

# Wishful theory and sexual politics

Jonathan Dollimore

Across the last two or three decades identity and desire have been ‘theorized’ relentlessly. Influences have been diverse: I remember especially the impact, for gay writing, of Barthes’ dream, or plea, in 1975, for a radical sexual diversity wherein there would no longer be homosexuality (singular) but *homosexualities*, a plural so radical it ‘will baffle any centred, constituted, discourse to the point where it seems ... pointless to talk about it’.<sup>1</sup> And Derrida’s even earlier call for that Nietzschean philosophical affirmation which ‘determines the noncentre otherwise than as a loss of the centre’. That was thirty years ago plus – 1966.<sup>2</sup>

But whatever the influences, we converged on this one conviction: desire and identity are not – must not be, can never be – fixed or essentialized. Identity is contingent and mobile, desire is fluid and even more mobile. To try to fix or naturalize things like femininity, masculinity or heterosexuality – to see them as stable, natural categories – was reactionary crap, at best the last throes of an obsolete humanism. For those of us thinking lesbian and gay theory, ‘nature’ and ‘essence’ were the metaphysics of the heteronormative.

Was ‘homosexual’ equally ‘non-natural’? There we were less sure. On the one hand, we quite liked the idea of being non-natural, even unnatural, but only on our own terms – which meant under strictly theorized limits – and if anyone else found us unnatural, well, that was rampant homophobia.

During all this, and somewhat unexpectedly, I found myself in a relationship with a woman. Experientially this was exhilarating, if somewhat bewildering, but I took consolation from the fact that I was at least on theoretically safe ground – after all, hadn’t we just proved beyond doubt the radical mobility of desire/identity, and wasn’t this being-surprised-by-desire exactly what the theory predicted? Actually I really should have asked for theoretical clarification before

embarking on this relationship, because it quickly became clear that for some sexual politicians it marked me out as a traitor: one lesbian was heard to snarl that I’d gone straight, gone ‘nuclear’, and, worst of all, become a ‘breeder’. But the charge that *most* intrigued me was the one which said that I’d only ever been gay for my career. Initially I was tempted to say ‘well, you should have been at Sussex when Alan Sinfield and I launched that first gay MA programme, meeting with hostility not just from politicians and the press, but the powerful at the centre of our own University.’ But then I thought, hang on: any guy who could spend his life being fucked from pillow to bedpost by other guys, presumably faking perfect orgasms on the way, qualifies for a fabulous career. I for one can’t think of anyone more employable.

Anyway, I decided to lay low for a while. In truth it was something of a relief: now that I no longer needed to be a good gay object I found myself writing and exploring ideas which had hitherto been off limits. But eventually the phone started to ring again and I was asked if I’d write or speak on the subject of bisexuality. But, I said, hadn’t we already theoretically wrapped up the bisexual as the biggest hypocrite of all in the sex arena, a bullshitter, a hedge-sitter, someone who wanted the best of all worlds without committing to any? Yes, yes, came the impatient reply, but that was before. Before what? Before bisexuality was retheorized by queer theory. And, you know, he was right – books on the subject were appearing from Routledge, and the culture journalists were chattering it up.

What little credibility I managed to regain is owed entirely to the way queer theory sidelined some of the moralists in sexual politics, celebrating an erotic life somewhat closer to the theory. It recognized – or rediscovered – the complexity and diversity of human erotic life, the mobility of human desire, the unpredictability of human fantasy and, above all, our capacity to

make profoundly perverse identifications in the sexual imaginary. None of this was new, but it was useful to have it resaid and to see the judgemental sexual politicians either silenced or having to retool. That's an unfortunate metaphor but one which, on reflection, I think I'll keep.

But lesbians and gays of all descriptions were also being told by the new queer theorists that they had to retool. In 1996 Mark Simpson edited a collection of essays called *Anti-Gay*. Unashamedly controversial, it argued among other things that gay culture is boringly mediocre, intolerant of criticism and bigoted when it comes to the sexuality of people who do not define themselves as gay. Predictably, it generated debate. A couple of years later Simpson was even more angry with 'gay'. In a review in the *Independent on Sunday* (25 January, 1998) he lambasted the contributors to *Lesbian and Gay Studies: A Critical Introduction* as (again among other things) boring, irrelevant, middle aged, bitter, suffering from intellectual incontinence, and hilariously paranoid.<sup>3</sup> I found this a hugely amusing review until I remembered that I was one of the contributors to the book in question. Simpson's review was so OTT I simply failed to recognize the book he was reviewing was one I knew. It would be easy to take one side or the other in this debate, and send even more bitchy rhetoric up to the fan. The fact is that the contributors to *Anti-Gay*, some of whom were apparently unreconstructed lesbians and gays, had some very pertinent things to say, but Simpson's framing broadside failed to make a hundred or more crucial distinctions on recent and past lesbian, gay and queer history. Related to this, the more fashionable Queer became, the more it was appropriated by those who wanted to be fashionable and the more inclusive and meaningless the term became. As I write, an anthology of literary theory arrives on my desk which reprints work of mine as representative of queer theory even though that work was written before queer was a glint in anyone's eye. A few days before that another book arrived, an introduction to the work of E.M. Forster, in which the author, Nick Royle, boldly explores the idea that Forster wrote not one queer novel but six.<sup>4</sup> Somehow Nick, I don't think so. But then, when the deco boys start to out-queer queer, maybe it's time to move on.

## Out-queering

Except that out-queering was always an aspect of queer, especially in relation to perversion. If a lesbian or gay man is foolish enough to be overheard saying something incredibly old-fashioned like 'I am attracted by

the real person rather than their superficial attributes' they are likely to be met with howls of derision by queer theorists. For them, such humanist, essentialist sentimentality is a huge sexual turn-off. They have great sympathy with the size queen who famously declared that he was in love with the cock but had to settle for the whole person. This is of course a quintessentially postmodern anecdote because, depending on who you tell it to, you can substitute bits of anatomy as you wish.<sup>5</sup> Erring here on the side of caution, I settle for the penis.

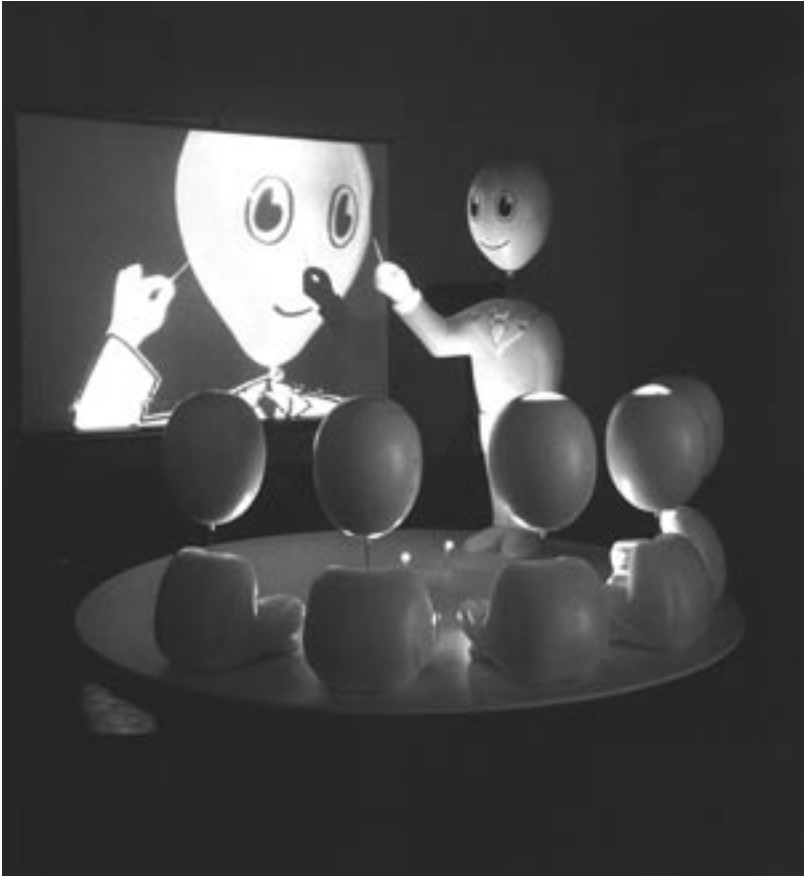
And let's face it, there's an important sense in which queers were right about a certain kind of gay/lesbian activist of the 1980s whose radicalism was steeped in petty-bourgeois anxieties; for all the apparent radicalism, at heart he or she could only accept their own sexuality, and certainly other people's, if it was respectable and self-policing, and represented to all in positive images. Their indignation at homophobia was genuine and justified, but was also intensified by, and helped to conceal, anxieties about aspects of homosexual behaviour – including maybe their own – by which they felt threatened or disgusted. Their counterparts today are those gays who want to square the circle with a homosexuality which is hugely subversive but at the same time politically correct.

Something comparable to the queer challenge to gay happened inside feminism some time ago. Some feminists imagined a unified movement around the so-called homosexual continuum – roughly, the idea of being women-identified without the lesbian sex. This was rather wickedly caricatured by the lesbian activist Pat Califia:

After the wimmin's revolution, sex will consist of wimmin holding hands, taking their shirts off and dancing in a circle. Then we will all fall asleep at exactly the same moment. If we didn't all fall asleep something else might happen – something male-identified, objectifying, pornographic, noisy, undignified. Something like an orgasm.<sup>6</sup>

More recently Julie Burchill, in her *Absolute Filth: An A to Z of Sex* tells us that orgasm is 'The point, the whole point and nothing but the point of having sex in the first place. If what you want is cuddling, buy a puppy.'<sup>7</sup> Califia led a campaign to put sex back into lesbianism, whereas Burchill is here apparently speaking for everyone.

So the challenge of queer theory, rather like this earlier challenge, was something of an internal, family affair – queers arguing with gays rather than with the world at large. Upsetting the prescriptive agenda of one's own radical (or not so radical) movements by



The following anecdote, apocryphal or not, wonderfully queers the relation between sexual identity and sexual behaviour. An American student eventually gets to meet a cult writer in the US lesbian S/M scene whom she admires greatly. The writer asks the student what kind of person she sleeps with. The student, grateful of the opportunity to do so, eagerly announces that she too is lesbian.

Writer, surprised: 'Are you telling me that you never fuck men?'

Student: 'Definitely not. Like I said, I'm lesbian. Like you.'

Writer (after reflective pause): 'You mean you don't even fuck gay men?'

Student: 'Well no – I mean they're still men, aren't they? And anyway gay men don't sleep with women.'

Writer (after further pause): 'Well, you sound like a pretty straight dyke to me.'

promoting the sexual practices it ignored or excluded. And in the name of sexual libertarianism this strategy of upsetting the new normative agendas seems to be not only pleasurable but productive. I owe a debt of gratitude to it. But as the grounds for claiming a radical new theory of desire, or of the place of desire in politics? I think not. Sometimes I see little more than a libertarian politics which dovetails fairly conveniently with a lifestyle politics of the well-heeled and well-insulated metropolitan.<sup>8</sup>

On a more philosophical level, Queer rehearses a familiar move whereby there is a rejection not just of the old religious idea of the soul (barely remembered anyway), but also the modernist secular soul-substitutes. So, for instance, even the idea of having a comparatively fixed sexual identity is rejected as too soul-like. Some queer writers will insist it is a form of self-oppression for gay people to claim or assume such an identity. This is of course exasperating for those who came to gay consciousness believing it was a form of self-oppression *not* to make such a claim. But times change, and today the radical agenda is less a question of what one is, more of what one does. As an early queer manifesto urged,

Queers, start speaking for yourself! ... Call yourself what you want. Reject all labels. Be all labels. Liberate yourself from the lie that we're all lesbians and gay men.... Queer is not about gay or lesbian – it's about sex!<sup>9</sup>

The beauty of insisting on sexual practices rather than identity is that anyone can now be queer. It's a very democratic form of radicalism. Now famously, Carol Queen once wrote:

Heterosexual behaviour does not always equal straight. When I strap on a dildo and fuck my male partner, we are engaging in 'heterosexual' behaviour but I can tell you it feels altogether *queer*, and I'm sure my grandmother and Jesse Helms would say the same.<sup>10</sup>

Actually I doubt if 'queer' would be the first word which sprang to the lips of Granny and Jesse, and certainly not 'queer' as it has been refashioned by postmodernism. But you never know, and I certainly don't want to be patronizing, at least not to Granny. But the real issue here is whether such sexual practices are in any sense politically radical. To imagine they are is to be closer in thought to Granny and Jessie than Queen realizes: after all, to regard a sexual practice as inherently radical is really just the obverse of regarding it as inherently evil or, indeed, as inherently normal.

One thing we learn from the history of dissidence is that the subversiveness of a dissident culture derives in part from the force which resists it. This has been a focus of my own thinking about this history – the violent dialectic between dissidence and domination as is exemplified in sexual deviance but also far beyond it. In a rather trivial sense this is apparent from Queen's

claim: somehow the ‘queering’ of that particular sexual practice required, if not the actual presence of Granny and Jessie, then certainly their imagined disapproval. The transgression has to be regarded, discussed, known about in order to be transgressive. Which is one reason why today sexual transgression is talked up so much. But as we talk up our transgressions, let’s never forget that historically the working out of this dialectic has involved the murder, mutilation and incarceration of sexual dissidents. To repeat: the subversiveness of a dissident culture derives in part from the force which resists it, a force which is usually the stronger by far. Hence that violent dialectic and all the broken people left in its wake.

But maybe I’m becoming too serious and missing the new queer insistence on the importance of pleasure for the dissident agenda. I would indeed hate to be associated with the puritanical attitude which used to say that nothing pleasurable could be radical, and that politically effective action had to be painful. If it wasn’t hurting either the activists or those they were trying to change, it wasn’t working. Depending on its size, maybe that couple with their dildo were upholding the puritan political tradition after all. Of course there’s nothing wrong in principle with the new insistence on mixing politics and pleasure. The error is to pretend that because it’s pleasurable, sexy and shocking, it’s subverting patriarchy, heterosexuality, masculinity and whatever else we don’t like – and of course it only ever does subvert what we don’t like. It’s an obvious point, but it seemingly needs saying: pleasure, sex and shock are neither necessary nor sufficient conditions for radical political effect. To want them to be so corresponds to a more general move today whereby the undoubted truth that sexuality is political through and through has allowed many to delude themselves into believing that sexuality is the only political focus worthy of attention. This is a development which goes hand in hand with an increasingly naive notion of the political, and very probably an abdication of the political.

Queer radicals, far from liberating the full potential of homosexuality, tame and rework it in various ways, one of which is especially relevant here: they tend to represent themselves as personally immune to the subversiveness of desire. It’s an immunity which comes with being radical, since to be radical is to be liberated (not repressed) and, via a simplification of Freud, it is only the repressed who can be wrecked by desire. In other words, sexual radicals are the agents of the disruptiveness of desire but rarely, if ever, its victims. If they are the victim of anything it is social discrimi-

nation against their desire – embodied in Jessie and Granny – rather than the desire itself.

But perhaps the biggest problem with queer theory is that it’s a version of wishful theory. Wishful as in wishful thinking. It is a pseudo-radical, pseudo-philosophical, redescription of the world according to an a priori agenda. One in which the observation that ‘we need to retheorize the problem of *x* or *y*’ too often means ‘let’s use theory to redescribe, analyse and describe the problem so that it goes away (for us), or at least makes us feel better’. So, for example, some have theorized male *heterosexuality* – it’s rarely female heterosexuality – as so insecure as to be always about to self-destruct under the pressure of the homosexuality it is repressing. I say, dream on.

In wishful theory a preconceived narrative of the world is elaborated by mixing and matching bits and pieces of diverse theories until the wished-for result is achieved. If anything in ‘reality’ offers resistance, all you need to do is to splice in, or jump-cut to, another theory better suited to erasing the difficulty. Finally, the contrived narratives of wishful theory insulate their adherents from social reality by screening it through high theory, and this in the very act of fantasizing its subversion or at least its inherent instability.

As an instance of what I mean I choose not an easy target, of which there are many, but the work of Judith Butler, a brilliant and justifiably respected cultural theorist. Her now famous account of heterosexuality seems to me a version of wishful theory. She argues that heterosexuality is an impossible and panicked imitation of itself, one which is always failing, and exposed as such by homosexuality. I’ve elsewhere given this theory the fuller description it deserves and criticized it on several grounds, not the least of which is the way it puts homosexual desire in such an intense relationship with heterosexuality that it seemingly has an antagonistic desire *for* it. Indeed, reading Butler one occasionally gets the impression that homosexual desire only realizes itself *as* the subversion of heterosexuality.<sup>11</sup> The additional point I want to make here – one especially appropriate to the philosophical context – is the bizarre, wishful logic of the argument. For Butler, heterosexuality survives only because it is endlessly panicked into trying to overcome its own fundamental instabilities, its intrinsic sense of its own tenuousness; trying to disavow or foreclose on the fact that it always knows or feels itself to be on the verge of being ‘undone’ by the homosexuality it excludes, and so on. In short, ‘precisely because it is bound to fail, and yet endeavors to succeed, the project of

heterosexual identity is propelled into an endless repetition of itself'.<sup>12</sup>

The evidence for Butler's diagnosis of the permanent instability, panic and crisis of heterosexuality is the very fact of its survival and persistence. But when demonstrable historical 'success' becomes the main evidence of radical theoretical failure, and actual real-world perpetuation the theoretical sign of an innate impossibility, things are getting wishful in the extreme.

### Perversion and the daemonic

Let's recall what perversion is. Most significantly, it works internally to the normality it threatens; something is perverted from the inside not the outside. Because and not in spite of this, the normal may demonize the perverse, trying to refigure it as utterly alien. But the same original intimacy may enable the perverse to subvert the normal; the perverse tracks back to it, and does so along the same demonizing trajectory whereby it was disavowed or ejected. I've called this process the perverse dynamic.<sup>13</sup> Further, perversion can be a form of resistance which works in terms of desire *and* knowledge. The pervert desires deviation in a way inseparable from knowing what s/he should not know.

This means that it is not enough for modern perverts to trace their history to – and repudiate – the abject identities created within sexology and (some) psychoanalysis. They must go back in time, ultimately right back, to embrace – not repudiate – the archetypal perverts, the heretic and the wayward woman, Satan and Eve, whose crimes were, among other things, crimes of desire and of knowing. In addition to these perverts' vicious, unregenerate desire, there was this question of their knowing too much, or being infected with heresy. That's why, theologically, perversion is the opposite of conversion. The pervert precisely defects/deviates/errs. Thus Satan, and Eve too, who after all desires the apple not from any old tree, but rather the tree of knowledge, which is of course the one forbidden her. Mythologically, that desire, death and knowledge were all born in the first transgression. In the creation of the modern pervert this connection of perversion with dissident knowledge was largely but not entirely eradicated. It is recoverable in the paradox that desire, and perverse desire most acutely, is at once an effect of history, and a refusal of history. Recall Kenneth Burke's dramatization of the perverse dynamic, circa the eve of creation. God and Satan are discussing the pros and cons of creation. Satan asks God if the earth creatures will possess 'a deviant kind of "freedom"':

The Lord: You would ask that, my lad! I see why I love you so greatly. If my negative ever broke loose from me, I'd know where to look for it.

Satan: Milord, I blush!  
(pause.)<sup>14</sup>

Never was a pause more pregnant with desire *and* knowing; indeed, one might say of perverse desire that it was born in that pause, on the Eve of Creation, when Satan, because he already knew more than he should, wanted to fuck with God. Here we see well enough what it is that Satan as pervert knows: among other things, that the other is always somehow within the same; that what a culture designates as alien is never actually so, never entirely other; that in a paradoxical and complex way the other is integral to the self-same. There's more to learn about what it is to be a pervert from the mythological history of Satan and Eve than anything in queer theory.

Perverse desire lives across a separation of same and other which is also a proximity, and knows that it does. The history of homosexuality is, in some respects, the history of this desire, and of this divide which is also a proximity. Homosexuality is imagined, positioned or represented as simultaneously utterly alien and mysteriously inherent within. But remember: we are talking here of a process at once psychic and social, brutally material in its effects, mercurial and contradictory in its representations. And the proximity is the means of a fierce dialectic between displacement and subversion.

In this longer and violent history of the perverse we find the daemonic in desire. Just when you thought you'd worked out a sexual identity, and built a lifestyle around it, your desire disrupts both the identity and the lifestyle. Magnified and intensified this is, of course, a familiar theme in literature: human desire won't be contained by safe and reassuring cultural narratives or the institutions they sustain. In literature desire is dangerous, perverse, disruptive and destructive and often the more seductive for being so.

To think of desire as daemonic is to think of it as being to some defining extent not just incapable of socialization, but deeply antagonistic to the social – perhaps even to civilization. The daemonic in this sense is powerfully expressed in some of the great mythic oppositions of Western culture: the Greek one between Apollo and Dionysus; the Renaissance ones between Reason and Passion, Culture and Nature; and most recently, Freud's account of human history as the unending antagonism between civilization and instinct. Each of these far-reaching mythic oppositions embraces a double, conflictual truth which is at



once social, political and psychological. On the one hand, civilization requires the education, control and suppression of certain desires, especially sexual ones. On the other, the more we try to contain and control sexuality the more likely it is that some part of it will escape or resist control, and probably return in some direct or distorted form to disrupt, and maybe even subvert, whatever or whoever is trying to control it.

In each case, too, the desire in question is obviously a life-force. It is, for instance, the Dionysiac, Passion, Nature, instinct, or drive. But this life-force is untamed, unsocialized and at heart non-human. Its amoral core becomes the more potentially destructive of the human as a result of human attempts to tame it. The romantic take on this is voiced by Georges Bataille: 'eroticism is an insane world whose depths, far beyond its ethereal forms, are infernal'.<sup>15</sup> More fundamentally still, this is a life-force indifferent to life itself. What this means, as Bataille realized, is that the life-force is also a force of death, dissolution and destruction. Eros and Thanatos are not enemies like God and Satan; they cleave together, but it is an embrace in which each is indifferent to the other. This is the heart of the pre- or non-Christian idea of the daemonic.

The daemonic is being hesitantly revived by some queer theorists, most of whom are vague about its history. One queer slogan a couple of years back was 'put the homo back into homicide'. But its most controversial recent intellectual advocate has to be Camille Paglia, and she is very aware of its cultural history. I'm referring mainly to her influential book *Sexual Personae*, first published in 1990. Paglia resurrects the idea of human history as a struggle between the Apollonian and the Dionysian. For her the truth of the Dionysian is not to be found in the earth's surface but in its bowels, and if we have a deep revulsion from slime, it's because that's what we came from; to be civilized is necessarily to be alienated from our real origins. The essence of nature is what Paglia calls the 'chthonian' – that is, 'the blind, grinding of subterranean force, the long slow suck, the murk and ooze'. All culture, including aesthetics and science, is built on the repression or evasion of the fact that we begin in a primal melting pot where the life force in also a force of dissolution and death. Human culture is a massive and necessary defence against this nature. But our sexuality still partakes of it. Which is why sex is unfree, inhumane, compulsive and aggressive, characterized by a 'daemonic instability'.<sup>16</sup> In sex we are caught up in a 'backward movement towards primeval dissolution'; sex threatens annihilation. This

is why, says Paglia, so many men turn away or flee after sex: 'they have sensed the annihilation of the daemonic'.<sup>17</sup> She believes a perfectly humane, guilt-free eroticism to be impossible.

To hear academics and others dismissing Paglia as a fascist or merely a spokeswoman of the New Right is to know they are, yet again, on the defensive.<sup>18</sup> Paglia is given to the odd overstatement and may be said to be an embarrassing victim of her own success; she is certainly an American celebrity, which is almost the same thing. One good reason for her success is that Paglia polemically restates, often crudely, occasionally compellingly, some of the most powerful myths of Western culture. Of course it remains open whether those myths articulate profound truths or pernicious mystifications. But they persist in the cultural memory, and they return because the realities they articulate or mystify remain intractable. I believe, against Paglia, that the daemonic is not pure nature returning to blast culture apart, but the return of a repressed desire so inextricably bound up with history it is impossible to distinguish between the two. And even if it were possible to tell them apart, I suspect the most recalcitrant kind of desire might be more socialized than 'natural'. I could put this differently, in the form of a familiar paradox which artists have explored (Thomas Mann in *Death in Venice* and Joseph Conrad in *Heart of Darkness*, for example): only the highly civilized can become truly daemonic. Freud remarked that the superego could be as cruel as the id. Renaissance and Enlightenment sceptics observed that corrupted reason was capable of an evil unknown to the non-rational or the irrational. Likewise desublimated desire potentially has a virulence which is not the opposite of civilization but its inversion. This is not unfettered pre-social libido indifferent to the civilizing restraint it has escaped. On the contrary, this is desire returning via the 'civilizing' mechanisms of its repression and violating them along the way. Because desublimated desire is violating the civilization which has made it what it is, and cannot at some irreducible level cease to be, it is therefore also violating itself.

## Notes

1. Roland Barthes, *Roland Barthes*, trans. Richard Howard, Macmillan, London, 1977, p. 69.
2. Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1978, p. 292.
3. Mark Simpson, ed., *Anti-Gay*, Cassell, London, 1996; Andy Medhurst and Sally R. Munt, eds, *Lesbian and Gay Studies: A Critical Introduction*, Cassell, London, 1997.
4. *E.M. Forster*, Northcote House, Plymouth, 1999, blurb and p. 6: 'I hope to establish a sense of Forster's novels

not only as queer ... but also ... queerer than queer.'

5. Although, significantly, it has a precedent in Freud when he speaks of the women whose infantile wish for a penis changes in later life into 'the wish for a *man*, and thus puts up with the man as an appendage to the penis'. 'On Transformations of Instinct as Exemplified in Anal Eroticism', in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, Hogarth, London, 1955, vol. XVII, p. 129, his emphasis. I am grateful to Rachel Bowlby for this reference.
6. "Unraveling the Sexual Fringe"; cited from Lynda Hart's illuminating study, *Between the Body and the Flesh: Performing Sado-masochism*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1998, p. 49.
7. Julie Burchill, *Absolute Filth: An A to Z of Sex*, no place of publication, publisher or date given. Entry for Orgasm.
8. Donald Morton argues at length that queer values correspond all too neatly with modern capitalism; see his 'Queerity and Ludic Sado-Masochism: Compulsory Consumption and the Emerging Post-al Queer', in Donald Morton et al., eds, *Post-ality: Marxism and Postmodernism, Transformation*, 1, Maastricht Press, Washington, 1995, pp. 189–215.
9. Anonymous London leaflet, *Queer Power Now* (1991); cited from Alan Sinfield's *Gay and After*, Serpent's Tail, London, 1998, p. 8 – itself the most thoughtful account of the recent challenges to the gay identity.
10. Carol A. Queen, 'Strangers at Home: Bisexuals in the Queer Movement', *Outlook* 16, 1992, p. 33; cited here from Elizabeth Wilson's provocative and recommended article, 'Is Transgression Transgressive?', in Joseph Bristow and Angelia R. Wilson, eds, *Activating Theory: Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Politics*, Lawrence & Wishart, London, 1993, p. 113.
11. Jonathan Dollimore, 'Bisexuality, Heterosexuality and Wishful Theory', *Textual Practice*, vol. 10, no. 3, 1996, pp. 523–39.
12. Judith Butler, 'Imitation and Gender Insubordination' in Diana Fuss, ed., *Inside/Out: Lesbian Theories, Gay Theories*, Routledge, London, 1991, p. 21.
13. Jonathan Dollimore, *Sexual Dissidence*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1991, esp. ch. 15 and pp. 33–5, 249–75.
14. Kenneth Burke, 'Epilogue: Prologue in Heaven', in *The Rhetoric of Religion: Studies in Logology* (1961), University of California Press, Berkeley, 1970, pp. 279–80.
15. Georges Bataille, *The Tears of Eros*, City Lights Books, San Francisco, 1969 (1961), p. 69.
16. Camille Paglia, *Sexual Personae: Art and Decadence from Nefertiti to Emily Dickinson*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1990, pp. 1–6, 41–2, 13.
17. *Ibid.*, pp. 4–5. Male sexuality is especially insecure, always haunted by the prospect of failure and humiliation ('a flop is a flop'), and even when successful is inherently mutable, going from erection through orgasm to detumescence: 'Men enter in triumph but withdraw in decrepitude. The sex act cruelly mimics history's decline and fall.' Which also means that male sexuality is inherently manic-depressive (p. 20).
18. See, for example, Wilson, 'Is Transgression Transgressive', p. 114; and bell hooks, 'Camille Paglia: "Black" Pagan or White Colonizer?', in *Outlaw Culture: Resisting Representations*, Routledge, London, 1994, ch. 7.

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