BOYS WILL BE GIRLS: DRAG AND TRANSVESTIC FETISHISM

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'Girls will be boys and boys will be girls / It's a mixed up muddled up shook up world except for Lola', the Kinks sang in 1970, asserting that the gay man in drag was the only sane person in a crazy world. That rock group's revaluation of camp and masquerade is currently shared by many theorists on the left, who advocate it as a postmodern strategy for the subversion of phallogocentric identities and desires. Their now radical chic has made the likes of Dolly Parton and Madonna (and their satin queen or Wanna-Be parodies or imitations) more than chicks with check. They have become draped crusaders for the social constructionist cause, catching gender in the act, as an act, so as to demonstrate there is no natural, essential, biological basis to gender or heterosexuality. Postmodern critics argue that because both gender and sexuality are organized around the phallus in our culture, there can be no escaping phallic effects. Any appeal to identities or desires beyond or before the phallus and its signifiers is both too utopic and essentialist. According to this logic, drag is just postmodern pragmatism, deconstructing identity from within so as not to sacrifice desire to an outmoded, purist, and Puritan essentialism.

Not so long ago camp languished, theorized as the shameful sign of an unreconstructed, self-hating, and even woman-hating, homosexual. Now not only femininity but even macho masculinity is read as drag and, therefore, radical. Such a literal re-habilitation of sexual difference seems almost too camp to be sincere. The stories we tell about the gender acts of others tell something

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about our own as they position subjects and objects with respect to symbolic
castration and what signifies lack. If there is a desire for camp, expressed in drag
fantasies, there is no camping up desire, which we cannot ‘put on’ or ‘put off
with the masquerades which are its symptoms. What is revealed – or concealed
– by the desire for drag, whether to perceive or perform it? In whose eyes is what
chic radical when all gender is an act and not an expression of an essence? Does
a camp relation to identity subvert or support phallocentric hierarchies of
difference?

CAMP, HOMOPHOBIA, AND MISOGYNY

Andrew Ross (1988, rpt. 1989: 144) suggests that after Stonewall camp was an
embarrassment to the gay community, the sign of a pre-political gay identity.
But other historians of drag have argued that gay and lesbian activists were
uncomfortable with it long before then, at least since the 1950s. Both the
Daughters of Bilitis and the Mattachine Society disapproved of it and partici-
pated in the consolidation of a distinction between gender and sexual ‘devi-
ance’ which resulted in the separation of transvestism and transsexualism from
homosexuality, according to Dave King.¹ The impulse behind the devaluation
of camp was the apparent complicity of the latter with the sexual inversion
model of homosexuality. Inversion theory, and most ‘third sex’ theories, assert
that the invert or ‘uranian’ has the psyche of one gender (or perhaps both) and
the body of the other, so that what looks like a homosexual object choice is in
effect heterosexual. Thus, if men desire men, they do so as a women, as Freud
explains: ‘they identify themselves with a woman and take themselves as their
sexual object. That is to say, they proceed from a narcissistic basis, and look for
a young man who resembles themselves and whom they may love as their
mother loved them’. Similarly, among women, ‘the active inverts exhibit
masculine characteristics, both physical and mental, with peculiar frequency
and look for femininity in their sexual objects . . .’ (Three Essays, 11).

This model reinscribes heterosexuality within homosexuality itself, as Judith
Butler (1990a: 54–5), among others, has argued. However, in doing so, it is
unable to account for the apparently ‘normally’ gendered partner in homo-
sexual object choices. Freud recognized there was a certain amount of ‘ambi-
guity’ about masculine inversion (if not about lesbianism):

There can be no doubt that a large proportion of male inverts retain the
mental quality of masculinity, that they possess relatively few of the
secondary characteristics of the opposite sex and that what they look for
in their sexual object are in fact feminine mental traits . . . A strict con-
ceptual distinction should be drawn according to whether the sexual
character of the object or that of the subject has been inverted. (Three
Essays, 10)

He sometimes describes the subject of homosexual desire as feminine, in search
of a masculine object, and sometimes as masculine, in search of a feminine
object. In both cases he explains desire heterosexually; his inversion cannot account for the butch gay man or the lesbian femme. Confronting the theoretical impossibility of their existence, gay men and lesbians affirmed both their desire and their gender, refusing to assimilate homosexuality to heterosexuality but repudiating drag and butch-femme roles as deviations from gender norms. For the Daughters of Bilitis and the Mattachine Society, gay men and lesbians, despite their object choices, were really just like heterosexual men and women. Even more recent theorists have also been wary of drag, asserting that embracing gender norms is not assimilationist but radical, given the public’s common-sense model of homosexuality, which is still indebted to the inversion model; for example, Martin Humphries writes, ‘[b]y creating amongst ourselves [gay men] apparently masculine men who desire other men we are refuting the idea that we are really feminine souls in male bodies’ (1985: 84).2

If the logical conclusion of inversion theory is the claim that homosexuality is really transsexualism, the extreme form of the reaction against it, the inverse of inversion theory, is the belief that transsexualism is only a defense against homosexuality. To reject either is to court charges of homophobia or transphobia, but it is the former which accounts for the gay community’s rejection of camp and butch-femme roles (though it is important to recognize that there was never a feminization of lesbian culture as a counter to charges of masculine inversion comparable to the rise of gay machismo in the 1960s and 1970s).

Transphobia takes the very specific form of misogyny when femininity is devalued, which may be why even drag queens often insist they should not be mistaken for women. The emphasis on gay masculinity might be a defense against the feminization our culture has persistently linked to homosexuality, and not just a counter to heterosexist inversion theory. Hypermasculinity can allay the castration anxiety evoked by man objectified as spectacle, as film theorists have argued (cf. Dyer; Flitterman-Lewis; Neale). Thus John Marshall is right to underline that the association of gender inversion with homosexuality has been used to police masculine and feminine roles, for example, through homophobic questions like, ‘What are you – a fag?’ (153–4). However, because he privileges sexuality rather than gender when defining gay identity, he does not discuss the common misogynist corollary, ‘What are you – a girl?’.

Being called a fag or queer, a sissy, and a girl, are closely in Western culture, but as Craig Owens indicates, homophobia and misogyny are not the same thing – as Owens emphasizes by arguing that it is possible for feminists, like Luce Irigaray, to be homophobic. He therefore contradicts himself when he cites Jacques Derrida as authority for the assertion that gay men are not gynephobic because they do not suffer from castration anxiety (219–20). It does not follow that because gay men are unafraid of being seen as gay, they are unafraid of being seen as feminine (or castrated, in a patriarchal fantasmatism) unless they ‘really’ are already feminine or castrated, ruled out from the moment homophobia and misogyny – or homosexuality and gender inversion
- are made disjunct. The fear that homosexuality robs a man of his virility and feminizes him, which Freud saw in Leonardo Da Vinci, conjoins homophobia and misogyny and impacts on both straight and gay culture (Leonardo, 88). Denigration of drag queens in gay culture may be a rejection of the heterosexual stereotype of the effeminate invert, who is contrasted with the 'real thing', the gay-identified masculine man, but it also may be a misogynist rejection of the feminine. The queens in literature or film are often tragi or abject, as in John Rechy's City of Night or Hubert Selby, Jr.'s Last Exit to Brooklyn. Those interviewed in Men in Frock are defensive - like Harvey Fierstein’s Arnold in the movie Torch Song Trilogy (1987), who announces that he is a female impersonator to his soon-to-be-lover Alan with a bravado that suggests he believes he is being provocative if not downright offensive.3 The major premise of the cult hit Outrageous! (1977), starring Craig Russell, is that his character's drag is just that, outrageous. 'It's one thing to be gay, but drag--' his gay boss tells him at one point, and later fires him for refusing to give it up. Even one of Robin's lovers says, 'I don't usually make it with drag queens -- none of the guys do'.

Gay theory's affirmation of the properly gay man as a masculine man may also coincide with a misogynist critique of drag and camp effeminacy:

The gay male parody of a certain femininity ... is both a way of giving vent to the hostility toward women that probably afflicts every male ... and could also paradoxically be thought of as helping to deconstruct that image for women themselves. A certain type of homosexual camp speaks the truth of that femininity as mindless, asexual, and hysterically bitchy, thereby provoking, it would seem to me, a violently anti-mimetic reaction in any female spectator. The gay male bitch desublimates and desexualizes a type of femininity glamorized by movie stars, whom he then lovingly assassinates with his style, even though the campy parodist may himself be quite stimulated by the hateful impulses inevitably included in his performance. The gay-macho style, on the other hand, is intended to excite others sexually, and the only reason that it continues to be adopted is that it frequently succeeds in doing so. (Bersani 1987: 208)

Leo Bersani here assigns women the place of lack as bitches, actual and potential, in need of the rather violent 'help' that drag queens are best equipped to offer them. But drag queens themselves are also the victims of a misogyny for which Bersani would make them responsible, represented as just as bitchy and narcissistic as the 'real thing', too self-involved to be stimulating to anybody else, unlike the altruistic macho man.4 Asserting that neither the 'glamorized' movie star nor the queen are desirable (they are 'asexual', despite the evidence of star fan clubs and Chicks-with-Dicks phone sex numbers), Bersani condemns them to/for masturbation.

However, he rehabilitates drag when it is dressed up as 'feminine masochism' rather than bitchy sadism.

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It is possible to think of the sexual as, precisely, moving between a hyperbolic sense of self and a loss of all consciousness of self. But sex as self-hyperbole is perhaps a repression of sex as self-abolition. It inaccurately replicates self-shattering as self-swelling, as psychic tumescence. If ... men are especially apt to 'choose' this version of sexual pleasure, because their sexual equipment appears to invite by analogy, or at least to facilitate, the phallicizing of the ego, neither sex has exclusive rights to the practice of sex as self-hyperbole. For it is perhaps primarily the degeneration of the sexual into a relationship that condemns sexuality to becoming a struggle for power. As soon as persons are posited, the war begins. It is the self that swells with excitement at the idea of being on top ... (218)

Bersani argues that promiscuous best realizes self-shattering jouissance. What could be more threatening to the heterosexist media, he asks, than 'the sexual act [which] is associated with women but performed by men and ... [which] has the terrifying appeal of a loss of the ego, of a self-debasement?' (220). His conclusion implicitly answers what is only a rhetorical question: 'if the rectum is the grave in which the masculine ideal (an ideal shared - differently - by men and women) of proud subjectivity is buried, then it should be celebrated for its very potential for death' (222).

Though Bersani admits that the ways in which sex politicizes are 'highly problematical', he nevertheless reifies one kind of sex as politically progressive because dephallicizing. But do all attenuated intersubjective engagements necessarily fail to function as 'relationships'? Freud stressed the relative stability of the fantasies which structure a subject's psyche and characteristic defenses; promiscuity might be defensive and as much a part of that fantasy life as any other type of object choice. Furthermore, in a persuasive analysis of T.E. Lawrence's writings ('White Skin, Brown Masks'), Kaja Silverman demonstrates that masochism is not inconsistent with phallic narcissism and may even be a crucial component of masculinity and leadership in general. Being the bottom can be a means to being on top. If Bersani is right to insist that women, like men, can experience a phallicizing of the ego, despite what some feminist theorists assert, he is surely wrong to imagine that promiscuous anal sex is a greater guarantee of the self-shattering death of the subject than another kind of sex, including the vaginal sex he has asserted it recalls by association. 5 In this essay, a 'feminizing' promiscuous anal sex has a phallicizing function, swelling the ego of the theoretical impersonator (as 'feminine masochist') at the expense of women. Gay men are the better women, represented as better equipped to undo identity. When the rectum is a grave, the vagina is evidently a dead end.

THE PHALIC WOMAN

The gay man in drag in Bersani's essay is sometimes misogynist and sometimes a victim of misogyny, a self-swelling phallic sadist and a shattered and
castrated masochist. Too often, feminists have been unable to see that the penis is not the phallus – perhaps not surprisingly, given that patriarchal culture promotes such a misrecognition. Though no one has the phallus and the omniscience, omnipotence, and wholeness that it signifies, in patriarchy woman often figures as the mirror in which man sees himself whole, through the regressive defense mechanisms of projection, sadism, voyeurism, and fetishism. For many feminists the gay man in drag is just another misogynistic representation of woman. Radical lesbian feminist Marilyn Frye argues that gay camp effeminacy 'is a casual and cynical mockery of women, for whom femininity is the trappings of oppression, but it is also a kind of play, a toying with that which is taboo. It is a naughtiness indulged in ... more by those who believe in their immunity to contamination than by those with any doubts or fears' (137). Judith Williamson writes that men in drag undermine 'female characteristics' and satirize women (47–54), while Erika Munk argues that female impersonators are like whites in blackface, 'hostile and patronizing' (89), and Alison Lurie asserts that 'men who wear women's clothes, unless they are genuine transsexuals, seem to imitate the most vulgar and unattractive sort of female dress, as if in a spirit of deliberate and hostile parody' (258). They believe drag is a defense against femininity and the lack it signifies. The femininity of the female impersonation is a put-on, not the real thing, signalling he has what women lack: the phallus.

Psychoanalysis offers the same explanation of most cross-dressing, which is labeled transvestic fetishism. The transvestite feminizes himself only in order to 'masculinize' or phallicize himself through the erection the cross-dressing causes. Masquerading as the phallic woman, he is able to have (the illusion of having) the phallus. 'I was in Toronto once, and the only female impersonator they had was a woman', the star of a drag act in Ostracized! jokes, which is why so many feminists have found drag outrageous, though no laughing matter. By insisting on their difference from 'real girls' ('r.g.'s', in transvestic slang) impersonators can defend themselves against the castration the latter are made to signify. Like other men in a patriarchal symbolic, the female impersonator may feel whole at woman's expense, misrecognizing her difference as lack and fetishistically disavowing even that.

Andrew Ross has argued that camp is radical because it defetishes the erotic scenario of woman-as-spectacle (1988, rpt. 1989: 159). But as Freud points out, the fetishist both worships and castrates the fetish object, romanticizing and reviling it for its differences – differences the fetishist himself makes meaningful or invents, like the 'shine on the nose' one of Freud's patients could see in certain women even when others could not ('Fetishism', 219, 214). The details that mark an impersonation as such function fetishistically, signs of the ambiguous difference between phallic women and r.g.'s. Drag routines generally reveal the body beneath the clothes, which is made to serve as the ground of identity. Joking in double entendres, dropping the voice, removing the wig and falsies, exposing the penis all work to resecure masculine identity by
effecting a slide along a chain of signifiers which are in a metaphoric and
metonymic relationship with one another and with the transcendental signifier,
the phallus.

The pleasure of transvestism is like the pleasure of the Western, in which we
see men mutilated, castrated, and restored, rendered whole again.\textsuperscript{5} It is
exhibitionistic as well as voyeuristic, and may invite identification with rather
than disidentification from the hero/victim. Powerful female characters like
\textit{Dynasty}’s Alexis Carrington Colby Dexter, serve as a conduit for a gay look,
according to Mark Finch (1986). Such phallic women solicit not only a trans-
vestic gaze but a transvestic identification, as they are both the subjects and the
objects of the gaze and phallic mastery, as transvestite pornography makes
clear. Lola, ‘tall, dark and hung’, and Pasha, ‘the Polynesian Bombshell’, are
consistently described and imaged as phallic women in \textit{Drag Queens} (4:3,
1986: 2). Lola has ‘the right equipment for either sex … [she] loves to play it
both ways, and she knows she’s got what it takes to make it work’, the maga-
azine claims and verifies that with photos drawing attention to Lola’s breasts
and erect nipples and to her partially erect penis (40). Both shots and writing
emphasize fetishism: ‘Lola loves to show it all off. The slow striptease is her
favorite. Wearing lace, nylons, and high heeled shoes, she hides her meaty
truth. At the right moment, she unveils her cock. The shock is erotic and
irresistible. Lola is unique!’ (7). Phallic narcissism is suggested by the many
photos of Lola masturbating and by captions which describe her as ‘the seducer
of herself, a woman capable of turning herself in to [sic] a rigid and throbbing
man!’ (7). The text makes clear the queen’s penis is king, continually reinscrib-
ing patriarchal gender hierarchies, describing Lola’s feminine ‘half’ as ‘turning
on the man below’, ‘desir[ing] to please’, ‘giv[ing] way to the long thick cock’,
etc. (7, 23, 11). And although Lola is never shown having sex with anyone, she
is frequently represented masturbating to pornography in which another black
man in drag is seen anally penetrating a white man. If Lola is a woman, she is
one with a very special difference; after all, ‘she can take her man where no
woman has taken him before’ (32). Represented as active, masterful, and com-
plete, Lola is obviously the phallic woman.

\textit{Pink Flamingos} (1972) also plays with the power of the queen. In one
sequence, the voyeuristic pleasure of Raymond in a beautiful woman is sud-
denly disrupted when she lifts her skirt to reveal her penis. The spectator,
aligned by the camera with Raymond, can only laugh by disidentifying from
him; otherwise, s/he is the butt of the joke too. The transvestite’s gesture in this
sequence is almost literally a punch-line, as the look at a shocked and visibly
displeased Raymond in the reverse shot reveals. The laughter of the viewer is a
defensive response to the castration anxiety suddenly evoked and evaded by
making what is literally a transvestic identification with the phallic woman.
Such scenes point to the presence of a desire Freud never discusses when he
elaborates on the negative oedipus: the boy’s active, sadistic, and masculine
wish to penetrate the father, rather than his passive, masochistic, and feminine
wish to be penetrated by him, a desire that undermines the father’s alignment with the phallus. I am not suggesting that spectators are always encouraged to identify with the man in drag, only that such an identification is possible and may not subvert phallic identities. Of course, it is far more common for distancing effects to be maintained by representing the transvestite as mastered and lacking object, rather than potent subject, of the gaze, which suggests that Marilyn Frye’s critique of what she calls the ‘phalophilia’ of gay men and drag is neither fair nor accurate (128–51). For example, *The Queens*, a ‘photographic essay’ by George Alpert, tells a story of pathos and horror. It incorporates many photos of older comic and ugly ‘dames’, whose failure of femininity is suggested by contrast with the young ‘glam’ queens included, who are usually not photographed in extreme close-up or in unflickering lights or poses, and are sometimes even seen in romantic soft focus, like women. But they are also often photographed against or behind doors and windows, sometimes barred, or in corners, suggesting they are tragically trapped by their ‘perverse’ inclinations. The opening and closing series in particular convey this effect. The first ends with a close-up of ‘Baby’ looking pensive; on her cheek glistens what appears to be a tear, though it could just be a drop of water left after washing off make-up. The final picture of the last sequence is of ‘the twins’ sadly trying to peer out over the sill or through the frame of what could be a window which partially obstructs their faces. The photo suggests the pain of being caught in ‘their’ world, barred definitively from ‘ours’. This book does not confuse the queen’s penis with the phallus. It envisions the female impersonator as symbolically castrated, tragically – even horribly – lacking, a point of view which is not necessarily (or only) heterosexist, since it is also available to homosexuals.

**MASOCHISM**

When *Torch Song*’s ‘Virginia Ham’ (Arnold/Harvey Fierstein) drops her voice to tell her gay audience, ‘You can’t become a dame until you’ve knelt before a queen’, she constitutes herself as a phallic woman, invested with an erotic power denied by Bersani and others. Though spectators might identify with her, her punning address to us invites us to pay her homage in an act that both feminizes and ennobles. The spectacle of queen makes a lady of her supplicant; she is the phallic woman who offers the ambiguous pleasures of masochism. As D.N. Rodowick has pointed out, Mulvey’s almost biologizing insistence on aligning the cinematic gaze with masculinity and an active and controlling voyeurism and fetishism blinds her to the possibility of a passive component of vision, one in which fetishism coincides with masochism rather than sadism. Interested in theorizing a feminine pleasure in films Mulvey seems to rule out, Rodowick considers Freud’s essay on the beating fantasy to extend to film its notion of multiple enunciations for a single utterance. He does not discuss what we can infer, that the gaze directed toward the heroine at those moments
when she is most fetishized could be masochistic rather than sadistic. Nor does Rodowick discuss whether the masochistic spectator might fetishize the male hero he argues can be viewed as an erotic object by women and men (though Rodowick does not elaborate a homoerotic gaze, his theory, unlike Mulvey’s, implicitly includes it). Bound by the Freudian logic he used to question Mulvey, he does not theorize the significance of difference other than gender for the gaze, desire, and subjectivity, differences which may well come into play in fetishism.

Some recent feminist work shares Rodowick’s conviction that the phallic can solicit a masochistic, rather than sadistic, gaze. Griselda Pollock argues that one of Dante Gabriel Rossetti’s paintings of women, *Astarte Syriaca* (1877), transcends the ‘repetitious obsessive fetishization’ of most of his art in order to represent ‘a figure before which the masculine viewer can comfortably stand subjected... a fantasy image of the imaginary, maternal plentitude and phallic mother’ (Pollock, 153). Berkeley Kaithe arrives at a similar conclusion about pornographic images, asserting that the look at the fetishized woman who looks back – whether that woman’s investment with the phallus is ‘literal’ (the transvestite or ‘tv’) or vestigial (the r.g.) – provides the pleasure of the surrender to the penetrating ‘cut’, the moment when the subject is severed from the phallic M/Other and accedes to difference and a fantasy of self-possession (Kaithe, 158).9 And in a series of essays devoted to the topic of masochism itself, Kaja Silverman explores at length the eroticization of lack and subordination for men. She notes that the conscious heterosexuality of the male masochists Freud discusses in ‘A Child Is Being Beaten’ constitutes a “feminine” yet heterosexual male subject, one whose identification with the phallus is disrupted by installing the mother in the dominant place. (Freud himself subordinates that fantasy to the unconscious and homosexual desire to be beaten by the father) (‘Masochism and Male Subjectivity’, 36).10 Like Kaithe and Pollock, she privileges the relation to the phallic M/Other who ‘precedes’ the symbolic, which subordinates her and the child to the father. She does so to make the radical claim that the male masochist ‘cannot be reconciled to the symbolic order or to his social identity’ because his sexuality is ‘devoid of any possible productivity or use value’ (‘Masochism’, 58).

Whereas Silverman’s emphasis is on the male masochist, just a few years earlier Jane Gallop and others had focused on the subversive force of the phallic woman or mother who undoes the logic of ideological solidarity between phallus, father, power, and man.11 Yet when Freud discusses the phallic woman, for example in the ‘Witch Man’ case or the essay on the taboo on virginity in ‘Primitive cultures’, he suggests she is phallic on the same terms as the man, having acquired a penis or what stands for it, perhaps from a man with whom she has had intercourse (‘Infantile Neurosis’, 256, 258; ‘Taboo of Virginity’, 76–8). It is therefore revealing that Sade’s archetypal phallic woman, the eponymous heroine of *Juliette*, explains her desire as a reactive copy of masculine desire: ‘My lubricity, always modeled after men’s whims, never is lit
except by fire of their passion; I am only really inflamed by their desires, and the only sensual pleasure I know is that of satisfying all their deviations. When the active, desiring woman still reflects man's desire, the mirrors of the patriarchal imaginary are not shattered.

The fantasy of the phallic mother is the topic of a great deal of feminist writing on mother-daughter relations. This work has focused on the difficulty of difference for the daughter, who cannot quite distinguish herself from her mother in a symbolic which requires that confusion. Woman is theorized as unable to represent lack for herself because she must represent it for men by becoming, through identification, their lost object of desire. She cannot enter the symbolic, too close to the mother whom she is unable to give up or give up being, because for her, having nothing to lose, castration poses no 'real' threat. The daughter's response to this lack of a lack and difference is paranoia, a defense associated with psychosis and foreclosure of symbolic castration. The mother is phallic because she is invested with the power to free her little girl, to divest herself of her phalus-child.

This paranoid fantasy about the phallic mother is a cornerstone of object-relations theory, for which the boy's accession to masculinity is a problem, rather than the girl's to femininity, as in the Freudian/Lacanian paradigm. Object-relations theorists assume masculinity and femininity are there from the start, rather than produced through the resolution of the castration complex and the separation from the mother. They suppose a boy is destined for masculinity even though he begins in a 'feminine' dependence on and identification with the mother. She is presumed phallic in that she is blamed for men's 'gender identity disorders', like transsexualism, which according to well-known expert Dr. Robert Stoller results from too much mother and too little father. The phallic mother will not let boys be boys.

This phallic mother is at once castrating and castrated. When the fantasy is paranoid and the lack of difference figured as fearful, it cannot be progressive for women; it contributes to the repudiation of femininity patriarchy already engenders and realigns women with the maternal as a role they can never adequately perform. However, when the fantasy is also fascinating and pleasurable, it maintains the subject on the edge of subjection and self-(dis)possession. Berkeley Kaite argues that transvestism does just that, providing the pleasure of self-dispossession as castration and the death of desire through the death of the subject, who lacks a lack in or difference from the phallic M/Other. Yet Kaite critiques Francette Pacteau for associating androgyny with just such a death of desire, which follows from Pacteau's assertion that androgyny represents the narcissistic desire for wholeness in the phallic M/Other, beyond the lack that motivates desire and so beyond difference itself, including sexual difference. According to Kaite, the tv or androgyne expresses a desire for repression rather than a repression (or, more properly, foreclosure) of desire (164). Kaite wants to retain for transvestism and fetishism the radicality of a refusal of the symbolic and its hierarchies of difference and without giving up the
recognition of castration, difference, and lack accession to the symbolic is supposed to generate. Kaite’s beliefs about fetishism are as contradictory as the fetishist’s about the mother’s phallus: fetishistic disavowal will (not) make him/her whole. The fetishist at once knows and refuses to acknowledge his lack or castration, his self-difference. The perversion has a defensive function, even if it also has a subversive impulse. In this, fetishism is like what Julia Kristeva has called abjection, which can re-fashion ‘his majesty the ego’ by storming the fortress in which he reigns, described by Lacan as the ‘orthopaedic . . . armour of an alienating identity’ (Lacan, *Ecrits*, 4–5). But the emperor’s new clothes threaten to expose him utterly, leaving him defenseless against the phallic M/Other, prey to the psychotic failure of subjectivity itself. For Kristeva, the loss of the subject abjection threatens is not without its liabilities, even if a rigidly defensive ego is also a liability.

Gendering feminine such a tantalizing/terrifying loss reveals the defensive nature of masculinity itself. Silverman says that the beating fantasy Freud discusses, and masochistic fantasies in general, attest to the need to be boys to be girls, so that even the female ‘feminine masochist’ has a masculinity complex, albeit one in which she makes an identification with the homoerotic man, wishing to be passive and masochistic rather than active and sadistic. Castration or divestiture, Silverman argues, ‘can only be realized at the site of male subjectivity because it is there that the paternal legacy is stored’ (‘Masochism’, 62). The woman has nothing to lose; it is the male subject’s self-fetishizing phallic imposture which provides him with the signifiers of lack: the penis and all that signals the power and privilege accruing to man in a patriarchal culture. Man appears to have the phallus by exhibiting what signifies having the phallus, that which is metaphorically or metonymically linked to it. One such substitute is the woman herself, the fetishized M/Other, who ‘masquerades’ as the phallus so that man can ‘parade’ his phallus, the woman whose lack he needs to feel complete. In the Lacanian paradigm, man, like woman, only comes into being when ‘photo-graphed’, fixed by the look of the phallic M/Other, who reflects for him an image of wholeness with which he jubilantly identifies (Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis, 104). Both man and woman literally appear to be subjects. Their relations revolve around having or being the phallus for one another, which is never more than appearing to have or be the phallus for the other who can be duped by the performance (‘The Meaning of the Phallus’, 83–5).

However, man’s fetishistic misrecognition of the organ upon which his identity hangs is legislated by the patriarchal symbolic, so that it seems to be the real thing. The subject who desires to take up the position of being the phallus for the phallic M/Other, the hole in her whole, must be castrated, feminized. This leads to the curious conclusion that only men can become real women (in fact, Moustapha Safouan asserts just that about transsexuals, and it is implicit in Bersani’s and Silverman’s work on masochism). Masochists—and even theorists of masochism—have been duped by the penis-fetish when they
fail to distinguish between it and the phallus, even if such a misrecognition apparently does not serve man's phallic narcissism. Masochistic fantasies may include 'scenes' in which the male genitals, the symbol of man's identification with the father as bearer of the phallus, are beaten or cut off, but this does not preclude the belief that the phallic mother is phallic because she has castrated the father and retained his penis.

In a classic essay on transvestism which ties it to masochism, Otto Fenichel notes that the little boy can desire to have the mother's baby just as a little girl might desire to have the father's baby (214–15). Freud emphasizes that the wish for a child points to an unconscious equation made between the penis and the baby. The daughter's desire to be a mother, expressed in playing with dolls, is motivated by penis envy (Introductory Lectures, 113). The same might be said of the expectant son, who anticipates the gift of the phallus in sexual relations, even masochistic relations, because they are all structured around phallic exchange. If a world with such sexual relations would be an inversion of those current in Western patriarchy, the meaning of the phallus and its 'privileged' signifiers would nevertheless remain unanalyzed.

**Dragging the differences**

Luce Irigaray reads the little girl's interest in dolls differently, seeing in it not an expression of penis envy but a desire for a 'feminine' mastery of the mother/child relationship by playing with an image of the self (Speculum, 73–80). Playing with dolls is a variant of what Irigaray calls 'mimicry', in which the woman masters 'her' image, the fetishistic masquerade, putting it on so as to signify it is a put on and can easily be taken off (This Sex, 76). Irigaray suggests mimicry signifies a distance between woman and her image which is necessary for knowledge and hinges on disidentification and difference. Woman cannot know 'woman' if she is too close to her image to see it with a critical eye. Transvestism also may express such mimicry, in which the son plays with his image like a doll, dressing it up to signal his distance — and difference — from lack. If femininity, like masculinity, can be a defense, a phallic imposture, a literal castration, as in transsexualism, it may not effect a symbolic castration. The fact that men can assume femininity (and castration) in order to disidentify from it (as lack) has distressed feminists who have discussed drag. Yet the possibility of assuming it to disidentify from it has excited feminists who theorize a female female impersonation or mimicry. The mimic can know 'woman' because she does not have to be her and does not have to make a transvestic identification with man in order to have some perspective on her image. Mimicry provides an alternative to adopting a masculine point of view, without necessitating a naïve idealist or essentialist belief in the ability to access a 'genuine' femininity beyond patriarchy.

Paradoxically, feminists praise in female female impersonation or mimicry what they condemn in female impersonation or drag: its distancing effects. This contradiction is symptomatic, but not necessarily of homophobia. Rather,
it points to the significance of differences other than those of gender or sexual orientation, which have to be ‘dragged’ into drag and its theories. Though feminist theorists of mimicry and lesbian and gay theorists of drag generally do not comment on the work of the other camp, both privilege the tactic of assuming an identity as a false identity. For both any identity is ‘assumed’ or false and alienated, unreal, fictional – what Lacan terms ‘masquerade’ or ‘parade’. There is no authentic, ‘real’ self beyond or before the process of its social construction, so our identities must be subverted from within.

As Judith Butler explains, drag promotes

a subversive laughter in the pastiche-effect of parodic practices in which the original, the authentic, and the real are themselves constituted as effects. The loss of gender norms would have the effect of proliferating gender configurations, destabilizing substantive identity and depriving the naturalizing narratives of compulsory heterosexuality of their central protagonists: ‘man’ and ‘woman’. (1990a: 146–47)

Sue-Ellen Case suggests that butch-femme lesbians camp up the fiction of castration, ironizing it, while Jack Babuscio, Richard Dyer, Jeffrey Escoffier, Andrew Ross, and Vito Russo all discuss drag as a parodic or ironic exaggeration or hyperbolization of gender. These are the very terms and phrases which feminist theorists use when they write about mimicry. To be a mimic, according to Irigaray, is to ‘assume the feminine role deliberately ... so as to make “visible”, by an effect of playful repetition, what was supposed to remain invisible ...’ (This Sex, 76). To play the feminine is to ‘speak’ it ironically, to italicize it, in Nancy Miller’s words, to hyperbolize it, in Mary Ann Doane’s words, or to parody it, as Mary Russo and Linda Kauffman describe it. The mimic and the drag queen ‘camp up’ ideology in order to undo it, producing knowledge about it, that gender and the heterosexual orientation presumed to anchor it are unnatural and even oppressive.

For theorists of drag and mimicry, irony and parody set them off from the masquerade or parade of those who play gender straight. But if all identities are alienated and fictional, what makes one credible and the other incredible, an obvious fake? The answer, it seems, is the author’s intention: parody is legible in the drama of gender performance if someone meant to script it, intending it to be there. Any potential confusion of the two is eliminated by a focus in the theories on production rather than reception or perception. Sometimes, however, one is ironic without having intended it, and sometimes, despite one’s best intentions, no one gets the joke. When, as Lacan points out, the ‘real thing’ is already a comedy what passes for passing for or impersonating a gender must be analyzed (‘Meaning of the Phallus’, 84).

In theories of camp, butch-femme drag is visible as such because of an essential ‘gay sensibility’, invoked to keep straight the difference between gay and heterosexual gender impersonation. Some theorists, like Babuscio (1977: 41) and Russo (1976: 208), explicitly refer to it as the ground of camp,
explaining that 'passing' sensitizes gays and lesbians to both the oppressiveness and artificiality of gender roles. But as Andrew Britton suggests, such gay essentialism is problematic because it is obvious that the experience of homophobic oppression does not necessarily lead to an understanding of it (1978: 12). Gayatri Spivak has made a similar point about oppression in general, arguing that theorists like Michel Foucault are too ready to credit the oppressed with the power to know and articulate their oppression directly when the very fact of oppression can make that impossible, since consciousness itself may be dominated and, indeed, constituted by hegemonic ideology ('Can the Subaltern Speak?', 273–6).

Other theorists of drag only implicitly invoke a 'gay sensibility', which manifests itself in the difficulty they have demonstrating the difference between butch-femme and inversion, on the one hand, and butch-femme and straight gender roles, on the other. It is a difficulty apparent in Freudian theory too, which cannot explain the desire of the femme for the butch lesbian or, conversely, of the butch gay man for the queen – they are too gay to be straight inversions. Camp theory has difficulty with the same two roles, which are too straight to be gay parodies or drag. Butler, Babuscie, and Oscar Montero suggest that butches and queens mark their impersonations as such through the use of incongruous contrasts, signs of a double gender identity, and through parodic excess (for example, Ross says the queen dresses 'over the top'). 'Excess' is what prevents drag from being mere inversion or a heterosexual role when there are no incongruous contrasts and confused gender signs, as with lesbian femmes and butch gay men. When Butler discusses the play of difference and desire in lesbian camp she argues that the butch does not assimilate lesbianism into heterosexuality as inversion because being a woman recontextualizes masculinity through the confusion of gender signs. She says it is exactly this confusion the femme finds desirable: 'she likes her boys to be girls' (1990a: 123). Butler discusses the butch as the subject of gender play but the object of desire, which enables the lesbian to be consistently associated with transvestic subversion. The femme's being a woman does not obviously recontextualize femininity, nor does it sound particularly radical to suggest the butch likes her girls to be girls.

Yet just a few lines later Butler insists the femme displaces the heterosexual scene as if she embodied the same shifting of sexed body as ground and gender identity as figure that the butch does. Similarly, when Case (1988, rpt. 1989: 294) writes that the femme 'aims her desirability' at the butch, she inscribes as active a potentially passive fem-ininity so that it can appear as distinct from femininity. What ultimately makes the femme different from the r.g. for both theorists is that she plays her role for another woman, which they claim makes it excessive and incongruous by 'recontextualizing' or 'reinterpreting' it (an argument that provides an additional safeguard against butch roles as mere inversion by asserting the illegibility of the butch's womanliness despite the confusion of gender signs). This is an essentialist tautology: butch-femme or drag is gender
play because it is gay; it is gay because it is gender play. An implicit ‘gay sensibility’ determines in advance what counts as gender play, keeping straight the difference between enlightened drag and unenlightened masquerade or parade. It is not surprising that the tautology fails, as Lisa Duggan reveals in an article tellingly titled, ‘The Anguished Cry of an 80s Fem: ‘I Want to be a Drag Queen’: ‘When lesbians sponsor strip shows, or other fem erotic performances, it is very difficult to “code” it as lesbian, to make it feel queer. The result looks just like a heterosexual performance, and lesbian audiences don’t respond to it as subversively sexual, specifically ours’ (64). In fact, the photo of two women in corsets illustrating this article is by Annie Sprinkle, who has appeared in similar tv pornography which has a straight audience. The picture or fantasy has two different enunciations, one that is heterosexual and masculine, and one that is lesbian. 19 Teresa de Lauretis underlines this dilemma when she writes that the femme cannot appear in most contexts ‘unless ... she enter [sic] the frame of vision as [sic] or with a lesbian in male drag’ (1988: 177). Clearly only something like a gay sensibility would enable one to recognize a femme in burch drag.

Perhaps the most troubling consequence of such essentialism is its paradoxical reinforcement of the idea that the ‘authentic’ or ‘natural’ self is heterosexual, even as it inverts the hierarchy by proclaiming the ‘fake’ or artificial gay self to be the ‘better’, smarter – more smartly dressed – self, which deconstructs itself by knowing its difference from itself and the gender role it only assumes like a costume. This erects the gay self as the upright self, properly non-identical by comparison with the straight self which also, therefore, lacks gay jouissance. Such uses of jouissance make it ‘stiffen into a strong, muscular image’, according to Jane Gallop; it becomes phallic, a sign of ‘an ego-gratifying identity’ in which ‘fear or unworthiness is projected outward ...’ (‘Beyond the Jouissance Principle’, 114). Gays and lesbians are no more free from castration anxiety than anyone else, as this defensive manoeuvre suggests. Like straight men – and women – they can disavow castration through projection and fetishism, including the self-fetishism of phallic imposture which may not be inconsistent with camp. For when roles are already alienated and unreal, the problem is maybe not how one holds them at a distance but how one responds to that distance. In transvestic drag, it is fetishized: the impersonator assumes a phallic identity through an apparent identification that is, in fact, a disidentification, signified by the incongruous contrasts and ironic excess she sees – and those who share that point of view see – in that gender act, which constitute it as camp.

It is also fetishized in mimicry, as I have argued in ‘The Feminine Look’. Theories of mimicry reinscribe white, middle-class femininity as the real thing, the (quint)essence of femininity. This is implicit in the feminist critiques of drag I have discussed, which define its style as sign of a hostile burlesque through contrasting it with that of a ‘natural’ femininity, whose understated good taste is a sign of the genuine article. If boys will be girls they had better be ladies. A
real woman is a real lady; otherwise, she is a female impersonator, whose 'unnaturally bad' taste—like that of working-class women or women of color—marks the impersonation as such. The mimic flaunts or camps up lack by fetishistically projecting it on to some 'other' woman, from whom she distances herself through a disidentification that takes the form of an apparent identification, as with the impersonator.

Feminist theorists of mimicry distinguish themselves from 'other' women even as they assimilate the latter by romanticizing them, assuming the 'other' has a critical knowledge about femininity because of her difference from what counts as natural femininity: white, Anglo, bourgeois style. It is only from a middle-class point of view that Dolly Parton looks like a female impersonator; from a Southern working-class point of view she could be the epitome of genuine womanliness. Something similar can be said of Divine in Polyester (1981), whose polyester marks his impersonation as such for those who find it in unnaturally bad taste, since Divine never gives any (other) indication he is 'really' a man. Mimicry is distinguished from masquerade on the basis of differences between women which white, middle-class feminists fetishistically disavow whenever they talk of 'the' feminine, as if it were only one thing.

Some women can 'have' the phallus in our culture because it is not just the penis but all the other signs of power and privilege, which stand in a metaphoric and metonymic relation not only to 'penis' but also to 'white' and 'bourgeois', the signs of a 'proper' racial and class identity. Relations between members of different races and classes, like those between genders, can be structured by the imaginary and characterized by fetishism, in which the signs of difference signify phallic lack or wholeness. The symbolic is more than a masculine imaginary; it is also a white and bourgeois imaginary, which explains the potentially oppressive effects of mimicry and drag when they constitute the other as what must be repudiated (the inverse complement, a symptom of lack and ignorance) or what can make one whole (the supplement, the phallic M/Other who guarantees full self-presence and knowledge). Feminists have shown that talk of a 'common humanity' is only a masculine ruse disguising oppression. The utopic vision of a common femininity and of women free from the effects of symbolic castration and the unconscious it produces, the source of the desires and fears that motivate us, has been made possible by an indifference to the significance of differences other than gender. The same can be said of relations between gays, which may not be characterized by the perfect reciprocity and equality that Harold Beaver, Craig Owens, and other gay theorists imagine they are.

Homosexuality, like femininity, is marked by the effects of castration anxiety. Gay men, like women (including lesbians), are in the symbolic as much as heterosexual men are by virtue of a phallic imposture which they can use to defend themselves from the psychosis with which both homosexuality and femininity have been associated in psychoanalysis since Freud's analysis of Schreber (in 'Psycho-Analytic Notes'). As Eve Sedgwick points out, gay theorists
must acknowledge the significance of differences within the gay community, differences which can be activated defensively and oppressively in gay relationships and identities, including camp (54–5). Race and class fetishism can operate in homosexual as well as heterosexual eros, since forms of otherness between men or women can have a phallic significance which all too often has been overlooked. Sunil Gupta, Kobena Mercer, Isaac Julien, and Thomas Yingling, among others, have written about the potential for the replication of racism in gay relationships through fantasies about the black or Asian man’s sex, while Jane Gallop has described a lesbian relationship in which the working-class woman functioned as the phallus for her middle-class lover just as women in general function as the phallus for men. 22 If they are at stake in fetishistic masochism, race and class differences can give the fantasy a symbolic productivity or use value even when the subject subverts phallic gender norms.

The fantasy Homi Bhabha locates at the heart of racism, the ‘primal scene’ he claims to derive from Frantz Fanon, centers on a fascinating and fearful interracial rape that could be a permutation of the fetishistic/masochistic beating fantasy analyzed by Freud. In the scene, a little white girl ‘fixes Fanon in look and word’ as she turns from him to identify with her mother, saying, ‘Look, a negro . . . Mamma, see the Negro! I’m frightened. Frightened’. Fanon describes the experience as ‘an amputation, an excision’. Its violence is that of a castration, as in the retrospective understanding of the sexual primal scene. In each, subjects take up one of two, antithetical positions. One has or lacks color; one has or lacks the penis. However, in the racial primal scene’s confluence with the sexual primal scene, the other is figured as frighteningly different not because he lacks but because he has the organ, though one which is monstrous.

While Bhabha genders the subject of this drama, Fanon himself does not explicitly mark the sex of the child who speaks of being afraid of him (though later he implicitly does by discussing as the white man’s fantasy the fear that ‘his’ women are ‘at the mercy of the Negroes’).23 The fantasy, therefore, could have a white masculine as well as a feminine enunciation, just as the beating fantasy has two gendered enunciations. Freud’s exploration of the effects of the primal scene in his analysis of the ‘Wolf Man’ implies just this possibility because in it differences besides gender figure importantly. What the Wolf Man is afraid of is the big, bad dick, symbolized by the well-endowed dream wolves with their over-grown tails (‘Infantile Neurosis’, 213, 216). The Wolf Man wants to be loved like a woman by his father, but he is afraid it means he will be castrated (221, 228). He also wants to be a gentleman like his father and, therefore, different from the maids and male estate workers he might imagine are castrated (because they too seem to have a passive, feminine attitude toward his father). Paradoxically, his very identification with his father also means he will be castrated, since he believes his mother retains his father’s penis after intercourse (210, 278–9). This fetishistic circuit of pleasure, displeasure, identification, and disidentification is condensed in the image of the
wolves, who represent both the father and the Wolf Man as at once phallic (their tails are big) and castrated (their tails are too big, obvious fakes or prostheses disguising their lack).

At stake in the Wolf Man's castration anxiety fantasies are not only his gender but also his class identity. Peter Stallybrass and Allon White make this clear when they discuss his predilection for 'debased' women like Grusha, his nursery maid, as typical for the bourgeois man of his time:

The opposition of working-class maid and upper-class male... depended upon a physical and social separation which was constitutive of desire. But it was a desire which was traversed by contradictions. On the one hand, the 'lowness' of the maid reinforced antithetically the status of the gentlemen... But on the other hand... she was a figure of comfort and power. (156)

These women represent what has to be repudiated by the middle-class child as she grows up: improper dress, manners, speech, and hygiene, all the signs of someone with no class. At the same time, they threaten the bourgeois subject with the return of the lack he has lost, which accounts for their fearful fascination.

Though Stallybrass and White discuss this as abjection, Homi Bhabha terms the similar psychic mechanism at work in the racial primal scene and stereotyping 'fetishism' (159). Fetishism also seems to characterize the gay bourgeois 'sexual colonialism' Jeffrey Weeks documents, in which 'working class' equals 'masculine' equals 'closeness to nature' - for better or worse, as with the racial 'primitive other' (121-2). Such fetishism helps reproduce race and class differences, as well as gender differences, in all their ambivalence.

The fetishistic gaze at the 'other' may be masochistic, and not just sadistic; Fanon's primal scene offers both enunciations. Race and class differences regularly figure in masochistic fantasies. Joan Rivière discusses a case that seems to anticipate Fanon, in which a (Southern) white woman fantasizes being attacked by a black man from whom she defends herself by having him make love to her so she can - eventually - turn him over to justice (a scenario remarkably like that in the many popular film versions of King Kong) (212). Silverman describes one in which a man imagines himself a Portuguese prisoner of the Aztecs who is eventually skinned alive, another in which a middle-class woman is beaten by 'rough' and 'ignorant' working class women, and yet another in which she is beaten and loved as a male 'savage' by a domineering Robinson Crusoe figure ('Masochism', 55, 60-1). Transvestite pornography often includes stories, sketches, and photos of both men and women who serve a dominatrix as a slave or maid does a mistress.24 Even the Kinks' domineering queen Lola has 'a dark brown voice', a synesthesia suggesting she is black.

What is remarkable about these fantasies is their subjects' fluid shifting not only of gender but also of racial and class identities in ways which simultaneously subvert and sustain phallic identifications complexly articulated through
differences in gender, race, and class. It is not always necessary for the masochist (whether male or female) to fantasize being a man in order to be beaten and loved 'like a woman' and thereby symbolically castrated. There are a number of ways to be divested of the phallus in our symbolic which do not center on the penis as the mark of power and privilege. Phallic divestiture by one means can even be congruent with phallic investiture by another, functioning defensively so as to distinguish the subject from the phallic Other (mother or father) whose (mis)recognition s/he solicits and shares in order to be a subject at all.

Furthermore, the fantasy of the 'other' as phallic Other is not necessarily radical, since s/he may be phallic in exactly those terms a sexist, racist, and classist symbolic legitimates, and the fantasizing subject may identify with that position of omnipotence and omniscience, rather than imagine s/he is excluded from it, as occurs in theories of camp and mimicry. Finally, even when the subject does feel excluded from that place, and his/her fetishism is an anxious response to a sense of lack, the object/others still remains only a phallic fantasy. S/he does not exist as such: s/he does not exist for the subject (who wants to be whole through him/her), and s/he is not what s/he seems to be for the subject (since s/he has desires the subject cannot know). Theorists of camp and mimicry have not concerned themselves with the subjectivity of their 'others' except as it seems to guarantee their own status as phallic Others who know what they are about. The irony in mimicry and camp is all too often at the other's expense, a defense against castration anxiety. Thus, while it is perfectly possible to imagine a white male transvestic and camp identification with the heroine in *King Kong*, for example, it would not be particularly progressive for black men, made once again the bearers of the big, bad dick that has figured so prominently in the history of race relations structured by fantasies of miscegenation and all too real lynchings.

**Conclusion**

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 functions as a white, bourgeois, and masculine fetishistic imaginary. This narcissism needs to be analyzed, its phallic impostures unveiled as such. 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. While camp may not always facilitate such recognition and acceptance, it is not essentially at odds with it. Indeed, though Zora Neale Hurston's Janie Mae Crawford says, 'You got tuh go there tub know there' (183), Gayatri Spivak points out that 'knowledge is made possible and is sustained by irreducible difference, not identity' (*In Other Worlds*, 254). The play of identification and disidentification in drag could be the very condition of autocritique.

I would argue that it does make possible self-criticism for one very fragile moment in *City of Night*, when the first-person narrator, a hustler, briefly
accepts his castration by identifying with the beautiful queen Kathy, whom he understands to be castrated, paradoxically, because she has (rather than lacks) a penis; it is what prevents her from being a whole (and phallic) woman. His self-knowledge (which promotes our self-knowledge, since we have been asked to identify with him) is revealed in his response to a scene he witnesses in New Orleans during Carnival, when Kathy directs one of the heterosexual male tourists who has come on to her to grope her crotch:


I turn away quickly from the sign. I feel gigantically sad for Kathy, for the dropped mask — sad for Jocko — for myself — sad for the man who kissed Kathy and discovered he was kissing a man.

Sad for whole rotten spectacle of the world wearing cold, cold masks.

‘Minutes later’, the narrator says, ‘my own mask began to crumble’. He tells two scores he is not what they think he is, ‘tough’, ‘the opposite from them’ (Rechy, 254). In effect, he acknowledges his virile ‘parade’ is a masquerade, a charade of having something valuable to give (the penis as phallicus) to those others who are not to pay for it, who can ‘afford’ to be castrated for him, as the Wolf Man could not for this father. He understands that like Kathy he is only a man and not what he must seem to be in the comedy of sexual relations. At that moment, he recognizes sex could be something other than an exchange of the phallicus, though he is not quite sure how. But as the rest of the novel reveals, he resumes hustling and refuses the painful knowledge of castration that nevertheless returns to haunt him as the feeling that heaven is unfairly barred to some. The ‘solution’ to anxiety about fetishistic phallic imposture proves to be more fetishism, not surprising, since the symbolic itself legislates the repudiation of lack. Disrupted by camp, the camp moment does not last; misrecognition follows upon recognition, and incredible acts, unfortunately, begin to seem credible once more.

NOTES

2. See also Blachford (1981: 209), who argues that gay macho ‘may be an attempt to show that masculine or “ordinary” men can be homosexual too ....’
3. Sometimes, the interviewees in Men in Frockess are defensive about their masculinity, as I indicated above; sometimes, they are defensive about their femininity and discuss the denigration of queers in the gay community — see, for example, Terri Frances, 110, and Rebel Rebel, 120 (in Kirk & Heath 1984).
4. The transvestic slang, ‘r.g.’, ‘real girl’) is useful for suggesting that even the ‘real thing’ needs to be written in quotation marks, since she is only a product of certain gender codes which privilege the body as essential ground of gender identity, codes which the transvestic contests — but also uses, if the impersonation is fetishistic, involving an apparent identification with femininity which is, in fact, a disidentification, through
the appeal to the body beneath the clothes as sign of the truth of gender. I discuss this double strategy later in the essay. See Butler (1990a) for a deconstructive critique of the ontology of the body.

5. See my 'The Feminine Look' and 'The Supreme Sacrifice?'


7. Annette Kuhn suggests that films with cross-dressers offer the promise of a multiplicity of gender relations but tend to renege on it ultimately by exposing the body beneath the clothes as the 'truth' of gender (56–7).


9. I have used the term 'phallic M/Other' because the place of phallic omnipotence and omniscience can be filled by the fantasy of the phallic mother or the primitive father, since neither is imagined to be subject to castration. I will suggest later in the essay that the phallic Other may appear to have the phallic by virtue of his/her class or racial difference as well as because of his/her gender, since such differences signify lack or having with respect to the power and privileges which accrue to the phallic subject. Women are not the only ones who do not exist except as a phallic fantasy in the symbolic.

10. See especially this essay for the subversiveness of masochism, but see also her 'White Skin, Brown Masks'.

11. For discussions of the literature on de Sade, see Gallop, *Intersections*, and Carter.


15. Miller, 38; Doane, 'Film and the Masquerade', 82; Russo, 217, 224; Kaufman, 294–5, 298.

16. Once again, I want to stress that this is a problem for theory, and not necessarily for real people.


18. At p. 291 she claims that playing the gender roles between women recontextualizes them and 'foregrounds' them as myths.

19. See 'A Touch of Class in the Hourglass', which features Annie Sprinkle (and other women) in corsets (Sprinkle first appears solo on page 22).

20. Both Case and Ross note that class differences may be a factor in camp, but neither elaborates on the observation or makes it as central to camp as I am suggesting it is. See Case 1988, rpt. 1989: 286, and Ross 1988, rpt. 1989: 146.

21. Beaver 1981: 113–14; Owens, 228; see also my discussion above about the implication for egalitarianism of a subjectivity free from castration anxiety, as Owens (and, he maintains, Derrida) assume homosexuality to be (219). With regard to the question of the radicality of camp, Bersani (1987: 207) points out that a distinction must be drawn between its effects on the gay couple, who may not have subversive intentions, and its effects on heterosexuals. While I believe any politics of consciousness is suspect – as I hope to demonstrate here, the effects, not the intentions, of camp are what count – Bersani's statement does at least suggest the importance of context. Britton (1978: 12) also notes the importance of context when he says that subversion is not intrinsic to a phenomenon but to its context, its reception.


23. Fanon, 157. The child's fear of the black man is described on 112.

24. For example, see *Reflections*.
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