

Queer Being And The Sexual Interstice: A Phenomenological Approach To The Queer Transformative Self

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(BA Hons)

This thesis is presented for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
of Murdoch University.

2008

I declare that this thesis is my own account of my research and contains as its main content work which has not previously been submitted for a degree at any tertiary education institution.

.....
(Julia Horncastle)

This thesis is dedicated to my mate Reg, who died
when I was halfway through this project.

Abstract

This thesis explores a notion of “queer being” in relation to a difficult yet creative articulation of queer self-consciousness. The difficulty of attempting to “particularise” self-consciousness is challenged and dismantled by proposing ways in which putatively exclusive esoteric knowledges of being can be exposed and expanded. This is achieved by justifying singular (queer) experience as it coincides with the disparities between subjectivity and objectivity, experience and existence. I argue that two key perspectives (those of interstitiality and self-transformativity) provide a basis whereby we can “force” a radical articulation of queer being-ness into general and contemporary philosophical discourses of being. In doing so, a particularised theory of intersubjective being emerges as a way to identify the complicity of ethics and ontology.

“Queerness” in this thesis is especially articulated as an eccentricity or poetics of being, experienced at the juncture of diverse knowledge spaces. These include not only the threshold and radical spaces of sexuality and gender, but also the perceived limits of theories of being which allow us to formulate understandings of self-consciousness. This is evidenced through a critical analysis of feminist, queer, transgender, phenomenological and existential texts and/or practices, paying special regard to “everyday, real-life” experience. By using a combination of the “logic of the interstice”, genealogical methods, hermeneutical analysis and a deconstructionist theoretical approach, the thesis seeks out, and insists upon, ways to articulate and determine the possibility of a queer sensibility as both a practice of self-transformativity and a more broadly applicable knowledge heuristic.

The thesis demonstrates that by increasing an awareness of a particular kind of self-transformative queer being-ness – one that embraces a critical ethics of being – the rich insights of queer experiences and knowledges can act as a valuable resource for reviewing the horizons of the ontology of the subject. It also suggests that particularising the term “queer” in relation to a complex theory of “sensibility” provides new depths for understanding, and practical ways to make use of, a queer theory of being.

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Acknowledgements

To write theory is a practice of privilege for which I am truly grateful. The material circumstances (such as low-income single parenting) in which that practice has occurred, have determined the form of labour. I am grateful for the space and facilities that Murdoch University has provided and to have been the recipient of an Australian Postgraduate Award. I would like to thank not only those people who have understood what it has meant for me to successfully pursue this project but also those who have supported me in practical, material and emotional ways.

To my supervisor, mentor and sharpest critic, Bev Thiele, I express my deepest gratitude. Since my first day as an undergraduate student, you have consistently inspired and challenged me. I am lucky to have had such a wise and supportive person encouraging my scholarship.

To my “teachers”: Ruby at seventeen and Maya at fifteen, thank you for sticking by your mama through thick and thin. I continue to be overwhelmed by your unconditional and generous support. Your rock-solid love is cherished. To Zozha, who at nine years old teaches me what life is really about and is the young philosopher in my life – thank you. You have each in varying degrees lived with this PhD over the past five years; I am grateful down to my bones.

To my colleagues, Ingrid Richardson, Lubica Ucnik and Vicki Crowley, who have inspired and buoyed me, thank you for words of wisdom, practical support and encouragement. I treasure your friendship. To Lubica, special thanks for incredible generosity. Many thanks to Ron Fox and Maria Pallotta-Chiarolli, who edited a section of Chapter Two for publication and gave wonderful advice. To Linda Beresford, thank you so much for your support in the final stages.

To the participants who gave permission for their personal narratives to be recorded in this thesis: Ash, Dean, Jo, Mary-Lou and Y, I am humbly appreciative. To Ben Singer for his thoughtful discussions with me, thank you.

Over the years, many friends have provided moral or material support: Gerrard, Fenece, Barbara, Kathy, Renée, Liz, Radio, Norma, to name some ... Thank you all for providing such an important support structure.

To staff at Murdoch: Karen Olkowski, Silvia Rosenstreich and Lyn Dale, who have smoothed out bureaucratic and administrative processes in considerate and patient ways – my sincere thanks.

Lastly to Urszula, for brains, heart and realness. Danke schön.