects it on the grounds that it represents the paradigmatic case of the 'aestheticising' of critical thought in the era of 'postmodern capital' (1994, pp. 44-45; cf Jameson 1971, pp. 83-115; cf Jameson 1981, pp. 281-299).

Derbyshire's response to 'Queer Theory' and Elliott's response to 'post-structuralism' reproduce the mass society thesis that has played a significant role in cultural and media studies, most notably through the influence of the 'Frankfurt School', the 'Althusserian', and 'Gramscian' versions of critical theory (cf Kellner 1990; cf Williamson 1978). Derbyshire's reference to the 'mass cultural' and Elliott's reference to the objectifying powers of 'capitalist exchange value' invoke this enduring thesis: that moral autonomy, and hence true politico-moral agency, are threatened by the commodifying powers of capitalist modes of production and consumption (cf McQuail 1994, pp. 74-75; cf Adorno & Horkheimer 1977, pp. 349-374; cf Swingewood 1977, pp. 8-10).

I have previously argued that it was in part through the influence of Marxian cultural theorists' critiques of capitalist culture that cultural studies activist-scholars were able to treat their own theoretical and pedagogical practices as antidotes to these objectifying powers, or as the vehicles for a restoration of lost unity (cf Storey 1996, p. 3; cf Giroux et al. 1984, p. 472). Thus the cultural studies theorist John Storey (1996) is able to argue that Marxian cultural theory informs a distinctive cultural studies project through two main tenets: first, that 'to understand the meaning(s) of a cultural text or practice, we must analyse it in its social and historical conditions of production and consumption'; and second, 'that capitalist industrial societies are societies divided unequally along, for example, ethnic, generational and class lines'. Storey writes that as a consequence of cultural studies being informed by these tenets, it 'contends that culture is one of the principal sites where this division is established and contested' (1996, pp. 3-4). In Storey's Marxian account, cultural studies is equated with a project to perfect the dialectic of social semiotics (the 'pedagogy of culture') and of critical pedagogy (the 'culture of pedagogy') (cf Grossberg 1994, p. 11).
Storey inflects his vision of cultural studies' aesthetico-political project with Hall's theory of 'articulation', where 'meaning' is not guaranteed by the conditions of a text's production, but is differently articulated in various social contexts (1996, p. 4). Hall adapted his concept of articulation from Antonio Gramsci's 'hegemony theory': the theory that dominant social groups maintain their dominance through a dialectical articulation of the processes of production and consumption. Storey argues that the consumer always confronts a text or practice in its material existence as a result of determinate conditions of production. But in the same way, the text or practice is confronted by a consumer who in effect produces in use the range of possible meaning(s), which cannot be read off from the materiality of the text or practice, or from the means or relations of its production (Storey 1996, p. 5).

Following Angela McRobbie, Storey sees in the concept 'hegemony' a way for cultural studies to treat cultural consumption as a mode of production. 'Hegemony' offers to resolve the crisis that he says cultural studies entered into when the political, cultural, and economic transformations of post-1980s Eastern Europe, and the challenge to the authority of Marxian-indebted cultural studies by postmodern rivals, caused it to split along two tendencies. The first of these, a 'a crude and mechanical base-superstructure model', is a form of Marxian economism. The second is 'a kind of cultural populism ... [in which] ... anything which is consumed and is popular is also seen as oppositional' (McRobbie in Storey 1996, p. 5). A corrective 'return to hegemony theory' promises to give critical intellectuals a balanced alternative to these polarised positions – the qualified sense of 'resistance' discussed by Brown – by revealing how 'making popular culture ... can be empowering to [the] subordinate and resistant to dominant understandings of the world' (ibid; cf Bennett 1992, p. 29). Lest Storey's readers confuse his own position with the populist-oppositional one he rejects, he makes the qualification that 'this is not to say that popular culture is always empowering and resistant' (1996, p. 5; cf McLaren 1994, p. 207).

Proponents of 'critical pedagogy' have sought to justify their own specialist interpretive and evaluative functions by theoretically binding them to the interests of marginalised constituencies, in a critical-pastoral mode of politics. It was in an attempt to restrain the voluntarist versions of these mediations and their associated 'hyper-ethical' agendas that Bennett drew attention to the institutional issue of the relation between interdisciplinary cultural studies critics' social prestige and their claims to social and cultural marginalisation (1993, pp. 218-219). In the case of Giroux et al.'s critical pedagogy, the encounter between the 'sphere for cultural critique' that is provided by interdisciplinary cultural studies, and a 'resisting intellectual' with access to substantive values, is understood as representing marginalised peoples' 'voice in public affairs' (1984, p. 473). For Sartelle, the encounter is between the 'public forum'
of the journal *Bad Subjects* and 'the voice of the leftist public intellectual' (1992, p. 6). Despite Sartelle's previously mentioned deliberately ironic reference to 'those we like to call "the oppressed"', and his shifting of his allegiance from cultural studies to *Bad Subjects*, he shares Giroux et al.'s assumption that activist-scholars can and should mediate relations between their constituencies of the dispossessed and the principle of democratic political participation; they all aim to speak in the voice of emancipated critical consciousness (cf Hunter 1993-4, p. 97).

When Henry Jenkins (1992) theorises contemporary fan culture he argues that *all* resistant readings are not necessarily progressive readings; the "people" do not always recognise their conditions of alienation and subordination' (1992, p. 26, p. 34). For Jenkins, the admittedly privileged and specialist practice of critical judgement is redeemed by being conducted on behalf of this worthy _ currently misled _ constituency. Quoting Hall, to the effect that popular culture is ' "deeply contradictory," characterized by "the double movement of containment and resistance, which is always inevitably inside it" ', Jenkins anticipates a kind of deliverance from his onerous duties of theoretical and political representation (Hall in Jenkins 1992, p. 34; cf Bennett 1992, p. 29). In common with his queer colleague Burger, who, as I have noted, makes similar claims for the study of 'homographesis', Jenkins sees teaching others to be sensitive to this dialectics of culture as a way to share his load, so that one day they will be able to recognise and interpret their own interests unaided.

As objects or concerns of teaching theory, 'hegemony', 'resistance', and 'articulation' have allowed some critics of education to judge their own practice by its sensitivity to 'context'; they have enabled them to assess themselves and their colleagues according to the degrees to which they moderate zeal for unfettered cultural critique. This form of modesty helps Storey establish a theoretical distance from what he identifies as Frankfurt School pessimism and intrinsic elitism. He expresses this distance when he denies 'that popular culture is little more than a degraded culture, successfully imposed from above, to make profit and secure ideological control' (1996, p. 6; cf Grossberg 1994, p. 5; cf Kellner 1990, pp. 252-253). Yet while a capacity to contextualise occasions of cultural production and consumption can be a valuable theoretical and ethical asset for cultural theorists, like other ascetic acts of renunciation, it can also be a difficult virtue to maintain. Victoria Moon Joyce (1997) strikes this problem when she defines 'hegemony', after Beverley Diamond, as ' "asymmetrical relations of power" ', before asking what the critique of hegemony 'means for a society that is desperately in need of a renaissance' (Diamond in Joyce 1997, p. 1; cf Bennett 1992, p. 29). For Joyce, 'hegemony theory' is a way to conceive of a critical pedagogy that can deliver society from its current crisis and malaise: a revival that 'will require a queer sensibility' (1997, p. 1; cf Carter 2001, p. 2).
While reproducing a totalising or 'hyper-ethical' moral imperative does not seem to trouble Joyce, it causes anxiety among some of her contemporaries, who feel a need to assuage their discomfort by qualifying the totalising tendencies of hegemony theory. For instance, Peter McLaren (1994) argues that a critical pedagogy must balance the 'local' knowledges of students within particular sociopolitical and ethnic locations' with a modified model of 'totality'. He advocates a concept of totality not in the Hegelian sense of an organic, unified, oppressive unity but rather 'as both a system of relations and overdetermined structure of difference' ... As structures of difference that are always multiple and unstable, the oppressive relations of totalities ... can always be challenged within a pedagogy of liberation (McLaren 1994, p. 207).

McLaren's 'differentiated' revision of hegemony theory acknowledges the potential for discontinuities between various sites of moral agency, while minimising the risk of this modesty rupturing the emancipatory bases on which critical pedagogy proponents traditionally stake their claims to authority.

Unlike the advocates of critical pedagogy, Paul Patton (1994) denies that the conventional pedagogical relationship is 'normative', at least in the general or socially reproductive sense assumed in Romantic or oppositional criticism. He argues that such power relations are not intrinsically oppressive; that the exercising of power over others is not always inimical to their interests; and that as a consequence, states of domination are not always to be avoided. He cites the examples of teachers influencing the actions of their students by 'providing advice, moral support, or by passing on certain knowledge or skills' (Patton 1994, pp. 63-64). I can add the previously mentioned examples of Sartelle, Jenkins and Burger, who all make competence in the dialectics of culture a key outcome of their practice of activist-scholarship. However, following Patton, I suggest that it is not the 'undemocratic' nature of these activist-scholars' pedagogical relationships that is problematic, but the indiscriminate manner in which they project them as a public-political ideal. Bennett (1992) makes a similar point regarding the problem of a lack of discrimination in Gramscian theories of hegemony and resistance (1992, p. 29).

An ability to convincingly equate teaching with the practice of ideology-critique, and the promise of lifting the representational burden from teachers' shoulders by reconfiguring education into 'oppositional public spheres', are ready means of distinguishing one's own interpretive and evaluative functions from those of one's colleagues who do not stake their authority on a claim to 'democratise' academic politics. For example, Grossberg et al. (1992) state that 'that all forms of cultural

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McLaren is citing a then-forthcoming article by Teresa Ebert: 'Writing in the Political Resistance (Post) Modernism'.
production need to be studied in relation to other cultural practices and to social and historical structures', while also arguing that the 'traditional' disciplines make an anti-democratic and 'exclusive equation of culture with high culture' (Grossberg et al. 1992, p. 4). These 'democratising' encounters take place in the specialised sites and practices of cultural studies, where they have been praised for mediating the 'entire range of a society's arts, beliefs, institutions, and communicative practices' (ibid; cf Giroux 1994, p. 30).

It has been argued of cultural criticism that there are correlates to the simultaneous expansion and elaboration of its theoretical fields in two simultaneous movements: the 'aestheticising' of politics, and the 'politicising' of 'the aesthetic' (cf Hunter 1992, p. 347). In my earlier discussions of Koselleck's history of dialectical criticism I noted that these movements or strategies had been advocated two centuries before interdisciplinary cultural studies was developed. Koselleck lists them among the achievements of a new class of critics that emerged in the 18th century: a 'group of individuals who ... [saw themselves] ... as representatives and educators of a new society' (1988, p. 122). Thus by the late 18th century, Schiller could claim that of all modes of perception, 'only the aesthetic mode of communication unites society, because it relates to that which is common to all' (Schiller in Hunter 1988, p. 81). For Schiller, as for those critics like Jenkins, who have followed his example _ subject to suitably 'materialist' revisions of 'the aesthetic' _ the key feature of this apparently universal cultural process is an articulated play of the spiritual and the sensuous (ibid; cf Jenkins 1992, p. 34).

Queer activist-scholarship has inherited elements of its predecessors' aesthetico-political _ethoi_ and dialectical proficiency. Like them, queer sexual dissidents aim to identify and to rectify mistakes of thought and action they discover in their interrogations of self and society; they anticipate in their own selves and conducts the transformations that society will one day attain; and they demonstrate these exemplary performances publicly (cf Hunter 1988, p. 83). Over the period of the 1990s there were numerous attempts to install these refurbished aesthetico-political projects _ as 'queer pedagogy' _ in the theories and practices of education.

**Conclusion:**

I have identified explicitly queer attempts to make activist-scholarship the pivot of education. One is Alexander's report on his use of virtual hypertext to disrupt the
'crude binarism which runs roughshod over the complexities of experiences, feelings, and human possibilities' (1997, p. 1; cf Watney 1994, p. 16). Another example is Britzman's application of the ethical norm of the queer 'subject of difference' – 'the outside of normalcy' – to the task of calculating teaching outcomes (1995, p. 2). I also noted examples of a similar nature, such as Sartelle's gay Left 'public intellectual' stance. These advocates for teaching as an oppositional political practice share a goal of bringing into being a way of life that can subvert a presumed heteronormative order; each sees in teaching a potential vehicle for refashioning cultural citizenship in this image of an on-going dialectic of aesthetics and politics (cf Rich 1993, p. 336).

Some activist-scholars with a commitment to 'politicising' education assume that they know in advance what the moral and political outcomes of education are; they assume that 'real' politico-moral agency must only exist in the spaces of communal freedom that they and their colleagues have liberated from the otherwise normative structure of education. Yet as I have demonstrated, there is another emphasis within the relevant literature on pedagogy: a focus on inserting a grain of irritating caution into the otherwise smooth workings of this perfectionist mode of critical commentary. Brown's contextualising of his and his readers' cultural capacities, and McKee's problematising of hermetic models of 'public' and 'private' spheres are examples of this emphasis on moderation. My discussions of examples of what it meant to queer pedagogy in the late 1990s show that these projects were undertaken across both emphases in scholarly problematisation; that 'queer pedagogy' exhibits marks of the tensions generated between these 'hyper-ethical' and moderated imperatives.

I have described various occasions when tropes such as 'hegemony', 'context', and 'articulation' figured in the theoretical writings of activist-scholars who are committed to a critical vision of teaching (Giroux 1994, p. 30; Grossberg 1994, p. 16). However, I have also shown that the 'tension' these composite persons value as the very condition of their 'worldly vocation' is not only worked up by this ethos, but that it is dissipated by it as well. In Sartelle's exemplary case, he identifies a contradiction between the imperatives of secular conscience and of the state-run university, and then attempts to resolve it by balancing his enthusiasm for theoretically clarifying and amplifying his intellectual's voice, and his devotion to caring for, and being most watchful over, those of his students who are lost, marginalised or oppressed. Sartelle derives the models for his ideal public sphere of democratic participatory politics and its citizen-subject from these pastoral aspects of his professional practice. The teacher/student relationship – including its ethical norm of the neophyte whose comprehension is an artefact of that relationship – sets the theoretical terms for the

In the critically-orientated late 1990s theoretical literature on teaching, the moral and professional attributes of its implied academic readers are deemed to be properly balanced between scholarship and political activism, 'autonomous' moral existence and effective participation in the polity, when presided over by an integrating critical conscience. Adherents to various modes of activist-scholarship have proffered their theories, methodologies, and demonstrated capacities for restraining their own abstracting tendencies as guarantees of their own qualifications to perform this mediating function. For some, a project to queer pedagogy has given them opportunities to socially distinguish their own dialectical bent from that of others, whose philosophical way of life imbues them with similar ambitions to marry their intellectual and political lives in a politicised teaching practice. In the following chapter I examine a notable late 1990s case of queer-related activist-scholars asserting themselves across various inter-connected intellectual fronts and institutional spaces, and meeting with not entirely unexpected counter-critical receptions from those spaces' current occupants. I test a proposition I began to entertain in this chapter: that like their 'straight' colleagues, queer activist-scholars emphasise the quasi-religious or critical-spiritual aspect of academic life, while brandishing 'critical restraint' as a talisman to ward off those 'irritations' that otherwise could emanate from their other _ non-critical _ professional consciences.
Chapter 6:  Rival qualifications.

Introduction:

This chapter develops my earlier discussions of queer sexual dissidents' 'transgressive' ethos and its significance for their attempts to remake academic life in their image of activist-scholarship. It describes features of these projects, as well as of sometimes sympathetic, and sometimes competing, ethoi and projects of other activist-scholars. If, as I have argued, demonstrating one's abilities to deconstruct existing forms of political rationality was a means of gaining entry to post-Enlightenment criticism's 'moral stage', how was this assertive practice received by the existing occupants of the fora involved? How did they negotiate the terms on which these spaces and resources might be shared? What rationales were offered for confronting and rejecting this 'anti-foundationalist' mode of critique that included queer-identified activist-scholars among its most ardent proponents?

Following my earlier discussions of the problem of self-marginalisation in the 'culture of pedagogy', I also consider how junior participants in 1990s disputes over 'anti-foundationalism' reacted to this problem; how such doubly marginalised persons calculated and expressed their own interests and agendas, relative to their senior colleagues. My main examples are a series of encounters between the successors to what Koselleck calls a class of self-selected 'representatives and educators of a new society' (1988, p. 122). My main aims in this chapter are to understand how these dissident groups managed the epistemological and the ethico-political aspects of their practice; and to describe the kinds of relationships that prevailed between their cultivation of capacities for interpretation and sensitivity, and their own worldly circumstances.

25 'Anti-foundationalism' is a somewhat contentious term for those 'post-structuralist' and 'post-modernist' intellectual approaches that use semiotics and deconstructive methodologies to critique 'identity' (Beck et al. 1998; Sand 1998, p. 6).
Tactical dissonance and harmony.

The 1990s rise to prominence of 'queer' and other 'anti-foundationalist' modes of study in academic and related domains and practices was accompanied by a polarising of theoretico-political stances. Thus in what I have described as Derbyshire's version of the mass society thesis that is common in cultural studies, 'queer' is understood to be at best irrelevant before a host of 'cultural integrations' at work in liberal democracies 'at the level of media, at the level of professional acceptance, at the level of legal reform, and so on'. Misled by its empty promises of emancipation from this assimilation, the 'intelligentsia's play with queer ... can only be a form of Romanticism, a mis-identification ... a comfortable fantasy of difference that makes becoming the same slightly less banal' (Derbyshire 1994, p. 44; cf Martin 1995, p. 154; cf Halperin 1996). In response to such accusations that 'queer' and the 'cultural Left' exemplify bourgeois culture's aestheticising of social reality, Butler (1998a) notes that their critics' own agendas have been played out in the cultural forms of mass communications media. She argues that these polemics against 'aesthetics' make the untenable assumption 'that the distinction between material and cultural life is a stable one'; and that, in any case, they have had the paradoxical effect of 'reinvigorating the cultural domain as a site for politics' (Butler 1998a, p. 3; cf Hall 1996a, p. 1; cf Hennessy 1995, pp. 143-144).

Donald Morton (1995) is an opponent of the 'cultural Left' who is keen to express the kind of overtly dualistic notional separation of 'material and cultural life' that Butler problematises. He writes that

> those working within the frames of (post)structuralism, psychoanalysis, feminism, Foucauldianism, and the new historicism – espouse something they call materialism. However, these claims are themselves expressions of idealism since they deploy the notion of the material in such a way as to erase class conflict. Materialism is a structure of conflicts (Morton 1995, p. 3).  

In Morton's haste to defend the historical dialectic that lies at the heart of 'traditional' Marxian cultural theory, he equates what he sees as his opponents' lack of a theory of class conflict with their rejection of any notion of conflict per se (cf Dollimore 1991, pp. 122-123). Following my earlier discussions of queer dialectical criticism and 'the aesthetic', and of queer critics and their coalitionist imperatives, this argument is open to question.

Morton's attempt to make the apparently fundamental category of socio-economic class the basis for his counter-critique of his opponents' own favoured
category of 'language-culture', is itself subject to a withering critical scrutiny from those he criticises. No less than the 'traditional' defenders of the materialist inheritance, members of the cultural Left are capable of finding their opponents' rival consciences abhorrent, and can be moved to declare their truth claims redundant. The element of caricature in these polarised positions, their tendency to repeat — or, as Butler has put it, to parody — decades-old debates between factions of the intellectual Left, is clearly evident in these disputes and requires explanation (1998b, p. 34).

In my earlier discussions of the 'cultural materialist' tradition of critical thought I demonstrated how the significance of deconstruction has been notionally expanded, from a specialist critical procedure, to a semiotics on which a whole cultural politics might be based (cf Watney 1994, p. 16; cf de Lauretis 1987, pp. 9-10). When Butler defends projects to deconstruct the cultural order that she and others see as regulating experiences of gender and of sexuality, she does so by reasserting, simultaneously, her approach's own 'materiality' and its powers to displace key elements of existing political rationality. She takes this dispute into what her leftist critics regard as their own theoretical terrain — the field of Marxian political economy — by citing precedents in the canon of 'traditional' Marxism. These precedents include 'the convergence of Marxism and psychoanalysis in the 1970s and 1980s', and Engels' and Marx's 'own insistence that "mode of production" needed to include forms of social association' (Butler 1998b, p. 39). Elsewhere (1990), she paraphrases Marx, to the effect that since 'the political task' takes as its 'critical point of departure the historical present', it behoves Marxian critics 'to formulate within this constituted frame a critique of the categories of identity that contemporary juridical structures engender, naturalize, and immobilize'. Butler argues that this genealogical injunction is best undertaken by deconstructing the 'lawful' systems of categorisation which make their subjects' performances of identity possible (1990, p. 5).

Like Derbyshire's and Morton's political criticism, and contrary to Morton's charge of 'idealism', Butler's practice is a variant of materialist aesthetic criticism; the difference being that she treats 'the aesthetic' as intrinsically political, while they reconceive it along 'anti-aesthetic' lines in order to 'politicise' it (cf Hunter 1988, p. 241). Earlier, I discussed this issue of the relations between 'aesthetics' and 'politics' in reference to late 18th century projects to make aesthetic criticism into a platform upon which a then-new class of intellectuals could mount their moral critiques of politics. Butler's 'dragging up' of political reflexivity and her corresponding solemnising and spiritualising of the drag artiste's practice and ethos, can be referred to this longer history of the 'aestheticising' of politics (cf Tyler 1991, p. 33; cf Ankersmit 1996, p. xiv). When she locates the 'political' in 'the very signifying practices that establish, regulate, and deregulate identity', Butler is establishing a theoretical basis for
valorising drag's ability to challenge these configurations of identity, whose foundationalist claims to 'the natural', she argues, elide alternatives. Her queered materialist theory of drag offers to uncover these occluded experiences by revealing the ritualistic nature of the 'premises' of identity politics (Butler 1990, pp. 146-147).

In the previous chapter I discussed Sartelle's (1992) manner of problematising what it is to be an activist-scholar. Like Butler, Sartelle addresses the problem of how to render — in the double sense of representing and displacing — the already-political nature of the Imaginary field. Butler pursues this 'political task' by first asking 'what interventions into this ritualistic repetition [of normative identities] are possible?' Having defined the problem facing sexual dissidents in these 'Imaginary' terms, she finds her answer in drag's ability to parody the seemingly natural. The recipients of Butler's attentions — drag critic-artistes — are consequently invested with the important 'political task' of miming historically 'unconscious' forces, and of thereby helping their audiences to recognise internalised 'truths' that have hitherto structured their experiences of gender and of sexuality (1990, p. 146; cf Fuery 1995, p. 95).

I have previously noted a discussion in Koselleck's history of criticism with a bearing on Butler's attempts to guide her audience-constituency's interpretations of drag-as-performance. Koselleck describes how the theatrical stage emerged as a moral jurisdiction that asserted its independence from the state's jurisdiction by changing its allegiances to a contrary set of dialectically ordered principles. He writes that, for Schiller, the theatrical stage was a 'social institution that enabled him to subject that "peculiar group of people", the politicians, to its judgement' (1988, p. 102). Late 20th century queer political criticism profited from this late 18th century example. Butler's (1990) advice to queer critics to pursue 'the subversive and parodic redeployment of power', is thus comparable to Schiller's argument that 'merely unmasking [politicians] was not enough; the critical judgements had to be a call to action: "We must evade them or meet them, we must undermine them or be vanquished by them" ' (1990, p. 124; Schiller in Koselleck 1988, pp. 101-103).

After my discussions of Koselleck, I can say that Butler's envisaged guerrilla operative — the drag critic-artiste — is recycled from Schiller's 'theatrical' repertoire: the projects that he and others undertook two centuries ago, to make 'aesthetics' into an art of self and social re-creation (cf Hunter 1988, pp. 210-211). Koselleck's historical argument does not only make it clear that Butler's 'transgressive' or 'queer' ethos is not an entirely new phenomenon, it also provides a reason for questioning Morton's 'anti-aesthetic' counter-critique. Koselleck argues that the elevation of the moral stage 'above' the politics of state was no mere retreat into rarefied irrelevance, since a correlate of this development was that 'politics' itself became increasingly delimited as a dualistically ordered domain. 'At the point at which the dualistically segregated
dominant politics are subjected to a moral verdict, that verdict is transformed into a political factor; into political criticism' (Koselleck 1988, p. 101).

The kind of Marxian 'anti-aesthetic' response to Butlerian 'Queer Theory' that is modelled by Derbyshire and Morton does not, of course, exhaust the options available to critics of queer deconstruction. I have previously noted the examples of the theoretical, ethical and political grounds on which Dynes opposes queer studies, and argued that one need not be an advocate of queer 'politicisation' to find these responses problematic. However, there are critics of 'queer' or 'transgressive' theorising who have addressed problems in its procedures, rather than confine themselves to countering its epistemological claims.

Fadi Abou-Rihan (2000) describes the influential Butlerian 'performativity' thesis as following a critical imperative to subject theory to the 'reality principle' of practice. He calls this strategy of 'materialist' cultural commentary the 'pursuit of an ideal unity between theory and practice'; a pursuit which 'affirms the distinction between theory and practice only so that it may subsequently reunite them in a meta-calculus of checks and balances' (2000, p. 6). Early in the previous chapter I made a similar point in relation to Giroux et al.'s (1984) critique of the disciplinary university: that it 'presages a subsequent "return" of critical thought'. When Abou-Rihan makes this point in regard to Butler's performativity thesis, he does not dismiss it for its lack of grounding in the empirical reality that is apparently laid bare by a properly 'anti-aesthetic' counter-criticism. Instead, he identifies her ritualised splitting and restoring of an ideal unity _ together with an accompanying anxiety _ as exemplary technical and affective features of a practice of dialectical criticism.

Butler's self-reflexivity has a theoretical correlate in her questioning of the stability of her other main focus: the cultural order of signification, which she problematises as the hybrid category of 'language-culture'. She writes that, when considered abstractly, 'language refers to an open system of signs by which intelligibility is insistently created and contested'. Having associated 'language' with 'abstraction' _ the latter being part of materialist critics' repertoire of problems _ she introduces the notion 'discourse', which has the advantage of being definable as 'historically specific organizations of language'. Discourses 'present themselves in the plural'; and, because they 'are coexisting within temporal frames', they institute 'unpredictable and inadvertent convergences ...' (Butler 1990, p. 145; cf McHoul & Grace 1993, p. 31; cf Belsey 1980, p. 5). For Butler,

to understand identity as a practice, and as a signifying practice, is to understand culturally intelligible subjects as the result of a rule-bound discourse that inserts itself in the pervasive and mundane signifying acts of linguistic life (1990, p. 145).
To follow Butler on her post-structuralist path to disrupt this 'law' requires one to survey a moral jurisdiction — the field of cultural politics — conceptually divided between codes and practices (cf Jenkins 1992, pp. 35-36). Butler herself is following the example set by Foucault in his histories of practices of the self, in which he distinguishes between what he calls code-centred and ethics-centred systems of morality. Foucault (1985) identifies these systems by whether they emphasise 'codes of behaviour' (Butler's 'rule-bound discourse') or 'forms of subjectivation' (her 'identity as a practice') (1985, pp. 28-30; cf Hunter 1988, pp. 95-96).

Considering my earlier discussions of the ethico-political, I can say that Butler's reading of Foucault is not simply a mistaken application of his positive account of moral agency to the normative task of criticising an integrated field of cultural politics; it is an example of a particular mode of subjectivation: what in the fourth chapter I called, after Hunter, an exemplary display of 'ritual wisdom' (1996a, p. 49). In the fifth chapter I went on to cite an example of this kind of pedagogical display of moral character: Alexander's use of the technology of hypertext to disrupt the 'crude binarism' of his students' experiences of 'the complexities of experiences, feelings, and human possibilities'. Alexander makes the pedagogical aspect of this ritual explicit when he goes on to write that hypertext serves a 'profoundly educational purpose', in part 'because it allows students to "experience" me at many different levels; they can see, for instance, that an interest in homosexuality does not preclude an interest in religion' (1997, p. 2). Through Butler's example, her dedicated readers can cultivate composure as they deconstruct their 'Imaginary' field, secure in the knowledge that Marx authorises this 'political task' of accommodating oneself to having nothing to lose but the 'illusion of gender identity as an intractable depth and inner substance' (1990, p. 146; cf Reitz 1998, p. 18).

In Abou-Rihan's description of Butler's strategy he calls it a version of dialectical criticism's 'yearning for the ever-elusive harmonious unity that is the outcome of a conciliatory movement of contradiction and resolution' (2000, pp. 6-7). In the following section I follow his procedural precedent and discuss examples from socio-linguistic and socio-economic theoretical schools of thought whose adherents have expressed this yearning in their own interpretations of the Marxian imperative to account for their historical moment (cf Morton 1995, p. 3; cf Butler 1990, p. 5). What follows are descriptions of passionate advocates of 'cultural' and of 'traditional' materialist criticisms vying with each other to assert their own version of a quasi-spiritual anticipatory stance, as the best way to 'channel' this spirit of harmony (cf Butler 1990, p. 145; cf Seidman 1997a, p. 159).
Courting controversy and comparing virtues.

In the midst of the institutional struggles marking the historical emergence of 'queer' as an issue of the 'culture of pedagogy' Butler (1998a) declared, after Gayatri Spivak, that to 'deconstruct a category is not to eliminate it, it is precisely to make an inquiry into a category that we cannot do without' (1998a, p. 2; cf Claxton 1998, p. 4; cf Hall 1996a, p. 1). What is the significance of this prominent proponent of 'transgressive' critique — here acting in her capacity as advocate of 'anti-foundationalism' — recalibrating her ambitions in this apparently modest manner? In Abou-Rihan's account of another occasion when Butler struck this chastened tone — what he calls her 'apology-cum-preface' to Bodies that Matter (1993) — he describes it as part of an ascetic practice for treating one's own sense of 'substance' as a problem to be overcome (2000, pp. 6-7). For Butler, the point is to learn how to distrust one's most natural-seeming experiences, and to instead see them as constitutive products of a system of distributed recognitions and exclusions: a system of 'rules that are partly structured along matrices of gender hierarchy and compulsory heterosexuality' (1990, p. 145).

The occasion on which Butler defended her anti-foundationalist stance and re-dedicated herself to it, was the conference Left Conservatism: A Workshop, held at the University of California Santa Cruz in January 1998 and hosted by that university's Center for Cultural Studies. Her modesty can consequently be seen as a kind of apologetics: a type of rhetorical self-shaping genre that she used to position her arguments relative to a wider politics and culture. Couching her faith in anti-foundationalist criticism and in its deconstructive methodology in the language of diplomacy allowed Butler to position herself to maximum advantage before a court of her fellow activist-scholars, as well as before the conference's wider constituencies. She did so in the knowledge that some in her academic audience were suspicious of, and hostile to, herself, her more sympathetic colleagues, and their deconstructive strain of sexual dissidence. By arguing that conventional sexual and gender categories are theoretically redundant, yet currently possessed of a normative utility requiring acknowledgment, Butler could demonstrate her ability to hold theoretical 'erasure' and worldly utility in balance, and hence display her credentials as a worthy successor of the activist-scholars of 'politicised' cultural studies (1998a, p. 1; cf Wray 1998, p. 28).

One controversial feature of the Left Conservatism conference was its title, the choice of which suggests that the organisers deliberately pursued a strategy of courting controversy. This strategy is a standard one in explicitly queer studies. It had been in
response to a queer studies conference held in 1994 at the University of Iowa – one with talks and panels like 'Beyond Binary: Queer Family Values and the Primal Cream', and 'Clits in Court: Lesbians and the Law' – that Dynes had been moved to mount his criticism of academic 'Queer Theory'. As I noted in the first chapter, Dynes's response was to attempt to erect a cordon sanitaire of funding cuts and employment vetting around a queer studies that had escaped its confinement in the 'elite' universities of the American coasts, and which had now 'spread to the heartland' (1995, p. 1). In the same chapter I also noted that Halperin had traced the first outbreak of 'Queer Theory' to a 1990 conference held in what Dynes would see as one of these suspect coastal enclaves: the University of California Santa Cruz.

Chris Connery (1998), the Director of the Center for Cultural Studies, contributed to the deliberately scandalous tone of the conference by writing in a pre-conference publicity flyer that a 'spectre is haunting US intellectual life: the specter of Left Conservatism ... that is, an attack by self-proclaimed "real" leftists on those [anti-foundationalists] portrayed as theory-mongering, hyper-professional, obscurantist pseudo-leftists' (1998, p. 1). In a different version of the flyer, published in the journal Bad Subjects, Connery goes on to state that this 'Left Conservatism challenges post-structuralists' left credentials on a variety of fronts, but [that] a recurrent position is the claim for the incompatibility between anti-foundationalism and a political agenda predicated on real claims for social justice' (Connery in Bad Subjects Collective 1998, p. 4). For Connery, the 'conservatives' in question assume that to describe political subjects in terms of their discursive conditions is to undermine their claims to legitimacy. Dynes is one potential target for this 'constructionist' counter-critique.

When Connery declares that American intellectual life is threatened by a 'spectre' of conservative anti-intellectualism identified with the Left opponents of anti-foundationalism, he ironically invokes the positive connotations that Marx had given the term 'spectre' in The Communist Manifesto (1848), and which Jacques Derrida (1994) had subjected to sympathetic deconstructive analyses in his Specters of Marx (1994, p. 99, p. 103). When writing about the conference, some of those who attended it likewise claimed a sophisticated sense of irony as a criterion for full participation in the debates (cf Claxton 1998, p. 3). However, this ironic stance does not preclude Connery from sharing some of his earnest colleagues' problematic assumptions. Like them, he makes the apparently sincere assumptions that the particular intellectual milieux of cultural and political criticism are equivalent to 'intellectual life' itself, and that the political significance of these milieux derives from them being the key 'oppositional' sites of moral agency in society (cf Bristow & Wilson 1993, pp. 1-2). Connery's argument is thus understandable as a variant of the one made by Giroux et al. concerning the 'oppositional public spheres' that only a properly 'critical pedagogy'
can provide. By pre-empting his opponents' claims to exclusive right of occupancy of these sites, Connery can give succour to certain of 'intellectual life's' defenders, and imbue the subsequent polarising of positions with a powerful sense of inevitability.

After having a polarised stage prepared for them, it is hardly surprising that some of those Connery did not count among the defenders of American intellectual life might revel in playing their assigned roles of dour spectral presences. Some of these persons were present at the conference itself; others manifested their threatening poses on the Internet. But whatever their medium of response, these critics were drawn to an opportunity to flaunt the 'real' leftist attitudes predicted in the official conference announcement. In a subsequent edition of the journal Bad Subjects,26 the editorial 'Voices from the Collective' reported on Left Conservatism-inspired debates undertaken on the journal's electronic discussion list. 'Real' leftists on this list included at least one, Dave Hawkes, who insisted on the principle that positions on a political spectrum – and hence membership of the community of the academic Left – must be defined by 'the degree of one's opposition to capitalism', rather than by appeals to experiences of oppression, or by one's intellectual position on questions of 'race, gender, or sexuality' (Hawkes in Bad Subjects Collective 1998, p.5).

By reasserting theoretical Marxism's traditional insistence that it is socio-economic class which is central to material life, Hawkes rejected Butler's (1998a) conference paraphrasing of a point previously made by Hall: that 'race [like sexuality] may be one modality in which class is lived' (1998a, p. 4). Butler (1998b) continues this argument in a subsequently published version of her conference paper, where she takes to task Nancy Fraser's 'traditional' argument that lesbian and gay oppressions are located at the cultural, rather than the political economy end of a political spectrum, and that as a consequence, homophobia 'has no roots in political economy, because homosexuals occupy no distinctive position in the division of labour, are distributed throughout the class structure, and do not constitute an exploited class' (1998b, p. 39). Connery had anticipated this longer history of theoretical dispute when he wrote in the Left Conservatism conference flyer that the 'current polemics [of the American academic Left] bring to the fore long unresolved questions about how the left conceives the nature and stakes of critical work ...' (Connery in Wray 1998, p. 27; cf Reitz 1998, p. 4).

Not all of those who continued the conference's disputes into the Bad Subjects discussion list limited themselves to arguing the relative degrees of 'materiality' of jostling theoretical frameworks (cf Henwood in Bad Subjects Collective 1998, pp. 4-5). For example, Katha Pollitt (1998) raised issues pertaining to professional ethical procedures, such as the conference organisers' failure to invite participation from, or

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even to notify, those whom they had named as 'Left Conservatives' in the conference announcement (Pollitt in Bad Subjects Collective 1998, p. 5). Pollitt's objection was a valid response to this breach of protocol. However, like Butler's qualification of deconstruction, Connery's irony, or Morton's reassertion of Marxian 'ideological' purity, Pollitt's response also had a rhetorical significance; it brought into question the seriousness of her opponents' commitments to the community of activist-scholars they were seeking recognition from.

The subsequent edition of Bad Subjects contributed a further semi-public site for continuing and redefining the conference and discussion list disputes; it offered other performance spaces and courts of judgement where participants could form and conduct themselves as dissident subjects, as they socially distinguished themselves from their colleagues and rivals. Butler (1998b) extended these opportunities by publishing a post-conference version of her paper, in which she argued that political movements are 'overlapping, mutually determining, and convergent fields of politicisation' (1998b p. 37). Here her manner of problematising notions of a unitary shift from 'identity' to 'difference' is to insist that the latter

is not simply the external differences between movements, understood as that which differentiates them from one another but, rather, the self-difference of movement itself, a constitutive rupture that makes movements possible on non-identitarian grounds, that installs a certain mobilising conflict as the basis of politicisation (ibid).

Butler's ironic play on the term 'movement' is central to her notion of a 'non-identitarian' political movement. In this answer to her Marxian opponents, she deconstructs what she calls their 'neo-conservative' rationales for opposing the politics of gender, ethnicity, and sexuality. In their responses she finds unjustifiable fears that such identifications factionalise the Left and that they will reduce 'political activism to the mere assertion and affirmation of cultural identity' (1998b, p. 36). For Butler, her Marxian critics' anxious responses to 'non-identitarian' political formations underestimate those formations' potential to be radically reflexive. She directs her readers' attentions away from the question of the 'external differences' between socio-political movements, and towards 'self-difference'; from envisaging a field of opposed totalities, to critically appreciating the ethical processes of subjectivation that make adherence to a particular movement possible. This academic journal 'intellectual front' aims to induce in her readers an on-going process of self-reflection that can then move outwards, to public-political action.

The Left Conservatism conference gave Butler opportunities to raise and to refute her critics' assessments of her own and her colleagues' work and worth as members of the academic Left. It allowed her to publicly declare an 'anti-
foundationalist' deconstructive project a legitimate response to not only the inadequacies of the current order of liberal pluralism, but to problems in 'traditional' economistic Marxian critiques of that order. Early in her conference address Butler presented herself and her intellectual work as models for her notionally polarised audience. First she questioned the actions of what she called 'protesters of the workshop', who had distributed a rejoinder to the official conference announcement. She accused them of having implied — falsely, in her opinion — that if the anti-foundationalists had their way 'those who remain disinclined to accept poststructuralism ... [or] ... "the postmodernist paradigm," would be excommunicated from the left, or denied tenure or job possibilities by those who work within such paradigms' (Butler 1998a, pp. 1-2). As I noted previously, Dynes made similar recommendations to these when he sought to combat the postmodern leftist queer studies he saw as threatening American academic life.

Butler's second move was to distance herself from those on her 'own' side who had breached protocol by naming leading 'Left Conservatives'. Her apologetics meant that she could appeal for more courtesy and tolerance to be shown by both of these communities of conscience, while also arguing that her opponents' anxieties over anti-foundationalism were the products of a mistaken assumption that it was merely a textualist exercise in ideology-critique. These themes of conciliatory reasonable dialogue, theoretical rigour, and practical wisdom were evident in Butler's acknowledgment, after previous conference speaker Paul Bové, that anti-foundationalism understood that it could not offer a foundation for politics; that as the critique of all political certainties, it had the wisdom to know that it lacked a means to secure or to replace a politics (1998a, p. 1; cf Bové 1998, p. 1; cf Abou-Rihan 2000, p. 6; cf Connery 1999, p. 4). She then argued that this is not a weakness, but a strength; that anti-foundationalists understand that there are necessary limits to intellectuals' links with political formations; and that this gives them an insight that their opponents lack: that 'the whole debate concerning the politics of foundationalism takes place within a foundationalist imaginary' (Butler 1998a, p. 1).

In Butler's conference paper on the theories and politics of the 'new' social movements — those organised around points of identification that 'traditional' Marxists view with suspicion — she defends them on the grounds that they interrogate apparently 'foundational' terms such as 'objectivity', 'rationality', and 'universalit}'.

What can such terms mean, given that there is no consensus on their meaning? How can they be mobilised, given that there is no way that they can be grounded or justified in any kind of permanent way. What is the task for politics when it invariably must use terms, must use the language of universality, for instance, precisely when the conventional usages of the term
do not include the radical democratic uses of the term one has in mind for the term (Butler 1998a, p. 2)?

Butler responds to those who see a lack of political prudence in scepticism towards 'identity' by acknowledging that there are limits to the intellectual politics in which this term has recently been devalued. However, there is a significant gap between the qualifying tone of this conference statement and the argument that appears in the version of her paper that was subsequently published under the title 'Merely Cultural', in the journal Theory & Event. It is in this version, and not in the conference one, that she makes the previously mentioned reference to her 'traditional' opponents being 'neo-conservative'. On this later occasion she also describes anti-foundationalism as being 'central to political economy', on account of it being 'a movement concerned to criticise and transform the ways in which sexuality is socially regulated' (Butler 1998b, p. 36, p. 39). Her published paper's debt to structuralist Marxism is made explicit in a reference to Althusser's materialist reworking of the category 'Ideology': his theoretical linking of cultural practices to a general social function of reproducing subjects (Butler 1998b, p. 43).

When Butler assumes that anti-foundationalism is a specific political factor with no general connection to political formations, she fills the notional vacuum produced by this renunciation of political ambition with a description of her practice as a critique of a general 'foundationalist imaginary'. These gestures – the inherited marks of critical theory's traditional ambivalence – exemplify what Abou-Rihan calls Butler's yearning for the unity to be found in a 'meta-calculus of checks and balances' (2000, p. 6). They also correspond to the philosophical mode of self and social transformation that Pfeiffer calls 'a consciousness of discrepancies and conflicts to be repaired at least symbolically' (1994, p. 16). In this case, Butler presents a split in Marxian political discourse, between the categories of 'culture' and 'politics', then symbolically reunites them in an anti-foundationalist critical discourse of 'difference' (1998b, pp. 36-7). The conference gave her the opportunity to make a qualified acknowledgment that there are historical and institutional limits to 'anti-foundationalism', and to thus establish a common ground with its critics. It also enabled her to reassert the prestige traditionally associated with critical theorists' claims that a critique of the 'foundationalist imaginary' is the basis of effective politico-moral action (cf Martin 1995, p. 157).

Butler demonstrates her own dedication to the activist-scholar's 'worldly vocation' as a lesson in prudence for her audiences. She argues that criticism is not 'merely cultural' but is a practice with specific socio-political conditions and effects; that this specificity imposes necessary limits on critics' theoretical and political ambitions; and that a reflexive awareness of these limitations guarantees those critics'
political effectiveness (Butler 1998a, p. 1; cf Althusser 1971, p. 156, p. 163; cf Grossberg 1994, p. 8). Her chastened comportment consequently confirms what Grossberg et al. (1992) identify as a key tenet of cultural studies: that since 'culture' has both symbolic and material aspects, studying it 'involves not privileging one over the other but interrogating the relation between the two' (1992, p. 4; cf McKee 1997, p. 93).

While these are potentially useful moderations of hyperbolic tendencies, it is notable that such acknowledgments of the exigencies of activist-scholarship are accompanied by a sense of disquiet at the prospect of having to convincingly use politics' conventional representational terms to move a constituency to action. Butler expresses this discomfort as a necessary compromise between her demonstrated skill at using the terms and her moral conviction that they have no legitimate basis beyond those particular mobilisations (1998a, pp. 1-2). The public and 'private' spheres covered by the rubric 'Left Conservatism' provided variable yet imbricated sites for repeating this uneasy balance between making persuasive truth claims and adhering to the protocols of critical modesty (cf Grossberg 1994, p. 15).

The audiences for Butler's exemplary renunciation of surplus power were communities of fellow activist-scholars gathered together as conference attendees, and as writers and readers of the printed and electronic literature generated by that conference. Such diverse gatherings give their participants opportunities to acquire the intellectual and moral attributes of their profession. Some of these occasions, such as the reading of academic journals, may be silent and 'private', or collegial, when conducted in an academic reading group; others offer more public and even dramatic platforms on which the appropriate attributes can be acquired and demonstrated before one's peers (cf Hunter 1996a, pp. 41-42, p. 49; cf Claxton 1998, p. 1). Butler's own performances across these genres and milieux of academic life allowed her to elevate her practice relative to those persons and traditions without the virtue of modesty; those without the prudence and confidence that could be demonstrated by balancing erudition and an acknowledgment of one's limitations; those without the profound insight that could be persuasively manifested through a properly chastened attitude (1998b, pp. 34-35; cf Hindess 1997b, p. 263).
Raised voices and selective hearing.

Matt Wray (1998) attended the Left Conservatism conference and subsequently wrote 'Left Conservatism: A Conference Report', in which he expressed discomfort with its factional polarisation. The Report appeared in Bad Subjects, the same journal that had published Sandell's 'Living the Political' (1995), Sartelle's 'Public Intellectuals' (1992), a version of Connery's publicity flyer (1998), and which had provided the semi-public forum of the Bad Subjects discussion list. Since Wray writes for fellow postgraduate and early career activist-scholars who share his post-Althusserian milieu, his Report can give us insights into the options faced by these readers, and those they saw themselves being offered by the Left Conservatism conference; it can suggest the sorts of arguments they were prepared to entertain regarding postgraduate education, the functions of professional conferences, and the nature and potential of their own theoretical and pedagogical practices.

Wray expresses a profound dissatisfaction with what he takes to be an intolerant and hermetic obscurantism that had excluded a number of those, such as himself, whose professional background, personal history, or age precluded them from fully participating in the conference (cf Claxton 1998, p. 4; cf Alterman 1998, p. 1). At one point he describes this unprofessional polarisation by using the metaphor of acrimoniously divorced couples who leave their children with a feeling of having been abandoned. He asks: 'how is this [conference] situation any different from the child who wants the parents to stop fighting and to take some responsibility for parenting (?)' (Wray 1998, p. 30).

The social portrait Wray sketches is one of alienation and compulsory entrenched positions: passionate debates with rationales that hark back to the academic disputes of the 1960s, and which have no coherence or relevance for himself and his contemporaries (ibid). But while he criticises Butler for contributing to this state of affairs by being 'reluctant to leave the realm of the purely discursive, to abandon the close textual reading for a moment of participant observation', he also questions whether her Marxian opponents are any more committed to restraining their own critical powers and making constructive contributions (ibid). He argues that their alternative to anti-foundationalist discourse analysis is itself not conducive to the
'empirically-minded research' that he himself favours. In this respect, Wray's response is a variant of the balance between critical and empirical imperatives that I have previously identified in Namaste's (1998) synthesis of cultural studies and the social sciences, as well as in Butler's own conference performance28 (1998, p. 132). By invoking the issue of activist-scholars' ability to strike this balance, Wray judges the polarised conference participants by the standards of their own commonly held 'worldly vocation'.

The search for a balance between inward and outward orientations has a history in the self-reflexive problematising of Enlightenment intellectual politics. In Hunter's (1996a) account of popular schooling, he discusses the historical example of the late 18th century German Popularphilosophen or 'public intellectuals', who had opposed the Schulphilosophen or academic intellectuals of the period, in large part over a similar issue to the one confronting Namaste and Wray: the question of how to find 'ways of modelling conduct that were both more realistic and more civil than those they found in ... academic moral philosophy' (1996a, pp. 39-41). For the 'public intellectuals' of the 18th century, the answer to this problem lay in theatricalising philosophy, and thereby recruiting aesthetic self-stylisation to the task of rousing their audiences to interested and sympathetic actions. Wray shares this problem of how to replace an inward-turning aesthetico-ethical practice and conscience with a viable publicly or civilly-directed alternative.

Wray takes the Left Conservatism conference to be symptomatic of a wider civil and intellectual impasse in the academic Left, and calls for 'courses in the intellectual and political history of the Left that has preceded this moment of struggle': courses responding to a need to train 'a new generation of interdisciplinary activist/scholars' in more responsible and collegial conducts (1998, p. 30; cf Alterman 1998, p. 1). He makes this plea, in part, to open the current disputes to those without the cultural capital to fully participate in them in their present exclusionary form, and in part so that those currently embroiled in them can move on from what he sees as their acrimonious, factionalised, and sterile repetitiveness. After diagnosing the problem as a combination of textualist obscurantism and Left factionalism, he proposes 'pedagogical and political responsibility' as the solution. He calls for

a division of labor which has as its goal the production of a new form of interdisciplinary knowledge, one which is neither rigorously poststructuralist, nor structuralist, neither modern nor postmodern, but simply oppositional. That is, by the way, what we here at Bad Subjects try to do. We often fail, but at least we can still talk to one another (Wray 1998, p. 30).

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28 Here I am deliberately using the term 'performance' in its theatrical, rather than in its 'Butlerian' sense.
This call for senior and experienced activist-scholars to acknowledge their pedagogical duties appeals to their senses of 'pedagogical and political responsibility'. However, there is a major problem in Wray's rationale for this civil alternative to 'consciencised' moral philosophy: its circularity. He assumes that the 'missing institutional context' — Martin's previously cited 'institutional and historical analysis' — can only be introduced if activist-scholars master their irrational factional enthusiasms and recommit themselves to shared professional ideals of collegial academic dialogue and pastoral care for junior colleagues. But this ethos is itself part of the currently missing rational 'context' (1998, p. 30; 1995, p. 157).

Like his colleagues Sandell and Sartelle, Wray finds his ethico-political model in the form of the Bad Subjects Collective: a community of activist-scholars devoted to balancing intellectual rigour and oppositional politics, within a spirit of collegial interdisciplinarity. In my opening chapter I noted that Sandell's notional merging with this collective moral subject accompanied her dialectical balance between the 'personal' and the 'political'. I also argued that this particular formulation of feminist criticism's key insight into the relational nature of these terms can be a problem for political theorists, if through such a double unification they hope to exceed the nostrums of traditional moral philosophy. Not only is Sandell's definition of the 'personal' unable to bear the ethical weight she imposes on it, but the problem of a fractured 'political' domain in need of her powers of symbolic reconciliation is itself a projection of the 'fully integrated' ethical norm of the Kantian academy (cf Hunter 1994, pp. 146-147).

In my first chapter I discussed this issue of critical abstraction, in relation to the possibly of embarrassing gaps opening up between the critical rationales for the dance performance Helmet and its audiences' own comprehensions. I wrote that these gaps are caused when a specialist cultural capital is notionally projected upon an apparently integrated field of cultural politics (cf Dean 1994, pp. 151-152; cf Hindess 1986, pp. 113-114). I considered other examples in the second chapter: queer variants of Kantian philosophy that equate 'the political' with the repair of a bifurcated Reason (cf Raulet 1988, pp. 26-27). These earlier discussions have implications for Wray's choice of a hybrid personality of the activist-scholar to mediate diverse intellectual practices and possibly incompatible ethical and political commitments. They indicate that this is not simply an idiosyncratic choice on his part, but an ethico-political norm peculiar to his 'critical pedagogy' practice and intellectual milieu.

When Wray calls for his colleagues to take responsibility for mediating the domains of the University and of 'extramural' politics he distributes the ethico-political weight of this balance between different sets of ethical and political imperatives in problematic ways. In one set of capacities in which activist-scholars operate, they
engage in what Hindess (1997a), after Max Weber, calls 'politically-oriented' action: 'the partisan promotion of disputed interests and values' (1997a, p. 261; cf Weber 1968, p. 54). In another set of capacities, they are officers of the University, whose interests they are ethically bound to consider in their professional deliberations and actions. This 'compartmentalising' or particularising description of roles and capacities makes questions concerning the administering of the cultural attributes and other resources needed to coordinate these capacities pertinent ethico-political issues, yet it differs from Wray's own 'hyper-ethical' critical stance and its associated images of 'ethics' and 'politics' (cf Hindess 1997b, pp. 257-258).

Wray's Report can help him and his readers question their senior colleagues' failures to ensure the fullest level of participation from potential contributors to the conference, but it is not conducive to differentiating professional conferences as such, from more postgraduate-focused training occasions. In addition, Wray limits his ethico-political options to accepting or rejecting the community of Bad Subjects as a model for how to marry one's social statuses of activist-citizen and teacher. Yet this relatively unified moral community is of limited use as an example of moderation for the much more theoretically and politically diverse constituencies of 'Left Conservatism'. Since the relevant interested activist-scholars disagree on the relative merits of their theoretical, ethical, and pedagogical practices, attempts to pacify them by appealing to the better natures of their 'ethical responsibility' must be calibrated more carefully than they are in Wray's Report. In this respect, the Report is a leftist 'politicised' counterpart of Dynes' conservative neo-Kantian appeal to the 'pure ethics' of the apparently disinterested academy.

A shared critical pedagogy ethic did not enable participants in 'Left Conservatism' to escape its polarising logic. On the contrary, it ensured that they repeated longstanding tensions within the academic Left over which of its personnel and modes of study are best placed to further the dialectics of culture (cf Grossberg 1994, pp. 10-11). For example, Ariel Reinheimer argued in Bad Subjects that 'postmodernism' and its preoccupation with culturalist ephemera waste 'the limited resources which the left has in academia' (Reinheimer in Bad Subjects Collective 1998, p. 5). In the post-conference version of her paper, Butler (1998b) dismissed such fears as the special pleading of persons accustomed to being at the centre of academic knowledge production: those who resent having to cede space, authority, and resources to peoples hitherto rendered peripheral; those who tactically invoke a 'division between the material and the cultural ... for the purposes of marginalising certain forms of political activism' (1998b, pp. 36-38). In making these arguments, Butler reasserts the political status of a key procedure of much 'counter-hegemonic' cultural studies; she

secures marginalised individuals' and communities' strategies of cultural consumption for 'politics', through her powers of critical commentary (cf Jenkins 1992; cf Boney 1996).

In my first chapter I discussed the issue of the marginal critical intellectual in reference to Halperin (1996), Jagose (1996), and Fuss (1991). I described them as attempting to secure their modes of activist-scholarship by appealing to a moral wholeness they ascribe to their experiences of social and cultural marginality (Bennett 1993, pp. 218-219; Halperin 1996, pp. 131-132; Fuss 1991, p. 6). But unlike the 'real' leftist Hawkes, I do not imagine that this strategy of self-exclusion is peculiar to the 'cultural Left'. 'Left Conservatism' includes numerous examples of persons on each 'side' of the issues who pursued this strategy, even as they charged their opponents with seeking to assist them in doing so. There were those who accused their critics of attempting to displace them from their membership of the academic Left (cf Beck et al. 1998). Some saw a threat to their status as subjects of discourse analysis or of political economy respectively (cf Lubiano 1999). Others defended their membership of a scholarly profession with a vocation to liberate its students from their state of Ideological subjection (cf Connery 1999). These tactical assertions and counter-assertions show that the relations between neo-Kantian critics and social and cultural marginality are more complex and ambiguous than the logics of either polarisation/reconciliation or of domination/resistance suggest (cf Grossberg 1994, p. 19).

There have been attempts to 'de-scandalise' political criticism by theorising a mode of intellectual life that resolves potential problems caused by critical intellectuals claiming the mantle of their marginalised and oppressed constituencies. One of the most notable is Antonio Gramsci's 'organic intellectual'. In a reference to these subjects of politics, George De Stefano (1998) writes that while they 'strive to promote the critical consciousness of their social milieu, they are also to some extent autonomous' (1998, p. 31). However, while De Stefano defines organic intellectuals by their skills at maintaining a degree of moral autonomy from 'restrictive organizational affiliations or allegiances', other writers are less sanguine about the extent to which this 'autonomous' ideal is realisable (ibid). For example, in my fourth chapter I noted that Grossberg (1994) rejects this model of intellectual politics out of hand, because of its assumption that organic intellectuals have 'an already existing relation to an already existing constituency'; in other words, because the model overlooks their roles in helping to form their constituencies, rather than simply representing their pre-existing interests (1994, p. 8). In the same chapter I also cited Hall's (1996b) confessed discomfort with this anticipatory role: his belief that when he and his colleagues at Birmingham's Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies had
attempted to live this model – as the correct way for Marxian intellectuals to inhabit the historical moment – they had actually been pre-empting a future conjuncture between intellectuals and an historic movement (1996b, p. 267). I have dealt with the question of connections between this discomfort and queer studies – and identified associated theoretical, ethical, and political problems – in my earlier discussions of the notion of a queer 'politics of difference'.

My discussions of 'Left Conservatism' demonstrate that aesthetico-ethical techniques can have public or civil orientations and repercussions (cf Hunter 1996a, p. 39). As a consequence, while it is accurate to say that queer activist-scholars face difficulties in balancing the privileges and opportunities of their powers of commentary with their imperative to acknowledge necessary limitations, it is not convincing to dismiss them for trying to escape 'ethical responsibility' as such (cf Butler 1998a, p. 1). On the contrary, they are being responsible, albeit to a hybrid moral personality and practice. Wray may indeed be justified in indicting the activist-scholars of the Left Conservatism conference for fulfilling their responsibilities to one of their comportments (the critic-theorist), at the price of abrogating their responsibilities to another (the teacher-mentor). However, his solution of 'reuniting' them – through the proxy of a postgraduate curriculum that develops its students' historical-institutional understandings and raises their political consciousness – simply defers the theorectico-political impasse that he professes to abhor (cf Hunter 1988, p. 21, p. 24).

Wray's acknowledgment of a policy dimension to the problem differentiates him from others who participated in the 'Left Conservatism' debates, although not, it should be said, from an opponent of the academic Left like Dynes. A gesture to policy does not in itself calm the passions. This is particularly the case when the policy in question subordinates non-critical aspects of academic life, like the role of University bureaucrat, to partisan imperatives, in an effort to expand, rather than to internally differentiate, activist-scholars' claims to authority. As I noted in my fifth chapter, this appeal to the integrated, self-realising moral personality of criticism had also been a problem in Sartelle's call for his scholarly colleagues to use a 'clearer voice', a less 'exclusionary' and specialised language, in order to appeal a wider audience (1992, p. 4).

Despite Wray intending his policy recommendations to pacify activist-scholars' professional affairs – to harmonise and clarify their currently raised and discordant voices by introducing a note of 'pedagogical and political responsibility' – their focus remains the internal reorganisation of only some parts of the academy's hybrid domain: the critical-intellectual aspects of academic life (1998, p. 30). The problem is not that Wray and those he criticises are selective about which ethical imperatives they should
heed, but that their hyper-ethical stances take precedence over any imperative to discriminate between them. The internally civilised community of activist-scholars in which both Wray and Sartelle work is of limited help as a model of conduct for academics when they must operate not only in more fractious 'consciencised' circumstances, but across the range of statuses and capacities they are called on to negotiate.

Conclusion.

The rubric 'Left Conservatism' refers to imbricated and internally hybridised public and 'private' spheres formed by the practices and techniques of the professional academic conference, the academic journal, and the newer electronic communications technologies. However, during the disputes gathered under this rubric, 'queer' was rarely, if ever, mentioned. Neither Butler, her supportive colleagues, nor their 'real' leftist opponents looked to it to provide traction for their rhetorics. 'Queer' does not appear in the conference papers or the transcript of the question and answer period that were subsequently published in *Theory & Event* (Dumm & Norton 1998). On these occasions, it was 'anti-foundationalism' that carried the weight of 'transgressive' critics' expectations and attracted criticism. Nevertheless, these disputes are emblematic of the intellectual and ethical milieux in which explicitly queer-identified versions of 'anti-foundationalist' criticism found favour during the 1990s. They are therefore relevant for the sexual dissidence of the beginning of the new century.

One reason the minor scandal of 'Left Conservatism' remains relevant is that beyond these particular 'internal' disputes between fractions of the academic Left there were hostile 'external' forces that actively opposed 'anti-foundationalists', their 'traditional' materialist opponents, and the academic Left per se. Historians of sexual dissidence – even those of us who live and work far from the passions of American academic life – are now faced with the tasks of identifying these possibly still extant forces and anticipating their potential and likely impacts. In this chapter I dealt with other tasks of an equally pressing nature: I described and analysed the disputing parties' relations with their own non-critical academic statuses, agendas and sets of personal capacities, as well as the relations they maintained with their supportive and critical colleagues. To the extent that the tactical sensitivity and indifference with which these activist-scholars negotiated these various kinds of relations are typical of
their intellectual and ethical *milieux*, they are relevant for a broader history of sexual dissidence.

Despite participants in these disputes voicing their objections to being aligned into two opposing camps, this great sorting was difficult to avoid (cf Brown 1998, pp. 1-2; cf Buttigieg, 1998, p. 4). On one of these sides, adherence to anti-foundationalism meant qualifying the epistemological emphasis of culturalism and insisting that activist-scholars need to balance their appreciations of the symbolic and the material aspects of culture. By contrast, others sought to restore ‘traditional’ Marxian criteria for claiming membership of the academic Left, by restating the principle that it is socio-economic class, and not the 'new' modes of cultural identification, which is at the centre of politics. Yet as I have demonstrated, these otherwise antithetical parties' *ethoi* have important features in common: a ritual of publicly renouncing one's own theoretical virtuosity; an anticipatory stance towards shifting fields of commentary; and an imperative to eventually bring the dialectic of self and field into rational harmony.

I have approached 'Left Conservatism' through positive descriptions of a set of practices – attending a professional conference and participating in its associated discussion groups, reading and writing academic journal articles, and distributing and denouncing political tracts – that are peculiar to the intellectual class into which queer theorists emerged in the late 1980s to early 1990s. I described related occasions on which factions of this class asserted their own personnel, theories and methodologies as the best vehicles for anticipating the harmony to come. These proffered 'solutions' need not provide coherent theoretical bases for general socio-political transformations to have significance as what Koselleck calls 'politicised fronts'. Thus, despite their disagreements, the disputing factions could all experience disquiet at the prospect of giving full reign to their critical powers, and consequently sought to restrain them. This ambivalence – theorised by some as their 'worldly vocation' – is a characteristic theoretico-ethical feature of their common practice of dialectical criticism.

Jacques Donzelot (1979) writes of the class of Kantian political critics that it faces the long-term problem of 'reconciling effective mass adherence to a politics with the technicist nature of ... [its own] ability to rouse audiences' to political action (1979, p. 83; cf Hindess 1997b, p. 268). This problem of contemporary political philosophy is expressed in Butler's concern with the question of how to live with an imperative to use essentialist categories in political mobilisations, while being aware that the legitimacy of such terms may not extend beyond those particular uses (1998a, pp. 1-2). However, contrary to the assertions of her 'real' leftist opponents, Butler's ambivalence does not constitute grounds for dismissing queer criticism or other versions of 'anti-foundationalism'. Instead, it suggests that membership of the class of Kantian political
critics not only carries with it the privileges of a prestigious practice and personal comportment, but accompanying responsibilities and anxieties. Many of these features are also familiar to the 'traditional' Marxian opponents of the 'cultural Left'.

Those who currently occupy, or who audition for, leading roles on the platforms provided by the practices, techniques and *ethoi* of activist-scholarship, should expect to demonstrate their intellectual proficiency and 'worldly' legitimacy in appropriate rites of acknowledgment, peer review, and publicly and privately conducted acts of self-reflection. The academic Left's factional debates are civil disputes between communities of conscience driven to publicly manifest these attributes of their 'worldly vocation'. By demonstrating their skills at balancing their ethical norms of individual moral autonomy and community affiliation, the parties involved aim to assert their truth claims without the scandal of critical self-deception and its potential embarrassments. However, if they have not taken possession of their shared but disputed 'moral stage', it is not because they have failed to sufficiently articulate their political themes in a convincing program of action. As I argued in reference to Sartelle and Rich, the strategy of attempting to occupy a notional domain of democratic political participation is a projection of a particular integrating ideal of the person (cf Hunter 1994, p. 171). This chapter dealt with variable conditions and effects of using these 'materials at hand'.
"Queer Theory" of the 1990s has been understood in ways that remain problematic for sexual dissidence and a broader cultural politics. In this thesis I set out to account for the relations that activist-scholars maintain, or fail to maintain, with the non-critical aspects of their own practice, and with their colleagues. I took a positive approach to this problem, as well as to the associated issues of the correlation between a more or less perfectionist enthusiasm for mediating cultural multiplicity and a horror of being 'incorporated' into worldly politics. As a consequence, I have been able to demonstrate that a key reason for the difficulties activist-scholars of this period had in discriminating between the variety of forces and interests with which they were implicated, was their own 'hyper-ethical' comportment. I was able to show that the widening of vision that accompanies this comportment can not only unhelpfully expand the 'political' field – this being a charge typically levelled against 1990s 'Queer Theory' by its 'real' leftist opponents – but that it can also produce an equally problematic narrowing of what counts as 'politics'.

Notwithstanding the concrete and potential theoretical, ethical and political problems of their practice and ethos of politics, a succession of 'transgressive' critics have sought to carry their projects forward, across numerous loosely coordinated 'intellectual fronts'. In this respect, the radical queer-identified critics of the 1990s continued an intellectual tradition of long standing, rather than break decisively with earlier forms of sexual dissidence. What queer critics called their 'politics of difference' did not follow a single agenda, hold to a uniformly perfectionist 'transgressive' ethical ideal, or maintain an unwavering devotion to a utopian vision of an integrated sphere of democratic-political participation. I have shown that by describing this variegated 'queer' moment in the history of sexual dissidence in positive terms – rather than in the rationalist or perfectionist terms typically deployed by queer sexual dissidents and their critical opponents alike – it is possible to identify potential rewards, as well as dangers, in prioritising a 'hyper-ethical' dissident comportment above, or even to the exclusion of, other pertinent statuses and responsibilities.

I made a case for a strategy of positive description in the first chapter, where I identified various objects that have been designated 'queer': a self-reflexive gendered subject that straddles heteronormative ideology and a queer counter-discourse; an 'ethnography' of audiences that departs from traditional identity-based modes of audience studies; 'postmodern' and 'post-structural' strategies of theoretical representation; and practices of social distinction deployed by producers and consumers of magazines. I demonstrated how, by not trying to impose an a priori
principle of unity on this field, a descriptive emphasis can identify and critically appreciate specific relations between its objects.

Queer-identified theorists of the 1990s tried to effect their anti-conventional expansions and transformations of 'culture' by continuing their critical theory predecessors' projects to deconstruct the existing cultural order. But as I showed, these ambivalent critical projects to 'queer' culture are irreducible to the eruption of the forms and audiences of 'popular culture' into previously elite cultural enclaves and regimes of appreciation; they are not simply what Hall calls ' "politics by other means" ' (Hall in Bennett 1993, p. 224). On the contrary, champions of 'queer culture' were faced with quite specific ethical and political dilemmas peculiar to their own specialised practices and milieux. These included the problem of how to export their self-reflexive personal comportment beyond the institutions and spaces in which it developed. In my discussions of commentaries on the dance performance Helmet, I argued that if queer-identified cultural producers wish to avoid the potential embarrassment of exceeding their critical authority, they should carefully calibrate their representational strategies and democratic-political aspirations in reference to existing social patterns of cultural capacities for 'aesthetic' self-care. I proposed that these calibrations can profit from being informed by the history of the sexualising of 'aesthetic' education over the period of the 20th century: a development that distributed techniques, materials and models for the kind of intensive dialectical work on the self that was later to contribute to the queering of sexual dissidence.

The second chapter developed the previous chapter's theme of the variability of queer sexual dissidence by describing some of its constituencies and their projects. Rather than make a fetish out of the principle of 'difference', I sought to describe differences between these queer constituencies while remaining sensitive to the potential similarities of their representational strategies, intellectual histories, and moral and political imperatives. It was in this spirit that I traced the characteristically 'queer' concern with mediating the dominant cultural order of heteronormativity to some of the key influences on academic critical theorists of the 1980s. One of these influences is the Althusserian account of the Imaginary that has enjoyed popularity in interdisciplinary cultural and media studies since the 1970s. A second key influence is a particular Kantian reading of Foucault's theories of sexual subjectivity, knowledge and power. By the late 1980s these rationalist traditions of critical theorising had made 'post-structuralist' commentaries on the dialectics of culture a fixture of the academic and associated practices and milieux in which 'queer' was emerging.

The Althusserian and the Kantian-Foucauldian traditions of political philosophy influenced the rationalist manner in which the 'Queer Theory' of the 1990s was typically understood by its proponents and critics alike. However, my discussions
of these influences were not confined to the epistemological aspects of these philosophies; they also focused on the ethical norms and imperatives that queer cultural critics adopted from their 'post-structuralist' predecessors. I mobilised examples to demonstrate how queer-identified critics were able to hitch their dialectics of culture to the various interests of their 'transgressive' constituencies by conceiving of those relatively diverse communities of interest as the 'extramural' source of their 'transgressive' ethical and political imperatives. These examples showed that this move contradicted their own rationalist claim to have made the appreciation of cultural plurality their guiding principle.

In the third chapter I examined the issue of a queer 'politics of difference' further, by describing how queer critics' claims to difference have operated in particular ethico-political practices. I showed that while these sexual dissidents aim to effect transformations in self and society, their attempts are irreducible to their perfectionist orientations. Prior to the emergence of an identifiable 'queer' mode of study, cultural studies' personnel were well-versed in sophisticated techniques of self-reflexivity that enabled them to mediate their critical imperatives through a set of exemplary tensions and reconciliations. By means of these aesthetico-political techniques, cultural studies' adherents sought to balance their ambivalent pulsions, and thus maintain what Hall called a proper commitment to the cultural studies 'worldly vocation'. Queer cultural critics inherited these commitments to not only exceed disciplinary constraint, but to ensure one's social and political effectiveness; to defend an ideal of moral 'autonomy', while historicising one's practice of cultural commentary; and to search for perfection while avoiding potential critical embarrassment.

By considering queer cultural criticism in these particularising terms I was able to show that what queer critics called their 'politics of difference' can be usefully understood as a manner of cultivating certain kinds of sensitivity and indifference. I offered examples to support an argument that the cultural studies 'post-structuralist' ethos is irreducible to its perfectionist orientations, and considered the proposition that the subsequently developed queer variants of this ethos did not originate the tensions between perfectionism and its suspension, but elaborated this dialectic and expanded it into new fields of sexual dissidence. Thus, queer critics' difficulties in appreciating the sheer variety of objects that they routinely dealt with – what I have called the problem of 'queer rationalism' – can be viewed in 'applied ethics' terms; that is, as a specific manner of working upon conduct, with no claim to being the 'immanent' expression of the Kantian subject's 'aesthetic' or 'cultural' condition. It follows that it is not reasonable to make queer sexual dissidence bear the burden of its own perfectionist tendencies.
I continued these discussions of queer critics' aspirations to transform self and society in the fourth chapter, where I referred them to Koselleck's history of the practice of dialectical criticism itself. By synthesising this history with Pfeiffer's and Hunter's own historical accounts of 'the aesthetic', I was able to demonstrate how it is possible to critically appreciate queer sexual dissidence without relegating the art of critical commentary to either the apparently autonomous 'aesthetic' realm of 19th century liberal and Romantic philosophies, or the 'anti-aesthetic' corrections of those philosophies by various schools of 20th century Marxian cultural criticism. Following these discussions, I can say that while queer commentaries on 'heteronormative' culture and politics may be made from the 'moral stage' that the politics of state had quarantined from its own coercive powers and inclinations, these spaces of moral conscience are no mere retreat into an abstract irrelevance from the domain of real politics.

While it may serve the apparently antithetical purposes of 'transgressive' sexual dissidents and their 'anti-aesthetic' opponents to see themselves as autonomous from the current political order – as removed from the centres of political power and the agendas they impose – my adaptation of Koselleck's history of dialectical criticism modifies this picture somewhat. It does so by providing a supplement to the positive strain of post-Foucauldian criticism that I favoured in preference to the more Kantian-Foucauldian strain that dominated the 1990s debates around 'Queer Theory'. I have not tried to explain 'queer' as a recent example of the fate of cultural critics who imagine that they have escaped the public-political realm of administrative politics, only to become its unwitting and ineffectual satellites. Instead, I drew on Koselleck's historical argument that the formation of enclaves of 'privatised' conscience was accompanied by a corresponding return of dialectical criticism to public affairs: a return that critical intellectuals have sought to manage across a variety of politicised 'intellectual fronts'. By synthesising Koselleck and other writers, I redescribed what might otherwise be simply dismissed as the often irritatingly abstract pronouncements of late 20th century 'transgressive' and 'anti-aesthetic' self-appointed public intellectuals.

Koselleck and Foucault both argued that the secularising migration of formerly religious routines of self-formation or subjectivation spiritualised secular and sexual life. Foucault and many of the 'Foucauldian' critics who have followed him have been criticised for having often adopted a Romantic stance against this 'aestheticising' and 'culturalising' post-Enlightenment order; for treating it as an undifferentiated power to subject individuals, and as thereby reducing politics to a response of critical opposition (Morrow 1995, p. 25; cf Pratt 1987, pp. 4-5; cf McHoul & Grace 1993, p. 65). My
own strategy was to follow the more positive examples found in Foucault's own oeuvre and in the theoretical work of other writers in the field.

By describing occasions when the art of dialectical critical commentary has operated as an ethico-political practice, I was able to identify specific aspects of this ethos that assisted its adherents in embracing or celebrating the experiences of disunity that they themselves helped produce. Rather than work with a general theory of 'the aesthetic', I described particular 'aesthetic' techniques that some critical intellectuals have used when they calculated and pursued their various interests. My examples included Piazza's interpretation-sermon and Hall's account of how his secular conscience was changed by his exposure to cultural studies' 'constitutive' model of the 'discourses of representation' (Hall in Storey 1996, p. 3). These discussions gave further support to the previous chapter's argument that there are intellectual, ethical, and political yields of this variable ethos that are not the unique contributions of queer critics to the field of contemporary sexual dissidence, but are the products of more broadly distributed techniques and disciplines.

The fifth chapter dealt with the question of how, over the period of the 1990s, 'queer' became a factor in projects to transform the teachers' conscience and to make cultural studies the vehicle for a reorganisation of the cultural field. I began by discussing examples of the promise and the problem of interdisciplinary cultural studies; namely, the 'critical pedagogy' of Giroux et al. and Sartelle's more chastened assessment respectively. I treated these as examples of particular aspects of the intellectual politics in cultural studies milieux in the period leading up to development of 1990s queer studies. Cultural studies' adherents have long been concerned to secure themselves and their practice as counter-hegemonic forces in society by politicising the institution and spaces of education. Yet as we have seen, not all writers in the field have necessarily agreed that this interest amounts to a coherent, or even attainable, project. 'Queer' was born into this atmosphere of optimistic enthusiasms and worldly doubts; its subsequent career was partly shaped by the mixed expectations of its cultural studies supporters and their critics.

Queer activist-scholars' 'transgressive' ethic allowed them to position themselves and their practice within a teaching environment that was undergoing significant changes over the decade of the 1990s. Due to their commitments to 'process' models of subjectivity and of culture, queer-identified activist-scholars were well-placed to take advantage of the expansion of various kinds of 'cultural' studies in this period. The rapid introduction of new communications technologies and corresponding demands for formal education to adopt appropriate intellectual and ethical teaching outcomes made the tactics and strategies of a queer 'politics of knowledge' peculiarly pertinent resources for the relevant revisions of pedagogical
disciplines. As a consequence, far from being antithetical to the moral teaching outcomes of education, the queer 'transgressive' ethical norm could now audition for these prestigious roles. However, I also showed that, in keeping with their inherited critical ambivalence, and contrary to the otherwise varied nature of their agendas and political interests, queer-identified commentators on the ethos and practice of teaching tended to project the pastoral aspects of their profession – such as a commitment to equipping students with capacities for self-consciousness, and an image of the 'educable being' who bears these skills and aspirations – onto an ideal public sphere and its 'subject of politics'.

The sixth chapter addressed this issue of activist-scholars' problematic mediations of their representative and pedagogical functions by discussing examples from the 1998 'Left Conservatism' affair. I referred these occasions of critical ambivalence to Donzelot's identification of a problem that has long confronted the class of post-Enlightenment political theorists: how to reconcile commitment to mass politics and the knowledge that in order to act on that commitment one must use 'technicist' means. Following my earlier discussions of dialectical cultural criticism and its manner of differentiating the 'moral' and the 'political', the 'substantive' and the 'technical', I argued that 'anti-foundationalist' critics' anxieties over their own uses of 'essentialist' concepts are peculiar to their post-Enlightenment milieux. Where critics of the queer 'politicising' academic Left like Dynes took queer theorists' model of identity-as-'necessary fiction' as a sign of bad faith, and where some leftist critics saw it as a contradiction that Marxian political economy can theoretically resolve, I understood it to be a characteristic comportment of particular fractions of the stratum of critical intellectuals to which Dynes and his leftist opponents themselves belong.

I have made a qualified endorsement of my earlier proposition that these persons ignore possible conflicts between the critical and non-critical aspects of their profession, and between their ethico-political ideals of moral autonomy and community affiliation. My discussions of the various tactics and strategies mobilised in the 'Left Conservatism' case show that while it was common for those involved to favour their critical-perfectionist imperatives at the expense of their other professional duties, this was not simply a matter of them choosing to ignore those other capacities and responsibilities. Instead, these rival communities of conscience shared an ethos of activist-scholarship and acted on an imperative to mediate the multiplicity of the cultural field from this 'hybrid' perspective. They did not necessarily ignore the 'internal' divisions between their 'hyphenated' statuses and the 'external' relations between the agendas they support and those they oppose, but filtered them through the ethico-political apparatus of their 'worldly vocation'. These variable attempts to reconcile commitments to the principles of cultural plurality and moral autonomy,
within notional spheres of democratic-political participation, are among the most characteristic features of these composite personalities.

My identification of participants in 'Left Conservatism' who voiced their resentment at being forced into opposed sides, even as they sought to draw their fellow activist-scholars into a greater camp of the oppositional academic Left, leads me to make certain conclusions about the intellectual and ethical *milieux* of 1990s activist-scholarship. First, that the problem of how to 'transcend' polarising forces is not amenable to voluntarist solutions. Wray makes this assumption – subject to the qualification of his gesture to curriculum policy – when he calls for a wider sense of professional responsibility among the fractious parties. But if the 'great sorting' of the *Left Conservatism* conference was a more powerful force in the lives of conference participants than their capacity for 'moral autonomy', does it follow that this 'force' is an ideological legacy of the historical formation of the institutions in which it became possible for a class of subjects to pose political problems and solutions in these particular terms and no other? The variety of conference responses – Wray's included – would indicate that this is not the case. How then to understand this problem, and thus the prospects for early 21st century sexual dissidence?

In a discussion of the philosopher Richard Rorty's work on Wittgenstein's notion of 'language-games', Walter Okshevsky (1997) makes a point that has a bearing on the problem. He writes that

> It is a mark of the nature of a language-game that attempts at their [sic] justification and/or comparative appraisal reach the limit of their genuine possibilities, and it is a mark of an authentically self-critical understanding of the legitimate bounds of philosophical reflection that this jurisdictional limit to its power be recognised (Okshevsky 1997, p. 4).

If activist-scholars who dispute issues like 'Left Conservatism' and 'Queer Theory' do not genuinely respect – rather than simply acknowledge – the limits of their various statuses and associated ethical imperatives, it is because they are working with language-games of other kinds. It is not that they are acting 'falsely' and are hiding from themselves their real limitations, in order to continue acting irresponsibly. Rather, it is because the language-games they deploy do particular things. Examples include Butler's rhetorical 'parody', de Lauretis's theorising of a 'subject of feminism', and Rich's 'bus stop' metaphor. These uses of language-games do not all entail the kind of modesty needed to avoid critical embarrassment; many even seem inured to it, in the manner of the *avant garde*. As a consequence, if future expansions of the repertoires of language-games available for use in sexual dissidence are to shift its terms and effects from those I have discussed in this thesis, they will not only have to
address the relatively easy issues of quantity, but also the more difficult problems of discrimination.

It is now more than a decade since 'Queer Theory' made its first controversial appearances on the stage of sexual dissidence. As is the way of theatrical 'sensations' and academic enthusiasms alike, it might now be tempting to dismiss 'queer' as a passing fancy, or to insert it into a narrative of radical utopian moments that periodically break free from the gravitational pull of post-Enlightenment cultural and political incorporation, only to be drawn back in. Indeed, 'queer' now seems to have become a ubiquitous – if not always explicitly articulated – feature of many contemporary 'lifestyles' and their accompanying cultural industries. 'Otherwise "straight" ' celebrities like the British actor Eddy Izzard and the Australian television host Will Anderson provoke relatively little adverse reaction from their habit of wearing nail polish. Young men on university campuses are as likely to sport necklaces as accessorise with skateboards. Even that most identity-affirming of phenomena, the annual Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras, has recently only narrowly averted cancellation, after years of national television broadcasts, the increasing respectability that came with recognition for its contributions to the New South Wales and Australian cultural tourism industries, and criticisms for having been appropriated by heteronormative culture (Mills 2001, p. 5; Maher 2002, p. 7; Harris 1995, p. 20). After what could be seen as signs of the 'queering' of many such aspects of contemporary life, what is one to make of the early 1990s 'transgressive' optimism that was expressed in critical enthusiasms like Rich's project to create a 'new queer cinema'? This thesis has shown that there are reasons to be suspicious of responses that insist on placing these historical developments within a narrative of resistance and incorporation.

In Dollimore's (1991) Sexual Dissidence: Augustine to Wilde, Freud to Foucault, he argues that a sophisticated dialectic is at the heart of sexual dissidence (1991, pp. 122-123). He writes that

dissidence may not only be repressed by the dominant [culture] (coercively and ideologically), but [is] in a sense actually produced by it, hence consolidating the powers which it ostensibly challenges. This gives rise to the subversion/containment debate, one of the most important areas of dispute in contemporary cultural theory (Dollimore 1991, pp. 26-27).

Dollimore identifies this debate with the 'diverse studies concerned with the complex dialectic between centres and margins, dominant and subordinate cultures, conformity and deviance': intellectual circles in which faith in an 'authentic self' has been effectively brought into question. Furthermore, this complexity has been in existence 'rather longer than post/modernism has been fashionable' (ibid).
Dollimore's alternative to the fetishising of 'postmodernism' in contemporary cultural criticism seeks the advantage of theoretically locating its model of sexual dissidence in specific modes of study and intellectual *milieux*. It is nevertheless problematic, for reasons I have dealt with in this thesis. First, it remains largely focused on the 'pedagogy of culture', and consequently de-emphasises descriptions of the 'diverse studies' in question, in preference to reading them as mediated distillations of the field of 'culture'. In the first chapter I described Dollimore's advocacy for an interpretive methodology that has moved 'away from the misleading language of entities and towards social process and representation', as his manner of distinguishing the 'peripatetic artistry' of his ethical norm from the theories and practitioners of less demanding critical practices (1991, p. 27; cf Burston & Richardson 1995, pp. 1-2).

My discussions problematise the rationalist image of changes in 'contemporary cultural theory' that Dollimore identifies and advocates; they also suggest the kinds of limitations that such a focus on the dialectics of culture imposes when used to account for the 1990s career of queer cultural criticism as a practice of sexual dissidence. In fact, the passages from Horne and Lewis (1996) with which I began this thesis are examples of this dialectical language-game being applied to the issue of 'queer'. It was in order to provide an alternative to such conventional ways of assessing the politics and the cultural effects and implications of 1990s 'Queer Theory' that I made my positive descriptions of the variable art of queer critical commentary.
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