

QUEER BODIES AND SETTLEMENTS:

The pertinence of queer theory in the fields of queer history and trans politics, disability and 'curative education', quantum physics and experimental art – an interdisciplinary and transnational account of three socio-cultural and filmic research projects

Submitted by Stefan Jack Garel to the University of Exeter as a thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Film, October 2008-11-14

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STEFAN GAREL.....

ABSTRACT

What is queer? What is *queer*? What is queer theory? Where can it go from here? This thesis sets out to explore the origins and influences of queer theory before investigating the present and the future spaces (ie, bodies and settlements) it can potentially move into. Three distinct experiments of fieldwork and ethnographic filmmaking test the truths and potentialities of queer theory when relating to queer bodies and settlements. That is to say that each chapter balances a film and its supporting text by embracing the value and urgency of practice led research.

The first chapter questions queer history and details the importance of emerging trans politics in the post-gender, leftist, avant-garde, queer activist and militant space of Bologna. Queer bodies, case one: transgender and transsexual perspectives. Settlements, case one: Bologna and Lido di Classe (Italy).

The second chapter considers the interface between disability theory and queer theory with particular attention paid to the practical theory of 'curative education'. Defined by Rudolf Steiner in 1922 and further developed by Karl König with the foundation of the Camphill movement in 1944, curative education privileges the social model over the medical model in the field of disability so that disability is in fact ability. Queer bodies, case two: learning differences and disabilities perspectives. Settlements, case two: Berlin (Germany), Chatou and La Rochelle (France), Barry and Glasallt Fawr (Wales, United Kingdom).

The third chapter uses queer perspectives to promote the relevance of quantum physics to the human body, thus involving contemporary dance, physical theatre and the arts more generally to address and redress the chiasm between science and technology on the one hand, and arts, humanities and socio-cultural sciences on the other. Queer bodies, case three: the inescapably queer reality of the physical world. Settlements, case three: multiple locations in Tuscany (Italy), and Thamesmead, London (England, United Kingdom).

This thesis brings notions of *queer* and *otherness* deceptively close to notions of the *self*. Otherness and queerness become mirrors in which our own queerness comes into view.

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To what makes it all worth while.

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Prologue

This thesis articulates my understanding of queer theory. Firstly the re-appropriation of the word *queer*, in order to affirm difference as a legitimate source of enriching exchange concerns identity and identity politics. In this sense, queer theory questions reality and objectivity. Indeed, it is increasingly clear today that a human body possessing a penis may not identify as male¹ (see Foucault 1990; Cameron 1996; Stryker and Whittle, 2006; Stryker, 2008), which emphasises the prejudice that science imposes upon its findings. This in turn renders the notion of objectivity, in terms of human perception and interpretation, as highly questionable. Thus, if reality (itself a contentious term) is assumed to rely upon elements preceding and beyond constructs of human subjectivity, that is to say facts and truths or realities that are immutable in the face of different points of view, we have a problem, or rather a realisation. From concepts of liminality the word *queer* reclaims human nature as more complex than the notions of self afforded in (western) culture. As a human individual develops and evolves, so does s/he change so that no fixed and strict definition of self can be deemed truly representative of an individual in his/her subtle originalities. Therefore queer in essence and when relating to identity is a means to access varied notions of self, outside and beyond generic labels and binaries only partly, if at all, applicable to the individual. Hence, through the analyses of particular environments, groups and individuals, as laid out and developed in this thesis, I will argue that more general realisations are at hand and that human nature and human identity is queer and not fully conforming to cultural constructions of the self. Let us nonetheless nuance this statement by reminding ourselves that queer theory is not necessarily a complete rejection of one's culture but rather "a negotiation and renegotiation" (Duggan in Goodloe, 1994) of greater lucidity.

The second sense of queer within the realms of queer theory is a political one. As the term queer now resists any strict (and thus confining) definition of self, so must we remind ourselves that the personal is still political; a political dimension grounded in the notion of resistance to inaccurate and limiting modes of identification that would assume identity to be a fixed entity. By extension, *enqueering* our gaze, our experience, our outlook is essentially a form of resistance against normative values and expectations such as hidden agendas and counter-productive bias. It is

¹ Nor does a body possessing a vagina necessarily identify as female.

worth mentioning that queer, as a political tool, is fundamentally “positional” (Halperin, 1995) and “strategic” (Moffat, 2008). Thence one could argue that certain positions are only ever temporarily queer given that they are always in relation to a particular state of affairs. This would recognise that the norm is, in spite of its oppressive nature, prone to change and evolution (whether in terms of advancement or regression) with regards to the impact and consequential effects forms of reaction may operate on it.

Accordingly, each chapter uses a queer positioning as its premise while the respective fieldwork and ethnographic-filmic research represent processes undergone in virtue of which an open-ended apprenticeship of queer in context is achieved. The first chapter sets out to assess the importance of re-reading a particular history² in order to unpick the powers of exclusion soon exacerbated by the gay liberation movements, who left anyone not discreetly homosexual – thus more easily assimilated by the status quo – behind. The debates relating to transgender and transsexual theories echo the drive of queer theory to return to an open space of identity, exchange and agency. The fieldwork is set in Bologna, a fort of resistance against the oppressive force of a catholic tradition – embedded in Italian culture – to homogenise and dictate. Within this leftist and secular environment where a transsexual and transgender corpus has gained political recognition, political power and the political profession, genders are multiple and multifaceted to the extent that many individuals escape the realms of a dominant single gender to base identity upon, consequently opening up a post-gender reality, as I will elaborate in the first chapter. Additionally, it is imperative to revisit queer theory in an ethnographic context within which to value peculiarities and understand queer theory’s reinterpretation and recreation within non-Anglo-American cultures.

The second chapter considers the breadth of queer theory revealed by the fact that the transgender and transsexual bodies are more aware of the culturally conditioned and psychosomatic process of body construction and self construction: the imaginary body (Butler, 1990: 70-71). This process is equally virulent, if unsuspected by some, in the human race at large. Therefore, I suggest that queer theory should not limit itself to the realms of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and

² That of the emergence of gay pride (initially relevant to all forms of sexual and/or gender variants) and the gay liberation movements in the United-States with their repercussions and re-appropriations in the western world, with brief but particular attention to Italy. It should be specified that this finds root in the history of Berlin in the 1920s and 1930s (Peppiat, 1996: i-ix; Stryker, 2008:i-xii)

gender queer (lgbtq) but rather embrace its relevance to any form of identification and social exclusion on the margins of the mainstream (Halperin, 1995: 62). In this venture the field of learning differences and disabilities becomes a rich ground to broaden the meaning and application of queer. Being different, unusual, misunderstood, all equate to being queer. Furthermore, disability appears as a label applied extrinsically to abilities which, while they may operate through different processes, remain valid and productive. Thus should the social model take precedence over the medical model to avoid limiting a disabled person to their condition, and to avoid repressing their individual and social merits. As we will see, the Camphill movement is a particularly rich case in point.

The third chapter attempts to communicate the queerness of our bodies as conscious, reflexive and responsive materiality. The findings of quantum physics – or the *enqueering* of the physical sciences – uncover the unpredictability of nature, the impossibility of pure objectivity in science, and the complete absence of fixity in the physical world (Gribbin, 1984; Rae, 1986; Nadeau and Kafatos, 2001). Contemporary dance in its motion towards ‘natural movement’, and art more generally, articulates the intelligence and interaction of matter with the human body through non-verbal media. In this context, the meaning of queer is at its most open and inclusive, with a highly performative film piece to materialise an *enqueering* of communication and interaction.

Thus in my understanding of queer, its relevance to every human being is of crucial and central importance. This openness must resist the tendency of movements to become institutionalised and dogmatic. In this way, it often seems useful to return to the early forms or origins of a movement in order to keep a broader scope of vision. Logically then, I came to value the works of the French philosophers Gilles Deleuze (1925-1995) and Michel Foucault (1926-1984) as convincingly queer yet less constrained by queer theory as an academic field of enquiry which did not exist as such until the 1990s, thus post-dating Foucault’s death and coinciding only with the last five years of Deleuze’s life. So what is so queer about these thinkers? Firstly, Deleuze’s (in Colebrook, 2002; Stivale, 2005; Hallward, 2006) focus on the constant state of becoming of man reflects back to the fluidity (or non-fixity) of identity promulgated in queer theory. Moreover, he insisted on the non-linearity of history to emphasise the complexity and interrelation between all elements. In this respect and by extension, his work both pre-dates and parallels the confirmation through seminal

experiments (Aspect, 1984; Gisin, 1997) of quantum physics and the interconnectedness and awareness of matter. Foucault (1972; 1990; in Halperin, 1995) is also an unavoidable figure to decipher in the roots of queer theory. His discourses on power placed an interesting value on the oppressed and their resistance. Indeed, in Foucault's mind, power is generated as much by the oppressor as by the oppressed. Through resistance, there can never be a sole direction or exertion of power. Hence, once again, these lines of thought announce already quite clearly the arguments and elements analysed in queer theory.

Before entering the body of this thesis, it may be useful to put forward some key criticism of queer theory in order to better specify the hermeneutics I believe to be harnessed upon the term *queer*. Drawing in the first instance from the work of Brad Epps (2001), "The Fetish of Fluidity", a compelling if questionable accusation emerges:

Warner... shares Butler's investment in queer theory... and Butler frets, somewhat more melancholically, about "the institutional domestication of queer thinking. For normalising the queer would be, after all, its "sad finish". Both, then, are concerned with maintaining, even championing, the queer as signifier, even if such a project entails a degaying and delesbianizing agenda... even if it also seems to spell... the "sad finish" of feminism.

Butler and Warner are aware of such a reading of their work and go to varying lengths to refute it. Many critics, however, remain skeptical. Sheila Jeffreys (1994) and Biddy Martin (1994), for example, have been at the forefront of the critique of queer theory for what they present, respectively, as the "disappearance of lesbians" and the erasure of gender. Jeffreys reproves queerness... for not challenging the gay male agenda that dominates the field", and thereby effectively makes queerness a ruse of gay maleness. (in Dean and Lane, 2001:417-418)

Stemming from a belief in lesbian feminist theory that "sex and gender are conceptually interdependent categories" (Goodloe, 1994), which opposes the queer belief that "sex and gender must be conceptually distinct" (Goodloe, 1994), Jeffreys' (1994; 2003) criticism would portray queer theory as cause for chaos in the field of identity politics. I defend the fact that queer is more of a bridge between supposedly distinct identities, which are in fact always overlapping to some extent. Therefore queer is not everything and everyone at the price of discernable identities, but rather

an engine relevant to identity in order to *enqueer* it, broaden it and free it from what is – within the institutionally imposed – disenfranchising. For example, Bruna, a transgender participant in *Tribes of the Queer* (Garel 2006), reclaims her right to marriage and motherhood, thus indicating that she values those notions, roles and responsibilities but on her own terms. In other words, she is *enqueering* marriage and motherhood whilst not assuming them to be an institutionalised code of practice that is disenfranchising to her.

Another reservation articulated by Jeffreys (1994; 2003) questions queer theory in what she perceives to be an acceptance of heterosexuality and thus of homosexuality as a natural phenomenon whereas she insists that “lesbian feminist theorists seek to dismantle heterosexuality, and one strategy is the promotion of lesbianism as a choice for women.” (Jeffreys, 1994: 469) I, in contrast, argue in the first chapter of this thesis that sexual desire is born in the realms of the pre-verbal and the pre-conscious so that, although the cultural, social and psychosomatic constructions and limitations attached to it are highly questionable and surmountable, there remains an instinctual veracity and ferocity in the human body. That is not to say that a particular sexual desire engenders a specific, unalterable and non-fabricated gender. Indeed, to speak only from subjective but concrete personal experience, my attraction to several female to male/masculine transgender and transsexual men (F2M) does not arouse heterosexuality in me at any point but rather a new or at least a different form of (homo)sexuality. In parallel to this Jeffreys also condemns the centrality of camp and drag in queer theory’s deconstruction of gender as core theoretical concepts since she perceives those performances and parodies of femininity to be fundamentally bound to male constructs. Goodloe (1994) paraphrases Jeffreys (1994) in stating that “[a] man *playing at* being a coy, submissive woman, for the benefit of other men, is hardly a vision of sophisticated gender analysis to most lesbian feminists”. In response to this I remind the reader that “coy” and “submissive” are antithetical to the nature of drag performance and the drag artist³, who holds the power to mock him-/herself, his/her audience, gender-bound behaviour and perhaps anything fitting to the show through sharp satire. The drag act in its controlled yet grotesque exaggeration of gender performance brings to light more subtle and deeply rooted truths about gender performance (Butler, 1997).

³ Interestingly, however, the qualification of coy may often apply to a drag artist when out of character. (see chapter 1)

Also, responsively, the drag-king and drag-queer circuits have had their say in redefining or re-appropriating stereotypes of masculinity to compelling effect for queer considerations (Volcano and Halberstam, 1999; Baur, 2004; Treut 2006; Moffat, 2006), removing the assumed purely male perspective on and interpretation of such questions.

In addition, it may be useful to mention that the academic parents of queer theory are, if at all arguably, Judith Butler and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick with their respective publications in 1990 of *Gender Trouble*, and *Epistemology of the Closet*. They were both identified as female at birth and have since recognised themselves as women, if ultimately a queer person first and foremost, in the case of Butler. The absence of males at the opening of the queer theory era *per se* means that even if early queer debates focussed on camp and drag – before the drag-king scene exploded in the western world as it did in the mid-90s (Volcano and Halberstam, 1999) – that is to say a male to/for male performance of gender, many lesbian and/or feminist theorists (see Butler, 1990; Sedgwick, 1990) were deconstructing those manifestations of male constructs of femininity; and this in the way that feminism has done in feminist psychoanalysis and feminist film theory (Hayward, 2006). Moreover, the key works of the queer theorists Jackie Stacey (a queer-lesbian woman) and Susan Stryker (an M2F queer-lesbian woman), to name but these two, which cover the past twenty years, also attest to the questionability of a ruse of gay maleness to be inherent to queer theory. Ultimately it would also suggest that the third wave of feminism, which challenges the white middle-class monopole of feminism, the universal female identity inferred in second wave feminism, the notions of what is good for women, and trans-phobia, has more common ground with queer theory and transgender politics (Stryker, 2008; Volcano and Dahl, 2008) than the radical lesbian feminism advocated by Jeffreys.

Martin's comments, on the other hand, seem impossible to contradict due to their very evidence. However, the derogatory tone she derives from them is highly ill-founded. She states that “[q]ueerness is riddled by what she calls ‘an enormous fear of ordinariness and normalcy’, by a desire for positions always outside and beyond, for perpetually dislocated locations.” (in Dean and Lane, 2001:418) Here again, as genders are acknowledged as multiple (in general but also in each person) and thus outside or beyond the gender binary of masculine/feminine, so do they become quasi-infinite and thus redundant. For gender as a culturally enhanced performance

is consequently permeable to a queer realisation of this kind, which renders its very meaning as insignificant. Equally, as minorities – that is to say individual persons and groups partly or completely not included, not represented by the norm – multiply, as the impossibility to wholly comply with any norm becomes apparent, minorities added to one another supplant the (imagined) majority and consequently eliminate any actual meaning from the word *normal*. Therefore, if a fear of normalcy is concomitant to queer theory, it is with good cause for no queer theorist can place any deep trust in ‘normality’ or ‘normalcy’, to reuse Martin’s term. However, a nuance should be made if we recognise that with all its dangers, the word *normal* may still possess value if it is re-appropriated in the way that the word queer has been in queer theory. I have an example to offer in suggestion. The former communist hydraulic power station, Berghain, close to the station of Ostbahnhof in Berlin, is now a vast and multi-storey nightclub. Inside, darkrooms are numerous and open to all. The first floor (above the ground floor) attracts a large gay male crowd whereas the second floor attracts a large straight crowd. Nevertheless, there are no strictly gay areas – with the exception of the first floor darkroom, if only implicitly – and no strictly straight areas. People convene in this location because of its quality and size, and because of the music it plays, so that sexual orientation is not the overwhelming factor. By being the site for both heterosexual and homosexual activity in shared or identical locations, it is above all a queer venue because of this originality of cohabitation and relative public display, through mutual respect and appreciation⁴. In other words, due to its enduring popularity, an emerging – for the time being still pertinently queer in more general cultural terms – norm is embodied, experienced and explored here. Other bars, clubs and centres more prominently attractive to gay men and/or lesbian women exist and although they can often be perceived as separatist or segregating, it is also important to sustain establishments where a certain minority can be in the majority, to normalising effects. This is also true of the young adults with learning differences and disabilities who live in the Camphill village of Glasallt Fawr (as described in the second chapter). With strong links to the local community, they nonetheless enjoy the privilege of living with other ‘disabled’ persons in an environment where it is quite normal, common, and not impeding, to have Down’s

⁴ The originality of this setting also lies in its sheer size and scale.

syndrome, Asperger's syndrome or cerebral palsy, for instance. In this sense, normal could be synonymous to a certain sense of recognition, home and well-being.

From here on, I will let each chapter, with its own re-articulation and expansion of queer theory, speak for itself.

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**Queer Bodies and Settlements
Chapter I**

Beyond Gender Propaganda

From queer to Queer

A study of queer history
and the emergence of transgender/transsexual politics in contemporary
Bologna, Italy (2004-2005)

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Becoming is superior to Being

Paul Klee (1969)

Beyond gender (propaganda) – an introduction

My first encounter with depictions of *trans* bodies occurred through a viewing of *The Adventures of Priscilla Queen of the Desert* (Elliott, 1994) in 1998. This film essentially deals with the stigma of AIDS attached to the gay community, gay & dragqueen parenting, transsexual identity, and attachment by and large by means of witty humour. However it was undoubtedly the cinema of Pedro Almodóvar, particularly his 1999 production *All About My Mother* which created an emotional involvement with the plight of the transgender. Here I mean to refer to anyone whose life, identity and practices fall outside the strict Western gender bipolarisation where masculine can/should only belong to the male and feminine can/should only belong to the female. My attraction to this film and its depiction of femininity through the transgression of gender norms drove me to incorporate this topic into my studies.

The film/research project *Tribes of the Queer* (Garel, 2006) thus finds its premise in the experiences and training gained during my Masters in Visual Anthropology at the Granada Centre for Visual Anthropology, University of Manchester. I produced a twenty minutes documentary on two transsexual male to female (M2F) sex workers (Deborah & Jeanette) in Brighton, United-Kingdom, titled *La Vie en Rose* (Garel, 2003). I had the privilege of living with Deborah during the shooting, thus gaining an insider's knowledge of the subject at hand. This filmic research was all the more enriching that I, somehow unavoidably, brought much of my prejudice to the field.

The outcome of this project fell nothing short of a revelation. As a gay man, I expected to have developed sympathy and understanding for similar experiences of finding and acknowledging one's nature. And yet, through a culturally conditioned performativity I was reproducing the same systems of exclusion against the transsexual community than those applied by our society of neo-Christian and monogamist ideologies to the gay community. My mind was still entrenched in the optic of the self AGAINST the other. It came to light during this fieldwork that the only life you have any right of authority and discipline over is your own.

Yet despite the fact that my fieldwork had granted me a practical awareness of the indigenous transsexual body within British culture, and more accurately within the environment of Brighton, my theoretical knowledge of queer theory and trans theory was still extremely limited. Nevertheless my attraction to the topic was crucially accentuated by my viewing of *Southern Comfort* (Davis, 2001). *Southern Comfort*

tells the story of Robert Eads, a female to male transsexual (F2M) living in Georgia, United States of America, an area of extreme prejudice. Robert has one simple problem: he is desperate to have his ovaries removed to complete his transition from female to male. Unfortunately, he is repeatedly refused treatment by the medical establishment due to its prejudice against F2M transsexuals. Tragically, Robert contracts an ovarian cancer and dies. I resolutely decided to embrace the cause of the transgender and transsexual from then on. Indeed, in the case of the F2M, the line between transgender and transsexual is blurred⁵ and without wishing to amalgamate these two distinct paths, I wanted to establish an interface between TG and TS.

In conjunction with this I decided to take my filmic interests further and embark on the PhD Film by Practice at the University of Exeter. Drawing from the lessons I had learnt during my Masters degree, I knew that my enthusiasm and passion for a project had to be deeply rooted. Certainly passion in my view is the only drive that can see a doctoral degree to fruition. Consequently the subject of the transgender and transsexual bodies as liminal bodies remained my preferred field of study. As we will explore in this chapter, the gender propaganda inherent to our culture were dying and even non existent in some parts of the world (Evans-Pritchard, 1940), thus proving the potency and urgency of this change in our own (Anglo-American and by extension Western) society and culture. The next thought had to be given to where to set my research.

After five years of regular visits to friends in Tuscany, with the cities of Sienna, Livorno, Arezzo and with the natural hot springs of Petriollo more specifically in mind, I was drawn to the vivid culture present amongst the Italian youths I had encountered and befriended over the years. Their lifestyle and keen intellectual activity was both refreshing and charming. They also seemed to be people of the outdoors. By this naïve denomination I simply mean that music, juggling, fire spitting, dancing and by and large the notion of spontaneous outdoor performance held a key part in the social lives of my Italian peers.

⁵ The current state of gender reassignment surgery offers limited possibilities for the F2M body and no fully functioning penis is yet available. Male hormone treatment has been shown to provoke considerable increase in the size of the clitoris, which can thus become a substitute or an alternative to the penis (Davis 2001/Cameron 1996). Hence the F2M transgender and the F2M transsexual may share similar physiological traits albeit different or opposed mindsets.

My academic background was in social and cultural studies, in social and visual anthropology. Hence the link between Italy and the transsexual body struck me both as resourceful and stimulating within socio-cultural studies. Indeed, if our neo-Christian culture is responsible for the gender norms we are brought up into, what better place to put this under scrutiny than in the cradle of Western Christianity itself: Italy, home of the Vatican in the capital city of Rome. Thus my study would aim to bring the extreme and otherwise liminal bodies into the debate. Who could be better placed than them to reveal the flaws and residues of fascism still present in Western society today?

With this in mind, I chose the city of Bologna to set my research in, relying on its reputation as the San Francisco of Italy, that is to say an open-minded haven with a strong leftist political tradition, breaking free from the morals and principles of the Vatican and the Catholic Church. Furthermore Bologna is home to the oldest University in Europe and its high student population also figured as a dynamic element in and of the city. Influenced by the city's reputation, I felt the heart of Italy's take on queer theory resided in Bologna.

Having set the parameters of research within a specific city, the importance of the citybody came to my attention. Was I to discover a ghettoised transgender/transsexual community or rather an *open* city where boundaries were fluid? Moreover, the question of citybody involved a close analysis of the cityscape. Did the public statues, carvings, architecture and the material history of the city not create an interface between past genders and current ones? Were Bologna's emerging post-gender politics and reality not re-appropriating traditional and archetypal notions of gender?

The ultimate concern in the shaping of this project lied in one crucial drive: giving one's research relevance to current issues, and pertinence within the novelty and originality of its focus. In this framework, I realised through research that the boundaries of trans theory had moved beyond mere matters of identity and medical progress. It was time to abandon the notions of pathos and disorder associated with the transgender and transsexual statuses. A new awareness was being raised to legitimate the transgender and transsexual bodies as natural constituents of human biology and human nature. The political voice and agenda of the transgender and transsexual bodies now had to be heard and considered carefully in a society and a system, even a language, that have not accepted them; certainly not on their own

terms. It was still a question of man *or* woman, of masculine *or* feminine, thus ignoring a third constituent which was not an *in-between* but a distinct identity, an identity demanding to stand and be counted whether it fitted any pre-established definition or not. Legal and social issues around marriage, adoption and the gender reassignment surgery stemmed from this activism.

Before we continue, we should clarify the fact that a clear distinction exists between the transgender body and the transsexual body. For instance the pre-op transsexual is often at antipodes with the established transgender. Many feminist theorists and trans theorists challenged the values placed by a patriarchal system on the phallus. The notion of *woman*, backed by psycho-analytical assumptions, was defined (by *man*) as lack of phallus. Yet is the male to female transgender body, as exemplified by the character of Dil in *The Crying Game* (Jordan, 1992), not proof enough that a woman is defined by and exists through infinitely more varied and complex elements than the sexual lack of phallus? In fact 'lack of' supposes an amputation, the taking away of the faculties provided by this phallus. Contradictorily, the vagina has specific and exclusive faculties that the penis lacks. Moreover, it is worth reminding ourselves of the authoritarian muscular capacity of the vagina, the phallic nature of the clitoris and the power of selection inherent to the ovule during conception. On these simple but nevertheless essential grounds, the embodiment of gender's fluidity begs the question: what can the transgender and transsexual bodies tell us about human nature and the human body? Is gender reassignment surgery a surrender to patriarchal constructs of gender as indissociable from sex?

In short, the basis of my project topic had evolved from a feeling to a certainty: a study of the transgressive body (and here the trans and post-gender bodies) was a gateway to proving how unfounded on natural facts, thus making them artificial and constructed, our gender definitions, norms, roles and relations actually are.

We will now endeavour to contextualise the history of the queer body and the emergence of queer theory, or the theorization of the queer body, in order to set the theoretical background of *Tribes of the Queer*.

What is queer?

In our exploration of queer bodies and queer theory, the first question to address is: what is *queer*?

Queer is by definition whatever is at odds with the normal, the legitimate, the dominant. There is nothing in particular to which it necessarily refers. It is an identity without an essence (Halperin, 1995:62)

Accordingly the queer body is a liminal body, a body that does not fit or comply with the dominant order. However, queer was traditionally a term used to designate male homosexuals in the English language. Since gender is synonymous to sex in the hetero-normative discourse, the masculine to feminine transgender were seen as 'men' and thus, failing any other adequate modes of classification, they were also labelled with the term queer. In a Judeo-Christian moral, legal and social order, queer was the unnatural species systematically shunned as a source of disgust. Christian religion could not justify a sexual act that had no purpose of reproduction. Arbitrary censorship and prohibition created a dreaded and repugnant sense of otherness. This process of vilification shares many similarities with those inflicted on other oppressed communities, such as the peoples of Africa under European colonial regimes. As the socio-cultural theorist Hall (1995) remarks, "[t]hey had the power to make us see and experience ourselves as *Other*" (in Sinfield, 1995:43). *Victims of oppression* is the common denominator. In fact in a culture based on the male/masculine or female/feminine gender binary, a male homosexual could only be rationalised of as an effeminate male. Within this context, any deviant sexuality or self-representation was one and the same queer body, regardless of what the inner differences of this minority might be. There were bodies that fit, and bodies that didn't.

So when did gay replace queer?

So when and why did the word *gay* come to replace the word *queer*? Does it describe a same people and how has this description evolved?

In simple terms, the derogatory term *queer* was officially superseded by *gay*⁶ with the birth of gaypride, although the first gay pride was not what we have come to know it as today. Queers had to fight for their right (to party essentially, that is to say to be out and proud). In 1969, despite the rise of the hippy movements' sexual

⁶ The Gay Liberation Front, a politicised group fighting to obtain legal recognition and equality for the gay community and gay identity described themselves as gay. Gay was chosen as it stands for "Good As You". Thus is it pertinent to point out that the famous London gay nightclub G.A.Y insists on the historical roots and fashioning of the term.

liberation and feminism, any queer/gay establishment in the United States still had to bribe the local police authorities to be tolerated and routine police raids were part of the deal. However, a significant event was to change this forever.

On 26 June 1969, Judy Garland died. Judy Garland was a queer/gay icon, as the following article explains:

*In more closeted times, gays used the term [friend of Dorothy](#) to refer to themselves in mixed company, in homage to Garland's role as Dorothy in *The Wizard of Oz* (Fleming 1939). Judy Garland was hugely popular among gays during her lifetime. Her concerts were major gay meeting places, and in her later years, she made money singing at gay piano bars. Garland's father was gay, as were her studio-executive mentors and two of her five husbands. She had many gay friends and went to parties where she joked that she was the only woman present. But her appeal was based on more than her own acceptance of gays.*

Both onscreen and off, Garland projected a unique combination of vulnerability and strength. She sang of intense loneliness, followed by songs describing delirious love [and self assurance]. She had legendary stage fright but declared her greatest happiness came from performing. These conflicts mirrored the lives of oppressed, closeted gay men in the 1950s and 1960s. They identified with the paradox and duplicity in Garland's life. Severe laws and prejudice against homosexuality forced gays to lead double lives and hide their true selves.

*As Dorothy, Judy Garland portrayed a misunderstood kid from a small town who has an amazing adventure in a Technicolor world. The central message of *The Wizard of Oz* is that you will find what you're looking for inside yourself. That message resonated with gays of the era who yearned to come out into a colourful world and live what was inside of them⁷.*

On 26 June 1969, grief stricken gay and dragqueen customers of the gay bar, Stonewall, in New York opposed the routine police raid and provoked a riot. This event is commemorated and celebrated annually all over the world with the gaypride festivities. It was indeed the first time⁸ that queers resisted so adamantly discriminatory oppression and challenged the dominant system's right to humiliate them (embodied by the local police authorities). The derogatory term queer was progressively and officially replaced by gay, to imply the acronym of 'good as you'. Admittedly gay also means joyful, happy and by extension proud (to be gay in this

⁷ <http://ask.yahoo.com/20030909.html> [27.06.2006]

⁸ To a lesser extent, similar reactions and retaliations had occurred elsewhere to predate the Stonewall riots but they did not achieve the same lasting impact. Details on these can be found in Susan Stryker's (2008) publication *Transgender History*, and it is worth mentioning them here as a reference for the reader. This quote is an excerpt from her publication: "The *Stonewall Riots* have been mythologized as the origin of the gay liberation movement, and there is a great deal of truth in that characterization, but as we have seen, gay, transgender, and gender-variant people had been engaging in violent protest and direct actions against social oppression for at least a decade by that time. Stonewall stands out as the biggest and most consequential example of a kind of event that was becoming increasingly common rather than as a unique occurrence." (Stryker, 2008:82).

instance)⁹. *Gay* separated itself from the clinical denomination *homosexual* and the derogatory label *queer*. This historical turning point in queer history soon caught on encouraging the proliferation of queer activism all over the Western-Christian world. In show business at least, homosexuality and the stereotypical androgyny associated with it became subverted and thus fashionable. Stars such as David Bowie and Grace Jones were the embodiment of transgenderism for the 1970s.

The queer community bound together by their same exclusion from society saw homosexuals, bisexuals, transgender, transsexuals and gender queer mingle easily and stand as one. Yet paradoxically the progressive recognition and integration of the queer body soon meant that distinctions had to be made and imposed by society. Gay men and lesbian women were discernable as men and women. They upset the traditional gender norms but they did not fundamentally threaten the established gender organisation. The transgender, transsexuals and gender queer however had no place in this organisation. Accepting them as they were would simply destroy the sense and logic inherent to Western gender bipolarisation. A (discrete) gay man was still a man after all and a (discrete) lesbian woman was still a woman. Homosexuality mainly concerned sexuality whereas transgenderism concerned gender directly. In a desperate determination to be recognised and accepted into society, gay and lesbian movements knew that counting their once queer comrades amongst their ranks would set them back decades. The general gay consensus was: “we don’t have a chance of gaining any ground if we bring the freak show to town”. Thus did gay and lesbian identity separate itself from the transgender, transsexuals and gender queer in a bid to gain social and legal ground. That is to say that gay and lesbian activism reproduced the same systems of exclusion it had set out to abolish. Society was assimilating homosexuals on its own terms.

These ever-growing currents of self-definition and the discrimination they engendered became sharper with the years. Hemmings (2002) gives us a poignant example of how far things went in the gay, lesbian and bisexual history of North America when “[s]everal gay men resigned from the 1990 Lesbian & Gay Pride Committee following its decision to exclude bisexuals” (:54). In other words, the process of selection in the gay community had reached disconcerting peaks. Even

⁹ A more recent evolution of the word in British society now shows a derogatory meaning attached to the word *gay*, best translated as *lame*.

bisexuals did not suit strict enough a definition and sufficiently clear boundaries. Queer theory arose as a reaction to the perverse effects of integration: assimilation. But which shift in thought gave rise to queer theory?

Sodome et Gomorrhe (Proust, 1988) takes early queer considerations back to the early 1920s where, drawing on the theory of evolution, Marcel Proust suggests that human nature has obviously kept trace of its hermaphrodite past revealed by the hermaphrodite flower's reproduction process, thus explaining the natural and beautiful impulse of homosexual desire as well as blurred gender boundaries. Furthermore the writings of novelist and playwright Jean Genet from the 1940s to his death in the 1980s, and perhaps more importantly the separate yet cross-fertile academic works of philosophers Gilles Deleuze¹⁰ and Michel Foucault from the 1960s to the 1980s lay the foundations for queer theory. As Halperin (1995) relates, "Foucault believed that a progressive politics needed, not a vision of what should be, but a sense of what was intolerable." (:54). This approach favours a specific target and a wide spectrum of and for inclusion since any oppressed group is made queer by this very oppression. Foucault realised that power relations were actually above systems of oppression so that power was created as much by the oppressor as by the oppressed. Oppression was counteracted by resistance so that there could effectively be no sole force. The internal generation of power empowered both sides. Similarly to Genet, the idea of resistance thus became what Foucault sought and valued. The mechanisms of resistance were at the heart of Foucault's theorizing on power relations. In his words, "[t]o resist is not simply a negation but a creative process". (Foucault in Halperin, 1995:60) Resistance could now be appreciated as a resourceful and expandable power.

The valorisation of resistance opened the way for queer bodies – bodies that don't fit – to access more accurate definitions of self. However and more importantly, this resistance had to rise against tight boundaries between identities and allow for hybrid identities to emerge: masculinity, femininity, sexuality and genders could and were thriving within one same person and one same body: the androgen, whether transgender, transsexual or merely gender queer, that is to say non-gender specific, gender vague. Nevertheless, although the fields of performance and show business embraced androgyny as a fashionable and marketable notion, the transgender,

¹⁰ The queer richness of Deleuze's work is related more precisely in the second chapter.

transsexuals and gender queer were still ignored by slow changes in the law for the benefit of gay and lesbian citizens.

So when did queer separate itself from gay?

In response to this rejection, the word queer began to separate itself quite substantially from the word gay. But to what effect was this undertaken and why? What does this *queer* share with its predecessor 'queer' and what sets them apart so significantly? Let us first rely on a definition put forward by Halperin (1995) who specifies that "[t]hose who knowingly occupy ... a marginal location, who assume a de-essentialised identity that is purely positional in character, are properly speaking not gay but queer." (:4) Many members of the gay and lesbian community did not match the idea society had of them. The ideal portrait of homosexuality did not reflect reality. The same gender norms and binaries were excluding any behaviour and lifestyle that did not conform and confirm them.

It is widely accepted today in academic circles that queer theory, and certainly trans theory, did not come into firmer ground until the late 1980s and early 1990s. Alongside the queer canon *Epistemology of the closet* (Sedgwick, 1990), the publication of *Gender Trouble* (Butler, 1990) marked the advent of queer theory with the analysis of the *unspeakable* heterosexual melancholy. This denial of one's spontaneous homosexual desire and the subconscious melancholy this leads to was *unspeakable* since "heterosexual melancholy is culturally instituted and maintained at the price of stable gender identities related through oppositional desires." (Butler, 1990:70) The restriction of natural impulses is nurtured by a strict gender binary with fixed codes of practice and interaction. Drawing on this discovery, Butler identified the repercussions of heterosexual melancholy in which "some parts of the body become conceivable foci of pleasure precisely because they correspond to a normative ideal of gender-specific body." (:70) In other words, the cultural construction of our body perception creates a gender specific body which numbs certain areas and privileges others in order to abide by given gender norms. Hence the imaginary, or more rightly the psycho-somatic effect, has a determining role in body conception and definition with relation to our fantasised sexuality and sexual desire.

With this finding alone, Butler opened up the field of queer theory to the up until then liminal bodies of the gay and lesbian minority: the bisexuals, transgender,

transsexuals and gender queer who were on the margins of the margin. As Butler notes, the transsexual body is more aware of the imaginary dimension of physical pleasure due to its own experience of re-creation (:71). In effect the trans body is living proof of the fluidity of gender. An M2F transgender, refusing to surrender to the dictatorship of the phallus, embodies and becomes female/feminin regardless of her sex. Sex is divorced from gender and for an increasing number of transgender, it is not necessarily about becoming a woman. It is about becoming oneself, outside of gender binaries. As we will develop in this chapter, recent currents of thought and emerging alternative lifestyles are finally pointing towards a post-gender reality, where one does not have to exist as either man or woman. In fact, there is no sense in being anything but oneself, a person.

Capitalising on the existence and potential of this reality, Butler's theorising of the queer body assigned the greater queerness to be that of the trans body. Yet this greater queerness was now valued as closer to human nature than the culturally constructed marriage of male/female sex to masculine/feminine gender specificities respectively. As a result, the signification of the word queer acquired a new dimension. Queer theory was cautious to reassess the implications of this word in order to re-appropriate it effectively. As Dyer (2002) describes it,

Queer theory and politics have sought to reclaim the word queer, not so much to cleanse it of its negative associations as to challenge the assumptions that these associations are in fact negative – thus immorality may be a challenge to repressive morality, deviance a rejection of the straight and thus narrow, and what is considered sordid and disgusting may in fact be exiting, risky, a life lived to the full on the edge. (:6-7)

Moreover, queer theory was a reaction to the post-Stonewall integration of homosexuals which saw their division from and exclusion of any visible transgressive bodies. As studied in the field of cognitive psychology, human nature has a tendency to reproduce patterns of behaviour incurred during childhood. Thus an abused child will often reproduce the patterns of abuse on his/her own children. This may go a long way to explain how gay and lesbian integration led to the exclusion of bisexuals, transgender, transsexuals and gender queer. How do former allies become enemies? To avoid repeating this pattern, queer politics must seek to keep the redefining of the norm from being assimilation to the norm.

What is/was the norm?

In fact where does this norm come from and can it be transformed? The recent and contemporary overarching norm in Western society is bred and supported by a surprising yet logical correlation between religion and (pseudo)science. Christianity and psychoanalysis share patriarchal constructs of hierarchy and gender norms. The award winning writer Ian McEwan (1997) vindicates this quite unabashedly:

psychoanalysis-fabulation run riot. Using the highest methods of story telling and all the arts of priesthood, Freud has stacked his claim on the veracity, though not the falsifiability, of science. (McEwan, 1997:50)

Thus is psychoanalysis an unverifiable science. And relying on the principles of an institution which claims to hold the truth on such premise is kin to blind faith. Within the realms of queer theory, psychoanalysis is anti-queer for one simple reason outlined by Shaviro (1993):

Freud and Lacan internalize the norm as a fundamental principle of human psychic functioning, as unattainable as it is ineluctable, whereas Proust, Foucault, and Deleuze and Guattari recognize it for what it is: purely formal, purely extrinsic, and hence purely oppressive. (:74)

After all, in Freudian terms, is the homosexual body not an example of an unresolved Oedipus (or Elektra) complex? Does this not connote inferiority and failure? Furthermore this would assume that homosexuality can only be read as a 'failed' heterosexuality.

Therefore and quite paradoxically the use of an unfalsifiable hypothesis as undisputable theory in Western neo-Christian culture can be explained by a simple psychological process: subjective and arbitrary reiterations of such norms support the dominant authority's argument. But what does this systematic urge to justify itself reflect about the dominant order and manner? One could suggest this proves that it knows or at least suspects, and hence fears its limitations and fragility. Bhabba and Butler (1995) draw parallels between the colonised body's resistance to colonial discourse and the drag artist's resistance to fixed gender norms: "*[t]he subtle imperfection of subaltern imitation of colonial discourse, or in the drag artist's mimicking of gender norms, plays back the dominant manner in a way that discloses the precariousness of its authority.*" (:33)

As we will explore, gender being a socio-cultural performance, the satirical performance of stereotypical, hetero-normative gender norms crystallises quite

clearly the artefact of gender. In her study of the oppressive nature of norms, Butler exemplifies in *Gender trouble* how gender norms are enforced on a subconscious level into our definitions of self and body with culture as its vehicle. Breaking away from normalising and homogenising cultural norms is essential to the queer thinker. In order to consolidate this endeavour, Butler explores the forces of performativity.

What is performativity?

But what does the word performativity refer to? In the words of Sonser Breen and Blumenfeld (2005) it is “the reiteration of norms which proceed, constrain and exceed the performer.” (:29) That is to say that the performer is conditioned by culture. By performer here we are referring to the social performance inherent to man since man, who comes into being and is defined through social interaction, is thence a “performing animal” (Turner, 1986:570). This awareness provides an invaluable tool to extrapolate oneself from and thus reflect on the normalising forces of society in order to find the true self: the androgen.

In *Excitable speech*, Butler (1997) elaborates on the idea that gender is not so much what one is as what one acts out, reproduces, adapts and ultimately performs. This evolving and personalised role is, culturally speaking, designated by the given and specific associations with one’s sex. Consequently, in his/her performance, the drag artist brings gender performativity from the subconscious to the conscious. Indeed, the drag artist recycles all gender clichés to better mock them, thus bring them to light. An essential component of the drag show is quick witted discourse. And discourse is the most prominent bearer of performativity since man is brought into an ever-evolving yet pre-established language s/he will rely on to structure its brain and perception. The performative essence of discourse thus ties in with the actions it expresses and relates to. Butler (1997) gives us an insight into a meaning of performativity in queer politics:

[C]oming out and acting out are part of the cultural and political meaning of what it is to be homosexual; speaking one’s desire, the public display of desire, is essential to the desire itself, the desire cannot be sustained without such speaking and display, and the discursive practice of homosexuality is indissociable from homosexuality itself. (:107)

Although this quote is enlightening when considering the meaning and implications of performativity, it resonates as yet another confining concept of

exclusive labelling and (self)categorising. Admittedly, the coming out process of any liminal body – forcing its way into a system, or boycotting a system by valorising its queer positioning – fuels self-assured experimentation and legitimisation. Nevertheless, the unspeakable desire, by definition, predates the discursive practice of one's identity and/or sexuality. The unspeakable desire is generated by an undeniable instinct of attraction which, while it is invigorated and empowered by the coming out and acting out, is neither engendered nor uncovered by these. Therefore, if we may concede that coming out and acting out sustain and nurture the desire, the desire comes into existence and one's awareness before that. Moreover, it is the virulence of the early forms of this desire that instigates the coming out and acting out performance. In this case, homosexuality can persist outside Butler's narrow conceptualisation of self-identification.¹¹

Thus we can begin to assume the logical evolution of the unspeakable desire. As we have shown, since its existence is not entirely dependent on the performative attributes of discourse, it has the potential to surpass the imposed categorisation operated by and through language. This quest for queer purity, as it were, takes us outside of language – at least the conscious, clearly enunciable language – and thus outside of gender. We will refer to this journey beyond gender as post-gender. Further still, as we have elucidated the concreteness of this hypothesis, we are now venturing into the post-gender reality and the fruit it bears.

Towards a post-gender reality

The overarching lesson that can be found in queer theory engages with man's natural androgyny calling for an education system designed abidingly. A full-filling future lies in an attempt to start afresh on stronger ground, that of equality in diversity: the post-gender reality. Examples to support this hypothesis are numerous. Sinfield (1998) gives us a pertinent case in point when bringing the issue of sadomasochist practices to the field of queer theory:

Some male and female SMers, transsexuals and bisexuals may have more in common with each other – as SMers, transsexuals and bisexuals respectively – than with other male and female gays respectively. If this is the case, it will tend to

¹¹ We should specify here that homosexuality, although more specific to dragqueens in the transgender milieu, is often an experience the transgender and transsexuals can relate to, whether as a shared experience or a similar (coming out) journey.

undermine the dominant pattern – shared by gays and straights – whereby the gender of one's partner (same/different) is the overwhelming factor (:10-11)

This post-gender conceptualisation of social life and interaction in order to come into being must rid itself of the rotten core: obsessive and compulsive rigorous self-definition. The propagation of this aspiration provides Sinfield (1998) with a compelling suggestion: « [w]e may now be entering the period of the post-gay – a period when it will not seem so necessary to define, and hence to limit, our sexualities. » (:14)

A striking projection of this idea is articulated in the feature film *The Crying Game* (Jordan, 1992). An IRA terrorist, Fergus, falls in love with Dil. But who is Dil? At first glance she is a woman. However, when shown naked we realise she is a woman with a boy's chest and a penis. Yet she is neither a transvestite nor a dragqueen. It would also seem inadequate to refer to her as a transgender insofar as she does not appear to have made any alterations to her appearances and body. What of her wearing makeup and dressing in women's clothes? Are these distinctions not a matter of taste rather than gender performance? Dil does not feel the need to explain or define herself to Fergus assuming he knows who and what she is. Unfortunately, Fergus is taken by surprise and his discovery precipitates him into a state of shock. Yet the romance between Fergus and Dil is as untameable as it is impossible. This realism is touching and disturbing simultaneously. Fergus cannot love a man and because of his Christian beliefs and the cultural conditioning thereof whereby the phallus or lack of phallus define a man or woman, his love for Dil is nonsensical. This notwithstanding, attraction is perhaps one of man's few remaining uncontrollable instincts. Albeit one question remains: had Fergus known at the outset about Dil's colours, would his attraction have been able to or been left to materialise?

The Crying Game is an ode to the queer body, which can also be arguably read as a post-gender body if we consider the person of Jaye Davidson (in the role of Dil). Davidson seems oblivious to gender norms, as this interview reveals:

Kara Young: *Do you intentionally try to look like a girl?*

Jaye Davidson: *No, I don't, actually.*

KY: *Because when I first met you, half the time I was with you I'd say "she" and half the time I'd say "he." And you'd never say, "I'm a bloke!"*

JD: *I don't really care what other people think. I do own some women's clothes, but not like dresses or whatever; I just buy clothes that I like. Doesn't matter if they're a man's or a woman's. I went to the Ritz a couple of weeks ago, in London, where men*

have got to wear suits and ties. I'm sitting there in a whole suit, and they were still calling me "Madame." [KY laughs] I just thought, Whatever.
(Davidson in Young, 1994 -
http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m1285/is_n11_v24/ai_16423098)

With the release of *The Crying Game*, queer theory was speaking and appealing to mass audiences. Additionally a queer body was reclaiming its right to be authentic and happy in its given body. Fergus's attraction and enduring love for Dil goes a long way to show that penis, or not, Dil is the woman of his dreams. She has crossed over from the subconscious realms of repression, the id according to Freud, to the conscious domain of the undeniable.

To remain a moment longer in cinema, *Gattaca* (Niccol, 1997) also relates quite compellingly to queer theory. The story is set in the future in a time when doctors adjust foetuses' DNA in order to make them genetically-enhanced, perfect. Vincent is one of the last 'natural' born babies. In a system that discriminates against genes, Vincent can never become an astronaut. The plot follows his relentless journey of transformation in order to defeat the most refined system of detection. As Jackie Stacey (2005) has pointed out, a queer reading of *Gattaca* renders it as a vivid homage to and a fable of the trans experience.

Reservations

Despite a widespread embrace of queer theory and the work of its leading figure, Judith Butler, points of contention have emerged regarding the recent legalisation of gay and lesbian marriage, albeit its being labelled by different non-religious denominations in some Western countries such as civil partnership in the United Kingdom or PACS¹² in France. Butler warns against the perverse effects of this apparent advancement in gay and lesbian activism. In her view, marriage negates the morals queer movements have fought so hard to legitimate. Butler (2005) summarises this opinion in four key points:

1) *[T]he pro-marriage agenda prescribes long-term monogamous pairs when many people in the lesbian, gay, bisexual community have sought to establish other forms of sexual intimacy and alliance.* (in Sonser Breen & Blumenfeld 2005:22)

My encounter with both a sample of the British and Italian trans corpus respectively suggests that by getting married they would also belong in the vanguard of the redefinition of marriage and thereby of sexual politics.

¹² *Pacte Civil de Solidarité* – Civil Pact of Solidarity

2) *[I]t breaks alliance with single people, with straight people outside of marriage, with single mothers or fathers, and with alternative forms of kinship which have their own dignity and importance. (:22)*

This comment seems somewhat exclusive. Perhaps some gay couples favour a more traditional commitment without however equating such a wish with scorn for any other dissimilar lifestyle.

3) *It seems to me to be a move away from AIDS, and so a move by which we seek to produce a public picture of ourselves as religious or state-sanctioned set of upstanding couples rather than as a community still afflicted by an epidemic for which adequate research and medical resources are rarely available. (:22)*

Although a little extreme in tone, the parallel drawn by Butler here is clear: how can the queer body hand over such authority on its life and decisions to an institution which is by and large turning a blind eye on the fatality of AIDS, in some despicable hope that it will eventually disappear only taking queer bodies – bodies that challenge the patriarchal order, bodies that pinpoint the absurdity of current Western ethics for social organisation and valorisation – away with it.

4) *I object to the notion that having marital status is important for health benefits, since what we are saying with this argument is that those who are outside the traditional couple form are not worthy of health benefits. This seems to me, once again, to demonise individuals who engage in multiple partners or who live in non-traditional alliances... we leave the most vulnerable people behind in this current effort to make ourselves over as married couples. (:22)*

I can only agree with Butler if better health benefits are deemed reason enough to engage in marriage. Would that not equate to saying “yes, I agree. I deserve higher health benefits if I buy into your ethics on relationships”. Yet with recent changes in American and European law regarding the equality of registered partnerships in legal, fiscal and administrative terms, does marriage really signify a new process of separation and discrimination? In fact I would nuance Butler’s argument by pointing to the fact that gay and lesbian marriage cancels the issue surrounding the transgender and transsexuals’ right to marry either man, woman, or trans¹³. Additionally the rite of marriage can also represent commitment, the celebration of a relationship. Access to marriage for anyone outside the Christian gender norms also emphasises the worth and genuine nature of a relationship,

¹³ The status of intersex or hermaphrodite is not explored in this chapter. Nevertheless, its very nature exposes the absurdity of a system reliant on hetero-normative definitions of marriage.

implying sincerity and stability. Ultimately it also favours the prospects of a home with regards to adoption.

However, despite these reasons, I must agree with Butler in that this apparent advancement is perhaps no more than another form of acceptance and therefore assimilation whereby the terms of marriage and family ideals do not fundamentally change. Marriage represents a certain unnatural obligation of loyalty to one partner 'for life', as it were. Furthermore its founding principle lies in the establishment of the right to belong to and possess another person. This offshoot of capitalism promotes power relations and a perverse sense of ownership over a human life. No good intentions can excuse a concept so synonymous to slavery. Moreover, it reaffirms the supposed advantages specific to the nuclear family when queer politics are still at pains to gain recognition for gay parenting and open family units . As for trans parenting, one thing is certain: any surrender or modification of queer values in exchange for hetero-normative family systems is condemning any progress for the trans who wish to be parents.

In passing, it is of the utmost importance to consider the now concrete possibility offered by the post-gender reality: F2Ms within the era of the post-gender can find a balance favourable to conceiving children, not as men but as F2Ms where the female and perhaps also the feminine attributes required are incorporated and thus recreated on F2M terms¹⁴.

Coming back to queer theory's opposition to the nuclear family as the worthiest environment for child rearing, let us learn from the findings of anthropology. Drawing on the example of the egalitarian social organisation and politics of the Nuer, a tribe of South East Sudan (Evans-Pritchard, 1940), a new born child is not bound to its biological parents and the community share responsibility. Ties only remain if they are genuine for the simple reason that the Nuer system does not function around a nuclear family structure. Surprisingly, this organisation invests its youth with a strong and spontaneous sense of sociability and freedom. What could be better? What is the Western world waiting for?

The final point of contention in the field of queer theory I wish to address here lies in the criticism of transsexualism by the transgender and gender queer. Gender

¹⁴ Media coverage of Matt Rice's, or more recently Thomas Beatie's successful pregnancies confirm this emerging possibility.
(http://www.sfbg.com/entry.php?entry_id=6105&volume_id=317&issue_id=373&volume_num=42&issue_num=28 and http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/us_and_americas/article4265368.ece)

dysphoria has been linked to psychoanalysis and the notion of man and woman being defined as the have and have-not, the phallus and lack of phallus, as aforementioned. This attribution of gender roles to match clear sexual distinctions has been challenged affirming that gender reassignment surgery is the price a trans has to pay for current gender organisation. Room urgently needs to be made for other genders and other experiences. For many trans militants, gender reassignment surgery is little more than a surrender to the rule of narrow patriarchal definitions and distortions of body and identity. Nevertheless, different bodies and senses of identity depend on and require different needs. As Jeanette explains in *La Vie en Rose* (Garel, 2003) referring to her relationship with her penis as a child: “I used to wear knickers in the bath. I didn’t want to look at it. It didn’t belong to me.” Ultimately as Butler has specified:

transsexuality¹⁵ can be very complicated. It is not always about becoming heterosexual, and it is not always about becoming another gender. Kate Bornstein says it is about becoming itself. (in Sonser Breen & Blumenfeld 2005:17)

Why documentary? Issues and debates.

I would now like to address the reasons for choosing the documentary approach with regards to my fieldwork and film project. Documentary is just one way amongst many others of telling a story. And within documentary there are many ramifications that each follows a different code of ethics and varying procedures all interlinked and overlapping within the audio-visual field in general (cinema, news report, factual documentary, high-art, low-art film...). These boundaries are blurred.

This documentary project was initially set to follow the more ethnographic approach with no such pretence nevertheless. I hold dear the idea of respect for the film subjects and participants. However, inevitably and often due to time constraints, the documentary filmmaker must acknowledge his/her intrusiveness and act on it. Moreover, I have come to value the artistic responsibility of a story teller. For what is any filmmaker but a story teller, regardless of the means? Recognizing the undeniable and more importantly the unavoidable subjective nature of filmmaking is to value it and use it as an asset, as opposed to the mistake visual anthropology (at least its academic institution in the UK: Granada Centre for Visual Anthropology,

¹⁵ Unlike Butler, I feel a distinction should be made between transsexuality and transsexualism. Indeed, (trans)sexuality has come to infer notions of sexual preference as opposed to notions of identity, better signified by the widely used term *transsexualism*.

Manchester) sees it as. I did not venture into this project with claims of producing a *fly-on-the-wall* type documentary, that is to say an *authentic* portrayal of a given life or event. What is authentic however is being in Bologna, coming into contact and bonding with people there, first hand experience of the events witnessed and shared (participant-observation). What is real is the research and interest in the subject. Admittedly, the film product can only be a depiction of the filmmaker's perception of it all. Subjective filming will reflect the subjective choices of shots, interviews, protagonists and so on. On the other hand participants are improvising with only a vague guideline, if at all. They are speaking their minds or what they want the camera to hear. It is *actual* insofar as their performance for the camera is very much the fruit of their own work and thoughts. The documentary filmmaker's role is (supposedly and ever arguably) minor in determining their discourse and responses.

The filmic dimension of my research was not so much geared towards the final film product as it was towards my experience of fieldwork as a filmmaker, using the audio-visual medium as a tool of research, and more rightly as a re-conceptualisation of research (Grimshaw, 2001:viii). The documentary characteristics of the process I underwent did not rule out a certain sensitivity to the aesthetics of my surroundings and of my filmic work within them. Indeed, I feel a focus on action and factual documentary should not rule out the aesthetics of film as an art form. What is at stake is the knowledge and experience acquired while preparing for and shooting this kind of film. To be expressed, this experience and the knowledge it brings depend on an aesthetic tonality in the filmic material. Foucault's words translate quite accurately this close connection:

This transformation of one's self by one's own knowledge is, I think, something rather close to the aesthetic experience. Why should a painter work if he is not transformed by his own painting? (Foucault in Minh-ha, 1991:226)

And according to Richter (1966), documentary is indeed an art form:

With the documentary approach the film gets back to its fundamentals... The documentary film is an original art form. It has come to grips with facts – on its own original level. (in Minh-ha, 1991:33)

Visual Anthropology, although in crisis since the early 1990s (see Minh-ha, 1991, as a key instigator of this necessary crisis), still hangs on to the idea that the main virtues of ethnographic and anthropological documentaries are their unaltered or minimally altered depiction of facts and thus *reality*. But what is *real*? The fact that

the documentary filmmaker is actually there and that this is what the participants actually said. Admittedly film can only be a construction to varying degrees. So documentary is only a method and more rightly a medium to capture material with. But as Minh-ha compellingly describes, my passion for documentary is to do with the reality of the field of research since “reality is more fabulous, more maddening, more strangely manipulative than fiction.” (Minh-ha, 1991:39) There you have it. I would say that documentary has never been so alive because its link to reality is undeniably ambiguous. And according to Bazin (1958) ambiguity is the very nature of reality (:62). The essential danger in attempting to impose a strict code of ethics and practice on documentary derives from its traditional pretence of showing and portraying truth. Yet the only truth a filmmaker can sustain is that of his own views and perception which in turn will influence his/her work. Moreover, as James Snead (1994) carefully points out, films deemed to depict truth, especially historical truth, are nothing more than the construction of an illusory fantasy. On the other hand fiction and fantasy films all too often depict hard facts through symbolic and metaphorical tools of representation far more accurately.

If we break away from the myth of the fly on the wall, authentic documentary, where minimal input and post-production manipulation assume a minimal alteration of reality, the possibilities of this medium broaden considerably. Acknowledging the unavoidable construction inherent to storytelling using film form liberates documentary from its previous constrictions, thus affirming a close link between one’s social performance as self and one’s performance as (an)other. This hybrid field – which we will call grey – where the overlap between fact and fiction is recognised and utilised, was explored by Jean Rouch (*Chronique d’un été*, 1960) with *cinéma vérité*. His documentaries introduced the revolutionary concept of participants explicitly acting as themselves, acting out the role of themselves. In so doing Rouch sought to reveal the participant’s dreams and fantasies as well as the reality of their everyday lives. According to him, the truth about someone lay as much in their day to day lives as it does in their imagination, projections and desires (Stoller, 1992:43).

Other filmmakers have arrived to and explored this grey field coming from cinema and fiction. The Free British Cinema of Ken Loach in the 1960s revived an interest and concern for social-realism. His actors were free to improvise along basic guidelines in unforeseen circumstances, thus closing the gap between the actor or fiction and the role or real life character through performativity. Loach transforms his

actors into the characters played out by relying on intrinsic and intuitive responses shaped by a shared or similar cultural conditioning.

Another key investigator of this grey field worth mentioning here is the Danish filmmaker Lars von Trier. His amalgamation of film styles and techniques consistently re-create and innovate landmark genres such as the docu-drama with *Breaking the Waves* (von Trier, 1996), the realist/Dogme film with *Idioterne* (1998), the musical with *Dancer in the Dark* (2001) or the theatrical, minimalist and politically loaded film with *Dogville* (2003) and its sequel *Manderlay* (2005). As von Trier (2003) affirms: “[t]his business of film going beyond fiction at the moment of shooting is something I’ve aimed for in all my films.” (in Björkman, 2003:206) Indeed fiction and fact, cinema and documentary have influenced one another to the extent of becoming interchangeable. But where does this leave truth? Drawing on the pioneering work of Rouch, Loach and von Trier, truth is a fluid and versatile notion that cannot be confined to one filmic practice. The nature, purpose and virtues of documentary must therefore be reassessed. As Morris (2005) clarifies:

There’s no reason why documentary can’t be as personal as fiction filmmaking and bear the imprint of those who made them. Truth isn’t guaranteed by style or expression. It isn’t guaranteed by anything. (in Bruzzi, 2005:5-6)

Film project

***Tribes of the Queer* (Garel 2006)**

We will now present a deconstructive analysis of the interface between *Tribes of the Queer* and queer theory. The first dissonance apparent in *Tribes of the Queer* concerns what the English language idiomatically refers to as the *language barrier*. The opening titles are in English followed by interviews and dialogues solely in Italian with English subtitles. This indicates that the film was designed for an Anglophone audience. However, the opening menu offers a choice between the original version and the subtitled version. This may lead to confusion for an Italian audience who does not require any subtitles to understand the content of the film. Indeed, the opening title boards are only in English.

Is this presentation logical or at least intentional when considering the fact that the documentary may be shown at the Gender Bender Film Festival, Bologna, in 2006? The reasons to justify this choice are purely practical and perhaps also reliant on the myth that most people across Europe today understand simple English. More to the point however, this elementary detail emphasises the powers of inclusion and

exclusion inherent to language. Indeed, drawing on the biographical discourse of Porpora – co-director of M.I.T¹⁶ – there is currently no suitable pronoun to express the post-gender. Despite Porpora’s adoption of a female name, she refuses to confine herself to strict gender norms and has reached a place neither male nor female, neither masculine nor feminine but rather all of these interacting together in what appears to be a smooth and healthy cohabitation. In the words of Gatens (1996) Porpora is the whole person: the androgen (:4). In this case, s/he surely deserves a specific terminology at present unavailable in Western languages¹⁷. Interestingly, despite obtaining social integration as convincing men, many F2M (female to male) transgender and transsexuals, as featured in the documentary film *Southern Comfort* (Davis, 2001) have, with time, come to one same realisation: they are neither man nor woman and they want to be recognised and accepted for who and what they really are: T-men. Harry Dodge confides: “I can tell you that every time I go to the bathroom and see the signs for *men’s room* and *women’s room*, I just think to myself, neither.” (in Volcano & Halberstam, 1999:138) That is to say that after a long and demanding journey from one sex and/or gender to the other, many trans wish to reach a post-gender space in order to finally arrive at their destination: the true self. And as Porpora so clearly suggests, to full-fill this quest we need a cultural change more than a legal one (Garel, 2006). But let us go back to the beginning. Why does *Tribes of the Queer* introduce the queer bodies of Bologna with an anecdote pertaining to American history, that of the Stonewall riots of late June 1969? The explanation is simple: gaypride was born in New York, at the Stonewall bar. Hence perhaps expectedly, queer theory also finds its roots in the United-States with the groundbreaking publications of academics Judith Butler (since 1990) and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (since 1990). Yet the likes of Richard Dyer and Susan Hayward have made it an equally British concern. Moreover, as we have shown, the works of French writers Jean Genet and Michel Foucault predate and remain a strong influence in queer thought. World renowned events such as the Love Parade of the 1990s also bring Germany into the equation (not to mention the queer heaven that was Berlin during the great recession in the 1920s & 1930s before Hitler came to power). Denmark’s liberal laws regarding a trans’ right to marriage stemming from the

¹⁶ M.I.T: Movimento Identità Transsessuale
Via Polese 15/B, Bologna

Support centre

¹⁷ Although I have since learnt that the Finnish language uses a non-gender specific personal pronoun, *han*.

legalisation of gay marriage in 1989 put their legal system at the vanguard of queer preoccupations. While films such as *The Adventures of Priscilla Queen of the Desert* (Elliott, 1994) and *Head On* (Kokkinos, 1998), as well as the world renowned Sydney gaypride add Australia to the queer map. The cinema of Almodóvar also provides a re-appropriation of queer theory and queer politics within Spain and Spanish culture. And following in these footsteps comes Italy.

Movimento Identità Transessuale/Transgenere or M.I.T, a centre for legal and medical advice, counselling and social integration for the TG/TS, is the only centre of its kind in the world to also have political recognition and a concrete role within the community¹⁸. Marcella di Folco – director of M.I.T – is a member of Bologna city council and the Italian National Communist Party. Porpora – co-director of M.I.T – is an accredited historian and a leading figure of the political party Antagonismo Gay. In fact Bologna is referred to as the San Francisco of Italy, the most liberal city of Italy not because of its nightlife or lgbtq (lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, gender queer) scene but rather in virtue of its political and cultural activism. Queer theory has many resonances in Bologna and in my view it has taken on a nature of its own. Being queer in Bologna is a political statement and youngsters work hand in hand with inspirational pioneers of queer rights to constantly push the boundaries further and resist oppressive systems of patriarchy and homogenisation. In this respect, Bologna's ancient tradition of secularity lends itself well to an emerging Italian queer culture redefining and subverting the Christian cultural heritage of Italy.

As I discovered, Bologna is both a gay city and a queer city. The lgb (lesbian, gay, bisexual) cultural centre and club, Il Cassero, is open to ArciGay members and tourists/visitors only. ArciGay, the national gay advocacy group, is what many Bolognese citizens refer to as the main stream gay organisation. Antagonismo Gay in contrast is against the grain, unsatisfied with the gay comfort provided by Bologna. They represent the queer body. The political activism and awareness noticeable in Bologna is admittedly strong amongst students but it seems to be a cultural trait relevant to every age group and social circle in the city.

Coming back to the film project, let us analyse what the opening images are saying in parallel with the voice (over) of Porpora. Queer history has been given a

¹⁸ It is also worth mentioning here the performer, actress, former member of the European parliament, member of the Italian parliament, politician, and openly transgender Vladimir Luxuria (b.1965).

brief overview and the quote by painter Paul Klee is given substance by suggestive, quasi-subliminal images inter-cut with the text:

*Art does not reproduce the visible
Rather it makes visible.* (Klee, 1940)

It is at this point that the image slowly returns back into the film, mixing shots of sculptures, that is to say the historical and cultural heritage of Bologna, with the shot of a graffiti announcing *enduring resistance* (Garel, 2006) thus setting up the tension between tradition and contestation in Bologna. Klee's quote was chosen with *When the Moon Waxes Red* (Minh-ha, 1991) in mind. Minh-ha's study of documentary confronts the two strands of her academic background: the field of visual anthropology and that of applied arts. I found this work to (still) be of extreme relevance and pertinence regarding current issues surrounding visual anthropology and documentary. In fact, in a philosophising on film, Minh-ha (1991) evokes an idea closely related to Klee's: "[M]eaning should be prevented from coming to closure at what is said and what is shown... what is put forth as truth is often nothing more than a meaning." (:30) Documentary, therefore, is but another artistic means to communicate (a) meaning. The obstinate tradition of visual anthropology persists in imposing strict rules to serve objectivity in the depiction of a people and its rites and culture. Yet how can the participant-observer deny the fact that his work, whether emphatically or discreetly, can only convey his/her perception and interpretation of occurrences. Anthropology gained popularity in academic circles by appointing itself as a science with rationality and clearly defined rules of practice in which to encompass its research. These pioneering intentions are admirable insofar as they made anthropology more credible and thus acceptable to the field of academia and scientific research in the early 20th century. Nevertheless, with the advent of multi and inter-disciplinary research in recent years, should the new directions explored in documentary not be praised and valued? In other words, now is surely the time to encourage and learn from artistic documentaries in all their variety as a means to penetrate spheres of reality not constrained by the overbearing pretence of *truth conveyed*.

Tribes of the Queer, while remaining close to the ethnographic approach of research and film form, attempts to conserve an impartial positioning not so much to comply with rules of neutrality and objectivity as to preserve an open field of

meaning. *Tribes of the Queer* infers that each participant's truth does not necessarily have to involve anyone but themselves. Bruna echoes this idea in her comments on marriage:

Speaking only for myself, I'd love to get married. And in the future, I'd love to have kids. I've got what it takes to be a great mother. (Garel, 2006)

Porpora's queer reading of marriage, although fundamentally in contradiction with Bruna's comments, is not there to undermine hers. Rather, it presents a different perspective to give the title another significance. 'Tribes of the Queer' then signifies that the queer body is a sea, perhaps a tidal wave of fluid identities and intentions which, while often taking opposite directions, do not hold each other back as a consequence. This last point may well be within the realms of utopia. Nevertheless queer theory is entrenched in history in order to avoid reproducing the patterns of inclusion-exclusion perpetrated by the first waves of gay activism following the Stonewall riots.

DOCUmenteur

Let us now look at the clip in a car that introduces the filmmaker's name. This alone continues to challenge the aging traditional values of anthropological documentary. After having hinted at the potential of art as a tool of vision and discovery, the film then goes on to cast a doubt over the truth conveyed by the filmmaker/artist and the film produce. Despite the spectator assuming they are watching a documentary – which in turn conveys a sense of factual reality – the filmmaker refers to himself as the DOCUmenteur. What we are dealing with here is a play on words which also relates back to the opening idea of language barrier. After a swing from English to Italian, this word is clearly French. This information refers to Stefan Garel's French nationality. But what else is DOCUmenteur telling us? A 'documenteur' is the director of a 'documentaire' (documentary), or simply someone who documents. Then to what effect is 'docu' separated from 'menteur'? 'Menteur' means 'liar'. In short Garel is acknowledging or at least suggesting the likelihood of lies or distorted truths entering his film. Interestingly, the filmmaker's name does not appear again until the end credits and when it does, it exhibits another confession to the audience: *loose translation & subtitles* (Garel, 2006). Hence we are informed that the subtitles may not be as accurate as one is led to expect. For that matter, what leads us to expect

accurate subtitles anyway? What powers do we trust in to guarantee we remain protected from lies and propaganda and this through no particular effort of our own? Once again, queer activism would urge one to avoid relying on our current system for matters so essential to our self-preservation.

The illegal body

Following on from these clips are shots of Bologna by night, mixing medium-long shots to medium-close-ups. Two details stand out in this section of the film. Firstly, the phosphorescent green lights of the night appear twice: once as the reversed hotel sign amidst the green leaves of a tree, once as the lighting to a building, placed behind a green tree. Beside the symbolic association of the colour green with hope and renewal, natural green and artificial green cohabit in the night, somehow introducing the body that has left its natural, initial envelope to enter and embody its (true) nature. This body is the M2F transsexual, Bruna. She appears with the label of *the illegal body* (Garel, 2006). The denomination illegal here reflects three signifiers: the clandestine immigrant, the prostitute and, of course, the transsexual. The latter is illegal in terms of marriage to a man (homosexual marriage) in Italy, and in the eyes of the divine (Christian) law whereby the body that god has given one should not be altered, thus refused. The compelling interview with Bruna immediately sets the tension between who and what the system rejects – making one illegal to maintain the unwanted lifestyles and practices on the outside. Yet the illegal body featured here is both engaging, charming and primarily thought provoking. Bruna embodies queer resistance. Hope is to believe that the viewer is touched by Bruna's words and performance for the camera to the extent of changing his/her outlook on the enforcement of what should be deemed illegal.

Body in transit

From the illegal body we move on to (the) *Body in Transit* with the national star, actress Eva Robin's as guest of M.I.T at Festa dell'Unita, Bologna's yearly festival of the socialist parties. As Eva clarifies, the term transsexual to her remains general and clinical, which she deems too confining as a word to describe herself: "I think I'm something more than that. And maybe also something less, who knows?!" (in Garel, 2006) It is important to note here that Eva Robin's marketed herself as a hermaphrodite at the beginning of her acting career in the late 1970s and early

1980s. Yet according to her interview, transsexual is still the term that best describes her condition: *in transit* (Garel, 2006). Once again, we can only remark the discursive powers and patriarchal constraint of language where the trans body has none or little vocabulary to describe and define itself beyond medical terminologies¹⁹.

So to Eva Robin's, transsexual means *in transit*. Perhaps a short etymological consideration is necessary here. 'Transsexual' comprises the word 'trans' – in between, across – and the word sexual – related to the sex and sexuality. In effect, a transsexual is a body between the sexes and sexualities. By this our language signifies between the strict definition of the male sex and the female sex, between heterosexuality and homosexuality. We can see from this that the transsexual is excluded by language from a clear sense of definition and thus of belonging. Language refers to it as an *in between* everything that we know, as opposed to a more specific, detailed, meaningful definition and terminology. In queer terms, this is probably a blessing in disguise for the body that doesn't fit and doesn't want to fit in the current system. Nevertheless, Eva Robin's confers the word with a nuanced significance. This is where the semiotics of the Italian language provides us with a different insight into the meanings and implications of transsexualism. To be *in transit* evokes the concept of journey, movement and displacement. The prefix *trans* becomes linked to the idea of transition, thus transit, thus journey towards a body and identity beyond matters of gender and sexuality.

As Porpora explains in an interview not included in the film, s/he does not consider him/herself to be a trans as trans to him/her is the idea of search and journey. Porpora has reached the end of this voyage: she has found her/himself, she has found home if we accept that home is not the place one comes from but rather the place one gets to. S/he is post-gender in a post-gender body. However, this notion of being in transit denotes a less definite semiotic when analysing the dragqueen body, in the second half of the *Body in Transit* section of our film. The dragqueen is undeniably a component of the trans, even if not transsexual strictly speaking but certainly transgender. Transgender since the dragqueen is performatively embodying cultural traits specific to the female body and gender. Yet how can it do this since the dragqueen inhabits the male sex and, by extension, the male body? Thus the dragqueen is a woman in his performance and enactment of

¹⁹ The use of the terms *gender abolitionist* and *gender variant*, as used by the photographer and queer theorist Del LaGrace Volcano (2008), seem more resourceful.

the female gender but ultimately, our codes of definitions appreciate him and perceive him as a man. This last point is made easier to sustain insofar as dragqueens rely on burlesque behaviour and attire, in many ways parodying the female gender, in many ways supporting male concepts and definitions of femaleness and femininity. Moreover, the dragqueen body occupies a different state of transit to the transsexual and in some respects to the other transgender: it embodies femaleness and femininity only as part of a show, a profession in bars and nightclubs or a night out. The dragqueen returns to its male body and masculinity. As a result, it remains a body that matters in Butlerian terms, a body that fits. The embodiment of femaleness here relies on padded bras, makeup, clothing and high heel shoes. The embodiment of femininity is permitted by behaviour and discourse. All of these elements can be replaced by their opposites. The process of becoming, experienced by the dragqueen serves its metamorphosis from male and masculine to female (or faux-male) and feminine. This is equally true of the reverse, the undoing: make up is wiped off, costumes are swapped for clothes and during this mutation, the man reappears and the dragqueen disappears.

This widely accepted perception of the drag artist's journey across genders is legitimated by the fact that they are merely artists, acting out a role. The drag artist begins and ends backstage. He *becomes* backstage and *is* on stage. This stage is the environment in which he performs and lives as a dragqueen. It is common knowledge that no matter how outrageous – being outrageous and outspoken is indissociable from being a dragqueen – the man behind the dragqueen is with rare exception reserved and shy. The example of Brazilian dance teacher and dragqueen Marconi in *Tribes of the Queer* emphasises this fact when we cut from his kiss towards the camera to his silent and uncomfortable looking face at the table, listening to Abe. Indeed, the camera canalises and nurtures the dragqueen's performance and revelling for attention. On the other hand, it seems to inhibit the re-emerging man.

I would nonetheless like to nuance this conception of dragqueens. Under formulaic and stereotypical behaviour, each dragqueen develops its own punch lines and personality. In my view, the personalities of the dragqueen as dragqueen and as ordinary man exist in symbiosis. If one's moment as a dragqueen often releases the inhibitions, anxieties and frustrations of one through self-parody and thus through one's un-containable mockery of others, the process of becoming and being a dragqueen is cathartic. The shy man uses the dragqueen facet of his personality to

invigorate his confidence and empower himself. Dragqueens are among society's greatest entertainers and most fierce satirists. The dragqueen, in and out of character, sheds light on the man it shares a body and mind with and vice-versa. Drag artists as men too readily separate themselves from the dragqueen they are, talking of the latter as another person they both admire and despise, suggesting the psychological patterns characteristic of split personality disorder (Watson, 2002). Marcella di Folco (Garel, 2006) only considers dragqueen's message and contribution to the field of the transgender during their show. No interest remains for their everyday life as integrated men. Porpora (Garel, 2006), in contrast, is dismayed by the drag artist's homophobic tendencies while living out of character, thus consolidating the dangers of this split personality behaviour. Whether constructively or not, the trans body is *in transit*, on a relentless journey, not fixed in an 'in between' identity.

Enculturing the body

As the third theme in the structure of *Tribes of the Queer* we find *Enculturing the Body*. This section of the film touches upon how culture defines social expectations and norms and how in turn the queer body is subverting these norms and re-appropriating them.

The first section of this part features Porpora retracing the birth of gaypride and the origins of the word *dragqueen*. We learn that the trans militant and queer icon, Sylvia Rivera, was the first to use the term dragqueen. This indicates that the first dragqueens were more constant transgender. Trivial as it may seem, the historian and post-gender queer activist, Porpora, draws on this fact to lay down a virulent accusation against contemporary dragqueens in Italy: "If today dragqueens in Italy have no memory, no awareness of their own history, they are doomed to repeat the mistakes of the past." (Garel, 2006) From a refusal to abide by hetero-normative and patriarchal tradition the concern has shifted to enculturing the queer body with its own queer tradition and history. Failing this, to paraphrase Porpora, queer evolution and progress seem inevitably condemned to dissolution and regression. Queer thought urges us to break away from the hetero-normative and patriarchal culture. But it also warns against the normalising and categorising gay and lesbian culture(s). In this withdrawal process, queer thought has erected a queer culture, endeavouring to *dis-enculture* the queer body from oppressive rules and definitions. The next step

becomes that of *re-enculturing* the queer body with the more flexible and inclusive queer culture. Queer culture, in the broader sense of identity and politics turns sexuality into an irrelevant factor in such a way to reveal that “no one is free of the queer body” (Hayward, 2005-2006 in conversation). In this way certain patriarchal cultural codes are travelling to the queer spheres. Marriage, as aforementioned, in Butlerian terms, does not belong in queer culture as it negates everything queer theory stands for and against. Porpora reiterates Butler’s anti-marital position. Therefore, what can we understand from Bruna’s eulogy of marriage? Does it unavoidably place her on the margins of queer culture? The question becomes: is Bruna still a prisoner of patriarchal tradition and values or is she simply demanding the right to re-assess and redefine marriage on her own trans terms? There is no certifiable answer to be discerned from the interview alone. And more generally, should a space not be made for the queer body who wishes to re-articulate the significance and implications of marriage? By extension could friends who live together not celebrate their relationship by marriage? The/my truth is that marriage is a long term commitment, which quintessentially imposes and enforces ethics of obligation and exclusive relationships. It is an unnecessary tie. What is marriage but a perverse institution to secure one’s hold over another, both legally and socially? If and when love withers, marriage is nothing but a costly obstacle.

The final point made by way of interview in *Tribes of the Queer* gives the last word to Porpora. Here we can draw a parallel between the discriminatory power of language over the trans body and that established by the legal system in Italy. As Porpora points out, the law 164 did not recognise the existence of transsexualism or hermaphroditism. Instead, it recognised the possibility to become either man or woman by means of psychiatric treatment and gender reassignment surgery. In other words, the sex and gender binaries at play were not subverted or challenged. Porpora infers that, in order to amend this travesty, what is really required is a change in cultural perceptions. Without these modifications, the legal battle is lost before it has even started.

(City)body

Organised in three main parts, *Tribes of the Queer* portrays members of different queer tribes, as it were, under three distinct labels relating to the body. It seems a

fourth body remains implicit yet evident across these parts. This body is the citybody. Interestingly, it is used to complement Porpora's discourse on the body.

Everything happens through our body. It is both the starting point and the point of arrival. We must be careful not to see it as only one or the other. It has to be both.
(Garel, 2006)

The next shot appears in cross dissolve to better establish the link. Indeed, Porpora's words and image disappear to give way to the shot of one of Bologna's gates. As most medieval cities in Western Europe, the centre is surrounded by remains of the former city walls and gates. The following shot features Giulio²⁰ stepping inside Porta Santo Stefano. This locale has been allocated to the political and activist association *Antagonismo Gay* by Bologna city council following a series of persistent squats. Figuratively then, in Bologna, the in-between space is open to the public. Porta Santo Stefano hosts a small concert hall and a bar with a spacious entrance area for socialising. In other words this gate is in between the centre and the outer city and offers space in which to remain between the centre and the outskirts. Thus symbolically Porta Santo Stefano is a trans space and with regards to Porpora's preceding comment, it represents both a starting point – an entrance into the city centre – as well as a point of arrival – to socialise, attend a concert, reach the outer city. It seems the arms of Bologna (city walls and gates) embrace its people without restraining them.

Credits & finishing touches

The stills that follow the initial closure²¹ speak to the audience's sense of hermeneutics. Let us undertake a selective shot analysis here in order to interpret the chain of symbolic meaning conveyed by the credits section.

Firstly, the idea of 'work in progress', illustrated by a construction crane in motion, gives way to the peaceful views of the Bolognese countryside. These two shots of green fields seen through tree branches are there as a *breather* for the spectator to absorb the film content and reflect. The two shots of the construction site indicate that although still at an early stage of development, the change advocated is in motion. It is in the second nature shot that Francis Bacon (in Peppiat, 1996) is cited: "[t]o find yourself, you need the greatest possible freedom to drift." (:16) So this

²⁰ Giulio is a journalist and a member of *Antagonismo Gay* who I became close to during the latter half of my fieldwork in Bologna.

²¹ Marked by the last interview and the 'work in progress' road sign.

is the film's second textual reference to a painter. The film induces a collision between *mise en texte* with references to Stendhal and Genet, and *mise en scene* quoting two key painters of the 20th century: Klee and Bacon. Literature and painting are acknowledged as important influences in this documentary, which in turn conflates the moving image (in reality comprised of thirty six still images) and the (spoken) word. The artistic debt of film to its predecessors strikes the artistic virtue of film as obvious. Engagingly, the quote by Bacon infers the fact that the trans, and more generally the queer journey, is a search for self outside of oppressive norms of strict and predetermined definitions. The freedom evoked here is that of free choice. Bacon urges us to go beyond socio-cultural boundaries in order to discover our true tendencies.

Let us pause a moment to ponder on Bacon's works. His outstanding and often controversial contribution to the world of art places a persistent focus on the evils, or at least the malaise, of man. Is this shot then not an oxymoron? On the one hand it calls for greater liberties, moving away from the oppressive and authorial norm as a means to human evolution and progress. On the other hand, the associations we can make with Bacon's visualities insist on the dangers allowed by queer theory. Any body that doesn't fit should not systematically be granted a space: what of murderers and extreme criminals? Does Western culture not rightly and legitimately impose control and penalties over them? In brief, how free and all encompassing should we make definitions of queer? But let us appreciate the meanings of this shot as philosophical and thus generic. Murderers, for instance, can be found in any community indistinctly. Moreover, one's actions and/or crimes are not necessarily strangers to one's instincts, nature and ideas. Greater freedom in this context calls for an opening of gender binaries in order to separate sex (what we are) from gender (what we do/perform) and return gender to its natural fluidity. And looking at Porpora's example for inspiration: gender fluidity may well render gender notions irrelevant, paving the way for an age of post-gender identities where genitalia themselves do not hold any definitive meaning.

The following shots in the film play on the past, present and future of gender. These conclusive shots preceding the actual credits are fetishized shots of the Neptune fountain on piazza maggiore. Why are these shots fetishized? Before we answer this question, it is pertinent to notice that the Neptune fountain is shown at the beginning of the film in broad daylight. The goddess of fertility bears a bosom

from which springs clear water. The sculpture of Neptune, the god of the seas and oceans in antic Roman mythology, is also fetishized in daylight. Yet at this early point in the film, both Neptune and the goddesses at his feet seem to adequately portray gender stereotypes: the domineering, superior man with the woman, symbol of fertility, below him. These confining symbols are subverted on their second appearance in *Tribes of the Queer*. We can now read the fetishization of Neptune as a homoerotic intention on behalf of the filmmaker. Although a parodying of the divinity's authority may also emerge: isn't Neptune made to look ridiculous and vulnerable, naked for all to see? What of the strong lights aligned next to his leg and waist in the final shot? Does this suggest a more arousing vision of Bologna? In any case, the symbol of the naked male god has come to contain more subtle and complex messages of gender fluidity, the importance of history and the Bolognese subversion of gender stereotypes.

The next shot, a panning shot from one clock reading 1:20pm (13:20) to another reading 5pm (17:00), congests notions of the rapid and unstoppable passing of time. This interpretation could be viewed to signify that queer activism needs to gain more ground and influence our society at its very foundations sooner rather than later, that is to say immediately. The urgency of a queer ideal and a post-gender culture resonate in this shot. In the light of the film content, we could also read a silent narration and implicit subtext announcing: it's later than you think; thus reminding the audience that we only live once and that the time to act and change for the better worldly good is now.

The following shot features a broken chain hanging from a road pole. This obviously connotes post-genderism where one has freed oneself from the authoritative oppression of the phallus. We then cut to a view of the two towers of Bologna – with only the tallest one in sight. The camera is at the back of a bus, leaving the centre of Bologna through a side street. Metaphorically, once again, the audience is moving away from the overbearing phallic and historical nature of the famous tower. It is in this shot that the credits for the dragqueens of Festa dell'Unita appear. This reading may imply a certain revaluing of dragqueens in relation to Porpora's criticism. It seems to echo the dragqueens' thoughts: leave in the past what belongs in the past; sanctify the present and accept it generously. More accurately, this moving image simply seals the idea of ending and farewell as we approach the end of the film. We should note here that the credits unravel in three

distinct colours: white, red and black. An authorial reading of this choice associates solidarity, support, group sense and communism with the colour black; importance, power and passion with the colour red; beauty, admiration and surprise with the colour white. Although, strictly speaking, these are also fluid and overlapping labels. The only exception to this colour layout is the yellow font used for the title *then came queer theory*. This sets queer theory apart from the rest of the introductory titles particularly as it appears amongst them, thus emphasising the very essence of queer theory: theorising on bodies that do not fit in the hetero-normative, patriarchal system. Hence, in the Butlerian sense, these bodies are made not to matter. Furthermore, the first occurrence of non-diegetic music imprints another field of signification. We are listening to an invigorating punk song, as performed at Festa dell'Unita. To me, the editor, this track is synonymous to the youth culture and spirit of Bologna: fierce, empowering and passionate. On a deeper note, the only English verse of the song: "music, music, music..." reminds me of the poetic verve found in Jean Genet's romanticised biography, *A Thief's Journal* (1965), where certain words are perceived to sing out through the rhythm and music of their phonetics and semiotics. As words can sing and if it is true that an image says (a thousand) words, then images also sing. In the process of shooting and editing, the artistic richness of an image portrays subjectivity and feeling so that ultimately images should sing.

The conclusive conversation featured next is between Citronella, out of drag, and a passer-by. She invites him for a walk with her. In response to his suggestion she replies that she is not seeking sex with him but rather a friendly walk. As he agrees, he asks where her car is, to which the spontaneous wisdom of Citronella answers: next to the police station. Her wit is still that of a dragqueen here: quick witted, on the ball, humorous and lucid. This sequence also emphasises the reality whereby, offstage, the dragqueen remains an unconventional, threatening and thus an endangered body.

The cut to passing coloured lights on a wall reminds us that we are all but passing lights, "lost in our little lives" (R.E.M, 1992). Flashing lights then come over the drawing of a transgender body, bearing a voluptuous bosom and a stubby face, standing with his/her face in front of a microphone. It is this image that obtains enthusiastic applause from an invisible but audible crowd. Actually, this crowd is applauding the punk band we have been hearing since the credits began. This sound sample is dubbed and amplified so that the crowd seems to be applauding the

transgender plight. The effect of this montage also suggests that the singer we have just heard is none other than this transgender. The unconventional transgender bringing a camp touch to more alternative and hard hitting songs reminds me of the character of Hedwig in *Hedwig and the Angry Inch* (Cameron, 2001). Ultimately, this image is an explicit portrayal of the queer body, refusing to conform to the norms of either male or female and thus creating a third space where it may grow according to his/her nature, partly freed from the gender bias and merge with sex inherent to Western culture.

The final title supports the idea that the translation, hence the subtitles are in fact 'loose', that is to say the filmmaker acknowledges a subjective interpretation of the film's textual content. The last shot, muted, features Porpora performing for the camera. She touches her head/eyes, nose and mouth playfully. At once this creates a sense of proximity and friendliness between Porpora and the camera-filmmaker-audience. Porpora's body language seems to be saying: "You again! Okay, I enjoy (i.e. agree to) performing for you. Check this out... [got my eyes, got my nose, got my mouth... I got my smile]". Those gestures are a direct reference to the tribal rock musical of the hippy era, *Hair* (Ragni/Rado/MacDermot, 1968). I had asked Porpora to enact those same gestures. Not only does this musical on sexual and political emancipation hold an important part in queer history – as a premise for gay liberation, activism and classic queer musicals such as the *Rocky Horror Show* (O'Brien, 1974) – it also lends itself well to a queer re-reading of the lyrics *Ain't go no – got life* (Ragni/Rado/MacDermot, 1968). The lyrics have been copied below:

*Ain't got no home, ain't got no shoes
Ain't got no money, ain't got no class
Ain't got no skirts, ain't got no sweater
Ain't got no perfume, ain't got no bed
Ain't got no mind*

*Ain't got no mother, ain't got no culture
Ain't got no friends, ain't got no schooling
Ain't got no love, ain't got no name
Ain't got no ticket, ain't got no token
Ain't got no god*

*Then what have I got?
Why am I alive anyway?
Yeah, what have I got
Nobody can take away?*

*Got my hair, Got my head
Got my brains, Got my ears
Got my eyes, Got my nose
Got my mouth, I got my smile
I got my tongue, Got my chin
Got my neck, Got my boobs
Got my heart, Got my soul
Got my back, I got my sex*

*I got my arms, Got my hands
Got my fingers, Got my legs
Got my feet, Got my toes
Got my liver, Got my blood*

*I've got life , I've got my freedom
I've got life*

*I've got life
I'm gonna keep it
I've got life*

(as adapted & performed by Nina Simone, 1969)

I initially intended to film transgender and transsexuals mimicking and performing to this song. Indeed, I feel the lyrics take on a different meaning from their point of view. Despite society taking away any chance of professional integration and success from them – with perhaps a few exceptions in show-business, the entertainment industry and more recently politics²² – despite the stigma attached to these mutating bodies, they too can celebrate life and their own lives. Everything they sing to have is theirs and they can pride themselves on having these assets. Amusingly some of the assets have always been there such as blood, back and liver. Others they have fought hard to obtain, such as breasts and perhaps even sex. Others still they have transformed to match their vision of themselves. We can think of mouth, nose and chin to name but a few. For reasons of copyright this idea was abandoned during the editing. However, the only reference to this sketch upholds its core message: humour and performance are seldom intended as pure entertainment and distraction, they are a reliable way of speaking out. As Miriam Makeba (1988), also known as Mamma Africa, relates in her autobiography, *My Story*:

Under Mr. Mutuba's direction, I also learn to do more than make pretty sounds with my singing voice. I begin to communicate. I am becoming a performer (Makeba & Hall, 1988:22).

²² See the New-Zealand politician Georgina Beyer and Italian politician Vladimir Luxuria as key pioneers.

Where are the F2M?

Before concluding, I wish to mention the reason why the F2M are absent from *Tribes of the Queer*. Indeed, I initially intended to focus on the F2M of Bologna. Unfortunately the only F2M I found was Simone, who had at the time of filming recently undergone a mastectomy. After one conversation with him on our first encounter at Festa dell'Unita, Simone seemed very interested in my project and keen to be included. However, I was never able to meet him again despite constant attempts on my part, bar one brief encounter on the street as he was going to work (Simone is a builder). I had to accept the fact that to gain Simone's trust and participation, I would need to be in Bologna for longer than a month. Consequently in this disclaimer I wish to apologise for the lack of F2M input and point of view in *Tribes of the Queer*. It seems that despite the incredibly vivacious fluidity of gender in Bologna, the M2F are the more accessible and outspoken transgender by far. *Tribes of the Queer* is undoubtedly missing an important tribe of the Queer.

Conclusion

By way of conclusion, let us reflect on the experience undergone during the research for and the making of *Tribes of the Queer*. From an initial naïve understanding of the transgender and transsexual identities and issues, I have come to envision the necessary evolution of transgender and transsexual politics as a shift out of gender all together towards a post-gender system of interpersonal relations, desires and social organisation. My early sense that a genderless society is possible and worthy of consideration has come full-circle. My sense is now more than a strong conviction, it has grown to be a certainty. The cyclical patterns of human behaviour warn us that the distinction between transgender and transsexual is necessary yet potentially liable to reproduce the obsessive process of strict self-definition and psycho-somatic restrictions in body perception which assimilated the gay activism of the post-Stonewall era.

The question of content regarding the film project moves beyond mere concerns of identity. After liaising with the transgender representative of Act Up Paris, Helene Hazera, I decided to take the TG/TS seriously by not asking "what are you, exactly?" and thus study how their experience and political reclamations reveal the oppressive forces of arbitrary selection at work in our culture, as deeply rooted as the very language we use. Thus, extending this realisation that language is biased in

form before content, I came to question the language of film in a similar fashion. Conceptualising film content led to an interaction with conceptions of form. This awareness struck me as crucial drawing on the words of Bazin: a new subject matter demands a new form, and as good a way as any towards understanding what a film is trying to say to us is to know how it is saying it. (in Mast/Cohen/Braudy 1992:160). Breaking away from the confining myth of objectivity as the cornerstone and ultimate aim of documentary film, I discovered new modes of expression within the documentary practice. A consideration for art in film and art as an integral part of filmmaking opened up new fields of perception. Besides the useful and purposeful intervention of direct interviews, the symbolic impact of the image came into play in order to stimulate thought associations and call upon the viewer's senses beyond mere reflection and intellect.

I should specify that although this chapter is intended to support the film project, by way of the (perhaps excessive) opening titles I wanted to allow the film to exist and bear rich strands of meaning independently of this text. The danger of the academic film is that it can all too easily become overly complex and thus targeted towards an informed, essentially academic audience. The challenge was to create an accessible film with a supporting text available for those who wish to investigate the given topic and PhD product further.

APPENDIX

Sieni Danza/DV8

One succession of shots during the credits has not been mentioned: that of the rapid 360° movement of the camera featuring trees and the following credits entitled:

Sieni Danza

DV8 physical theatre

This is a reference to two companies of professional dancers engaging with the art and possibilities of physical theatre and contact dance within it. I was introduced to these practices by Francesca Duranti, an Italian academic, painter, actress and dancer based in Sienna who I befriended in 1999. My interest for and attraction to the choreographies of Virgilio Sieni (Sieni Danza) and Lloyd Newson (DV8) respectively began to establish a link between the trans body and dance in my mind. Unfortunately the endeavour to include contact dance and physical theatre into *Tribes of the Queer* did not materialise. This would have been a lively, essentially visual sequence for the film to express control of the body as well as our impulse towards the contact with others. Additionally, physical theatre is a violent yet compelling use of the body to express meaning.

The fast-pivoting shot preceding these credits simply connotes movement. A deeper interpretation of the connotations present here however suggests that in creating the illusion that the trees are moving, one can understand physical theatre to be an empowerment of the body. Physical theatre breathes life into the numb and oblivious body. It frees the entrapped body (trees being firmly stuck to the ground). It puts into play strong emotions expressed through equally strong body language in a flow of movements.

At a future stage of this PhD, I hope to re-examine physical theatre and include it more significantly in my research and filmmaking.

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Queer bodies and settlements
Chapter II

Queer theory in the field of learning differences and disabilities

'Curative education': alternative psychology, pedagogy and a new grasp
on human nature

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An Introduction

Drawing on my recent exploration of queer theory and queer politics, it became clear that the study of transsexual and transgender history and politics led to truths about our culture and human nature that were relevant and often applicable to a wider community. In an attempt to understand and empathise with a marginal body, important underlying facts come to light which are not always noticeable in the day to day lives and experiences of more integrated and assimilated bodies of a particular culture and system, thus bringing a broader scope in self-reflectivity and self-understanding.

In this train of thought came a logical conclusion: I needed to make my definition of queer more encompassing. And this meant queer theory could provide an unusual and thus enriching angle on the study of other marginal bodies. In my view, queer cannot restrain itself to a purely positional and hence political essence. Queer theory and its ramifications privilege individuality and fluidity in terms of identity (construction of the self and body) as well as a resistance to the (traditional) notion of normality. On the one hand, as discussed in chapter I, a queer focus moves away from the confining question of “what are you exactly?” in an effort to undo the system of labelling and sharp selection inherent to western culture. On the other hand however, an exploration of queer theory also brings impetus to new and valuable forms of self conception, self-assurance and understanding. Consequently, matters of identity or at least matters pertaining to the inner realm and the outer realm, the self and the other, become deeply affected by a *queerer* outlook. Self and other become more tangible and thus closer, perhaps even interchangeable, as we have seen with the psycho-somatic body construction of the transgender body in chapter I. Nevertheless, these notions remain relatively distinct on the whole. Therefore, it seems to me that queer theory should not systematically ignore its role in the construction, subversion and fluidity of identity. Queer theory, at times, is inseparable from a queer nation, however broad it may be conceived to be; a queer nation made of *queerlings*, that is to say human beings aware and acceptant of the fact that human nature is dysfunctional in essence, and individual disposition and identity can only ever overlap on several concepts and several cores of attachment and belonging. Moreover, as evolving beings, our dispositions and identities are never fixed in time and are thus prone to frequent and remarkable change, creating ever-increasing windows of clarification and ultimately understanding over time.

Thus a growing awareness and an acknowledgment of our dysfunctional essence make us informed *queerlings*. Although human beings by nature and in virtue of this fact are all *queerlings*, many cannot conceive of this or simply refuse to accept this simple fact and its implications even when here one's queerness is not engendered by sexuality but rather by actions, perceptions and hybrid notions of self. Unfortunately we do not yet live in a system that takes into account our differences as a means to social coherence, an asset in our exploration of potentialities, with the subsistence of an outdated culture at best and a uni-dimensional mode of selection at worst. As Deleuze (in Colebrook, 2002) affirms:

*Western thought has always privileged a politics of the actual over the potential, and does this by stressing human life as already expressed and constituted... If we look at all the bizarre, aberrant and different expressions of human life we begin to intuit the virtual powers that are capable of transforming life beyond what it actually is to what it might **become**. (:XXX)*

To complete this statement I would add that these “bizarre, aberrant and different expressions of human life” frequently represent a more noticeable or pronounced form of general human (dys)functioning. Therefore, our relation to any given marginal and/or queer body comes to embody a mirror in which our queerness comes into view. In other words, when I assert that every human being is dysfunctional, I am referring to its queerness, its natural instincts and potentialities as opposed to the limited strict and narrow paradigms afforded us through (mainstream) culture, the law of Order, the law of the father. Psychoanalysis, through its justification of a supposed innate and very specific sense of law and order, has little relevance to the open field that is queer theory. Nonetheless, its impact on Western culture cannot be discarded lightly as I have discovered, contemporary psychoanalysis has proved quite resourceful in our understanding of learning differences and disabilities²³.

A broader Queer

The work of Deleuze, briefly encountered in chapter I, helps to set the foundations of queer theory – as Foucault's work did – by laying down the necessity for a subversion of the constructed and imposed norm, i.e. subject. At the heart of Deleuze's reasoning is an insistence that understanding and thinking demand that

²³ “*Learning differences and disabilities*” here is referring to the fact that a mental condition and/or brain damage are/is correlated to physical and/or physiological impairments.

we go beyond the seeming order and sameness of things to the chaotic and active becoming which is the very pulse of life. (Colebrook, 2005:XXXIV) Thus perhaps haphazardly several experiences influenced my choice of research topic for this second chapter. My work with the Kiwanis International organisation in the mid to late 1990s related to sport events for groups of persons with learning differences and disabilities. I acted as an activity supervisor in alternance with the role of team coordinator. In addition to this I have developed since early childhood a close bond with my cousin Hannah, who has Asperger's syndrome, and her many friends over the years. The problematic of disability as social and cultural negotiation arose as an unexpected yet highly pertinent case of *queerness* in its more open sense. Whilst reading *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* (Haddon, 2003), the biographical journal of a teenage boy with Asperger syndrome, I realised that the body with learning differences and disabilities (formerly perceived as with mental handicap) had been given little voice and then again, hardly ever from its own point of view. I had a particular community in mind drawing on my interest in Steiner schools and centres for people with learning differences and disabilities. More specifically still I started to research on 'curative education' and its leading movement for adults, that of the Camphill communities, founded by the medical doctor and paediatrician Karl König in the early 1940s. The Camphill movement pioneered the idea of lifeshare and community living between "patients" and specialist practitioners. König envisioned a lifestyle where work, study and leisure for all involved could become confounded. He turned daily tasks for the good running of a community into workshops. He valued the educative and therapeutic virtues of artistic and sport activities, and he set about establishing informed and adapted centres of apprenticeship and education. As a result the Camphill ethos was able to create a microcosmic society providing residents (that is to say former patients) with a sense of familiarity, normality, progress and achievement. I had heard about these residential care homes or centres in some detail since my cousin Hannah has been living in the Camphill village of Glasallt Fawr, Llangadog, Carmarthenshire since September 1999. The difference in her since she moved there to live and study has been quite astonishing. On all counts, our family has had to admit that she is a happier, calmer, more patient and sociable person with high yet realisable ambitions such as attending a catering course at the local college and several work placements in the nearby town.

As a researcher with and through ethnographic and documentary film, however, I was used to avoiding too close a proximity with my potential participants. Consequently I took my research to Berlin, assuming that the Germanic origins²⁴ of curative education conveyed it a place of prominence there. I discovered a vibrant city with mostly young and rapidly changing cityscapes. A striking element during my time there was the omnipresence of monuments erected as a public apology and in memory of the Jewish genocide of Second World War. Even more strikingly the other victims of the ethnic cleansing undertaken by the Nazi regime had all been ignored. Gay and queer activists were forcing the council into amending this in the name of their communities²⁵. And too Germans of African origin, travellers and people with learning differences and disabilities, all of whom were shown no remembrance or respect, if the cityscapes of Berlin were anything to go by. This increased my resolution to give the latter a voice by lending them an ear. Why had they been ignored sixty years on? Was it because their voice did not matter? Was it to do with the fact that they are given little credit in the more official and serious world of politics and public decision making, outside of the realm of capital production?

Because of the long and complicated legal procedure required in order to visit, let alone film in a Steiner school, centre or Camphill village, my attempts to take curative education back to its Germanic origins in Berlin were vain. I soon envisaged my cousin's Camphill village as a possible outlet for this project. However, I was uncomfortable with the idea of making a documentary on members of my family. I felt the ethical issues at stake when making a documentary are complicated enough with relative strangers and new acquaintances. Nevertheless, during a conversation with the filmmaker and producer Don Boyd²⁶, I was strongly encouraged to follow this path of research since an in-depth and reliable knowledge of the story and situation at hand was more easily available or accessible in this way. Indeed Don Boyd underwent similar processes when making *Donald and Luba: A Family Movie* (Don Boyd, 2000), a film about his parents.

Thus my research on liminal, *enqueered* and/or *self-queering* bodies and their relationship with cityscapes took on a new direction. I sought to investigate a queer

²⁴ Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925) and Karl König (1902-1966) were both Austrian Nationals with strong academic & professional links to Berlin

²⁵ Since April 2008, a monument has been erected in the centre of Berlin in remembrance of the homosexual and gender variant genocide of the Second World War.

²⁶ Don Boyd is an Honorary Professor of the Department of Film Studies at the University of Exeter. Thus I have had meetings with him on several occasions to discuss my PhD research

community often overlooked or ignored by the lesbian, gay, bi, transsexual and transgender community. This promised to take us beyond a mere alteration of case study towards uncovering new modes of oppression, exclusion and resistance (the Foucauldian articulation of power). Drawing on the non-linearity of history and social interaction as investigated by Deleuze, it slowly becomes evident that every community interacts and exchanges with others. In fact most communities overlap. Consequently, is it not highly possible that some people with learning differences and disabilities may identify as gay, bi, trans or more generally as queer? More to the point, if human nature is closer to queer than any fixed definition or sense of self, then surely each one of us can discover and explore our own disabilities. If the cognitive patterns of matter itself are relatively unpredictable as revealed by quantum physics (Nadeau & Kafatos, 2001) then one size, one system, one organisation cannot be appropriate for the majority if for any one at all. In fact this denies the human race its diversity and complexity and suggests finally that embracing our differences and adapting our society to be more inclusive and accessible is the only policy that can connect us to one another in a constructive and progressive manner.

Drawing on personal observations, it appears clear that whilst omitting any sense of imperative, it is nonetheless crucial to increase exposure in order to trivialise the *other*. And this is in order to not so much rob one of one's plight as to create a queer space where specific differences and distinct identities do not bear the stigma pertaining to western modes of categorising, labelling and opposition through binary codes of interpretation. It is crucial to challenge these very modes which are otherwise persistently imposed on our definitions of self and other.

Interlude

Before entering the body of this second chapter, I wish to raise an important detail. As Judith Butler (1990;1994;1997) has laid out in most of her work corpus, our basic language itself reiterates the confining notions of hetero-normative and patriarchal hegemony. How can we turn away from the fact that the post-gender existence and its expansion neither belongs to the realms of *he* or *she* and certainly not *it*? I was confronted with a simple yet essential question by a fellow student two years ago: "It's all very well to state that the transgender and an increasing number of transsexuals feel they are excluded by the discursive gender binary but what other more suitable terms have they to offer?" Embarrassingly astonished by this comment

I had no better answer to provide than to blame past and current language for this lack of consideration. In effect, she was right, claimants had to propose some suggestions if this discursive obstacle were ever to be amended. Inspiration to remedy this limitation came quite recently in the reading of *Woman on the Edge of Time* (Piercy, 2001). Part science-fiction, part fantasy fiction, part social-realism and social critique, this novel offers a future society where gender norms have either disappeared or conflated into one human gender depending on the reader's interpretation. Correlated with this change comes more adequate language so that the denominations *he* and *she* are replaced by *person*, while *him/his* and *her/hers* are replaced by *per/pers*. This queer ideal offers a simple yet effective means to blur the imposed discursive gender boundaries we operate with.

To distract us no further from the subject at hand, let us explore the life apprenticeship and knowledge thus acquired of another tribe of the queer: people with learning differences and disabilities.

Normal & abnormal

To start with the initial premise on which the term *queer* applies to many distinct groups of society, let us borrow from Foucault to help establish this: “[i]n our present centralized scientific society, wrote Foucault, ‘when a judgement cannot be framed in terms of good and evil, it is stated in terms of normal and abnormal’” (Nadeau & Kafatos, 2001:169). And responsively if we have come to understand and value the re-appropriation of the word *queer*²⁷, it no longer refers to abnormality but rather to authentic strands of human nature long denied a place in normality, even if *queer* also questions and undermines the very concept of normality.

Discursive powers of exclusion and stigmatisation

Following an interview with the director of Equata – Exeter²⁸ on disability in June 2006, the importance of the terminology used when referring to a person with disabilities was emphasised and put under scrutiny. Initially sceptic I soon began to

²⁷ “Queer theory and politics have sought to reclaim the word *queer*, not so much to cleanse it of its negative associations as to challenge the assumptions that these associations are in fact negative – thus immorality may be a challenge to repressive morality, deviance a rejection of the straight and thus narrow, and what is considered sordid and disgusting may in fact be exciting, risky, a life lived to the full on the edge.” (Dyer 2002:6-7)

²⁸ The South West Disability Arts Development Agency, now renamed Kaleido

realise how determining this would be to my approach of disability. As Mason (1990) explains: "Calling someone a 'Down's' or 'spina bifida' child makes the child no more than their condition." My reasoning developed to relate to the implications of the discourse with which people with disabilities are faced. Undeniably, *wheel chair bound* comes across as condescending and fatalistic whereas *wheel chair user* effaces the idea of an unbalanced division, in my mind at least. Similarly, a given person named John is better defined by John *has* Down's syndrome as opposed to John *is* Down's syndrome. John has many other personal traits that distinguish him from other people with Down's Syndrome. As Mason has pointed out, an inappropriate lexicon denies anyone with a disability their individuality. The mainstream of the medical field has long reproduced this oversimplification and homogenisation. If the very terminology used to describe one is both undermining and inaccurate, then perhaps quite logically, an appropriate approach to understanding one is already greatly biased. Lane & Stratford (1985) expand quite convincingly on this arbitrary and unrealistic process. They relate the research of Rynders et al. when proving the flaw of I.Q. tests when applied to people with Down's syndrome:

*In their study, Rynders did not dwell on the validity of IQ assessments for people with Down syndrome. Yet it is simply invalid to use tests designed to measure the capacities of one group to assess another group who may have had different experiences and have a different range of interests and abilities. And, even if tests were used which enable one to make generalisations about the group of people with Down's syndrome, this does not imply that such statements are true of individuals; that is the clinical or positivist fallacy. Generalisations do not apply to individuals unless what is true in general is also true of each individual*²⁹. (:12)

If *queer* has come to signify one's resistance to unfair treatment and false or inaccurate assumptions then people with learning differences and disabilities are also concerned by queer theory. And this for the simple reason that the denominations assigned to them have only very recently become accurate. Indeed, as late as the early 1980s it was common place to refer to people with learning differences as debiles, imbeciles and idiots, especially in the medical field. However, a more human approach in professional involvement gradually rendered such belittling denominations inappropriate and redundant. The reappraisal of the subject at hand and the whole person involved leads to a logical privileging of the social model

²⁹ My emphasis

over the medical model to encourage a moving away from excluding and essentially derogatory terms. But what do we mean by medical model and social model?

To help explain this distinction it is important to put the word *disabled* under scrutiny. The medical model refers to people with disabilities as disabled due to their condition. The social model on the other hand only accepts the term disabled insofar as social exclusion creates this disability. For instance, if I were to remove my glasses, my visual disability becomes immediately apparent and cumbersome. Yet we live in a society that provides people with limited vision the means to maintain independent lives. Why then should wheel chair users be denied this same right when buildings and cities are not made fully accessible with lifts and ramps next to or as opposed to stairs? In the words of Mason & Rieser (1990): "The social model of disability identifies prejudice and discrimination in institutions, policies, structures and environments of society as the principle reason for our exclusion, rather than the particular impairment of the individual." (:1)

Another fundamental difference between the social model and the medical model is found in their respective modes of therapy. Whereas the medical profession heavily relies on medication to alleviate symptoms, by this implying that the ills cannot be overcome, the social approach relies on adequate activities, social interaction and a close humane rapport to improve concentration, patience and sociability, thus enabling or facilitating the development of an individual's skills towards a greater independence, that is to say a greater freedom of choice. This relatively recent change of methods in mainstream medical sciences and care work has long been advocated in curative education. Rudolf Steiner lay down the basic principles of curative education in the early 1920s, while a ramification of this practice was instigated by Karl König in the early 1940s under the name of the Camphill communities. Steiner's research and subsequent work at the turn of the 19th century sought to prove the irremediable symbiosis between mind and matter, tapping into the development of the human soul and the reality of our spirituality. This new philosophy which he referred to as anthroposophy led him to implement its implications in practice as far ranging as architecture, biodynamic agriculture and education. Indeed, the underlying ideology affected every aspect of lifestyle.

Anthroposophy

To give a brief explanation on the nature of anthroposophy, its tools and its deep rethinking of social interaction and human development, let us first point to the progressive virtue of Steiner's principles, evident already in his doctoral thesis:

...we do not want knowledge of the kind that has become frozen once and for all into rigid academic rules, preserved in encyclopaedias valid for all time. Each of us claims the right to start from the facts that lie nearest to hand, from his own immediate experiences, and thence ascend to a knowledge of the whole universe. We strive after certainty in knowledge, but each in his own way. (Steiner, 1964: XXVIII)

Thus did Steiner refuse to divorce theory from practice and practicality in his constant strife to promote their complementarity. As he warns his reader: "One must be able to confront an idea and experience it; otherwise one will fall into its bondage." (Steiner, 1964:XXX). For this exact reason, processuality, or the idea that learning must develop through practical shared experience over time, is of prime importance in the application of anthroposophy. During my own fieldwork, a member of the Chatou Institute for Curative Education (Institut Pédagogie Curative, I.P.C Chatou, France) informed me that, provided I was granted the right to attend the centre's daily running, I would have to envisage a placement no shorter than one week. This week would barely be enough to discover, feel and explore the forces at work through a personal process as opposed to a series of dogmatic interviews where the experience of the process would be lost. Mind would be divorced from matter to no avail. I came to respect and value this attitude as poignant, intriguing and engaging in the way participant-observation in the anthropological mode of research can provide a deeper understanding through interaction and shared experience.

Let us now study more closely the role of anthroposophy in education for people with learning differences, that is to say the body and findings of curative education.

'Curative education'

Karl König and the Camphill movement he gave birth to followed the lead of Rudolf Steiner in humanising and valuing disability through the social model rather than the medical model. As König (1966) explains:

If, for instance, in the diagnosis of a child's retarded development, the cause is traced to a defeat in a certain section of the brain, that is a medical diagnosis and not one of curative education. If observation of the same child reveals an intelligence-quotient of a certain degree, then again we are not dealing with a diagnosis made by means of curative education, but by means of psychology. Certainly both are helpful, and in no circumstances should they be ignored, but they are not diagnoses that can be attributed to curative education.

Supposing that in the case of another child, whose behaviour shows symptoms of an aggressive character, these symptoms are judged to be due to the mother's wrong treatment of this patient during earliest childhood, such judgement is a matter of psychiatry, but not of curative educational diagnostics.

(...) There is something else. It is still more or less customary to classify retarded children according to the degree of their intelligence, thus dividing them into debiles, imbeciles and idiots. But as a rule this classification is being misused insofar as it is already taken as a diagnosis, and a child is simply declared debile or imbecile without the consultant doctor or psychologist taking the slightest trouble to put such a classification to the test on a sound diagnostic basis. This is the result of the fatal over-estimation of the intellect, which would forever take the degree of intelligence as a true measure for human values of existence. Thus it often happens that quite well-equipped children and juveniles are condemned to a life-long existence behind walls.

There is really no such thing as mental deficiency – at least I have never come across it during my twenty five years' practice of curative education³⁰. (in Pietzner, 1966:5-6)

This avant-garde attention as from the 1920s to constituents of society contrasts drastically with the dealings of the contemporary mainstream medical field who were confining 'mentally handicapped' patients (as they were then known) to psychiatric asylums thus stripping them of any self worth or any favorable prospects. König understood that in order to maximise the potential of a person with learning differences it was important to recreate a family environment in which this person could rely on a stable routine and a sense of security in relative familiarity with house parents and fellow housemates. In this instance, we can state that routine, far from being a killer (as Germaine Greer would have it (1987:XII)), is important to people with learning differences who often need or at least prefer regularity and clear organisation.

I have been repeatedly surprised to find literature relating to a more social and humane approach to disability generally from around the early 1960s to make no reference whatsoever to the pioneering work and understanding of disability proper to curative education. Yet, the Camphill movement was 25 years old at the time of the publication of *Aspects of Curative Education* (Pietzner, 1966), notwithstanding the early lectures of Steiner (1924) on Curative Education. I am still at a loss to justify this illogical lack of cohesion in the medical mainstream when curative education so

³⁰ My emphasis

clearly led the way to building efficient and productive communities of people with disabilities and co-workers or facilitators, regardless of their eventual clash of interests in terms of spirituality and private autonomy. The financial cost of carrying out such a project in mainstream care would spring up as the obvious obstacle and yet few mainstream establishments consider such a set up as desirable, if partly or completely unattainable nevertheless.

As touched upon in the introduction of this chapter, queer and marginal bodies experience forms of thinking and behaving characteristic of human nature, albeit in more pronounced forms. They often are aware of or at least live out truths about the human condition that many more integrated bodies are unaware of. Weihs (1966) elaborates on this (queer) fact:

To achieve a truly remedial curative education, we must reach a level of compassion and intuition where we can feel our way understandingly into the child's situation. This means not to observe and judge the child's condition merely, not only to assess, but to enter into that very condition. This possibility does open up to us when we learn to know child-handicap as the distortion or exaggeration of something we experience ourselves as a normal process of personality-unfolding or incarnation. In as much as we learn to appreciate large- and small-headedness as variations of the balanced middle condition, in as much as we observe that we ourselves are like the large-headed, over-sensitive yet incapable of moving, haughty and irritable and given to our dreams – when we awake in the early morning; in as much as we learn to liken the small-headed child to our own condition when late in the evening, we can just still plod along but not grasp new ideas – shall we find the way to this compassion and love, which is neither sentimental nor pitying, but leads to an understanding from which remedial action can spring. (in Pietzner, 1966:38-39)

In this approach room is constantly made to appreciate each child with learning differences in his/her individuality with his/her own personality and characteristics. The pioneering work of curative education also draws on the realities in the construction of the self uncovered by Freudian and Lacanian psycho-analysis, even if their definition of Ego here is nuanced to Deleuzian proportions: “The Ego reveals itself not as the bearer of hereditary patterns but on the contrary, of potentials which in the education of the handicapped child have to be seen, guided and freed.”(Müller-Wiedemann in Pietzner, 1966:45). Indeed the anthroposophical roots of curative education remind us that body and soul are intricately related so that any encounter with a person with disabilities echoes the notion: there is a soul here/ there's a person here, with its own identity, potentiality and will. The importance placed on an awareness of one's soul is often misunderstood and dismissed in the mainstream as obscure and esoteric, which goes against the ideas promoted by

Steiner whereby our spirituality is concrete and must be addressed as such in order to do more than alleviate symptoms and hence reach the foundations of one's being. König appeals to the reader on this topic by reminding us that: "hardly any professional psychologist would even think of using the word soul, although he bears the name in his own title; for psychology is the Greek word for knowledge of the soul." (in Pietzner, 1966:69)

We will undertake a more thorough breakdown and analysis of curative education in the second half of this chapter through our case study relating to the filmic research.

Mainstream: I'm not so dumb

Having set some background for a better understanding of curative education, its origins, theory and theory in practice, let us see where mainstream has finally caught up with the curative education ethos, why and how?

Firstly, Lane & Stratford's (1985) research shows that contemporaries of Rudolf Steiner were also at work to change society's outlook on disability, even if they, unlike Steiner and König after him, were unable to materialise a concrete outlet for this new perception. Indeed they quote Crookshank's 1913 publication as reading: "we should not suppose idiocy or imbecility to be a necessary concomitant or ingredient of 'mongolism'³¹." (in Lane & Stratford, 1985:9). The example of Brian Stratford (1985;1996) is particularly compelling since as a medical academic, his research publications on disability span two decades and prove to retain a certain continuum of belief and perception with regard to his understanding and validation of persons with disabilities. Although the medical model remains important in addressing modes of assistance and therapy in his work, thus still lagging behind the Steiner/König initiative, it maintains a progressive, egalitarian and constructive approach as the two following excerpts indicate: "Prejudice sustains stereotypes." (Lane & Stratford, 1985:15). And:

...it is not always useful to measure life in terms of its length, nor even in terms of intellectual, commercial or material success. Life is perhaps best perceived in terms

³¹ *Mongolism* was long used to refer to people with *Down Syndrome* or *Trisomy 21* due to their facial appearance deemed to be reminiscent of the Mongolian ethnicity. The denomination *Down's syndrome* is linked to John Langdon Down, the British doctor who described it in 1866. The denomination *Trisomy 21* is linked to Jérôme Lejeune, the French pediatrician and geneticist who identified the disorder as genetic due to the presence of all or part of a 21st chromosome. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Down_syndrome)

of the quality of relationships, of relative contentment, of a sense of relative achievement. Such a state of affairs can only be attained through acceptance, first of all by the immediate family and then by the community in which one lives. (Stratford & Gunn, 1996:4)

The main figure responsible for finally steering the medical mainstream towards a significant acknowledgement and, in an increasing number of cases, an adoption of the social model is undeniably the psychologist Howard Gardner (1984;1993) and his groundbreaking (for the medical mainstream at least) publication: *Frames of mind: the theory of multiple intelligences* (which was followed by: *Multiple intelligences: the theory in practice, a reader*). This book drawing on some fifteen years of research in cognitive psychology, cognitive creativity and education places particular emphasis on disability. It justifies the social model as a productive alternative or complement to medication. Moreover Gardner tackles the implications of the social model in practice to expose how previous methods repress the full development of the child with disabilities. In fact the multiple intelligences theory reveals disability as ability. Gardner supports this argument with key examples: “Tapping Jacob’s understanding of numbers in a context that was meaningful and familiar to him seemed to help elicit abilities that might otherwise have remained hidden.” (Gardner, 1993:87)

We are normal. We have a right to be here

As was recently brought to light by an acquaintance who works in the field of disability, the acceptable terminology today is ‘learning differences’, and no longer ‘learning difficulties’, which stands to reason. With this new denomination so arises a new bridge between self and other. As the philosophical prose *Desiderata*³² states, “you have a right to be here”. This right has been given little emphasis by society with regards to disability. A prime example of this remains the national school curriculum which inevitably reflects governmental school policies. No awareness has yet been raised in schools beyond the physiological peculiarities and traits of the body with Down’s syndrome, as studied in biology class. Not unlike the negation of any child’s queer potential and rights, so are most children unaware of or unable to deal with the disabled body and the different learning mind. If most businesses and companies

³² *You are a child of the universe, no less than the trees and the stars; you have a right to be here. - And whether or not it is clear to you, no doubt the universe is unfolding as it should.*
(Desiderata - anonymous)

today raise disability awareness for their staff and also indirectly for their customers, it seems obvious that this awareness could benefit the said community if raised sooner in a life. As Leeds (1992) remarks: "Racism is challenged in many schools. This general awareness has not even begun in most schools for disability". It is enough to state that sixteen years on from this publication, Leeds' words still ring true today.

Information and above all communication must be encouraged. Unfortunately it seems that science itself remains blinded by the will to eliminate certain cultures and communities, deemed as social drawbacks, accidents of nature and unnecessary complications. Thus does Smith's (1981) concern echo as a heavy forewarning: "The acceptance of a philosophy of elimination of Down's syndrome through abortion might represent a backing away from the search for ameliorative measures." (in Lane & Stratford 1985:17). Although a parent's right to know of this eventuality during the early months of pregnancy and decide accordingly cannot be denied, still it seems most parents are left by our current society to only fear and misunderstand their options and the essentially productive and constructive potential of any child with disabilities. Moreover, the idea of a parent's right to abort a disabled foetus raises other issues from another point of view. Lane & Stratford (1985) articulate this concern by quoting two disability rights activists:

Wolfensberg (1981) is amongst those who see a current emphasis on the elimination of the handicap as dangerously close to the euthanasia policies of Hitler's Germany. His point was emphatically supported by Micheline Mason (1982:26) herself born with brittle bones, who argued: "It is quite normal for some children to be born with disabilities. We are part of normal life... We will not go away. Nor will we stop shouting until the right to choose to live or die is ours, and ours alone." (:17)

Thus the motion should prioritise the integration of a legitimate part of human possibilities as opposed to its limitation and attainable avoidance. Otherwise what kind of undermining and destructive effects are people with disabilities put through? The psycho-analysis of disability reveals disturbing truths about what our current system is doing to the child with disabilities. It urges us to establish an informed process of communication and understanding. Mason (1990) introduces the reader to this requirement compellingly:

We can live without patronage, pity and sentimentality, but we cannot live without closeness, respect, and co-operation from other people. Above all, we need you to

refuse to accept any exclusion of one group of humans from another as anything else but an unacceptable loss for all concerned.

Understanding

The difficulties a family may encounter when realising and accepting a child's disabilities are not without consequences on the child's development. If the early formative years are determining in one's construction of self and one's relative sense of stability and well-being, then the psycho-analyst and counsellor, Hodges and Sheppard (2003) respectively, argue that counselling is crucial in uncovering these issues and addressing them. Feelings of inadequacy felt by the child with disabilities as well as by an often unprepared and misinformed family reflect patterns of behaviour on a greater scale. As Hodges and Sheppard (2003) devise:

Ferenczi (1929) describes how people with learning disabilities can come to represent a receptacle for feelings of hatred or disability in their families. The learning disabled person then becomes projected into, and Ferenczi thought that this led to their susceptibility to minor physical ailments such as coughs and colds, and more significant illnesses such as epilepsy. It is likely that this process is not just confined within families, but that wider society projects feelings of inadequacy, disability, ugliness and insecurity into the section of the population who represent disability. (:36)

The identifying of a scapegoat is nothing new and occurs regularly in life and in history when the blame is either too complicated or too close to home. So does the *other* bear the fictitious marks imposed on it by misunderstanding, and thereby society's frustration faced with a community that requires, and this with good cause, different systems of learning and different routes of communication in order to thrive and fit in, to ultimately offer the best of themselves. These different routes of communication once achieved or at least opened up promise a more fruitful exchange with a person with disabilities. If understanding a community and a (sub)culture is the true ambition of any ethnographer, and in my case ethnographic filmmaker, thus must the said community's inner worlds (psyche, soul, subconscious, dreams, fantasies, what one says or believes one does), both individual and collective, be given as close attention as its outer worlds (reality, activities, awareness, conscience, what one actually does). Therefore, by embracing the realism of human nature and the human constitution when working with patients with learning differences, Hodges and Sheppard's work on counselling adults with learning differences and disabilities mirrors anthroposophy's emphasis on the human soul, that is to say, disabled or not, there is a person here, there is a soul here. They

suggest how counselling remains essential in the field of disabilities even if it must evolve to better adapt to the target client and/or patient. As this passage elaborates:

'normal' adults tend to have access to a greater range of vocabulary, and may be more able to verbally communicate their experiences and transferences to the counsellor. For this reason the process of transference, the unconscious, and often wordless, communication of feelings, can take on greater significance in the counselling relationship with a client with learning disabilities. This significance is similar to contemporary child psychotherapy, where all aspects of communication are closely attended to. So play, use of eye contact, looking, drawing, body movement and tones of voice can all be important sources of information about the relationship created with the client, and therefore provide information about the client's inner world. (Hodges & Sheppard, 2003:23)

Having thus established broader means of communication with such patients, Hodges & Sheppard, drawing on their professional experience, provide the reader with an accessible and reliable path to better understand a person with learning differences. In the same strand, they bring to light another general misconception of disability: that of age and maturity. A disabled person is often assigned a supposed mental age alongside his/her real age. This label remains dangerously inaccurate insofar as the needs of this said mental age³³ rarely inhabit a body with matching hormonal, physical and behavioural needs. Hence the mental age idea proves to be quite misleading and of narrow scope. As Sinason (2003) painstakingly explains:

...cognitive and emotional intelligence are not necessarily linked, and it is possible for emotional intelligence to develop age appropriately whilst still having severe cognitive impairment. The reverse is also true; it is possible to be very intelligent, but to struggle with emotions, both in recognising and experiencing feelings... This is not to say that the two develop completely independently, or that changes in one area do not have an impact on the other, but rather to recognise that they can exist independently of each other.
(in Hodges & Sheppard, 2003:37)

Once again, the observation of an-**other** community eventually leads back to us. In unveiling a group specific truth³⁴, one may often find unsuspected truths relevant to a wider group if not humanity itself. To return briefly to the limitations of the use of mental age equivalents for people with learning differences, the foremost error is to apply one group or (sub)culture's standards to an-**other**, expecting exact or credible readings. Indeed the fact that people with learning differences have life

³³ Mental age here refers to the assumption that a person with learning differences can be delineated by a mental age presumed equivalent to that of a child without learning differences.

³⁴ *Nota Bene*: According to Deleuze, in philosophical thought "Time has always put the notion of truth in crisis" (Stivale, 2005:152)

cycles with stages, such as adolescence and older age with associated feelings is often overlooked or minimised. In order to understand one better, the effort must ultimately be, as the expression enounces it, to put oneself in another's shoes; that is to say to look at a problem from a new perspective and the most relevant perspective often turns out to be that of the person studied and engaged with. In so doing many elements deemed minor become crucial. Thence Freud was able to identify a process both frequent and spontaneous in the field of learning differences: that of *secondary gain*. Hodges and Sheppard (2003) relate his findings to broader and more recent research:

Freud's (1901) concept of secondary gain, contributed towards the recognition of the process of secondary handicap (Sinason 1992). Freud described the idea of secondary gain as being the process whereby a person's symptoms are used to their advantage. This idea has resonance with Sinason and Stoke's work on the defensive process of secondary handicap often utilised by people with learning disabilities. Secondary handicap is a process that occurs when original or primary disability is exaggerated as a way of defending one's self against the painful feelings of difference, thereby making other people 'stupid' for not realising this is an exaggeration. So in secondary handicap, people might consciously or unconsciously exaggerate aspects of their disabilities, such as voice, movements or body distortion, in order to have control over the disability and over other people; they have a 'secret triumph' over their fooling everyone else, they are not really that handicapped (:100).

However playful and humorous this trick may be, it only emphasises the likely occurrence of wrong judgements. This miscomprehension can have more nefarious consequences. A clearly defined disability often includes an array of interlinked disabilities: psychological, cognitive and physiological. However in spite of many shared similarities within one specific disability such as Asperger's syndrome or Down's syndrome, genetic and character diversity remains true to any individual. Therefore identifying the nature and origin of a disabled person's issues, complaints or mood swings can prove complicated. These complications can lead to *diagnostic overshadowing*:

This is a process whereby symptoms or behaviours are either viewed as less important than the learning disability itself, or where the symptoms and behaviours are directly attributed to the learning disability rather than considering the presence of a psychiatric difficulty. (Reiss 1995 in Hodges & Sheppard, 2003:101)

The Camphill methods of community living and life sharing encourage a close contact with and an in depth knowledge of each resident, thus limiting quite

considerably the possibility of diagnostic overshadowing. Let us explore the example at hand which constitutes the filmic component and filmic research of this chapter.

AS IF! (Garel, 2006-07)

Pre-production: context

In uncovering different forms of communication to better connect and exchange with people with learning differences and the people who live and/or work with them, film appeared as the next form of communication. As Deleuze (2005) explains: “This is where the visual and auditory language of cinema exceeds that of the written or spoken word: the crystalline time images where words are unnecessary, and pre-linguistic signifiers open alternatives for engaging with the world.” (in Stivale, 2005:153). Film is thus another form of communication that can tap into a more multi-dimensional experience, and as a result provoke a deeper, more complex response from the person with learning differences. But let us start with the pre-production of *AS IF!* (Garel, 2006-07). My first intention was to go to Berlin where Steiner’s work found a good reception during his early lectures there. I hoped to build a network over several visits to the city and thus obtain permission for onsite shooting in a Steiner or Camphill Centre. Admittedly, the Camphill movement instigated by its founder Karl König started in the United Kingdom, yet Steiner’s life and works initially kept firmer ground in the German speaking world of the late 19th and early 20th century. It is worth mentioning that in 1930 König was appointed paediatrician at the Rudolf Steiner-inspired Schloß Pilgramsheim institute in Strzegom, former German-Poland, where he exercised his profession until 1936³⁵.

During my first trip to Berlin in late December 2005 and early January 2006 I made the acquaintance of the politician Marcus Albrecht. He is a member of the leftist party SPD (Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands, i.e. social democrat party of Germany), councillor of the Berlin district of Neukölln and insurance advisor to the embassies. This friendship taught me much about Berlin: the Berlin population, Berlin politics, Berlin culture and Berlin nightlife. Marcus kindly offered to be my host and invited me to live in his flat anytime I was in Berlin. I developed a growing passion for the forces at work in this capital and returned in April and July 2006. In spite of all that I learnt and enjoyed during those three trips, they weren’t enough to

³⁵ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Karl_K%C3%B6nig wikipedia.org [21.02.08]

obtain authorisation to film at a Steiner centre for young children with learning differences that I had been in contact with. Marcus' contacts may have pushed things further but running out of time and faced with a private establishment where Marcus' influence was more limited, I had to give up on the idea.

Fortunately, following several discussions with the filmmaker and producer Don Boyd, I had come up with an alternative plan. Don suggested I use the contacts I had within my own family for the film project. Indeed my cousin Hannah Curtis has been living in the Camphill village of Glasallt Fawr³⁶ for eight years. My close bond to her and the family stories around her slowly appeared as great assets for a more in depth filming process, as well as the chance to film Hannah's everyday life at Glasallt Fawr. However, extensive and time consuming legal requirements clashed with the fact that the film project had obtained a bursary from the Phoenix Media Centre in Exeter which meant that certain deadlines had to be met. Whilst not abandoning the idea of sojourning in Glasallt Fawr, my options became more limited with regards to the film I was contracted to produce by October 2006. Given these circumstances my final trip to Berlin in 2006, where I captured glimpses of the cityscape of Hallesches Tor, was followed by a family break in La Rochelle, France, where my parents and Hannah were taking a camping holiday. My parents are Hannah's aunty (Terry) and uncle (Philippe) and my mother is also Hannah's godmother. Fortunately and fittingly, they have been very close throughout Hannah's life.

Home Anthropology and Shared Anthropology

Before arranging to work with Hannah on a film project in La Rochelle, I had had to confront the advantages and drawbacks of home anthropology, the study of individuals close to us or community systems and cultures close to our own if not our own. Thus this project was penetrating the closest home anthropology possible: that of one's own family. My previous experiences had left me with the feeling that filming and working with close friends and family as participants was flawed. Out of love and respect for them or even embarrassment and reserve, the documentary filmmaker may often have to omit important elements and otherwise compelling moments of tension from the film. The risks are emotionally higher and more disconcerting. Yet

³⁶ The residential centre of Glasallt Fawr has existed as its own unit since 2006. Previously it was attached to Colleg Elidyr, a Camphill community that supports a specialist further education college for young people with learning differences.

the friendships created during fieldwork also command respect. Nonetheless the camera's power to become a key witness that participants find themselves wanting to talk to, confide in or perform for, works better with no added complications. Although the novelty of this experience with close relatives was refreshing and enriching, it remains that any perceived breach of trust or half-hearted approval from the participants after viewing *AS IF!* can be more hurtful than the common half-hearted approval or disapproval of any film participant viewing your take on their story and lives.

Let us return to the pre-production and shooting of *AS IF!* Following our trip to La Rochelle, Hannah and I headed back to Wales. It became clear at this point that despite having captured revealing snippets of Hannah's behaviour, personality and outlook on life, and despite witnessing moments where Hannah was bringing elements of curative education to life in her creative and performative modes of expression, communication and embodiment, I had essentially only beautiful sceneries and talking heads on my tapes: a danger the documentary film form often flirts with. I had to go to Glasallt Fawr in order to see, observe and partake in the pragmatic, day to day reality of curative education at Camphill. In the meantime, the *two short nights* film festival hosted by the Phoenix centre, Exeter, early December required I compile some semblance of a filmic research piece. Interviewing Hannah's mother promised to tell more about her childhood and the obstacles encountered, revealing society's inadequacies towards disability and upbringing. A talking heads film was my only alternative at this point in time and there remained another point of view to include: that of a professional curative educator.

Chronologically speaking, with regards to the actual filming, I had obtained an interview with Cornelia in my home town of Chatou (Paris region, France), in the spring of 2006. A friend of mine from the lycée (senior school/college) I had gone to had attended a Steiner school from the age of four to eighteen, the Ecole Perceval in Chatou. She arranged a meeting for me with her mother, a past acquaintance, who is a eurhythmy³⁷ teacher at Perceval. Moreover the town of Chatou, first cradle of

³⁷ Eurhythmy is a performing art also used as a dance therapy and in education, especially in Waldorf schools. It was originated by Rudolf Steiner in the early 20th century, who described it as an "art of the soul" (Steiner 1984: III in <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eurhythmy>). Indeed, it is often regarded as the embodiment of language and integrates practical, artistic, and intellectual elements, and is coordinated with *natural rhythms of everyday life*. The Waldorf approach emphasises imagination in learning, developing thinking that includes a creative as well as an analytic component... Schools and teachers are given considerable freedom to define curricula within collegial structures. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Waldorf_education)

Waldorf education³⁸ in France, has a centre for curative education, the I.P.C. (Institut de Pédagogie Curative, i.e. institute of curative education), where Cornelia also works as a eurythmy teacher. This contact provided my project with a more informed expression of the Steiner ideology, moral code and practice in the field of disability. Pertinently, Cornelia insisted that anthroposophical education relied on processuality and both lived and shared experience so that anything she may evoke was but a hint, devoid of any communicable depth without seeing and experiencing things first hand. This early exchange whilst proving invaluable in attempting to create a multidimensional documentary for the *two short nights* film festival also confirmed the most basic fact in anthropological research: the importance of being there³⁹. In fact as an ongoing process of research, creating contacts, and stretching a project made of several projects through various inputs and cross-fertilisation, *AS IF!* became a film that begets films, which lies at the very foundation of shared anthropology.

It is perhaps advisable to digress back into a short theoretical paragraph here since before and beyond home anthropology, *AS IF!*, like any other of my film projects, relies on shared anthropology in using film as a tool of research but predominantly as a new way of experiencing research and thus as a new way of seeing. Stoller (1991) confirms this idea in his comments on the methods and work of the shared anthropology pioneer Jean Rouch:

Films like Turu et Bitti are at once fruits of [Jean Rouch's] commitment to "shared anthropology" – without his long-term immersion in studying Shonghai society, he would not have known how to film this procession ritual – and fruitful sources for asking further questions, receiving further answers, and making further films that advance the enterprise of "shared anthropology." (in Rothman, 94:1997)

Stoller clearly indicates here how shared anthropology should by nature open new doors and both suggest and encourage new path ways towards a better understanding and a more informed appreciation – through experience, personal involvement and application – of other systems, lives and experiences in all their diversity and richness. Thus similarly the undertaking of the research film project, *AS IF!* went from lead to lead and grew from contribution to contribution before I finally obtained a short residency to discover the Camphill movement from inside, that is to

³⁸ Waldorf education (or Steiner or Steiner-Waldorf education) is a pedagogy based upon the educational philosophy of Rudolf Steiner, the founder of anthroposophy.

³⁹ This is why Part III: Being There was eventually attached to my bursary film in order to create a thorough and more coherent research report.

say whilst living in a Camphill village as a participant-observer. Having answered all the legal requirements early 2007, I was eventually granted the right to stay at Glasallt Fawr. The management team scheduled a meeting during which I presented my intentions and agreed to let me film the day to day lives and activities of Glasallt Fawr. Following recent house meetings, only three residents reserved the right not to be filmed at any point of my stay. This was a glorious outcome in a village of some forty residents. The time was now to let things take their course and let the camera observe. However, I, the camera man and guest, was made to feel very welcome and became seamlessly involved in the life of this Camphill village. Since staff and residents are all involved in the daily activities and constantly interacting with each other, I was made over as a resident, both helper and *helpee* with no other procedure than 'welcome and lets get on with it'. The filming process was thus mostly spontaneous. In effect the camera operated in three distinct and yet overlapping manners. Firstly I set out to make it a tool of research, a fifth limb of mine, as it were, carrying it with me at all times to confirm the association in the participants' minds. Interestingly, with the exception of the three residents who insisted on not being filmed, all the other residents were quite keen to perform in front of the camera, with Fiona going as far as addressing it as its own separate entity, "goodnight camera" (Garel 2007). And so secondly, the camera became an (inter)actor, and in Hannah's case particularly, the camera was perceived as an instigator. Anytime it was assumed to be on, a conversation ensued between the camera and a participant with me as the occasional intermediary or even interpreter. In their eyes, I was clearly separate from the camera. Thirdly, the camera acted as a new form of dialogue and communication between residents. This took place when some co-workers and I organised several film workshops. These workshops involved my filming residents filming and filming each other. I had brought a spare camcorder, smaller and easier to use than my own, following a suggestion from Birgit⁴⁰ before my arrival. It was important not to lose sight that this film should endeavour to give the residents a voice from their own point of view where possible.

⁴⁰ Birgit was the housemother of Nodffa Barcud, one of the houses of the village. Each house has a housemother and housefather who stand as the house managers and live on site. Some co-workers are young students on a sabbatical also living on site in the camphill tradition. Since 2006, however, with new governmental recognition came the imposition of a rota system with some co-workers coming from the outside, that is to say the broader care sector.

The idea of giving participants the means to tell their own story from the first person was pioneered by the filmmaker Jean Rouch in *Moi, Un Noir* (1958), and stands today as a more recent approach in the tradition of documentary filmmaking. Yet this change of optic calls upon a new perception of home anthropology since by giving the participants a camera through which or with which to tell their own story, they are producing home anthropology and whether the instigator remains involved or not, an invaluable *mise-en-abîme* may then proceed and develop. Thus and consequently the final angle of home anthropology pertinent to its definition and re-evaluation is reaction and reflexivity, the moment when as Jean Rouch and Edgar Morin convey at the end of *Chroniques d'un été* (Rouch & Morin 1961) participants are filmed reacting to having seen – or seeing themselves – on film. This remains to be captured for *AS IF!* when residents and staff from Glasallt Fawr come to Exeter for a public screening of *AS IF!* later this year 2008. Nevertheless, by filming themselves and their surroundings and by directing many sections of the film, both directly and indirectly, intentionally and unintentionally, several *mises-en-abîme* take place in *AS IF!* This links their own home anthropology to a shared anthropology, putting intertextuality into play. By this I mean to refer to the quality bestowed to meaning when different voices of narration collaborate or cohabit within a scene or sequence.

Voices of narration

The choice to include footage of occurrences captured by residents, captured by staff, and captured by myself, provided the film with several points of view and several distinct affinities with the environment in which the filming took place. This implies that the narrator and/or director are/is multi-faced as opposed to multiple. Indeed I remained the only editor, thus imposing a certain wholeness or at least coherence over several points of view and essentially several subtexts. After all if queer theory is at the foundations of this thesis on queer bodies and queer perspectives, its scope, whilst often specific, must remain relatively broad and fluid. And this need not necessarily be at the expense of subjectivity, an invaluable approach to realities, and through these in turn, to reality. Accordingly I once again take full responsibility for the subjective identity of this film. Besides, taking inspiration from the first chapter, ethnographic film should confront the unavoidable subjective nature of film. This needn't equate to letting it blow out of proportion uncontrollably. However, as the successful filmmaker Nick Broomfield's post-1988 work has shown,

being honest, realistic and embracing of one's overarching subjectivity saves the viewer as well as the participants and filmmaker himself from gross misconceptions such as the idea of 'truth' conveyed as opposed to 'my truth' or 'my understanding of their/the truth'. In this manner, when a documentary filmmaker such as Michael Moore, for instance, allows his subjectivity to drastically distort what is captured and impose a severely strict agenda on the filming process⁴¹, at least he does not run away from his part of the blame since he is omnipresent and identifiable visually and audably throughout his documentaries. I have found it sufficient to be acknowledged by the participants in conversation and body language so that the camera and the filmmaker may occasionally merge as one same entity, as well as and more powerfully still, be perceived as two very distinct entities. When this happens, the focus remains on the participant(s) without neutralising the ultimate bias awarded the filmmaker by the very nature of his direction and choice of editing. Yet, although I firmly believe that *cinéma vérité*⁴² should never deny its intrinsic subjective nature and value, it is still a compelling form of documentary filmmaking. It allows the participants to speak and react freely. The film director becomes a friend in conversation, whether audible or not, so that he also becomes a participant. Thence can a more open field of expression and sharing be created. Let us use a seminal example from the ground breaking American movement of *direct cinema*⁴³, that of *Grey Gardens* (A. & D. Maysles, 1975). *Grey Gardens* gives us an insight into the lives of Edith and Edie Bouvier, a mother and daughter who are the aunt and cousin of the former first lady Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy Onassis. They live in a twenty eight bedroom house on Long Island, abandoned and reclusive. Amidst the portrayal of self-imposed appalling living conditions and certain forms of social malaise and inadequacy soon apparent in the participants facing the camera, a surprising experience emerges for the viewer. This *direct cinema* documentary engages us psychologically and emotionally whilst remaining a classic example of purist documentary cinema. This is achieved through the development of the filmmakers' friendship with and attachment to their participants, who in turn become themselves narrators and directors. In effect, towards the end of the film little Edie tells the

⁴¹ See *Roger and Me* (Moore, 1989), *Bowling for Columbine* (Moore, 2002), *Fahrenheit 9/11* (Moore, 2004)

⁴² Traditionally defined as the *fly-on-the-wall* type documentary, which captures & conveys events with minimal interference from the filmmaking crew. However as we have touched upon, Jean Rouch, the founder and pioneer of *cine-vérité* would nuance this very definition as being in contradiction with the personal involvement and application required by the (filmic) researcher.

⁴³ The American answer to *ciné vérité*

camera(man) to look out the window and so does the camera immediately obey. This points to the open field of expression and sharing in question. All participants either side of the camera partake in a common experience where spontaneity and unforced or unimposed channels of discovery convey feeling, emotion and sensation in a quasi-objective and relatively authentic fashion. The catch in this type of *ciné-vérité* becomes to let the reality and full extent of human nature be not so much 'caught' as experienced by all parties that come to produce and/or influence meaning in and on a film. The following list of these parties is never reliably exhaustive yet the main pillars of meaning include the participants either side of the camera, the camera person, the director, the editor, the target audience, other audiences, the presenter, the advertiser, the promoter, the spectator(s), the viewer(s).

In this respect, the style of research and filming used in *AS IF!* allows for a broad cohabitation and exchange therein of voices of narration, mostly overlapping and complementary. To return to the example of *Grey Gardens*, it illustrates how the camera in documentary becomes alive, in some sense as distinct from its operator, rendering the meaning of the word director more limited.

I now wish to deconstruct *AS IF!*, paying close attention to the choices and implications of film structure.

***AS IF!* Film structure**

Due to unforeseen circumstances and delays, four separate filming moments construct this three-part documentary or triptych. I had not expected the piece to be as long in the first instance, but different opportunities as well as closed off routes led me into more complex product than I had initially envisioned. A complexity which undoubtedly arises from the more personal thread which runs through the film process than I had originally intentioned.

Even so, the personal story does not overwhelm, in my view. Thus, whilst Hannah's testimony is a key thread, so too is Fiona's and to a greater or lesser extent those of Miles, Victoria, Tim and Birgit. Moreover, testimonies in the first part of the film of practitioners of Curative Education function clearly in a balanced way with Hannah's mum's interview at the end of this first part. Ultimately, the film has a coherence which works to give us a rich sense of the immense value of Curative Education and the Camphill Centres. The way it is filmed and edited also, I hope,

present us with a rich tapestry of bodies of differences that matter. Thus in a summative form, these parts were:

- Attempting to film at the Institut de Pédagogie Curative (I.P.C. Chatou, France), obtaining an interview with Mme Babin, the director of the I.P.C, and finally obtaining a filmed conversation with a member of staff, Cornelia, a eurythmy teacher.
- Spending a week in La Rochelle (France) camping with Hannah and family, and filming.
- Spending a weekend in Barry (Wales) to interview Hannah's mother, Sue, on Hannah's childhood.
- Spending eight days in Glasallt Fawr living and filming on site.

As the time came to decide how to re-cut these sections and what to include in the chapter, the role and importance of each period of filming became clear. However Hannah's time in La Rochelle and the story of Hannah's childhood in her hometown both specifically addressed the telling of Hannah's story from her and her family's point of view. They stand as a cohesive part: Hannah's story. Although I had initially chosen to show Hannah on holiday before labelling her as someone with Asperger syndrome to the spectator through the interview with Sue thus causing immediate prejudice, a meeting with Don Boyd encouraged me to take the side of clarity. My initial research in Berlin contributed to the film project through the visual art clips captured on the streets of Hallesches Tor. Paired with Cornelia's discourse, they addressed the ethos and touched upon the methods and modes of practice used following anthroposophical thought. This also seemed to hold a place in the unravelling of the Steiner and Camphill approach to learning differences.

Then came the final film piece, which I had originally intended to be the first and only documentary film, the ethnographic and participant-observer film: *Part III Being there*⁴⁴. As anthropology advocates participant-observation as its prime tool of research, so do I avoid the expression 'observational film'. Indeed both the camera as its own character in the filming process and myself as a person became willing, communicative and interactive participants in *Part III: Being there*. As the words of Jean Rouch keep whispering, the camera acts upon and affects who and what it is filming whether directly or simply in the way it will convey them to the viewer within

⁴⁴ As aforementioned the time constraints relating to my phoenix media bursary and the delays encountered, both legal and administrative, to obtain access to Glasallt Fawr affected my original plans.

the limits of a frame, a particular proximity and focus. Thus can it never merely observe as though it could stand unnoticed or without any influence on who and what is being captured. Therefore with the exception perhaps of the footage recorded on judiciously hidden cctv cameras – the only means to catch people unaware – an observational film should recognise and acknowledge the fact that it can only ever be a participatory (whether consciously or not, whether directly or not) observational film.

Presenting the film subject

In spite of the fact that a documentary may frequently strive to *show* rather than *tell*, it must nevertheless aspire to clarity or at the very least intelligibility. Moreover, within the academic domain, the dilemma for the filmmaker remains whether to construct a piece aimed at an informed audience who can appreciate references and inferences related to the theme, or whether introductory title boards should anchor the film's subject matter so that arguably any spectator, expert or novice, may partake in the film exchange that takes place during a screening between the spectator and a work. I have grown to value the ethnographic passion for opening unknown and unsuspected worlds to an audience. Provided the filmmaker stays true to his experience in the field, thus can the story be deemed authentic and genuine. Furthermore, staying true to one's experience involves the recognition and acknowledgement of one's own bias and inescapable subjectivity. Rather than ignore or deny these elementary constituents of one's experience and perception, one must endeavour to make them strengths and assets in the depiction and recounting of a story. Only in this process can objectivity become concrete, that is to say apparent objectivity becomes honest subjectivity. Consequently and for the sake of clarity, an honest understanding of the subject explored by the filmmaker can then be conveyed to the audience in a few introductory words. So does *AS IF!* start with three title boards whose sole purpose is to render the film accessible to a wide audience. These are:

- Title board 1: 'Curative Education' as defined by Rudolf Steiner in the 1920s & further developed by Karl König in the 1940s privileges the social model over the medical model
- Title board 2: The medical model sees disability as an illness in itself
- Title board 3: The social model sees disability as a consequence of social and cultural marginalisation

The problem encountered in this venture related to how best to explain the Steiner and Camphill movements concisely yet meaningfully. Not only was it important to identify the key elements of these movements, it was also primordial to identify which parts of these movements were spoken of, shown and essentially explored in the film. The core answer to these questions in my view had to be found in the pioneering work of Steiner and König wherein the social model and its practical ramifications as a re-conception of learning differences take precedence over the medical model and the limitations this latter one imposes on the person with learning differences. Locating Steiner and König's works & practice in time helps the viewer to understand how seminal these are. It may be useful to mention here that mainstream research into disability and its practices often quotes founding ideas dating back to the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century. In spite of this it remains that chronologically speaking, these discoveries or more accurate depictions of disability did not find consistent and lasting support on a large scale⁴⁵, which would have affected mainstream care homes and practices, until recent decades. Thus they arguably post-date what the Steiner and Camphill movements were able to establish and sustain from as early as the 1920s and 1940s respectively. The final word on the title boards concerns the choice of soundtrack, that of the birds' song. This birds' song was recorded during my stay at Glasallt Fawr in early spring when birds exercise their voices to produce a variety of sounds broader than the chants they eventually use in the mating season⁴⁶. The connotation of this sound through association relates to the fact that Camphill villages and the Steiner ideology value a close proximity with nature as a healing and enlightening force.

Into the image

Let us now progress to the film as audio-visual material, which takes us past the introductory blackboards and the birds' song soundtrack into the 'moving image and sound' partnership. This opens on archive footage of an I.P.C end of year show⁴⁷ layered with credits. Disrupting or en-queering the documentary form is primordial to avoid stitching the spectator into the narrative, rendering him/her passive and

⁴⁵ By this I mean to refer to a scale beyond private and isolated cases towards a national and international network with concrete outlets and cross-communication

⁴⁶ Admittedly I was unaware of this fact until Birgit shared it with me one bright early morning.

⁴⁷ Saint John's day marks the end of the academic year's curriculum in Waldorf schools to coincide with the European celebrations of the summer solstice or midsummer. A show reflecting the artistic and intellectual development of each child during the course of the academic year is performed on that day.

unchallenged by the piece. Indeed, if I have adhered to the performative documentary as a natural reflection of my filmic research and experience, then the spectator must be involved and partake in creating meaning and ultimately producing subtle and personal reactions and responses to art. In this context I mean to refer to art as communication, exchange and cross-fertilisation.

But where does this leave the aforementioned place of the narrator as an overarching yet open vehicle for different points of view? As the title appears: “Don’t talk to me as if you think I’m dumb... As if!”, one is led to perceive these words using the first person as a discourse coming from the child with learning differences. Immediately the spectator is brought to attention by the participants/characters without the convenient and comfortable medium of the denomination ‘they’, ‘them’, *another*. This *mise-en- abîme* of the filmmaker’s voice is reiterated by the animation clip: “I am what I am... And that is that... Thank god I am what I am”. However these words taken from a Waldorf breathing exercise also create an exchange with any spectator suggesting we embrace our own limitations, disabilities and differences.

Thus comes the first case study: The I.P.C from the perspective of a eurythmy teacher, Cornelia, explaining the use of the term ‘curative’ in the context of curative education in Steiner centres for children with learning differences. ‘Curative’ does not imply the notion of curing an illness inasmuch as facilitating one’s independence, thus developing one’s skills so that one may be able to fend for oneself. This facilitation involves in no small part the use of art as a means to connect with the world. Artistic workshops help the child to express itself and exteriorise the self thus connecting with the outside. In this train of thought, my encounter with street graffiti in Hallesches Tor, Berlin, became a compelling illustration to Cornelia’s discourse. Art conceived and created by inhabitants of the Hallesches Tor building estate becomes a part of this building estate as a logical consequence, part of its outside, belonging to it geographically yet open to the street and to all. This youth population’s potential and creative flux brings their inner self out in the form of graffiti art to decorate and colour the grey walls of their tower blocks. Art then appears as a natural mode of therapy. As Cornelia points out: “we have therapeutic powers within us. We have to grasp them because if we don’t... we can’t grow... not really”. In my own endeavour to connect anthroposophical art to more familiar art, the wall graffiti come after several canvases of *peinture en couches*, an anthroposophical tradition of painting.

It is at this point in the film that an English voice over takes on from Cornelia, suspending for a moment the use of and the need for subtitles, creating another bridge between the familiar and the unfamiliar, blurring boundaries. Equally, if painting and graffiti constitute a bridge between the inside and the outside, the public and the private, so do they constitute a bridge between the symbolics of knowledge and ignorance. Indeed the earlier clip of children dancing is in fact an actual performance of long rehearsed eurythmy. This is explained before the curtain rise of the same show by voice over: Cornelia, a eurythmy teacher, is the choreographer and metteur-en-scène whose work points to what can be achieved by supposed ‘disabled’ and ‘abnormal’⁴⁸ children when given methods and an environment prone to maximising their potential, self-confidence and thriving development. The ensuing quote by König emphasises how eurythmy and dance or movement more generally are another key medium to help the child engage with its surroundings: “Through movement children become aware of their environment, eager to connect with it” (Garel, 2006-07).

As announced by the initial blackboards, Steiner centres cater for the needs of children with learning differences and Camphill villages for the needs of adults with learning differences. This was formulated to keep the introductory words both clear and concise. In actual fact, Steiner centres also exist for adults who choose to stay with their parents or live more independently in sheltered accommodation. Camphill villages on the other hand are aimed towards adults and young adults exclusively as they are residential centres linked to adapted and specialised colleges of further education. Nonetheless, they also support any residents’ wish to live more independently and where possible, remain in contact with the resident through regular visits and communication with the sheltered accommodation personnel. Hence the contrast established by the blackboards between Steiner centres and Camphill villages, if not all encompassing and accurate, still provides us with a timeline or life-line along which we may go from childhood to adulthood. The second part of the film, Hannah’s story (following the introduction and Part I: An Ethos), stands as a bridge between childhood and adulthood with learning differences as family members and Hannah herself describe this journey.

⁴⁸ This term refers to the general, unexposed view of disability in society. This said even within the field of disability itself, many fail to realise how ‘normal’ (if this word has any meaning at all) disabled people are.

Starting at the beginning of Hannah's life comes Hannah's mother, explaining how Hannah was not accurately diagnosed until the age of sixteen. This part answers the blackboard "where are you from?", showing her hometown of Barry, in south Wales. Yet the content of this section has little to do with geographical location. Hence the question "where are you from", as we discover, connotes context and evolution. Archive footage presents Hannah as a young child attending a wedding ceremony as a bride's maid. We also catch a brief glimpse of her mother Sue at the same event in 1987.

If we abandon a strictly linear analysis of the film from this point onwards, Hannah's story brings us to why she moved to a Camphill village which she simply sees as a coming of age rite of passage. As she puts it: "It was time to learn to live without mummy and daddy, time to live in the cruel hard world". Unlike most interviewees who typically either reveal more information after pausing and not obtaining any reaction from the camera operator, or indicate they have nothing more to say, Hannah returns to more pressing matters such as why her mobile phone is not working.

Point of tension

Sue and Hannah complement each other to end this section in support of Camphill residential homes. Sue argues against the common accusation that these villages tucked away in the countryside are akin to separation and isolation since they are involved professionally, academically and leisurely with their local community. Moreover, Sue explains how Camphill provides adults with learning differences with a social life of high quality, the like of which could not be achieved in a more mainstream set up. Hannah, through a small anecdote, confirms this idea and introduces the happenings of life at Glasallt Fawr, further developed in Part III.

I had initially intended to place this section after 'Hannah goes on holiday' as it seemed to introduce Glasallt more directly and logically. Nevertheless, if this documentary is to remain intelligible and accessible, clarity would infer that details on Hannah's childhood come before 'Hannah goes on holiday'. In this way, her godmother Terry's words obtain more resonance and Hannah's personality and behaviour are not overcast by misunderstanding and potential alienation. Thus her second mother or godmother, Terry, brings us into the next section.

Terry's discourse emphasizes the fact that Hannah's refreshing directness and honesty, rather than being perceived by Terry as a hindrance, has allowed her to realise her own shortcomings and work on them. Hannah's first appearance in this section is anticipated by a medium close-up of the 'reserved for' sign. And indeed on her arrival at the airport of La Rochelle, Hannah comes through first, accompanied by a member of staff responsible for ensuring that Hannah is duly collected by the right people. This implies that her independence is fragile and answerable to certain conditions. Yet any independence is constantly under threat, whether of a financial nature, sentimental nature and so on. In contrast to this connotation, as the clip indicates in its direct cinema stance, Hannah far from being camera shy is in fact quite thrilled to be filmed. Her search for attention could not be met more soothingly.

As her relatives welcome her, an important ellipsis is delivered by Terry: "This is the excited part. When she gets too excited she does this for a while until she becomes normal again". When interacting with a person with learning differences, a good knowledge of this person is essential to avoid diagnostic overshadowing⁴⁹. Furthermore knowing the difference between behavioural patterns related to one's learning differences and behavioural patterns related to the individual's habits and personality helps us to reassess what we mean by 'normal'. In effect Hannah is a normal person since it is her excitement that takes her momentarily out of a normal state as opposed to the overly generalising and anti-individualistic assumed causality: Asperger syndrome, which in essence would deem Hannah to be an 'abnormal' person twenty four hours a day. The pledge to integrate learning differences as just another trait of human diversity with no derogatory implications or stigma is further elaborated upon by Terry while at the seaside on the Ile de Ré, west of La Rochelle. Pertinently, however, these two passages are punctuated by a dialogue between Hannah and Lucky, her sheep cuddly toy which she has had since birth. As we have already gone at lengths to demystify⁵⁰, this does not equate to Hannah's relationship with Lucky being akin to that of an eight to nine years old child. The intellectual and emotional terms are more complex here creating different standards within which to appreciate the dialogue.

⁴⁹ See page 94 for definition

⁵⁰ See page 93

Hey, I only want the same as anyone

The challenge with disability is to understand, respect and learn how to work with general and individual differences whilst keeping in sight that the human core remains the same. Isn't that the danger? The concept of perceiving certain beings as less than human has now been addressed and rectified yet xenophobia remains a natural human impulse through lack of exposure. For instance, in the same way that homosexuality slowly permeated mainstream culture and media, so is the transgender, transsexual and gender queer dimension slowly gaining a voice. Sadly but perhaps inevitably, before being acknowledged and integrated into a society, the marginal community must expect if not accept an initial mis-representation and misunderstanding of its nature and agency in order to crack the mainstream's sphere. To pursue this metaphor, once the cracks start to appear, they can be widened and eventually reach a size grand enough to allow more accurate portrayals and exchanges to seep through so that two spheres may overlap, co-exist and eventually complement one another. This leads us back to the ever mutating notion of what and who are normal and how to assess this. Terry's spontaneous discourse articulates a convincing realisation on this topic. As she comments:

[Philippe] considers her... as a real human being and not as a disabled child as most people treat her; as if she didn't really have the right to have an opinion; as if she didn't really have the right to want to do something... And when you think of it, when you want to do something, we're all the same, we all fight for what we want... we're all basically selfish... [Yet] Hannah's not allowed to voice her opinion, it's "oh shut up, Han. No, we're not going there"... And then Hannah gets very upset... And I think if you... consider her as a normal individual and you let her have a choice, and you negotiate with her as you would with anybody else, she's fine. (Garel, 2006-07)

Hang around with me, I'm good company

As Part III portrays, adults with learning differences all have their own traits of character, personality and behaviour. One element that does bind them together however is that given a healthy and productive environment to evolve in, they too have a biting sense of humour. So does Hannah formulate an amusing statement towards the 'end' of her holiday in La Rochelle: "What I want to tell you is how easy it is to play this game and how difficult children might find it". Hannah then breaks into song to express her excitement at playing a game of boules, known as *pétanque* in France. Her godmother and her also take kindly to performing a goodbye singing and dancing act at the airport before departure. These spontaneous outbursts of

communication and performativity remind us of how artistic expression is encouraged and nourished in the Camphill movement. Let us now investigate Part III and hereby adopt a more thematic, as opposed to linear, approach.

Part III or the importance of being there

As Cornelia advised back in the summer of 2006, certain methods and processes can only be appreciated through close contact and prolonged experience. Having finally obtained all the legal requirements and cleared them with the parties concerned, I set off for eight days of filming and partaking in the day to day life of the Glasallt Fawr community. I was made to feel very welcome and became 'one of the family' almost immediately.

The general running of a house and several workshops involve every resident and non-resident staff, so that everyone may have a sense of participation, contribution and achievement. This is also true of the many social activities that punctuate each night of the week. Incidentally the social relations among residents are perpetual and although a member of staff is always nearby, each resident develops a strong sense of belonging with fellow housemates and fellow individuals with learning differences.

"Being there", that is to say filming on location, as well as eating, sleeping, socialising and by and large living on location made me realise the importance of the Camphill idea: recreating a family environment to provide adults with learning differences a familiar and secure environment that is both normalising and fulfilling. I was astonished to find during a handover⁵¹ that Fiona's nightmares about 'baddies' and her occasional mumbling to herself were not a trivial matter. Fiona lives in the same house as Hannah, they are best friends and have adjacent bedrooms. Living in such proximity or being in contact with the residents regularly enabled staff to immediately notice certain alterations in Fiona's behaviour, such as increasingly occurring mood swings. Knowing her as well as they do, they were quick to pick up on this and contact the local doctor and her family in an effort to address the problem in the most appropriate manner. Fiona was diagnosed with schizophrenia and I was told she is now living in a more adapted centre closer to her family home, following her family's

⁵¹ Now abiding by a rota shift system, each shift has an hour overlap with the previous one in order for staff to have a meeting called 'handover' during which they discuss important information about each resident. This procedure updates the relief staff so that they may be aware of any recent changes, complications or requirements.

wishes. It is worth mentioning here that the local doctor visits Glasallt Fawr on a regular basis to give each resident a full examination according to a fixed schedule. Once again, the medical involvement is indispensable and each resident is closely monitored, yet the medical field *per se* remains an external input, in compliance with the social model.

Although I was kindly asked not to film any handover due to the data protection act and other clauses of privacy and respect, I was nonetheless allowed to attend as a listener. This magnified my involvement within the community and gave me a deeper insight into the intricacies of the profession. Having perceived this discovery as a crucial reflection of the advantages inherent to the Camphill set up, I wanted to convey it to the spectator directly. However, in spite of my wish to let things speak for themselves in Part III by avoiding the use of title boards to delineate each section thus letting the viewer be gripped and involved by the development of each participant in their day to day lives, I felt the need to emphasise Fiona's change of state. I resorted to the use of an echoing sound effect in order to connote this fact, all the more poignantly that the echoing sound of the clock ticking intensifies the sombreness of Fiona's state. The return to standard sound while a co-worker is identifying the reason for Fiona's mood swing and schizophrenic mumbling, mood swings due apparently to unexplainably high sugar levels in her blood, thus mirrors Fiona's mindset as she becomes normal again⁵².

Fiona's moods linked to the sugar levels in her blood and minor fits of schizophrenia during my stay did not appear to cause much disruption and it is both moving and amusing to witness how Hannah takes it upon herself to informally counsel Fiona towards the end of the disco night; and this to great effect. In truth, most of the time, Fiona appeared happy, forthcoming and enthusiastic in her social relations with others and in undertaking her share of the daily tasks and activities, not withstanding the odd 'lazy' morning. One of such moments is displayed when she politely indicates that perhaps another resident could take on her less than exciting gardening chores. Therefore, the danger of misrepresentation had to be assessed when cutting the film. I concluded that I portray Fiona fairly in *AS IF!* inasmuch as, in spite of her occasional mood swings and occasional minor fits of schizophrenia, the viewer sees her as she is and it is almost impossible not to fall under her charm. The

⁵² See page 111

only arrangement of the material, the echoing sound effect, was used to better depict the essence of the moment she inhabits.

I am the camera, pleased to meet you.

Fiona, both in the film as in the life, I witnessed and was involved in, is a strong character with an equally strong personality. Thus perhaps accordingly she was the first to address the camera as a separate 'being' by saying "goodnight camera". Miles reiterates this notion during a cooking workshop, demanding Hannah's attention and silence while I am filming them at work. Miles feels that this scene should be silent, letting the action, in its meticulous detail, do the talking. Hannah, on the other hand, seems quite content to ignore the camera if and when she is not performing for or speaking directly to it⁵³. Without any preparation, staging or request of this, practically every resident who agreed to be filmed perceived the camera as an undeniable but unthreatening presence that could be addressed whenever (I or the camera or both were) needed. Fiona exemplifies this when she finds herself too short to reach the tea bags, turning towards me to ask: "Stefan, can you help me please".

More talking heads?

Let us now focus on the renewed use of the talking head in the film. The penultimate section of *AS IF!* sees the return of talking heads. I tried to avoid this as much as possible to create a contrast between Part III and Parts I and II, the latter two relying quite heavily on talking heads. I also avoided the use of talking heads in Part III to return to a more animated piece where meaning may be conveyed through showing and joining in as opposed to merely telling. Nevertheless, I also found certain of the conversations recorded to bring further depth to the messages of the film. Birgit's discourse seemed particularly striking in the way that she links her personal experience to the Camphill ethos more generally, helping us to understand how our participants, within their own individualities, articulate and embody the requirements and virtues of the Camphill movement. Birgit first confirms how a new approach to relationships amongst residents gives room for their natural attractions and impulses of desire to operate and develop in relative freedom. This freedom could arguably be deemed relative insofar as the sexual aspect of these relationships remains a

⁵³ See passage of Hannah cleaning the toilet in *AS IF!*: "And that's a dead fact. And I'm not **just** posing now for the camera"

disencouraged venture. Additionally Birgit explains how a recent governmental imposition of a rota system for Camphill staff challenged one of the core principles of Camphill: staff and residents live on location so that a typical day involves activities for the whole village from morning till night. There is no clear distinction between work and play since, for instance, a painting workshop is both; as is a cooking workshop or a gardening workshop. As for the living skills workshop referring to household chores, they represent a necessity and a simple fact of inhabitation. Interestingly enough, one of the non-resident co-workers agrees with Birgit that in spite of her living off-site and coming on-site to cover fixed shifts, she does not consider it as work but rather as an enriching and entertaining exchange. Need I specify that few professionals in the mainstream care sector would necessarily share this opinion? In fact, Birgit points towards the complications of long-term involvement within a residential care home as a full-time professional, whilst nuancing her own feelings on the matter as a Camphill resident:

I was always told that people usually last for five years in a job before they're in danger of burning out or not enjoying it anymore or wanting to do something else. I'm not too sure if for me five years would be the limit here because I feel... I think there's such a soul quality or a richness about the people here which I enjoy every single day. I certainly do not only provide care for them. I do not only provide a service in the care sector sense. There's much more going on here. (Garel, 2006-07)

The discourse then goes from staff to resident in the person of Fiona and Victoria during one of the three audio-visual workshops we organised. I found the process of residents interviewing each other more interesting, immediately accessible and more compelling than their visual work⁵⁴. The final performances by Victoria, Hannah and Tim respectively were completely incidental improvisations, which quite unexpectedly once on computer echoed the sounds of *The Idiots* (or *Dogma #2: Idioterne*). However these musical and vocal performances had not actually been staged or encouraged. Yet, although poles apart in nature and intention, the loose resemblance made sense for other reasons. *The Idiots* holds an important place in my thinking when embarking on this PhD, and more specifically on this second chapter involving the cross-fertilisation between queer theory and disability. Firstly for its illustration of the Dogme movement and its style of production and filming, as we

⁵⁴ Their visual work could have been included to a greater extent in the film but it brought little to the story and character development on screen, not to mention that I personally felt it would be unfair to glamorise or over-emphasize their first attempts at shooting material with a camcorder.

will elaborate. Secondly because *The Idiots* subverts the stereotpye of disability to great effect. Let me explain.

Idioterne, Les Maîtres Fous, AS IF!

The Idiots, by the successful and controversial Danish filmmaker Lars von Trier, still stands in my view as one of the most meaningful, challenging and rich contributions to the Dogme movement created by Thomas Vinterberg and Lars von Trier. The *Dogme Manifesto 95*, thought up as a joke by the two filmmakers around a few bottles of wine one night became the most talked about provocation and revolution in cinema since the films of the French New Wave or Nouvelle Vague in the 1960s. As a matter of fact, many have perveiced the Dogme movement to be a rearticulation and transformation of similar concerns regarding the role and potential of cinema. However the French New Wave alongside a search to better appreciate the golden age of Hollywood cinema⁵⁵ and acknowledge film as food for intellectual consideration, thus affirming the value of film studies, also represented the embrace of new technical possibilities bringing cinema out of the studios and onto the streets as Godard so compellingly accomplishes on the Champs Elysées in *A Bout de Souffle* (Godard, 1960). In contrast, although the Dogme movement was, similarly in ideological terms, a reaction, in this instance to the monopoly over the global market held by Hollywood productions since the end of Second World War, it also wanted to bring back depth and nuanced plot lines to cinema, sensing that modern blockbusters held shallow and unengaging plot lines together with an overuse or misuse of impressive special effects. Indeed, in order to cover monumental expenditures and production fees, modern American blockbuster movies were, and alas still are, forced increasingly to simplify their plots in order to appeal to a broader audience and thus sell more tickets in the hope of rendering a film production both feasible and profitable. By way of a challenge to this production process, the Dogme manifesto imposes a strict set of rules – quasi-impossible to abide by fully – to the filmmaker in order to push him/her outside of his/her comfort zone and habits towards new forms of creativity and more poignant storylines. This implied a return to more basic modes of staging and filming in order to enable a deep re-thinking of the purpose and potential of cinema. As a social scientist, I was delighted to discover that

⁵⁵ Officially assumed to stretch between the 1930s and the 1950s (Hayward, 2000: 199-201).

Dogme, although not solely, became a gripping new trend of social realism, blurring the boundaries between fact and fiction, and between feature and documentary styles, both for the viewer due to hand held camera shooting and natural lighting, and for the actors whose important personal input into a role blurred the boundaries between acting, enacting and experiencing⁵⁶.

But what is the relevance here with *AS IF!*? The major connection has to do with the Dogme philosophy of the soundtrack which states that it should always emanate from the location of shooting, and not be layered in studio during editing⁵⁷. Yet the more pertinent link is that of content. *The Idiots* first presents us with a gang of friends spending the summer together in the house of Stoffer's uncle, which is up for sale. The gang's main hobby is to venture into the public pretending to have severe disabilities and learning differences. Initially perceived as disrespectful to people who really do have disabilities and learning differences, the plot thickens when Karen, the outsider welcomed by and slowly integrated into the group, realises the therapeutic values of finding one's inner idiot, since according to Stoffer a happy idiot is a happy person. Karen's unexpected first 'spazz' confirms the virtues of spazzing out when the group were beginning to lose faith. Karen ultimately holds the torch for this practice and this philosophy when she uses it against her own all too real grief at the recent loss of her baby son, as well as in the face of a family who, misunderstanding her disappearance and lack of contact with them since the death, have wholeheartedly rejected her. The act and hobby of spazzing out, under the guise of a mockery of disabilities, and a rejection of middle-class etiquette, only points back to the friends' own real disabilities, which in turn become obvious as the film proceeds: neurosis and depression for Josephine, emotional disability for Jeppe, mourning and alienation for Karen, superiority complex for Stoffer, to name but a few. The scene preceding Karen's first spazz is when Susanne brings a group of adults with Down's syndrome to the house, the first of whom is quick to notice how poorly made the group's candles are. These candles were indeed made by the gang to look like the product of a disabled group's workshop, when in actual fact they only

⁵⁶ It is worth mentioning here that the gang bang or orgy scene in *The Idiots* led Lars von Trier and his filmcrew to also strip naked and partake. Lars von Trier has since been known to show up on set naked, playing on social and public expectation whilst putting his actors completely at ease or perhaps the opposite, thus pushing them beyond their ordinary reactions and behaviour.

⁵⁷ Except for the bird song used to open and close the film, all the music and sounds on *AS IF!* are incidental, thus do they emanate from the scene being filmed.

symbolise what the general public would expect them to look like. In other words, the supposed truly disabled individual proves how disability is misunderstood and underestimated⁵⁸. This surprise visit puts most of the pretend spazzers's fun into question as they feel uncomfortable around their surprise guests. However, Karen puts new wind in their sail with her subsequent first spazz.

Furthermore *The Idiots* also stands as a clever metaphor of the *Dogme Manifesto*. What appears as too basic and limiting becomes a resourceful tool of self-discovery, surpassment and new ways of seeing and conceiving⁵⁹. The spazzer by finding his/her inner idiot and adopting this alter ego and relating to the world through it, uncovers an unlikely source of therapy and release. The Dogme filmmaker by applying strict rules of production to their work develops a new relationship with their art, new means to exchange with the actors, new forms of communication with the viewer, thus undergoing a more vivid and fertile experience. In this way is fashioned a therapy for contemporary cinema in danger of losing sight of its potential to reach deep within the soul and consciousness of every part and party involved. I cannot avoid but to draw a parallel here with the ground-breaking documentary *Les Maîtres Fous* (Rouch, 1955). Jean Rouch's intimate portrayal of an intense and extreme African ritual layers scenes of a shocking nature (people reaching a state of trance, walking through fire, becoming possessed by the spirits of the colons, sacrificing dogs & eating them) with a respectful and insightful voice over. In so doing he reveals how an African community is coping with their history of colonisation and de-colonisation. We find them at the end of the film to be successful, well-integrated professionals, which indicates that, however crude in form to the unaccustomed eye, the ritual we have witnessed is nothing more than a healthy and effective form of group therapy.

⁵⁸ "The goods are sold without reference to the charitable character of the work. But time and again, buyers cannot believe that the articles are produced by often very severely mentally handicapped adults, because they cannot understand how such superb quality of product can be achieved. How is it possible? The answer to this is 'through personal application'." (Mark Gartner in Carlo Pietzner 1966:64)

⁵⁹ See *Open Hearts* (a.k.a *Elsker dig for evigt*. Bier Susanne, 2002) in which the rock music layered over Caecilie's walk down the hospital corridor and entrance into her boyfriend, Joachim's hospital bedroom comes from his walkman. This becomes obvious when he presses the stop button at her arrival and the seemingly dubbed soundtrack stops simultaneously. Technically speaking, the sound was dubbed and yet it respects the *Dogme Manifesto* insofar as the music does originate from the scene. This bending of the rule only reflects how the strict and confining manifesto pushes the filmmaker towards new and interesting forms of creativity.

Therefore, does *AS IF!* succeed in turning the tables round on the viewer by subverting expectations in proving that the 'abnormal' is an unworthy term to qualify human difference. And that those with disabilities and differences can be perceived on a human scale as perfectly normal and functional. To speak as a biased viewer, but viewer nonetheless, the answer is yes. To speak as a first hand witness, fieldworker and participant-observer, most definitely. The anthropological virtue of painstakingly attempting to understand a community through personal involvement and shared experience, that is to say participant-observation from me to them and them to me, allows for a sincere and valuable respect of the participants to come into place, and the filmmaker is no exception here. A convincing and worthy ethnographic film, unlike sensationalist journalism, must rest upon mutual respect. Accordingly, if every work deserves criticism, I wish to underline the fact that the documentary portraying the first established Camphill village in England (Botton, Yorkshire), *The Strangest Village in Britain* (O'Dwyer & Bliss, 2005), falls short of a convincing form of mutual respect thus inducing at times and in the name of traditional documentary objectivity, a uni-dimensional understanding of Camphill. On the other hand, one could argue that having spent time in a different Camphill village, I cannot judge accurately that of Botton. Perhaps, yet as the director of the award winning documentary *Etre et avoir* (2002), Nicolas Philibert, reminds us, a documentary filmmaker has the responsibility of assessing how his/her film content reflects the reality of his/her experience. Thus he chose to withhold an argument the teacher has with one of his pupils. Since Philibert found this occurrence to be extremely rare, he felt that including it in the film would unjustly detract the viewer from the truth, that he is a calm, controlled, passionate and effective teacher who is loved by his pupils. Consequently, I wonder whether Nicholas O-Dwyer & Rachel Bliss over-emphasised the tensions at work to suit their expectations and comply with a more standard dramatic curve in their story. After all, the very title would appear to confirm the former assumption. Having said this, in spite of a few questionable flaws and intentions, *The Strangest Village in Britain* may well underline the actual failings and short comings of the Camphill system, or more precisely of a particular Camphill community. Conversely one would have to nuance this idea with the simple suggestion that the Camphill system may not be appropriate and effective for every adult with learning differences, insisting on the fact that its ongoing popularity infers a certain ratio of success.

Questionable lengths

Before concluding let us question the length of certain sections of *AS IF!* in order to understand why they have been maintained. The documentary filmmaker when using interview and talking heads is faced with the challenge of never exacerbating the viewer's attention span. During my training in ethnographic filmmaking at the Granada Centre for Visual Anthropology, the general guideline was "less is more" and "never let a talking head(s) section go beyond sixty seconds". I failed to abide by this rule on two occasions in *AS IF!* The first instance is for the house meeting. I can only justify this decision by arguing that the group dynamics in this section maintain continuum and appeal. The second instance is for Birgit's section towards the end of the film. I deemed the content of her discourse to bring depth and a better understanding of what has been shown. Furthermore, Kiarostami's documentary-like and social realist film *Ten* (2002), inspired me to distrust the sixty second rule. In spite of its obvious power, it can be fruitfully disregarded. Indeed, in Kiarostami's film, the opening scene of a mother and child talking and arguing in a car is a single shot, with the same wide focus and medium close up, of over ten minutes length. The sheer content and acting of this sequence renders it a viable and engaging alternative. One could argue that the car's movement and the attempts of the child to exit the car against his mother's will punctuate the stillness of the image. Similarly, I would argue that the illustrations and the short comments from another co-worker balance the long take of Birgit's discourse.

Conclusion

In discovering just how normal or 'like us' adults with learning differences really are, I do not mean to take away the problems they are faced with and the obstacles they have to contend with. Nevertheless, this chapter's logical progression was to place greater emphasis on the overlooked parts of their potentials and capabilities, brought to light by the implication of the social model, as opposed to the obvious and often too confining components of a disability, relating mostly to the realms of the medical model. Disability is ability and just as no one is free from the queer body, so is no one free from disability. We are human beings, dysfunctional in essence. Like so we are all queer in identity; we are all dis-abled. The works of Foucault and Deleuze are key influences in the fashioning of queer theory. It seems pertinent to return to the early instigators of queer theory in order to preserve a broad spectrum and an open field of

thought and vision. Foucault urges us not to aim towards finding and proving what should be but rather to denounce what is unacceptable and intolerable (in Halperin, 1995:09). Deleuze echoes this idea by placing emphasis on our constant state of becoming which implies that we move towards aims that are as of yet unclear to us in order to keep future motions from being conditioned by present standards, knowledge and concerns (in Colebrook, 2002:06). Only then can we inhabit a truly queer thus open space. As queer theory deconstructs labels to move beyond them and render them untrustworthy, I have learnt to see and experience how gender binaries are constructed and far removed from the actual diversity and potentialities of human nature. Similarly, queer theory has provided me with a different perspective in my approach to disability. As we have uncovered, disabilities are various, intricate and present in every human being. That is to say that a supposed community specific label becomes partly redundant since, in its generic sense, it applies to the entirety of the human species. Therefore, the interface between queer theory and disability proves to reflect important considerations. On the one hand if queer theory cannot completely divorce itself from queer identity in its broad sense, it must acknowledge its responsibility to address the field of disability and learning differences. On the other hand disability theory and its practical theory can only benefit from a queer perspective in order to fully appreciate the person with disabilities as an integral part of society and human possibility.

I now wish to finish on a pertinent anecdote involving my housemate, Liz, and her current girlfriend. As I have shown her through my own example and a viewing of *The Idiots*, Liz occasionally 'spazzes out'. She did this in front of her girlfriend for the first time a few weeks ago whilst crossing the street. But instead of reacting with surprise, anger or disgust, her girlfriend simply put her arm around her, kissed her and said "ah, little sweetie". On hearing this story I began to hypothesize on a future society where disability and learning differences are no longer deemed as inferior since everyone is aware of their own disabilities and learning differences. Within this society, would relationships between for instance an X person with Asperger's syndrome or Down's syndrome and a Y person without Asperger's syndrome or Down's syndrome occur and subsist? In my own experience, I have encountered men with mild forms of Asperger's syndrome who are in fulfilling and happy relationships with partners who do not have Asperger's syndrome. However, it is hard to draw the line between the potentially acceptable and the ethically unacceptable.

The point should remain that, if and when labels truly disappear and each person can be appreciated without prejudice, only then may we know what can happen.

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**Queer Bodies and Settlements
Chapter III**

Quantum physics and Experimental Art:

Back to the pre-verbal and into the non-verbal

A cross-artistic collaboration on the topic of quantum physics and its
relevance to the human body

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CASHdance (c) 2008

a word does not begin as a word... it begins as an impulse
(Brook in Gallery, 2001:8)

Introduction

Following my investigation of a fruitful interface between queer theory and disability, the reality of non-verbal communication emerged as a poignant discovery. As Hodges & Sheppard (2003) explain, in order to create a meaningful exchange between a counsellor and a patient with learning differences and disabilities, all the signs of non-verbal communication must be spotted and heeded. Indeed, where a patient's language skills and/or means of verbal communication are more limited, indications such as tone of voice, movement, facial expressions, drawings and the like are key to framing the intent of the patient accurately. The example of Tim, a resident of Glasallt Fawr featured in *AS IF!* (Garel, 2006-7), speaks volumes of this concept. All at Glasallt Fawr understand Tim in spite of his limited use of vocabulary, relying instead on grunts, interjections, body language and facial expressions. It took me little time to adjust to a more conscious non-verbal awareness in which Tim and I could converse quite clearly and in a relatively elaborate manner.

Parallel to this, whilst still editing *AS IF!*, I realised increasingly that my third film project would need to move away from the strictly social documentary form towards more experimental and artistic modes. My initial wish to include physical theatre and contemporary dance in *Tribes of the Queer*, and eurythmy in *AS IF!*, remained unfulfilled. I remembered the making of the film *Some Live for the Waves* (Sandberg, 2003), which I edited. Erik Sandberg⁶⁰, the film director and sole cameraman, had managed to create a non-verbal documentary, tapping into the senses of his viewers and in no small part *enqueering* the production of meaning and the exchange between film and viewer. By taking the viewer outside of language he establishes an open field of interpretation. Yet, the message of his film in all its parts, sub-parts and details, remains clear: this is about the history of Norwegian civilisation, an alliance between a harsh climate and the human need to settle and prosper. From daunting winter coastal landscapes, we progress to vast greenhouses built along the seafront to grow fruit and vegetables. Man and nature are symbolically reunited at the end of the film which features several young men surfing the waves of the sea. *Some Live for the Waves* still affects me at every viewing and stands not as an abstract low budget art film but rather as a compelling socio-cultural documentary.

⁶⁰ Erik Sandberg is a professional filmmaker, both freelance and contracted to several Norwegian television companies. We worked and studied together at the Granada Centre for Visual Anthropology, University of Manchester, from September 2002 to November 2003.

Without wanting to emulate his direction and our collaboration on this film, it nonetheless brought back to mind the importance of the clear image and the non-verbal communicative experience.

However, let me not leave the impression that the concern for film form preceded the need for film content. On this occasion they grew side by side, contemporaneously. Indeed, my discovery of a vulgarised account of quantum physics, delivered by a physicist and a historian-philosopher of science in *The non-local universe: the new physics of mind & matter* (Nadeau & Kafatos, 1999), echoed my growing taste for an exploration of non-verbal reality. Their book, whilst mostly using the medium of written language, depicted a dimension I had not suspected, that of the awareness, self-reflexivity and unpredictable behaviour of matter, as I will elaborate. The implications of this discovery were impossible to disregard. Suddenly, and yet unsurprisingly, the time had come for me to appreciate the body as matter, that is to say an existence correlated to the mind yet independent of it and able to decipher and respond to its environment through its own presence, experience and awareness.

As the two previous chapters have endeavoured to demonstrate, the pertinence of queer theory extends far beyond the realms of lgbtq (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, gender queer) matters to human nature and human potential as a whole. Yet it appears quite clear that this is the very strength of queer theory and not its downfall. The critics who have dismissed queer theory as too broad in scope overlook its fundamental engine: no identity is fixed or static, so that no single identity is indeed single or truly adequate to one sole system of belonging or pertaining. Consequently, given the difficulty society still has in incorporating this idea fully into its cultural processes, every sense of identity can find more appropriate grounds in queer theory. It is by embracing this broad human outreach that queer theory can continue to develop. One could argue that many borders are in place in the name of self-preservation. And depending on the case or context, many borders are productively becoming blurred. Others, on the other hand should indeed remain, not as the walls they persevere in being today but as clearly marked lines on the ground, as it were, so that anyone may venture, knowingly and at one's own risk and peril, to the other sides.

Thus, through my journey into queer theory and beyond, quantum physics had suggested that a quantum, the smallest component of matter found in energy, reacts

to matter (other quanta) and is aware of the effects on other quanta regardless of the distance between them. In other words, the body as matter and generator of energy is equally in a perpetual awareness of and interaction with its material surroundings. This somatic experience and understanding of the world is both pre-verbal and non-verbal, in full operation before language and eventually parallel to language. I now had no alternative but to involve the sensory experience and expression of the body. But how would I communicate this through the medium of film?

While it dawned on me that the arts were a reliable vehicle for such information, my close friend Francesca Duranti contacted me to propose that we collaborate together. She needed a filmic testament of her current work in choreography, and with astounding timing, I had come to need the input of an artist in my research. My supervisor, Professor Susan Hayward, around the same period, put me in touch with the experimental composer Paul Ramshaw. In the matter of a fortnight, I had amassed the ingredients for a multi-layered collaboration where masters in the crafts of sound and movement could help me articulate a rich and communicative non-verbal project⁶¹.

The realities that words cannot convey accurately can be better grasped in the viewing of the film, and by this I mean to imply the creative exchange at work between an audio-visual piece and its audience. For now, let us relate the thought processes and the theories conflated here to emphasise the virtue of the arts as a powerful apparatus with which to overrule the mind by paying heed to the somatic wisdom we have acquired. In passing, it always fascinates me to find that pupils of Waldorf and Steiner schools are all encouraged to develop their artistic skills and modes of expression without assuming that they somehow have a particularly artistic disposition. I remember first discovering how good at drawing my friend Constance Duchamp⁶² proved to be when we found ourselves in the same class at college (Terminale Littéraire at the Lycée, French equivalent to the British college). Yet she dismissed my admiration simply stating that she was not a drawer at heart, or an artist in any way for that matter, and that she had no merit since drawing to a decent standard was the ability of any person who came from a Waldorf school. Art, then,

⁶¹ The complications and delays that eventually framed the making of *In Visibilities* (Garel, 2008) will be related in more detail in the second half of this chapter.

⁶² Constance Duchamp is the daughter of the eurythmy teacher, Cornelia, featured in *AS IF!* Moreover, Constance Duchamp co-directed the documentary, *Le Carnaval des Animaux* (Duchamp & Dalençon, 2000), excerpts of which are featured in *AS IF!*

can be viewed as a mode of communication, experiment and experiencing as opposed to an elitist craftsmanship. One needs to nurture one's creative impulse to remain balanced. Ultimately, if art can actually convey a thousand words, that is to say a sensation and an exchange not bound by words to exist and operate powerfully, then this chapter will only presume to offer its reader an insight into an understanding of quantum physics and its experience, broadly speaking, through art.

Therefore, I will outline the findings and implications of quantum physics before relating them to the somatic wisdom and experience of the human condition, greatly perused in the performative arts such as physical theatre. In the second part of this chapter I will give an account of the pre-production and production of *In Visibilities* to then deconstruct film form and film content. Finally I will locate the film in the context of the impact it has had on the development of my journey into queer theory.

Before I do this, however, it is worth noting that the film part of this chapter, *In Visibilities*, has been reconceptualised somewhat since its completion. Due to its non-verbal nature, with the exception of the opening title and the closing titles admittedly, a certain lack of explicit clarity is inevitable, which, according to certain critics, does the project a disfavour. Accordingly, its artistic content would render it as a compelling video installation within a gallery space, and this to greater effect. In this context, the link I have made between dance, non-verbal communication, queer theory and quantum physics would need to be emphasised. Thus do two potential tracks spring to mind. The first one, wishing to stay true to the initial intention of quasi-complete non-verbal communication, could go as follows. The installation would have three projector screens at a ninety degree angle from one another. The floor would hold a pyramid-shaped mirror in order to reflect each screen as well as entering visitors. A movement sensor, akin to that developed by artist John Eacott in his generative audio installation, *The Street* (2000), would be used to trigger the film to start. Initial movement would trigger one projector. More rapid and persistent movement would trigger the second projector, and the presence of more (than one) moving bodies would trigger the third projector.

The second track would have to rely on a minimal but determining verbal input to clarify the film's message. I imagine this installation to be in a square room with a wall erected in the middle, two thirds the height of the other walls. Placing one's hand on the wall would trigger a short synopsis to appear projected on the wall,

explaining the theory of non-locality (the reciprocal awareness of quanta) and the unpredictability of the behaviour of matter in a few lines, followed by a short mention of its relevance to the human body, especially when in and through art. Then, as in the first example of installation, an apparatus sensitive to movement and density would trigger the start of the film on each screen at different intervals.

Both these ideas of video installation for *In Visibilities* may benefit its communicability. Now let us return to what we know.

Mind and matter: the coupling of independent individuals?

Firstly, I will accept the notion of intertextuality in its broad sense to signify quite simply that nothing comes from nothing, that is to say that any creation draws on its past and present influences to exist. It is the digestion of all influence and shaping to produce something new, different and/or personal as a development of human potential and awareness. Hence, if we are indeed to delve into the behaviour and awareness of matter with and as opposed to the mind, it is advisable to locate the concepts relating to this strict dichotomy on the one hand, and symbiosis on the other hand. Rudolf Steiner's valuing of nature, as a force the human kind is a part of and thus needs to connect with, bears rich intertextual referencing. Pre-dating Steiner's life by only two generations are the 19th century German Romantics Goethe and Schilling. As Nadeau and Kafatos (2001) explain:

Goethe and Schilling proposed a natural philosophy premised on ontological monism (the idea that God, man, and nature are grounded in an indivisible spiritual Oneness) and argued for the reconciliation of mind and matter with an appeal to sentiment, mystical awareness, and quasi-scientific musings. (:X)

Yet Descartes's clear separation of mind, or human subjectivity, and matter, or the material reality of the world, continues to be a firm conviction. And in spite of Nietzsche "infusing our understanding of Cartesian dualism with emotional content" (:XI), he still presents the human kind as locked in "a prison house of language." (:XI) So what is the relevance of quantum physics? you might ask. Its relevance is at the very foundations of this chapter. Let us first expose its findings.

As identified by quantum physics (Nadeau & Kafatos, 2001), quanta can show unpredictable patterns of behaviour that classic physics and the realms of mathematical equations cannot account for. Moreover, several experiments (Aspect, 1982; Gisin, 1997) have revealed that if any two elementary particles (x ; y) were ever

in physical contact with each other, recently or 1 000 000 000 years ago, any action pressed upon *x* will instigate a simultaneous reaction in *y*. In physics, the influence of one object on another, distant object is called *nonlocality*. In other words, quantum *x* and quantum *y*, regardless of the distance between them and the time of their last encounter remain 'aware' of each other at all times. Scientists are still at a loss to understand the means of communication in place. All we know is that every particle knows what every other particle it has ever interacted with is doing. (Rae, 1986:52) With this realisation in mind, the metaphor of the universe as a giant spider's web⁶³ is pertinent since its smallest components, quanta, remain connected insofar as they are perpetually aware of each other. Therefore the first conclusion becomes that matter is aware.

The following discovery grounds this question. Mobile phone batteries, if regularly charged when half full, will eventually only be able to charge this half amount of power, whether the battery is half full or very low. That is to say that these batteries present a form of 'memory'⁶⁴. Thus, drawing on these facts, our bodies as matter are aware of and affected by matter. Furthermore, psychologists of the late 19th century underpinned a crucial point about physiological memory. The experiment concerned short-term memory amnesiacs. The psychologist Korsakoff (Banks, 1996) placed a device in his hand that would cause a minor electric shock to anyone who shook his hand⁶⁵. He went to greet his short-term amnesiac patients with a handshake. On his visit the following day these same patients did not remember him, yet, for a reason unexplainable to themselves, they refused to shake his hand. In other words their body developed a memory that their cerebral memory could not justify. As Banks (1996) denotes:

⁶³ As Nadeau & Kafatos (2001) state: "[the] experimental verification of nonlocality is the most convincing demonstration to date of the unity of the cosmos that Einstein viewed as the *foundation for inner security*". (:179)

⁶⁴ The memory effect is in fact a question of voltage depression as opposed to the occurrence of an authentic form of memory (Zaun, James A. 1996). Nevertheless, I chose to retain the importance of the example since it would be preposterous to assume that the causality of forms of memory in a battery are wholly comparable to that of forms of memory in a human or animal metabolism. Surely different criteria need apply. Ultimately, the use of the term 'memory' remains pertinent if only in its metaphorical sense.

⁶⁵ The story I learnt during a module in Biological Psychology at the University of Kent (1999-2000) has been altered slightly in this source. I have taken the liberty to keep to my original information (lecture notes) which I unfortunately have been unable to fully reference here.

Korsakoff found the preservation of memory that influenced behaviour in a non-conscious manner, what we term implicit memory, to be the most interesting feature of the amnesia. His only specific term for it was sagacité, which nicely conveys the idea of knowledge guiding action without conscious deliberation. Like Claparède, he noticed it in situations in which patients behaved appropriately toward him even though they did not recall ever having met him.

In other words, ultimately our bodies feel, understand, and hold a wisdom that often escapes our minds. Fascinatingly, my study of vulgarised quantum physics confirmed an instinctual conviction I had held for some time, that is the reality of the popularly coined *gut feeling*. If we can envisage our lives as a perpetual experiment with our environments, then our experiences are invaluable sources of information. The experience I have in mind is a constant reoccurrence. Seconds preceding the alert on my mobile phone triggered by the reception of a text message, I find myself suddenly thinking about the person who is sending it. To stop a moment and consider the technological process that enables such exchanges to happen, we think of wireless transmissions, otherwise known informally as airwaves. Let us return to Nadeau & Kafatos' work in order to locate how actual this experience is:

Since physical reality in quantum physics is described on the most fundamental level in terms of exchange of quanta, Bohr realised that the fact that a quantum exists as both wave and particle was enormously significant... the wave aspect of a quantum is continuous and spread out over space and time, and the particle aspect is a point-like something localised in time and space... It was this situation that led Bohr to develop his logical principle of complementarity... he was correct in assuming that complementarity is the 'logic of nature' (:13).

The Deleuzian idea of “the chaotic and active becoming which is the very pulse of life” (Colebrook, 2002:XXXIV) now appears as an unmistakable echo of the findings of quantum physics. We need only report Bohr's (1922) words:

Bohr reasoned that nature likes to keep its possibilities open, and therefore follows every possible path. Only when observed is nature forced to choose only one path, so only then is just one path taken. (in Gribbin, 1984:171)

As recent academic trends and incentives have shown, practical based and interdisciplinary research is increasingly gaining ground yet the crossover between humanities and social sciences toward biosciences and physics is rare. On the one hand we are still to see national education curricula implementing systems beneficial to multiple intelligences, broadening in a significant manner the potential and prospects of non-academic and disabled children. On the other hand it is equally concerning to find that specialising the education of teenagers too early confines their

potential and severely diminishes their general knowledge. Therefore, in spite of a modest knowledge of biosciences and physics, I could not turn away from the implications of quantum physics. In little time, I came to grasp the bitter truth of Snow's (1959) lecture:

When C.P. Snow recognized the growing gap between [the culture of humanists-social scientists and scientists-engineers] in his now famous Rede lecture in 1959, his primary concern was that the culture of humanists-social scientists might become so scientifically illiterate that it would not be able to meaningfully evaluate the uses of new technologies. What he did not anticipate was that the two-culture gap would become a two-culture chasm and that the culture of scientists-engineers would become just as responsible for the failure to unify human knowledge as the culture of humanists-social scientists. (in Nadeau & Kafatos, 2001:13-14)

It seems that history is seldom linear⁶⁶ and intertextuality proves that influences whilst not being atemporal nonetheless escape a purely chronological sense. Indeed, the philosophers of the enlightenment in 17th century France frequently doubled up as scientists. Equally, life experience contains the experiments we undergo, if often unwillingly or unsuspectingly, to attain a certain knowledge of ourselves and the world. In this instance and more personally, quantum physics confirmed a somatic and subconscious intuitive knowledge. An unhealthy body or a body under the influence of chemicals will impact on the mind, and reversely a stressed or grieving mind will affect the wellness of the body, psycho-somatically at the very least. However this parallel only begins to introduce the next part of this chapter. The true core of this exploration concerns the knowledge and awareness of the body that escapes the rational reasoning process of the mind, which is articulated through language. Instincts, intuition, penchants and the intrinsic way one has of feeling that one is being looked at from afar, sensing the presence of someone creeping up behind one, physically perceiving one's closeness to a wall; all these real and daily life experiences represent the movement of energy, the reality of our body's awareness and cellular memory as matter.

⁶⁶ "People think history is linear, that it only gets better but that's not true. Acceptance of difference is something that can easily disappear. What we have to always be aware of is, is there anything coming that could change the way things are today? We need to always be aware of that." (Lisa Power, head of policy for the Terrence Higgins Trust, in Attitude 167 Homo-Plus June 2008, p57).

Presence: a bodily matter

[T]he body knows things about which the mind is ignorant.
(Lecoq in Callery, 2001:4)

My research was now directed towards a better understanding of the body and more specifically the independent behaviour and capacities of the body as a centre of energy, and as matter. The pressing question soon became where to find material pertaining to the independent intelligence of the body? Although the term *body language* is mostly used in relation to or in parallel with language content, it seemed an appropriate starting point. Fast's (1971) work, *Body Language* underlined the intensity of body awareness in everyday social life with a poignant experiment in place of an example. The researcher and an unsuspecting friend are sitting in front of each other at a restaurant table. The researcher subtly and over time brings his cutlery closer to the space of his fellow diner. He moves his wine glass into the space of his diner. He discretely pushes his packet of cigarettes within the table space of his interlocutor during their conversation. The effects of these movements go a long way to make the unsuspecting experimentee feel uncomfortable, irritable and impatient. That is to say that by invading his friend's space uninvited, the researcher posed a concrete and serious threat to his friend. The experimentee, although completely subconsciously, reacted nonetheless quite vehemently. His mind remained unaware of the reason why but his body sensed the invasion and responded vigorously. This study belongs to the science of proxemics, which delineates four key distances that vary depending on the context:

- 1). *Intimate distance*
 - 2). *Personal distance*
 - 3). *Social distance*
 - 4). *Public distance*
- (Hall in Fast, 1971:30)

Although acquired, cultural expectations are at play, the spontaneous somatic awareness is paramount in establishing one's comfort zone if a situation warrants that a certain distance be respected. This first sociological examination of our somatic intelligence, whilst greatly informative, remained linked to language. I wanted to move away from any direct link to language in order to lay the physical side of our apprenticeship of the world bare and clear. It is both common knowledge and a common experience that young children can immediately sense whether an adult

likes them or not regardless of their behaviour and whether the adult is in a good physical and/or mental state, once again regardless of their façade. This capacity to intuit and uncover feeling is generally completely spontaneous and thus unconscious in the child. It is tempting in this context to suggest that the electrical, magnetic and chemical activity produced by the given adult exposes or betrays their true disposition. In more ways than one, it is easy to conclude that we as human individuals feel and come to be adamant about certain choices and decisions without finding any explanation for this in our rationale.

Thus I began to turn to the arts and performing arts as a rich source of extra-linguistic knowledge and as a mode of expression. My increasingly virulent research in dance theory and its practices pointed to a desire in the contemporary dancer through a painstaking exploration of physicality, movement and body expression to return to and reconnect with natural movement and natural somatic impulse. This quest leads the dancer to master dance technique. However paradoxical this may sound when the non-dancer thinks of the attainment of natural movement, mastering technique and intensive training is not a hindrance to the contemporary dancer but rather a way to free him/herself from “artificial and ungainly habits.” (Desmond, 1997:250) It is worth mentioning that, in music, we are much more prone to admit that rich and innovative improvisation belongs to the masters. John Coltrane and Keith Jarrett, both successful and world famous Jazz musicians, could produce complex improvisations and interpretations precisely because of their mastery of technique (Callery, 2001:14). As Brook (1993) insists, “[a]n untrained body is like an untuned musical instrument – its sounding box is filled with a confusing and ugly jangle of useless noises that prevent the true melody from being heard.” (in Bradby, 2006:22)

This realisation confirmed my inkling for contemporary dance as a generous articulation of the physical reality of the body as matter and energy. As mentioned in the second chapter, the word *soul* is often deemed inadequate within the realms of formal and scientific analysis. Yet the famous actor, mime and acting instructor Jacques Lecoq (in Bradby, 2006) plainly states that “bodily creativity is the scene of the soul.” (:27) In fact Lecoq kept reappearing in my textual research as a key influence on the advent of physical theatre. I had only been familiar with the term through DV8’s self-proclaimed title and work, and thus did not understand its specific history or meaning. I had witnessed and fallen in love with physical theatre after

watching DV8's film productions and attending a show by Sieni Danza in Sienna, in December 2004. In hindsight, chance had blessed me by putting pure feeling and somatic connection before intellectual understanding. My early encounters of physical theatre with the film *Enter Achilles* (Newson & DV8, 1996) and the performance *Visitazione* (Sieni & Sieni Danza, 2004) both in December 2004 had a deep impact where the deepest cord that had been struck in me rung from the pre-verbal and non-verbal part of my being. It is only now, three and a half years later that I have been able to find the verbatim relating to my experience with and of this form of artistic expression, this form of artistic language. As Preston-Dunlop and Sanchez-Colberg (2002) outline it:

'dance as language', a phrase used by Laban, Wigman and Jooss, should not be taken as a methodological premise, but a mere metaphor which describes dance's ability to express (taken to mean bring out, make manifest) that which lies outside language – the 'unsayable things' which Bausch has so often referred to. (:10)

With the firm desire to create a non-verbal film came the need to learn from non-verbal media. My two potential instructors and conveyors of this now seemed clearly to be found in contemporary dance and physical theatre. However, while I became gripped once again by each art, this time I had to go to the bottom of my feelings and impressions and retrieve a clearer sense of what they meant, or at least of what they stood for.

Is this dance or is this acting?

My passion for dance and acting was accompanied by a greater ignorance. I now had to identify their differences. This may initially appear to be quite redundant. Yet my first encounters with physical theatre were almost perfectly non-verbal in spite of being occasionally of great vocal intensity, particularly in *Visitazione*. Furthermore they both involved choreographed movement. So what justified these different denominations, with one attaching itself to dance and the other to theatre?

The answer seemed delightfully queer as Gallery (2001) explains, “[t]he way dance has been reinvented in DV8's work is a challenge to preconceptions about divisions in the performing arts.” (:7) DV8's production in *Enter Achilles* is unmistakably a reworking of contact dance to the point where single dancers begin to interact and dance with objects, in one particular instance with a pint glass. Contact dance, inspired from Tai-chi, relies on a near permanent contact between two moving

bodies. Each body has to follow, complement and respond to the natural impulse and flow of the body or bodies it is in contact with. This quasi-meditation through somatic awareness, exchange of energy and movement is precisely that: movement before dance; movement as a liberating yet canalizing alternative to dance. Ever arguably, it is a fine line between seeing movement and seeing dance, that is to say a relatively choreographed and aesthetically contained movement. The point remains that DV8 refers to its work as physical theatre. Is this to say that their body movement work wishes to reject any association with dance? As Callery has underlined, the answer would have to be no. On the contrary, the nature of physical theatre is to bridge the gap between drama and dance by finding a middle ground where both fields may merge to electrifying consequences. Physical theatre, without limiting itself to non-verbal performance, does nevertheless use this non-verbal premise to bring initial and ultimate focus to the body as a moving flow of energy. Once the focus is unavoidably set on somatic presence and expression, drama and dance are drawn much closer.

The foundations of this bridge between the embodiment of language and the language of the body lie in the consecration of mime as the most powerful tool to develop an actor's scope and abilities. The 20th century saw a vivid return to the art of corporeal mime, which uses the body as the primary means of expression. The theatre director, actor and dramatist Jacques Copeau (1879-1949) first instigated a return to simpler, rawer and thus purer theatre, since he felt that theatre had fallen prey to an ornamentation that obscured even the finest texts. His student Etienne Decroux (1898-1991) studied at his Ecole du Vieux Colombier in Paris and pursued the importance of the somatic impulse in creative acting to the extent of redefining the terms of mime. His teaching caused a most developed impact on the work of mime artist Marcel Marceau (1923-2007). His contemporary, admirer and close friend Jacques Lecoq (1921-1999), also an actor, mime and acting instructor, intertextually extracted what is now referred to as physical theatre from the progress of mime. Lecoq's acting school, just as that of his predecessors, acquired international fame and soon became an avant-garde as well as a duly recognised centre of excellence in actor training. These pioneering actors-acting instructors, by returning to the primordial role of the body in acting, sowed the seeds for what was to be reaped as physical theatre, or the essence of drama and dance, that is to say movement and

the embodiment of feeling⁶⁷. To borrow a quote from Lecoq's recollections of Marceau, we can portray the evolution of theatre towards physical theatre:

At all events, [Marcel Marceau's] preference was for 'poor' texts, for he liked to say that the poorer the text, the richer must be the music of the actor, and the richer the text, the poorer the music... By poor he probably meant texts that say little and suggest much, texts which provoke movements and gestures, texts which inspire the moving body and stimulate the mime to improvise. By rich he meant either the opposite, a great poem that says everything, and obliges the actor to be self-effacing, or, worse, a verbose and over-emphatic text that can only provoke wild gesticulation. (in Bradby, 2006:46)

Therefore, physical theatre by *enqueering* dance and acting creates an open, queer space where exchange and complementarity can thrive. To be clear, this queer space does not negate the distinct natures of dance and acting. However these respective paths bring us to a common ground where the nature of one enriches that of the other and vice versa through the process of physical theatre. Callery (2001) sums this up perfectly:

In physical theatre, whether the performers are dancers or actors, the process is still the same: ideas are scored in rehearsal through the body. Everyone starts by searching for the somatic impulse. (:8)

With this historical and theoretical background in mind, I now wish to contextualise the choices made during the pre-production and production of *In Visibilities*.

In Visibilities (Garel, 2008)

Pre-production

To start with the pre-production, the account of Martha Graham's creative and processual methods (Bannerman, 2006) on the one hand, and that of the creative and processual methods of Francis Bacon (Deleuze, 2003) on the other hand, helped me to identify a preferred framework for the film.

Bannerman's analysis of Graham's work and legacy proved to be of determining influence in my understanding of structural methods and practical outlets in dance. Indeed, I already had the contribution of the experimental composer Paul Ramshaw in thought when conceiving of *In Visibilities*. We had spoken at length during the summer of 2007 about the role of his compositions in a film about

⁶⁷ All these historical details were drawn from a reading of Bradby (2006) and additional sourcing at www.wikipedia.com

enqueered city spaces. However, I remained unsure of how to combine dance and music. My initial hope had been to introduce Paul Ramshaw to Francesca Duranti and let them exchange ideas and influence one another's work from the start. This intention did not come to fruition due mainly to Francesca's residency in Italy and her busy schedule. Instead, Francesca and I eventually agreed to set our particular collaboration in Tuscany, her home region.

Whilst disappointed by this first failure, it became rather a blessing in disguise. As Bannerman expresses it so persuasively:

Horst's influence on Graham cannot be ignored. From early in her career, he had advised her against seeking to interpret music, stating instead that it was the dance itself that 'should be the centre of interest, the point of tension'. (Madden, 1996:56-57 in Bannerman, 2006:5)

Suddenly, I could appreciate the unforeseen unfolding of the project. Moreover, my hope to create a cross-artistic collaboration still held promising potential in the person of Francesca alone, who as aforementioned, masters many different forms of art, from linguistics and languages to music, painting, acting and dancing. The production, once again multi-fold, rendered dance as the point of tension. This was further accentuated by my third collaboration with the Devon based dancer Curt Hennells. As we will detail later on in this chapter, his training as well as his current work lay at the cutting edge of contemporary and experimental dance.

As discussed in the last chapter, the *Dogme Manifesto '95* imposes strict rules of production in order to free the filmmaker from his comfort zone and habits towards a rethinking of cinema. A challenge only renders one's overcoming of it as a greater success. Therefore, alongside the obvious non-verbal clause of *In Visibilities*, I aimed to limit my reliance on pseudo-narratives and, to a lesser extent symbolism, which is often the only outlet for purely visual imagery. The key work to influence my thinking about the embodiment of quantum physics through natural movement on those terms was *Francis Bacon: the logic of sensation* (Deleuze, 2003). By gaining a deeper understanding of the forces at work in Bacon's paintings, I grew to value another artistic cross-over, that of painting, with its dance, and physical theatre, with its drama. The latter's embodiment of feeling converged with the capturing of a sensation by the former. Let us leave Deleuze to explain:

It is the confrontation of the Figure and the field, their solitary wrestling in a shallow depth, that rips the painting away from all narrative but also from all symbolisation.

When narrative or symbolic, figuration obtains only the bogus violence of the represented or the signified; it expresses nothing of the violence of sensation – in other words, of the act of painting. (2003:XIV)

There is movement and the violence of sensation in Bacon's art. Yes, but not only. Deleuze opened yet another association in my mind when he deconstructs the meaning of Bacon's 1972 Triptych; that of rhythm as the musical counterpart of movement:

A 1972 Triptych shows a Figure whose back is 'diminished', but whose leg is already complete, and another Figure whose torso has been completed, but who is missing one leg and whose other leg runs. These are monsters from the point of view of figuration. But from the point of view of the Figures themselves, these are rhythms and nothing else, rhythms as in a piece of music, as in the music of Messiaen, which makes you hear 'rhythmic characters'. If one keeps in mind the development of the triptych, and this way Bacon has of effecting relationships between paintings and music, then one can return to the simple paintings... each distributes rhythms, at least three, as though so many Figures resonating in the field, and that the field separates and unites them, superposes them, of a piece. (Deleuze, 2003:XV)

This image has been removed by the author of this thesis for copyright reasons.

(Triptych – August 1972, by Francis Bacon. © Francis Bacon Estate. Tate online)

Thus my framework was set: dance and/or movement within the greater sphere of physical theatre should remain centre stage and would in any case precede the sound input. Sound would appear as a reaction to body movement, but not as an interpretation. Also, the live paintings of a body within a city- or landscape should convey sensations and melody through the pace of movement and the interaction of matter with matter, that is to say of the body in, against and with its surroundings.

Production

Collaboration: different inputs for a richer production

As ever, producing a film begins with the shooting. This is the time when I as a documentary filmmaker can benefit from the input provided by the participants. Since I always privilege an organic approach in my filming process, the contribution of the participants often equates to a full-fledged collaboration insofar as their actions and discourse are only influenced by the presence of the camera. That is to say that their behaviour guides my work and my reactions thus owning a strong sense of directorial merit, often rendering me a cameraman first and foremost. Furthermore, looking back on the fact that many residents at Glasallt Fawr also became my camera crew, technical collaboration is bound to organic collaboration. Thus I am only developing this pre-existing sense of collaboration in *In Visibilities*. However, in this particular instance, the idea of collaboration and the implicit problematic of the voices of narration becomes more complex. Seven separate stages define the production of *In Visibilities* and they are, in summative form, as follows:

1. The filming of Francesca's physical theatre improvisations in Italy, summer 2007.
2. The filming of Curt's dance improvisations (closer to pure movement in that they are improvised, reacting to the dance space), April 2008.
3. A meeting with Paul Ramshaw, Curt Hennells and myself to exchange ideas and clarify the nature and methods of our collaboration, April 2008.
4. My initial editing of the material as two films:
 - Francesca's work in *In Visibilities I*
 - Curt's work in *In Visibilities II*
5. A meeting with Don Boyd⁶⁸ after which I decide to combine both films for a richer production of meaning and a stronger sense of pace.
6. Cutting a separate film for Curt's upcoming show and drawing on his ideas and input to modify *In Visibilities*.
7. Paul Ramshaw sends me the score he composed as an integrated score or soundtrack for the film and I set about marrying it (subjectively) adequately to the visuals.

⁶⁸ Don Boyd is an Honorary Professor of the Department of Film Studies at the University of Exeter. Thus I have had meetings with him on several occasions to discuss my PhD research

Before deconstructing these processes, let us locate, still in summative form, each contributing artist in this collaboration.

Francesca Duranti

During the thought process that led to the making of *In Visibilities*, I soon thought of my close friend Francesca Duranti, a linguist, painter, writer, musician, established actress, and most pertinently of all, an experimental dancer and choreographer. She has trained in physical theatre, contact dance, contemporary dance, Indian dance, classical dance and other practices I remain unclear about, taking courses, performing, directing and authoring shows in Italy, the United-Kingdom, France, Belgium, Germany, Austria, Sweden, Greece, Turkey, Lebanon, Syria, Morocco and Tunisia. In an uncanny occurrence of synchronicity, she called me one night as I was about to call her. I intended to suggest that we collaborate on a film and dance project together during the summer of 2007. To my utter bedazzlement, she put forward the exact same idea, arguing that she was ready to develop her dance improvisation skills for the camera. Albeit for different reasons, our ideas on the matter had merged most consistently.

Curt Hennells

Due to time constraints, a small budget and general unavailability, Francesca was unable to come to the United Kingdom to meet Paul Ramshaw and work with us on the development of *In Visibilities*. Thus I was lucky to know the dancer Curt Hennells through a common close friend. He agreed to contribute to the project.

Curt Hennells trained at Laban and The Place (London Contemporary Dance School) and founded CASHdance, a multimedia experimental collaboration of artists focused principally around dance. Curt is now living in Devon and is currently working with Rosanna Irvine, and Richard Poval on future projects.

Paul Ramshaw

I was put in contact with Paul Ramshaw by my thesis supervisor Professor Susan Hayward who had identified a strong link between our works and research. Indeed Paul's compositions through a computer-programme based refining and processing of live recordings achieve sounds and scores that present no clearly identifiable instrument. He also chooses to move away from the expectancy of rhythm and the

comfort it provides. His *(en)queering* of sound and the resulting experience of the listener opens up new fields of non-verbal communication.

Although I remained the only film director and photographer, *In Visibilities* is comprised of Francesca's and Curt's respective artistic direction paired with Paul's integrated soundtrack. Each of these, including Francesca's choice of locations, was developed with no interference from myself, except perhaps that I selected the location of Thamesmead⁶⁹ for Curt's dance improvisation. Yet once there, the specific spaces within Thamesmead were chosen collaboratively. The question to then ask is perhaps what kind and category of film was engendered by the collaboration of equal players, contributors and participants?

Film analysis

New material, new process?

Until the making of *In Visibilities*, I had only ever produced socio-cultural and often politically charged documentaries. Although several of these incorporated an artistic dimension such as D's paintings paralleled with her life story in *La Vie en Rose* (Garel, 2003) or the performance of drag artists in *Tribes of the Queer* (Garel, 2006), they remained secondary ingredients both in form and in content. *In Visibilities*, on the other hand, embraces the arts as a core element in its construction and production of meaning, especially since it chooses to avoid communication through words. However delineating a clear category remains inaccurate and simplistic. Moreover, and perhaps quite unexpectedly, my methods of work did not significantly change, nor did the equipment used. While being far more experimental, no light installation or additional lighting or a pre-designed set of any kind was used in the making of *In Visibilities*, following the practice employed in every one of my documentaries. Furthermore, due to the fact that Francesca and Curt relied solely on improvisation to articulate and re-articulate the progress of their work, there was no written scenario at any given point. Here again, no different to the rest of my films. With regards to the sound input, Paul was made to react to the visual material and create an audible response, which quite like the creativity and elaboration employed

⁶⁹ The specific location of Thamesmead seemed particularly pertinent in my view since it represents one of the most poverty-stricken housing estates of London, an isolated social and urban complex of withering grey concrete tower blocks. However, paradoxically, as it borders the county of Kent, so does it hold a lake and a vast park of green fields. This severe visual clash between the symbols of a harsh cityscape and those proper to the countryside materialise an *enqueered* and *enqueering* space.

in editing is essentially spontaneous and serendipitous. Thus I believe to have maintained a field of production that was free from – or at least of limited – predetermined directions and intentions. When making a documentary in this way, I can learn from my encounters and fully benefit from the experience of fieldwork and collaboration. Indeed, if a filmic researcher brings his/her prejudice and inflexible intentions to the field and the film, s/he often returns with little more than his/her original knowledge, ideas and appreciation of the subject at hand. One can cheat his/her audience into believing the film interprets the actual, but where does this leave one's true experience and apprenticeship of the field explored?

So if *In Visibilities* resembles all of my previous films in the filmmaking process, there remains an important variation. I use the word variation and not difference strictly speaking since the non-verbal quality of the film only represents a greater emphasis on purely audio-visual elements which appear in all audio-visual works, naturally. Nevertheless, I have always used additional sounds and music sparingly in my documentaries as I feel they influence the viewer in a unidimensional fashion and cheapen the emotions at play and at stake. In this film project however, the soundtrack is of crucial importance: it becomes a greater accentuation of the performative aspect. The orchestrated sounds used here, due to their highly experimental originality, instigate the emergence of a vast field of responsive, non-verbal and non-limiting complex feelings in the viewer. The involvement caused here is perhaps more poignant and unavoidable insofar as it projects the viewer outside of his/her anticipations and comfort zone. It is worth reiterating here that the scores Paul Ramshaw made me listen to during our last meeting were awe inducing, gripping and deeply affecting, just as is the score he composed for *In Visibilities*. Yet the novelty of their structures and the indecipherability of the instruments used convey a rich difference. Here is a soundtrack not so much imposed to the viewer-listener as it is negotiated across through the viewer-listener's individual experience of it, and thereby re-creation. In virtue of this final layer to the film, we are dealing with a form of performative art. Indeed according to dance practitioners and dance researchers Preston-Dunlop and Sanchez-Colberg (2002), "a performative art is one in which negotiation takes place between creator/performers & spectators, it is imperative that all actively participate if a performative art is to be had." (:16). And evidently, the film itself must be engaging or even provocative enough to encourage a strong dialogue and exchange with the viewer. This would also connote the artistic nature of film

regardless of whether it belongs to fiction, documentary or the realism attainable in both which perdures as an art form. Hence, would coining a film 'an artistic documentary' be a pleonasm? Arguably so if, as we have explained in previous chapters, the behaviour of man captured on camera reflects back to our intrinsic performing nature as social and sociable beings. Then let us examine whether the denomination of socio-cultural documentary is applicable here.

In the case of the moving body, seminal deductions presented by Lecoq (2006) in his writings would imply the answer 'yes' given that "the body reflects its society, its milieu and its period." (:27). But how does the body reveal so much? In reply to this, we need only notice how nationalities and/or milieus are often noticeable in people's composure, demeanour and body language. In fact Fast (1971) nuances and expands on Lecoq's affirmation while still coming to a similar conclusion:

We are born with the elements of a nonverbal communication. We can make hate, fear, amusement, sadness and other basic feelings known to other human beings without ever learning how to do it.

Of course this does not contradict the fact that we must also learn many gestures that mean one thing in one society and something else in another society. We can understand then that our nonverbal language is partly instinctive, partly taught and partly imitative. (:22-23)

And more evidently, the clothes we see others in and perceive ourselves through are also a significant ally to or a cover for the body. Hence along with our bodies and their expressions come clothes with their potentialities and meanings.

We are born naked. The rest is drag⁷⁰

A recent acquaintance, Peggy Meyer, who hosts and directs workshops for drag art and performance in Berlin uses a pertinent slogan: 'we are born naked, the rest is drag'. This places emphasis once more on the fact that one's behaviour and performance, whilst seemingly alien, may often be an exaggeration, a subversion or merely an increased visibility of what we all experience in the wearing of clothes, garments and objects. After all, on a basic level, is the aim not the same? Some individuals parade clearly visible trademarks while others prefer to wear discrete, plain coloured vestments. Many persons cannot bear to wear clothes that are too tight against their body as they do not wish to draw attention to it, while persons who

⁷⁰ This is a slogan used by Peggy Meyer, a queer activist in Berlin, and it was the title of a recent drag/queen workshop she organised and ran.

wish to attract attention, sexual or otherwise, may go to the opposite extreme. In any case, clothes and their assortments in every day life are loaded with intentions and signifiers. As Lecoq (in Bradby, 2006) summarises: “[a]n interplay exists between clothes and the body, accentuating or countering its shapes.” (:25). This interplay is used figuratively in *In Visibilities* to project the interplay between different quanta, even if its production of meaning far outstretches this notion. The idea of the film is indeed to see how different locations induce different reactions and responses in the dancer. With Francesca’s decision to use different costumes and outfits for different locations comes the clearly exposed additional influence of clothing. In contrast, Curt’s clothes do not change, immutable as are his grey surroundings. His mainstream, ‘high street fashion’ style, manufactured outfit echoes a man-made manufactured scenery. Let us now pay closer attention to **the construction of *In Visibilities***.

Reading in between the lines

The dramatic curve in this film begins with a rapid and clear opposition of a male (taken to mean born with a penis he has conserved) dancer in masculine attire and in black and white or grey, and a female (taken to mean born with a vagina she has conserved) dancer in feminine attire and in colour. The male dancer, Curt, is in a housing estate of grey concrete and tower block housing. The female dancer, Francesca, is on green grass. Curt’s location is in the city of London, in the United Kingdom while Francesca’s is in the city of Sienna, in Italy. These initial oppositions are slowed down as the film progresses until a new rapid inter-cut sequence between the two dancers is featured towards the end of the film. The cultural discourses of the body in a male/female dichotomy persist in traditional and essentialist associations of the female with nature against the male, builder of the concrete city and its symbolic association to nurture. The female would also incarnate the origins whereas the male would embody aspirations towards the future and technological progress. Amusingly with this in mind it is worth mentioning that Curt is a gay man, which at least in some respects, subverts the presumed traditional role, place and purpose of man in the world. Francesca, for her part, is an actress with much experience of playing lesbian characters. Moreover, contemporary dance conserves an approach to body and movement that is largely free of gender-bias. Although *In Visibilities* does not seek to eliminate any gender specific attributes, their presence is often parodied or

subverted. For example, in spite of the fact that Francesca's outfits and costumes may reflect a feminine sensitivity, they are first and foremost a connotation of her link to the theatre and drama as an experienced actress.

We should now return to film form for a moment. Half way through the film, more precisely at the end of the sequence where Francesca is first shown dancing amidst trees wearing a red dress, a split screen shows her and Curt dancing next to each other, albeit in different times, places and colours (Curt's frame is in black and white, Francesca's remains in colour). Soon after, as Francesca enters her car and drives off (this is implicit in the film) Curt is shown repeatedly jumping on the road in front of the car. He is partly transparent in this moment, that is to say that both images are superimposed in cross-dissolve, and could be perceived as a memory or a dream. The tone of the soundtrack would also point towards the idea of a mind-induced vision. In the final part of the film, before the credits, an apparent male body and an apparent female body appear on a beach performing an aggressive form of contact dance, thus suggesting that these two bodies are finally united or reunited. The colour effect used clearly delineates their shadows on the sand in bright colours. This further accentuates a physical contact and mergence of two bodies to play once again on the expectancy that a man and a woman are designed to be sexually attracted to one another, when we are dealing with two dancers who sexually at least would be incompatible. Therefore, if this shot denotes a logical and expected conclusion, the reasons may be more abstract. In any case, is this equivocal storyline the point of the film? Not really. The male body on the beach is that of Francesca's lover, Francesco. This semblance of intelligibility is only there to connect the different parts more convincingly. If Curt and Francesca had actually met, a contact dance sequence between the two of them would have been desirable to convey a certain sense of arrival or resolution. Nevertheless, the presence of Francesco 'in place of' Curt remains interesting insofar as it continues to subvert the viewer's expectations and modes of reasoning with the material presented. Ultimately, the emotion and meaning contained in the dance pieces and the film as a whole are open to broad interpretation. With the absence of my direction in any of the dances, I cannot restrict their role or purpose. However what is more palpable and interesting is the meaning produced by editing, special effects, slow motions and repeats which I combined when editing. Furthermore, the interplay of the dancers with their surroundings emits a theatrical and mimic-like sense, more rightly appreciated as a communication of

matter with matter. As we have elucidated, matter remains perpetually aware of matter and as Gallery (2001) reports in the words of Richards (1995), “[a]wareness means the consciousness which is not linked to language (the machine for thinking) but to presence.” (:22) In consideration of this we must now deconstruct the film.

A film and its parts

A visual introduction introduces our two main non-verbal performers and communicators, before the title appears, in order to immediately stress non-verbal exploration through body movement. Moreover, although the sound can seem overpowering in parts, it gives centre stage to the dancers by waiting till the title appears to make itself heard. Francesca and Curt are shown in a similar shot featuring the entirety of their bodies. Curt seems to be counting the passing of seconds to represent the intricate realms of space and time. He could also be perceived to be counting a rhythm or the period after which the sound may enter the film. The title is then preceded by the gradual appearance of red rectangles in a vertical position with the darker red to the left of the frame and the lighter red to the right of the frame. As the title appears in white against a black background, the red bars cover the six occurrences of the letter ‘i’. Their gradual colour progression infers that we go from less visible to more visible. Indeed the title plays on the idea of visible and invisible realities, as well as audible and non-audible ones. If we cannot see (or hear) the behaviour of quanta without a microscope, perhaps some persons feel it without necessarily understanding the physical process at work. Thus is *In Visibilities* a film set on making the invisible visible, and taking the viewer into new visibilities of the world s/he is in.

The first section following on from the title brings the dynamic of body and clothing to the forefront. We first notice a white piece of clothing floating on the water. The next shot presents Francesca lifting it and wearing it. However a battle ensues between her and the white dress as she migrates from water to land to water once more. On one occasion her face peers through the cloth screaming. On a second occasion her head emerges from the water under the cloth as though caught in a net or deprived of the air she seeks to inhale. Logically then, Francesca steps away from the floating white dress, provocatively shying away from any renewed involvement with it, in spite of her featured activities and presence on dry land, where one’s nudity cannot be hidden. The soundtrack develops quite unpredictably to echo these

actions. On the one hand, its absence of beats or any clear rhythm alienates it from Francesca's movements and expressions. On the other hand, it intensifies and tones up or down according to key moments in the physical theatre experience. The most easily identifiable such moment is when she runs into the water and lets herself become submerged. The sound resumes a mere whisper in this shot. Subsequently amid a tall cliff side of rocks, she is at one with the dry land and as though awoken from a nightmare she lifts her head abruptly to eventually drop her head down and meditate with nature and the vegetation it hosts.

As though by time and space travel, we are then taken to Thamesmead, a grey desolate housing space on the outskirts of London. From dull shades of grey in long shot we move to a medium long shot where Curt's hand seems to flicker towards a white wall that immediately turns brighter as a consequence. This seeming interaction between Curt and his surroundings is later emphasised to a greater extent as the colours and sounds of the scene change intermittently with sudden gestures.

Taken through another apparent time and space travel we arrive to the inside of a dark forest to rejoin Francesca wearing a red dress this time, dancing. The only glimpses of sunlight are filtered through her red dress, bringing vivid colour back into the frame. Several split screens punctuate this passage to escalating effect. The sound, after adapting itself to suit Francesca's disposition, now vanishes as though obeying a somatic order given by the dancer as she waves away a feeling or a spirit from the tree she is dancing against. The sound is brought back to life when we find Curt and Francesca dancing next to each other in a split screen. A set of movements resembling an incantation order the sound back into being. From this point onwards there can be no doubt that the movements and experiences we are witnessing represent the embodiment of sound. We then find ourselves in a vast abbey with Francesca, still in red, dancing on an altar. The split screen, this time split in horizontal fashion, features the same location (the abbey) and the same dancer in identical attire. The only difference is that they are producing distinct movements. Eventually, the bottom half freezes and its colours change, while the 'upper' Francesca continues to dance. Compellingly the upper half of the frame then becomes the entire frame. Within a few seconds the upper frame, now the whole frame, becomes the lower frame as a new horizontal split screen brings ruins – a façade of the abbey – through the lens of a moving camera above Francesca's continued dance. This constructed sequence brings accelerated rhythm to the film

development and compiles several dimensions together. Body movement and camera movement convey an unsettled sense of spatial awareness while the abbey as cultural and historical landmark conjures notions of the old city and the reality of times past, present and future. Thence matter and materiality by association depict time. Alluringly, this connection could belong within the realms of synaesthesia⁷¹. In other words, *In Visibilities* through my choice to escape verbal language and give sound a more abstract and predominant role may succeed in creating a multi-sensory experience in and for the viewer. As Paul Ramshaw has explained to me during our correspondences, unlike the music in Wim Vandekeybus's dance films (2000;2002;2005) which he found to be merely applied, his score would be integrated. That is to say that instead of being at best a key instrument in the telling of a story, the sound becomes an actor-creator and an inter-actor, integrally a part of the plot.

In the next section of the film, a painting of a blue coloured dancing crowd circling a white centre gives way to a field where Francesca once again tries to remove part of her garment in order to move more freely. The clothing comes to represent once more an un-useful burden. The reoccurrence of this discomfort in the white dress is amplified by an imposing gate ajar behind which Francesca can be seen. A sudden arm gesture takes us to her red car and in so doing audibly drops part of the soundtrack. After the dreamlike vision of Curt jumping on the road in front of Francesca's car we reach vividly green grasslands where Francesca stands, now wearing a black dress and a blonde wig. We see her in medium close up, calm and solemn, gather herself before she begins to dance. The colour of her dress and the weight of her stare towards the right of the frame are accentuated by a jumpy effect. It looks as though her visible spirit, or her malaise visibly disembodied, seeks release from her body. A release it eventually obtains as it is propelled towards us while the body in the background pursues its course of action and movement. Immediately we must question how a body would be able to function without its spirit. Is this an outer body experience which does not necessarily equate to a near-death experience? Is

⁷¹ **Synaesthesia:** *Impressions from different sense modalities which vary in content may be analogous in form and structure. One and the same rhythm may be perceived regardless of whether it is visual, auditory, or tactile. When we try to describe a quality of one sense modality, we often borrow an adjective from another: an adjective from sound may describe a visual impression, as when we speak of the harmony of colour or of a loud red. We also describe sound with words borrowed from temperature and smell, such as hot jazz and fragrant nocturnes, and we refer to our tastes as hot or sharp, and to smells as dry or sweet. Such phrases are not merely figurative. A colour, tone, smell, or temperature, a tactile experience of smoothness or wetness, may have some intrinsic phenomenal kinship with another sensory experience.* (Cohen and Clark, 1979:53)

this a mere exteriorising of discomfort, unease, rage? Or is there indeed a body spirit which emanates from the body alone and not the mind? Given the subtext of quantum physics in this piece, the visuals may well imply such considerations. As the image of the spirit fades away, the dance piece portrays puppet like movements and corporal signs of disagreement, rejection and release. Before a cut to a blossoming flower, Francesca's movement orders the soundtrack into appeasing silence once more. The ensuing jerky dance pushes the sound back into the frame through Francesca's joining of the palms and their subsequent open gesture towards the camera. The sequence ends with Francesca's presenting of the wig held in her hand with an accusatory look. This, in my train of thought, symbolises a confrontational idea: 'this dressed my head as does the mind but, lo and behold, I no longer need it here and now since it impaired my movement'. Interestingly the subsisting functionality of the body without the mind reflects back to recent research by the neurologist and writer Oliver Sacks (2007). He reveals that "H.M's case made it clear that two very different sorts of memory could exist: a conscious memory of events (episodic memory) and an unconscious memory for procedures – and that such procedural memory is unimpaired in amnesia." (:55) This would point to the idea aforementioned that matter can develop a memory of its own, as have done mobile telephone batteries⁷².

Without any transition this time, we rejoin Curt below a grey sky with nothing around but a bench and a railing in the background. This particular footage features the first use of diegetic⁷³ sound, soon surpassed and hushed by a climactic ascending of non-diegetic sound. With a new split screen and mirror effect, Curt looks as though he is dancing in front of himself and he eventually touches the mirror image with his hand and arm. Given the grey, dark and cold setting, one could expect him to be absorbed into the world of the dead as Jean Marais is in Cocteau's film masterpiece, *Orphée* (1950). In simple terms, this footage represents introspection, psyche and the inner darkness, cold or trauma, to counter the equally dark psyche of Francesca in the previous section. The next four shots succeed one another following the movements of Curt's body. In this manner, Curt seems to be pulling the next frame over the frame he is in. The colour filters change intermittently with certain of

⁷² See page 133

⁷³ Although we could argue that the sounds composed by Ramshaw are diegetic insofar as they clearly translate the performers' inner psyche, they were not captured while shooting.

his movements as do the sounds going from purely non-diegetic to purely diegetic. This brings invisible worlds or dimensions into view and testifies as to the parallel co-existence of the microscopic life and the macroscopic life, the emotional, psychological spheres and the material, physical spheres. A final kick from Curt takes us back to Francesca's car bathed in sunset. We then see her shadow on a sandy beach.

The dance piece here reveals her shadow in full with the increasing interference in medium-close up of her body. As such we have two bodies sharing a continuous dance sequence, as though Francesca's dark side and bright side have been extracted for all to see. The next sequence features an extended dance of Francesca in and with the sea. Her abstract story in the film starts at the natural hot springs and river of Petriollo, near Sienna, and after pursuing her course through woods, ruins, fields and grasslands, she returns to the water in which all water ends: the sea. As she falls back into the water she rises time and again to resemble a sea creature when she spins back to her feet towards the end of this sea dance episode. The shadows of walking legs across the sand serve as a transition before returning to Thamesmead. Curt is frozen in a grey and green painting-like shot beside a row of tower blocks, repeating the play on cross-artistic modes of expression. As Curt begins to move he assumes the movement of a swan opening its wings. This is repeated by editing to isolate that particular motion and value it separately. In this instance, the soundtrack does not mark the repeat cuts in any remarkable way. The next motion, closer to the lake contained within Thamesmead, repeats this effect. Back under some arcades at the entrance of one building, the shot is now in black and white and three slow motions are used to break down and bring out the complexity of three distinct movements so that the viewer may better appreciate them. The diegetic sound here alters with the speed of the image, validating and emphasising the effect used. The non-diegetic sound however conserves a near perfect ignorance of the slow motion effect. Curt then appears inside a long arcade. We go from a black and white shot in this arcade with both diegetic and non-diegetic sounds, to a line art shot followed by a colour shot, with the loss of diegetic sound. This was done to make another reality of the physical world visible: all quanta are aware of each other at all times and they present unpredictable patterns of behaviour. Consequently, the black and white shot flattens the image and thus places the surroundings on equal footing with Curt. The line art extends this

impression by blending Curt with the surroundings to resemble a sea of quanta. The absence of the sound made by his breathing, body and shoes in favour of the composed sound further increase this lack of separation and individual coating or skin amid a sea of quanta. Back in colour, Curt's movement approaches the camera lens, and in so doing the viewer, as his feet fill the frame and seem to be touching the lens/screen, thus provoking a strong response or involvement in the viewer. Another colour filter and a sudden burst of diegetic sound then present Curt in front of a purple door. Slow motion breaks down his dance and as his body extends upwards, the frame is frozen once more. In line art then colour, Francesca's clear cut movement is interspersed with Curt's until they seemingly meet for an aggressive and brief contact dance. Then come the credits.

The credits

As in all my films, the credits are an integral part of the film and its storyline. Paintings have punctuated the film and since the credits in my view needn't be an exception, a portrait of Francesca fades to a similar shot of Francesca on the beach. This cross-fade seems to bring the painting to life. This far into the film it has become quite clear that several artistic media are at play. Many shots have been transformed into paintings, many paintings introduce shots which are similar in form or content. Equally, many dance pieces incorporate the elements of the outdoors or become a part of them. Finally, different sources of sound are interspersed with each other, with the performances, with the performers, with the settings. This melting of categorical boundaries supports the vision of the world as a field of interconnected quanta, in a physical-material sense, and as a field of queerlings, that is to say the constant state of becoming of human nature and human potential. Before any other credits, we see the sun's reflection on the waves as the sea hits the shore with the shadow of a body (Francesca's in this instance) walking away from the sea and the camera.

The credits for sound go to Paul Ramshaw in a simple manner with white letters against a black background which keeps him as unidentifiable, letting his score embody his participation. The credits for Curt Hennells, by contrast, are preceded by a video excerpt from his last show, where he interacts with a part of his dancing in Thamesmead. Interestingly the image of him on the projector screen eventually freezes as he lifts his arm, holds it up and walks towards the screen. In the same way, as he moves away from the screen and lowers his hand, the image on the

projector screen disappears bringing darkness to the room he's in, a now perfect moment for the white letters spelling out his name to appear. But how does this fit in with the storyline? Firstly, an early intention was to include material of Curt reacting to himself on screen through dance. This attempt survives as a short hint for the credits. Nevertheless it produces, secondly, a form of *mise-en-abîme* where once again two bodies and media are reacting and responding to one another in movement. It is worth pointing out that Curt for this performance has kept similar clothing to that used in Thamesmead, thus bridging the gap between the outdoors and the indoors, the film performance and the live performance, his body in the present and in the past.

The paintings used in the film are credited with the peculiar naming of painting 0. This refers to the painting by Francesca that was used with the time-space travel effect and never alone. Therefore no viewer would be able to identify which painting it was, which led me to envisage it rightly as painting 0. The number zero can also be interpreted as the starting point of a new endeavour, a new beginning or, if we think of the term 'ground zero', "*the point of the most severe damage or destruction*"⁷⁴. Several influences are mentioned after the credit 'film by'. They include Maya Deren for her experimental film works, the dance company DV8 for its groundbreaking work in physical theatre and the resulting films, the dance company Sieni Danza for its work in contemporary dance, and Wim Vandekeybus for his inspirational work in contemporary dance and the resulting films. There is however a subtext in the layering and choice of these four credits. Maya Deren remained in spite of some collaborations, the main identifiable engine in all her films. DV8 was founded by Lloyd Newson in 1986⁷⁵ and he has remained the primordial choreographer and artistic director, yet since all pieces are developed with the performers collaboratively, DV8 stand as one. It is equally so for Sieni Danza, founded by Virgilio Sieni in 1992⁷⁶. Wim Vandekeybus, for his part, on all traceable work has not founded a specific company so that his creative and artistic direction remains his own.

Settlements: beyond the urban/rural binary

There remains one signifier to analyse. What was the role of settlements in the film? With regards to Thamesmead, we are evidently on the edges of the cityscape of

⁷⁴ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ground_zero [28.08.08]

⁷⁵ <http://www.dv8.co.uk/faqs/faqs.html#five> [26.08.08]

⁷⁶ <http://www.uniroma3.it/news.php?news=933> [26.08.08]

London. As the bordering park and the lake indicate, the countryside and the county of Kent, or the garden of England, are nearby. In one of the most poverty-stricken parts of London one does not expect to find a lake with a club for rowing and sailing, a public drinking house with an outdoor drinking area by the waterside and ponies tied to secure ropes in a fenceless park. So amidst acres of 1960's style housing, grey, of harsh square lines, rundown and cold, we find glimpses of the countryside: another uncanny cohabitation. But what of the cityscape in Francesca's parts? The sequence in the ruins of an abbey we can associate with an old settlement or city. Moreover we should remind ourselves of two important nuances. Firstly one of the meanings of cityscape is in fact "an artistic representation of a city"⁷⁷. Secondly, the etymology of the word *city* can be traced back to its origin of *cite* in medieval French language, originally meaning "any settlement, regardless of size"⁷⁸. These two considerations would render the interpretation of the word cityscape broadly encompassing. Conversely, if it is by knowing darkness that we can realize light, then perhaps any exploration of the concept of cityscape can emerge in contrast to the countryside and the relative wilderness. Nevertheless, since Thamesmead is not quite within the city but on its edges, so are the outdoor spaces Francesca chose as her stage and set bound to the history of living entities and their settlements. Therefore, in order to surpass the confines of the urban and rural binary, the original meaning of city is far more useful. Thus this chapter attaches itself to the interaction between queer bodies and settlements.

A note on music

It may be worth pointing out here before concluding that this third chapter makes little case of music theory, in spite of the important place *In Visibilitates* gives to the soundtrack. Although not entirely excusable, this flaw can be explained to some extent by the fact that due to numerous setbacks, it was the last element to be added to the film so that most of my analysis and reasoning was attached to the shooting, the performances and the editing. Moreover, I remained the director of the film work and the editing. In contrast, the music was a far looser collaboration in terms of my direct involvement, in spite of a directorial authority on the amendments and arrangements made to suit the film. Nevertheless, a few essential considerations still

⁷⁷ <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/cityscape> [26.08.08]

⁷⁸ <http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?search=city&searchmode=nl> [26.08.08]

need to be made or rearticulated. How is Ramshaw's sound score *integrated* as opposed to *applied* in the film? And are we hearing sound only or can it be accounted for as music? The first point to consider is that, in its avoidance of clear rhythms and recognisable instruments, the sound material becomes virtually anything. This anything, then, is by nature outside of any specific language, making it a perfect partner for images set to blur the boundaries between feeling and reasoning, materiality and embodiment. In short, as aforementioned Ramshaw's sound input precipitates a sensory response in the viewer-listener. Sensations and the interface between visual/audible and non-visual/non-audible collapse and merge to render the film piece quasi-haptic. In this process, I value the notion that Ramshaw's composition escapes the realms of music. Yet current debates in the field of electroacoustic theory remind us that "[e]lectroacoustic music is a domain where the cultures of trained, educated musicians and popular culture meet through the idea that any sound is music." (Ruby, 2007) By justifying the erasure of the sound/music binary, the queer merit of this incentive leads me to simply specify that Ramshaw's audio is "more textural and harmonically rich rather than rhythmically and sonically diverse." (Ramshaw, 2007) Thus it is an integral part of an extensive actor(s)-as-creator(s) collaboration.

Conclusion

Due to a highly collaborative nature with actors-as-creators rather than actors-as-interpreters, *In Visibilities* has been more difficult to analyse and explain fully. Nevertheless, the research surrounding its conception has afforded clear realisations. The discoveries, theories and speculations of quantum physics point towards the rich capacities of the body as matter in extra-linguistic modes of communication which are articulated through experience and intuition, that is to say through somatic awareness. Moreover in the light of quantum physics, nature likes to keep its possibilities open, and therefore follows every possible path⁷⁹. Thus queer theory symbolises a reliable tool to uncover the true breadth and depth of human potentialities in its drive to subvert and overcome inaccurate and confining modes of identity and related expectations. In addition, my encounter with contemporary dance and physical theatre confirms the queer perspective and approach of relatively recent

⁷⁹ See p136.

trends in the performing arts. Indeed, in a quest for natural movement and free-flowing somatic communication, theatre and dance do not negate their predecessors but rather incorporate the mastery of strict methods and processes to move beyond them. Just as we saw in films that embraced the restrictions proper to the *Dogme 95 Manifesto*, constraint forces one to adopt new paths of creativity and endeavour. Thus rejection out of ignorance can never be deemed a constructive form of release or freedom.

As in all my films, I have always valued the experience of filmic research above the film product itself. This approach reflects my attempt to remain open and without prejudice or prior agenda in order for serendipity and intuition to feel and read their way into unexpected and spontaneous occurrences. This process allows fieldwork to become an open ended apprenticeship, an enriching progress in empirical learning. And so do the words of Lecoq and Carasso (2000) echo my determination as a (documentary) filmmaker: “one must never forget that the purpose of the journey is the journey itself.” (:13).

A practice based research to me has always been synonymous with a school of experiment. Indeed, in spite of all its likely-bias, when you place yourself at the centre of an experiment, “you find out for yourself” (Craig in Callery, 2001:10). Yet this form of empirical learning needn't be a hopelessly egocentric venture but rather a constructively selfish one during which the notion of self can be so delectably lost. In fact the reality of man's queer nature, or the Deleuzian idea of our constant state of becoming identify the very notion of self: urged to eat itself so as to produce something new.

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Epilogue

This thesis has attempted to further research into and through queer theory. From addressing transgender politics in the specificities and originality of Bologna, I came to appreciate the post-gender space I was progressing into. This development in my thought process opened up my field of research to the extent that seeking new grounds for queer debates became evident and necessary. Finding a cross section between disability theory and queer theory was as challenging as it was enriching in my exploration of the common ground, points of tension and what I will term constructive and productive dissonances. From there on, the investigation naturally broadened again. This time it was to be about rebuilding a bridge between the history, philosophy and science and technology on the one hand, and the arts, humanities and socio-cultural sciences on the other. In my work I considered the importance of Quantum physics and its relevance to the human body showing how it echoed Deleuzian ideas of becoming. I did so by exploring the physicality and somatic impulse embedded in contemporary dance, physical theatre, performance and creativity in general.

In this regard we can see how the three projects of this thesis and their corresponding chapters cohere as a project. But the question they immediately raise to mind is their relevance to current societal concerns. More importantly, what benefits can be reaped from this thesis and who or what cause may it help to develop? In hindsight and on the whole, the work of non-governmental organisations as well as Western governmental efforts around inclusive thinking and consistent, coherent integration may find rich material here in the current formula under offer here in the form of three case studies, with actual fieldwork, film work and written work to articulate their respective reports and findings. Moreover, this thesis demonstrates, by example, the importance of practice-as-research and the acquisition and dispensing of knowledge through practice based fieldwork inflected by theory and methodological principles of research. The centrality of ethnographic film in my course of enquiry and networking was determining. Each documentary, from its inception to its dissemination, represents a concrete experiment with the introduction of an outsider into a community. It is also a constant negotiation between realities and the subjectivities that encapsulate them.

On a more personal note and with the aspiration to be looked upon as a queer researcher and a queer theorist, therefore not only as a queerling, I wish to raise a

particular concern. A recent and most outstanding conference I attended titled *Queer(s) in Europe*, hosted by the Centre for the Interdisciplinary Study of Sexuality and Gender in Europe (CISSGE) at the University of Exeter from 13 September to 15 September 2008, brought a sudden realisation. Although identity politics have justifiably always had an important place in debates relating to Queer Theory, I was alarmed to find that many academics at this conference had altogether placed matters of identity far beyond any other aspect of queer considerations and definitions. This confining focus negates the essence of Queer Theory and its main strength as a moving away from questions of 'what are you exactly?', 'which sex/gender do you sleep with?' and 'what is your role?' to a more positional and political stance where queer is essentially linked to outlook, strategy, perception, subjectivity and opinion. This misunderstanding and minimalising of *queer* struck me as endangering to what queer theory stands for. After all, my exploration of queer theory makes a strong case for the value of queer theory in the field of broader debates and communities or settlements. This rich potential in my view is annulled when queer is reduced to little more than an umbrella term for sex, gender and sexual identities.

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