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"Culturally Homeless": Queer Parody and Negative Affect as Resistance to Normatives

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"CULTURALLY HOMELESS": QUEER PARODY AND NEGATIVE AFFECT AS

RESISTANCE TO NORMATIVITIES

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Abstract

The main theoretical thrust of my project involves the political uses of parodically performing shame and shaming rituals in resisting normative regulation.   I argue that parodic performances of this negative affect—traditionally deployed to erase, obscure, and regulate queers—can expose how shame regulates the gender/sexuality performances of straight people as well as queers.   I view this project primarily as a tactical shift from the parodic performances outlined by Judith Butler in texts like *Gender Trouble,* and I feel that the shift is important as a counter measure to increasing homonormative inclusion of (white, middle class) gays and lesbians into straight or neoliberal society.

The first section of my thesis is dedicated to exploring theories of homonormativity.   I work primarily from Michael Warner's *The Trouble with Normal*, which is a queer polemic, and Lisa Duggan's *The Twilight of Equality*, which contextualizes homonormativity in the cultural project of neoliberalism. Homonormativity is, in essence, the opening of cultural space in mainstream society for a certain group of gays and lesbians—those who are "the most assimilated, gender-appropriate, politically mainstream portions of the gay population" (Duggan 44).   As Warner discusses at length, the shift from *queer* to conservative gay interests has shifted attention from issues like HIV/AIDS research and physical protection of queers to gay marriage and the repeal of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell," which are causes that primarily benefit the gays and lesbians already most assimilated to straight culture.

Section II focuses on the work of Judith Butler and other theorizations of parody. Butler's theory suggests that gender and sexuality consist of a set of continuously repeated performances, and that by performing gender one is constituted as a subject. Butler argues that it is impossible to step outside gender—to stop performing, as it were —because there is no agency prior to the imposition of gender.   She locates the only possibility for resistance to gender as a socially regulatory myth structure in the failure to properly perform gender, or in performing in such a way that gender is exposed as always already performative.   I have paired Butler's theory with Linda Hutcheon's *A Theory of Parody*, which examines the uses, limitations, and value of artistic parody.   These two theorists, of course, have different goals, which complicates the potential for combining their work.

In the final section I develop my own theory, which largely takes its cue from Butler's notion that we can resist gender/sexuality regulation through parodic performance.   But, whereas Butler argues for parodic performances of gender/sexuality, I suggest the usefulness of parodying shame and shaming rituals.   Shame—the social imposition of it, as well as the desire to avoid it—has long been a force maintaining proper behavior in the largest sense, but I am concerned specifically with the regulation of gender and sexual performances.   Queers (understood broadly) and women have long been the targets of shame, while straight males have long been the performers of shaming rituals—mockery, brutal laugher, violence.   What I suggest is that through an appropriation and parodic reinterpretation of these shaming rituals and shame itself, queers can expose the centrality of shame in repressing not only queer existence and performance, but in restricting the performative possibilities of straight people.   This new notion of performative resistance is especially important as some gays and lesbians enter straight society and become subject to its shaming restrictions, but also become complicit in shaming those queers still outside the realm of homonormative possibilities.

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Introduction: Political Fiction(s)

In an interview with Judith Butler, Irene Costera Meijer and Baukje Prins—of the University of Utrecht's Department of Women's Studies—pose an interesting question about the purpose of Butler's work. The question is about how we understand Butler's theories—"how would you want your ideal reader to read *Bodies That Matter*: as a form of political fiction or as a diagnostic philosophical inquiry?" (277). [1] What does Butler's work mean? Is Butler explaining an actual political situation, or is she simply imposing a phantasmatic narrative structure? In her answer, Butler explains, "I am sympathetic with the description of my work as political fiction, but I think it is important to stress that not all fiction takes the form of a story" (277). Indeed, a political fiction can also be a diagnostic philosophy. Because we understand the worlds—natural, political, social— through stories, these cease to be *merely* stories and become *truth*.

This paper is concerned with a set of political and social stories that have attained the status of truth, and stories that challenge those truths. If Butler's theory of gender as performance is a social or political fiction, we might say with equal truth that anatomical sex is a socio-political fiction, and indeed Butler does say this. My own theory builds from the basic argument Butler lays out, but I advocate a shift in what we parodically perform—from Butler's notion of parodying gender itself, I suggest parodying the shaming mechanisms and performances that help regulate and control both queer and straight gender and sexuality. This is, in my opinion, an important focal change because there has been a major socio-cultural shift since 1990, when Butler's book *Gender Trouble* was published. Of course, even the notion of a cultural shift implies a political

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[1] I am not dealing with *Bodies That Matter*; I take my analysis primarily from *Gender Trouble*.

fiction, or a narrative approach to socio-cultural experience and is, therefore open to interpretation. But the shift I am concerned with is the rise of homonormativity, which is theorized in books like Michael Warner's *The Trouble With Normal* and Lisa Duggan's *The Twilight of Equality*. Homonormativity theorists examine the social and cultural changes, primarily through the 1990s and 2000s, that have allowed (mostly middle class, white) gays and lesbians to enter the normative spaces of straight society.

As far as my own project, I think I am ultimately theorizing a social or political fiction. While I am interested in developing a politically practicable theory, I am also skeptical of the potential for substantive change through activism. In Section II, where I examine Butler and parody, I will deal more with this skepticism. There are, of course, practical results of activism: legislation, policy shifts, changes in cultural attitudes and social acceptance. These results have happened. However, these changes have left unchallenged many of the underlying conditions of inequality inherent in capitalism, patriarchy, and heteronormativity. Butler theorized a way to undercut these regulatory power structures, and I am theorizing a tactical shift using the same basic ideas, but directed at exposing the role of shame and shaming in preserving social norms through limiting the options of both queers and straights. Shame is difficult for capitalist and neoliberal power structures to co-opt because it isolates and breaks down the individual, rather than creating the illusion of unity. This is particularly important as an increasing number of gays and lesbians are co-opted into normative orders and become subject to the same kind of performative regulation that limits and defines straight life.

Section I: Homonormativity

Homonormativity was first theorized in Michael Warner's 1999 book *The Trouble with Normal*, though the term was coined by Lisa Duggan in *The Twilight of Equality* in 2003. In simple terms homonormativity is the increasing inclusion of certain (mostly white, middle/upper class) gays and lesbians into the value systems that have long structured straight society.[2] Duggan labels these ideological structures components of neoliberalism, and identifies homonormativity as a neoliberal strategy for obscuring crises of increasing gay visibility brought about by the Gay Liberation and Gay Pride Movements. Neoliberal ideologies "obscure and mystify many aspects of life under capitalism—hiding stark inequalities of class, race, gender, and sexuality across nation-states as well as within them" (Duggan 5). The main ways neoliberal power systems "obscure and mystify" include creating stark divisions between private and public, and the promotion of liberal values (e.g., belief in the free market, Western democracy, and socially conceived progress). These values and beliefs—a set of Foucauldian discourses[3]—favor the Western social, political, economic, and cultural status quo.

Duggan explains how homonormative inclusion of some gays and lesbians further establishes and legitimates the power structures of neoliberalism. Although gays and lesbians have become increasingly visible and harder to ignore or pathologize, those gays and lesbians who have been allowed to become most visible are "the most assimilated,

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[2] Although neoliberalism developed fairly recently, it is an outgrowth of classical Liberalism, which began structuring Western societies, to greater or lesser extents, around the time of the Enlightenment.
[3] Michel Foucault is famous for examining historical trends and attitudes as being structured by the existence and forms of discourses surrounding those trends and attitudes. I think homonormativity (and neoliberalism, for that matter) exists as a discourse, but also as a set of practices. For instance, I will discuss how some DBSM advocacy groups use the rhetoric of homonormativity, which suggests homonormativity's status within discourse, but largely I—like Warner and Duggan—will discuss homonormativity as a set of inclusive and exclusive practices.

gender-appropriate, politically mainstream portions of the gay population" (44). While Will Truman (Of *Will and Grace*) or Ellen DeGeneres are same-sex oriented, they function within straight institutions—a law firm, the television industry—pay their taxes, are white, middle (or upper) class, responsible, Judeo-Christian, and relatively *normal*. In other words, these queers are unthreatening. Because these gays and lesbians are "presentable" they are now (more or less) entitled to demand a place in mainstream power structures—a place still denied to other queers.[4]

To clarify homonormativity is, as with any critical concept, trickier than it might first appear. Michael Warner's initial theoretical development is vague; his book came out four years before the term homonormativity was published so he wrote about "the normal," and Warner's book is more polemical than critical. However, since Duggan's 2003 book the term has become increasingly popular, particularly with those interested in theorizing transgender issues like Susan Stryker (with whom I deal more thoroughly below). Transgender theorists have latched onto the possibilities of homonormative inclusion to explain the continuing rejection of trans individuals from gay and lesbian dominated socio-cultural movements.

Warner's work on "the normal" laid a foundation for later theories of homonormativity. His book raises questions about the value of being "normal," and what we actually mean by the term. Although Warner acknowledges that "Like most

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[4] I use the term *queer* to mean someone whose behavior or identity is socially disruptive. By contrast, when I use the terms *gay and lesbian*, I am generally referring to those able to benefit from homonormative inclusion. Clearly these two categories are neither stable nor mutually exclusive—a middle class, white gay man can be as socially disruptive as any queer—which means that I use the terms more for grammatical convenience than because they represent unproblematic categories. Indeed, the two terms (can) refer simultaneously to identities and/or behaviors, further complicating the relationship/division between them.

stigmatized groups, gays and lesbians were always tempted to believe that the way to overcome stigma was to win acceptance by the dominant culture," he problematizes that notion of acceptance by troubling the seemingly self-evident concept of the normal (50). Warner takes issue with the discrepancy between statistical norms and ethical imperatives—"The ordinary use of the term [normal], however, probably rests on a confusion between statistical norms and evaluative norms. An evaluative norm is a standard, a criterion of value" (56). This important, though popularly overlooked, distinction—"normal" according to statistics versus "normal" according to socially constructed behavioral standards—complicates the desire of homonormative individuals and organizations to be integrated into straight society. There is a particular paradox faced by any group defined by sexuality because "In one sense, nothing could be more normal than sex. . .In another sense, though, sex can never be normal. It is disruptive and aberrant in its rhythms, in its somatic states, and in its psychic and cultural meaning" (55). Only by excising sex from a sexualized identity—gay, lesbian, queer—does it become conceptually possible to fit into "normal" society, i.e., a social system that does not need to declare its sexual identity because the "norm" is assumed.[5]

Those with no public place in the neoliberal view are transgendered people, sex workers, black and Hispanic queers, the poor, HIV/AIDS victims, BDSM,[6] dykes,[7]

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[5] Neoliberalism, with it emphasis on the divide between private and public, attempts to relegate sexuality to the private sphere and present desexualized public images. Duggan writes about outrage over a Women's Studies conference at SUNY New Paltz in "The Incredible Shrinking Public." The controversy centered around a public institution—the state school—"promoting" what should have, to the neoliberal mind, been private practices—sexuality.

[6] Bondage/domination/sadomasochism.

[7] The "angry dyke" is sometimes used as a modern stand-in for the "angry black man" of the 1970s. These figures are threatening, but often rely on a kind of stereotyping that transforms them from real people to one-dimensional characters. In the 2010 *Law and Order: SVU* episode "P.C." the Lez-Be-Strong organization mirrors post-Civil Rights black militancy—they are extremely vocal, assume conspiracies

leather daddies, and so forth—these people are less easily commodifiable because they are less able to camouflage their sexualities as *private* concerns and present a desexualized or "normal" *public* image.   One criticism made by anti-homonormativity theorists is that the increasing acceptance of (white, middle class) gays and lesbians, and the increasing focus on policies that will benefit them, abandons these queers.   This is a point especially stressed by Michael Warner, who cites the political emphasis on gay marriage and repealing "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" as drawing attention and political action away from HIV/AIDS research, the physical safety of queers, and other goals that earlier grassroots gay movements worked for.[8]

One group that can never pass for "normal" is the transgender community.   Susan Stryker's essay "Transgender History, Homonormativity, and Disciplinarity" builds on notions of homonormative regulation and the problems many trans individuals experience in being accepted by gay and lesbian dominated queer communities.   At the outset of her essay Stryker cites a form of homonormativity "described in 1998 by Judith Halberstam in *Female Masculinity*, in accordance with which expressions of masculinity in women are as readily disparaged within gender-normative gay and lesbian contexts as within heteronormative ones" (145).[9]   In the sense of transgender people especially

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against their organization, and use the threat of violence to exert pressure on government organizations.   In particular, Sharon Harris, played by Kate Udall, is the quintessentially violent butch, one who makes a very believable murder suspect.

[8] HIV/AIDS is obviously a concern that developed in the 1980s, but beginning in the 1960s primarily gay advocacy groups sought physical, social, employment, and psychological protections for gays and lesbians.

[9] I am wary of recourse to Halberstam's *Female Masculinity*, though she makes some excellent points. What concerns me about her work is her refusal to define masculinity; she leaves the term not only deliberately vague, but assumes that the concept is self-explanatory.   She writes at the very opening of her book, "If masculinity is not the social and cultural and indeed political expression of maleness, then what is it?. . .although we seem to have a difficult time defining masculinity, as a society we have little trouble in recognizing it" (1).   This is as close as Halberstam comes to actually defining one of the key terms of her

homonormativity deals more with the internal regulation of queers than with the strategies employed by gays and lesbians to enter straight society. Of course, a complex set of internal regulations—mostly dealing with the denial and repression of sexuality, and the affirmation of anatomical sex—is a prerequisite for acceptance into straight society, but transgender people are gender queer. Stryker explains that homonormativity "is more than an accommodation to neoliberalism in its macropolitical manifestations. It is also an operation at the micropolitical level, one that aligns gay interests with dominant constructions of knowledge and power" (155). This micropolitical regulation works to reinforce the bases of normative systems both in heterosexual and homosexual communities. Stryker argues that homonormativity demands of gays and lesbians a fidelity to the gender binary maintained through the discourse of "natural gender" underpinning heteronormativity, which was thoroughly attacked by theorists like Foucault and Judith Butler. Fidelity to the male-female binary is impossible for trans people because they demonstrate the fluidity of gender and gendered experience, and, expanding from Judith Butler, the gender fluidity demonstrated by trans individuals illustrates the inherent fluidity of gender in non-trans people as well. Therefore, the presence of trans individuals in the queer community threatens the potential for (white, middle class) gays and lesbians to become integrated into straight society by fundamentally exposing the unnaturalness of a condition (i.e., gender) whose naturalness is a premise of straight power structures. The solution (all too often, as the examples

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analysis. I do think the book raises some extremely good points, but I am uncomfortable with a critical analysis based on the precept that something like masculinity is self explanatory.

Stryker cites suggest) is the expulsion of trans individuals from the queer community by those who stand to gain the most from homonormative incorporation.

There have been significant political and socio-cultural changes since 1999, when Warner's book was published. Warner poses the questions: "For whom would marriage be a victory? What would the value of gay marriage be, for example, to sexual dissidents who are not marrying couples?" (86). By 2011, however, gay marriage is a reality in several states, whereas in 1999 it was merely part of the political debate.[10] Similarly, the repeal of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" is in the works now, while the process of repeal was not then an immediate possibility. These changes have largely been due to the corporate style organization of gay and lesbian advocacy groups, which both Warner and Duggan critique as less connected to the needs of individual queers than earlier grassroots movements. Periodically throughout *The Trouble with Normal* Michael Warner critiques—attacks is perhaps a better word—Andrew Sullivan (an influential writer about gay issues, whom I discuss more in Section II) whom Duggan also critiques; she also focuses on the Independent Gay Forum (IGF) as a representative homonormative body.

The IGF is ideologically affiliated with the libertarian/conservative trend that has come to dominate the right wing of American discourse. In *The Twilight of Equality* Duggan cites the IGF's principles, laid out on their website. Because the principles are available in the book and on the IGF's website I am not including them here, though I do want to point out some key phrases[11]—"the full inclusion of *gays and lesbians* in civil society," and a "belief in the fundamental virtues of the American system and its

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[10] Massachusetts, Connecticut, Iowa, Vermont, and New Hampshire all legalized gay marriage between 2003 and 2010, and the District of Columbia legalized it in 2009.
[11] http://igfculturewatch.com/about/

traditions of *individual liberty, personal moral autonomy and responsibility, and equality*. . .the institutions of a *market economy, free discussion, and limited government*" (Duggan 48, my emphasis).   The IGF's laundry list of values corresponds almost exactly with the values Duggan lays out for neoliberalism.   By emphasizing these values, the IGF and comparable organizations "work within the framework of neoliberal politics generally. . .to (1) shore up the strength of neoliberalism in relation to its critics on the right and left, but especially in relation to the gay left. . .and (2) push the neoliberal consensus in the direction of their brand of libertarian/moderate/conservative gay politics" (50).[12]   This goal, to work within the ideological structures of straight society, is difficult because—as Warner, Duggan, and others repeatedly point out—the social structures that built straight society are constructed to maintain certain hierarchical relations, including men over women, heterosexuals over queers, and others.   The theoretical problems with trying to challenge the limits of capitalism/patriarchy/heterosexuality include the tremendous plasticity of these systems—capitalism can find a way to incorporate most forms of resistance—and the need for incentives—capitalism depends on a cost-benefit tradeoff, meaning that it must be more costly to continue repressing something than to incorporate it.   Therefore, queers have to agitate capitalist power systems enough to make a cultural re-evaluation of their position less costly than continuing repression and social exclusion.

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[12] Many of these comparable organizations are corporate, including the Human Rights Campaign (HRC), which Warner critiques for (amongst other things) its support of Senator Alfonso D'Amato of New York, even though "the gay vote went against him by a 3 to 1 margin," showing how out of touch the HRC was from the views of most queers (72).   Corporate organizations, like the HRC, are, as Warner characterizes them, more interested in governmental lobbying and fund-raising than continuing to work for the rights of queers as earlier grassroots movements had, particularly organizations like ACT UP, for which Warner has significant admiration.

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The basic goal of homonormativity and neoliberalism, as well as capitalism more generally, is the creation of consensus. I use this term as Jacques Ranciere theorizes it— not the creation of agreement on individual issues, but a communal agreement about the ethical terms that should define a discourse. Ranciere makes a distinction between *police* and *politics*: the former is "*a distribution of the sensible* (partage du sensible) *whose principle is the absence of void and of supplement*," (36) while the latter is "*the manifestation of dissensus as the presence of two worlds in one*" (37). In other terms, *police* describes a system that attempts to hide the gaps and discrepancies characteristic of real experience by constructing ethical values that then hide their genesis in the guise of naturalness. *Politics*, on the other hand, acknowledges, seeks to work within, and even to expand these cracks in order to challenge the hegemonic domination of a *police* system. Neoliberalism, a system whose precepts evolve into unquestionable principles—"as the ideas of Liberalism become common sense, they also work to *create* or *remake* institutions and practices according to their precepts" (Duggan 5)—requires a common agreement that its values are right, proper, and good in order to maintain its hegemony. Homonormativity, through its allegiance to neoliberal principles, works to shore up the system that has pathologized, demonized, repressed, and shamed queers of all kinds.

This notion—that neoliberal values require consensus—is an implicit idea in Lee Edelman's influential *No Future*, which theorizes queer resistance to straight regulatory values through a refusal to exist according to what Edelman terms reproductive futurism.

For Edelman the main regulatory force of not only straight society (we might say

neoliberalism in general) but all politics is this reproductive futurism:

> For politics, however radical the means by which specific constituencies
>
> attempt to produce a more desirable social order, remains, at its core,
>
> conservative insofar as it works to *affirm* a structure, to *authenticate* social
>
> order, which it then intends to transmit to the future in the form of its inner
>
> Child. That Child remains the perpetual horizon of every acknowledged
>
> politics, the fantasmatic beneficiary of every political intervention. (2-3)[13]

In other words, the desires and political needs of the present must constantly be

subjugated to provide a better life for a phantasmatic future generation that will never

actually arrive, because every actual generation will inherit the necessity of preserving

for their own children.   In Edelman's argument, homosexuals are not inherently tied to

the system of reproductive futurism, and through an embrace of jouissance, in contrast to

futurism, homosexuals can work to dismantle the temporal system of regulation inherent

in reproductive futurism.[14]   One way to think of this project is as a devotion to the

Freudian pleasure principle at the expense of the reality principle.[15]   Reproductive

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[13] Edelman's use of the term *politics* clearly differs from Ranciere's usage, and I think Edelman understands the term in its more commonly used form (at least here), that is, the action and concerns of governments and the causes/ideologies that seek influence in and through those governments.
[14] As with Judith Butler's project of deconstructing gender and sexuality as identities, Edelman's project is perhaps more theoretical than practical.   Although he argues that there is nothing wrong with same-sex couples raising children, and that it is even beneficial in securing gay rights, he also believes that allowing queer lives to be dominated and scheduled by a straight temporal system only further legitimizes that system, which will always be a temporal system from which homosexuals risk exclusion.
[15] "Under the influence of the ego's instincts of self-preservation, the pleasure principle is replaced by the *reality principle*. This latter principle does not abandon the intention of ultimately obtaining pleasure, but it nevertheless demands and carries into action the postponement of satisfaction, the abandonment of a number of possibilities of gaining satisfaction, and the temporary toleration of unpleasure as a step on the long indirect road to pleasure," writes Freud in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (4).   If we think of Edelman's analysis of jouissance (analogous to the pleasure principle) and reproductive futurism (i.e., the

futurism, with its emphasis on providing for the future, is heavily invested in marriage and the domestic family, as is neoliberalism.[16]

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Homonormativity and its consensus building efforts are also major concerns for other queer groups outside the traditional gay and lesbian constellation. The inclusion of (white, middle class) gays and lesbians into straight or bourgeois power structures further legitimates those norms and values by increasing their inclusiveness, which further alienates and denaturalizes those who are still outside of the expanded boundaries. I offered a list before of some of the positions—some same-sex oriented and some not—remaining outside the sphere of legitimacy: sex workers and BDSM communities, for example. These types of groups come to occupy a frontier position on the fringe of society comparable to that occupied by gays and lesbians before Gay Liberation. These queers are outsiders against which a newly expanded (though still exclusive) society can define itself as "normal." But why should these positions remain stigmatized while some gays and lesbians can find acceptance?

The answer to that question is largely that those gays and lesbians most able to integrate are those for whom sexuality is least a component of their public personae. In other words, the queers who are most able to conform to the neoliberal injunction that

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reality principle) it is clear that the latter sacrifices immediate happiness in the hopes of future happiness for the figure of the Child. However, while in the individual ego the reality principle generally expects some actual realization of pleasure in exchange for the postponement, with reproductive futurism, because the figure of the Child always looms in the distance, there is never any actualization of the promised pleasure, only a continual postponement. Edelman's suggestion to embrace jouissance is comparable to an individual ego removing the brake of the reality principle and allowing the pleasure principle free rein.

[16] Duggan writes that Andrew Sullivan, a major voice in the homonormative community, "only asks that gays be allowed to exist within this neoliberal landscape, so long as they support sentimental masculinist nationalism and challenge nothing" (63).

sexuality is a private rather than public concern are the most able to pass, in a manner of speaking, for "normal" people. When, however, one comes out as a BDSM enthusiast— I focus on them especially because many are heterosexual outsiders, and because Margot Weiss' article, which I will discuss, centers on them—there is no question of love; a homosexual can love someone of the same gender, but because BDSM is a loosely defined set of sexual practices the role of love is more ambiguous. If we look back to the pattern of the old Boston Marriage we find a same-sex relationship premised on an emotional connection, which may or may not have involved sexual intimacy.[17] This is, to some degree, the ideal pattern for a homonormative relationship: gay without sex. Homonormativity requires the expulsion of sex, which is impossible from a community identified around a set of sexual practices, particularly practices significantly different from the rather limited scope of bourgeois sexual activity.

These are some of the central ideas of Weiss' article "Gay Shame and BDSM Pride," which compares attempts to downplay sexuality and differences from straight bourgeois society against those who want to create social space for the expression of sexuality —challenging the neoliberal distinction between public and private. Weiss' essay is centrally concerned with "the tension between equality as sameness with normativity (hetero- or homo-) and equality as freedom for difference from the norm" (89). What this distinction comes down to is that homonormative gays and lesbians intend to develop spaces within straight society in which some homosexuals can find acceptance; the counterpoint is that anti-normative queers seek the freedom not to

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[17] We could also think of Adrienne Rich's lesbian continuum, which identifies all women-oriented-women as lesbians, even though an individual may not be sexually attracted to other women. Rich writes, "I mean the term *lesbian continuum* to include a range. . .of woman-identified experience, not simply the fact that a woman has had or consciously desired genital sexual experience with another woman" (239).

conform.   The two organizations Weiss discusses to represent these different positions are the National Coalition for Sexual Freedom (NCSF), and the San Francisco based Gay Shame, respectively.

Gay Shame is known for its radical anti-normativity, including opposition to marriage, both same-sex and straight.   Following the pattern of other disruptive grassroots organizations, Gay Shame is anti-corporate, preferring tactics directed at people rather than working with governments.   It attempts to increase awareness of how patriarchy, heteronormativity, racism, classism, and so on are inherently linked to and implicit within existing power structures, and that the only way to disrupt these oppressive patterns is to undermine the structures, both material and cultural, that support them.   Tactically, "Gay Shame's actions rely on public spectacle and strategies of humiliation: performative activism through street action, drag and costuming, or public stenciling" (92).   Section II of this essay will do more to put performativity, drag, and parody into a critical context.

Weiss contrasts Gay Shame's grassroots anti-normativity with NCSF's response to public opposition to a 2003 BDSM conference by the Washington D.C. BDSM organization Black Rose.   The conference met public protests and official harassment—the Alcohol Beverage License Board put pressure on the host hospital—and, as a result, the hotel canceled Black Rose's contract.   The NCSF, an "advocacy and lobby group that. . .provides legal and media assistance to local BDSM organizations embroiled in public controversy" (88), attempted to desexualize, or de-exoticize, BDSM enthusiasts. Weiss explains how NCSF language "Stressing sameness with the norm, professionalization, and middle-class status and bearing. . .rhetorically reproduces a

neoliberal relationship between individual class privilege and freedom" (96). NCSF

rhetoric, as cited by Weiss, encourages BDSM members to present themselves, and the

public to think of BDSM members, as average, middle class, mostly married,

professional workers, and socio-culturally unthreatening.

A huge divide separates the tactics and goals of Gay Shame and NCSF, which

Weiss links to their different relationships to homonormativity. Gay Shame is very

much about dismantling the power structures that allow any normativity to underpin

oppression of any kind. NCSF, on the other hand, uses the language and tactics of

homonormativity to try and open space for BDSM within existing normative systems.[18]

In other words, Gay Shame challenges the structures that make oppression possible,

while NCSF tries to get its constituency into the normative realm without challenging or

threatening the fundamental components of that realm. It is noteworthy, however, that

NCSF, the Human Rights Campaign, and most of the other organizations discussed in

homonormativity theory are just that—*organizations*. There is a major difference

between organizational responses to/uses of homonormative tactics and individual

experiences of social exclusion and inclusion. The fact that both Warner and Duggan

focus primarily on organizational/corporate activities, suggests a kind of homonormative

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[18] It is ironic that a BDSM advocacy group uses homonormative strategies, because the majority of BDSM participants are heterosexual. BDSM and other deviant or fetishistic heterosexual practices are, according to the broadest sense of the term, *queer*, because they do have the potential to undermine and disrupt traditional limited heterosexuality. Given this, we might wonder whether the term *homo*normativity is really sufficient, especially when sexualities like BDSM use the same tactics as homonormative gays and lesbians to try and achieve the same goals.

conspiracy—that white, middle/upper class gay men are organized and strategically attempting to abandon other queers to improve their own positions.[19]

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       This is the last point about homonormativity I want to address. It is a point that neither Michael Warner nor Lisa Duggan stresses sufficiently in their theorizations of homonormativity: those gays and lesbians benefitting from homonormativity are not engaged in some kind of conspiracy to better their lot by systematically abandoning other queers. Warner does note that this is the case, writing "This betrayal of the abject and the queer in favor of a banalized respectability does not result, in my view, from malice. Many of the people who are setting priorities in the lesbian and gay movement honestly believe in a rainbow coalition, or in trickle-down acceptance" (66). But like so many qualifiers, warnings like this are so thoroughly overshadowed by the analysis of homonormativity as a wide-spread, organized, and damaging phenomenon that it is easy to forget Warner makes the acknowledgement.

       This is a criticism made by Julian Carter, in his essay "Gay Marriage and Pulp Fiction," which explores an early expression of homonormativity in the 1950s and 60s lesbian novels of Ann Bannon. Carter is especially interested in the meaning of the marriage between Laura (the series' lesbian protagonist) and her gay friend Jack. In the novel *Women in the Shadows* (1959), Jack proposes to Laura "not in a cynical way but in response to what Bannon shows as desperation about the limits of gay bar culture and his own self-destructive taste in men" (Carter 598). Carter quotes part of Jack's proposal,

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[19] Although Gay Shame is discussed as an organization, it is really more of a loose collective of individuals committed to undoing normativities.

emphasizing the emancipatory language in which the proposal is couched: "We *could get away*, just the two of us. . .We could move uptown and get a nice apartment and you wouldn't have to work" (qtd. 598, my emphasis).   This offer, and indeed the marriage itself, is not a conscious attempt to abandon gay or lesbian communities (in their rudimentary 1950s and early 60s forms); Jack and Laura (Jack especially) are emotionally and psychologically drained by the challenges of gay and lesbian life at that time, and marriage presents an escape route.[20]   At least two major differences separate Jack and Laura's homonormative marriage from the goal of the modern same-sex marriage campaign.   Jack and Laura, being male and female, have what we would generally call a heterosexual marriage.   Those who now work to legalize same-sex marriages obviously do not intend that gay men should marry lesbians (which is currently legal in every state), but that gay men marry other gay men and lesbians marry lesbians. Of course, in the 1950s the latter was not a viable option, and so the only marriage Bannon's characters could have was a hetero-marriage (I resist calling it a hetero*sexual* marriage because each character is homo*sexual*, but then it is unclear what term we could accurately apply to a non-sexual marriage between a lesbian and a gay man).

The other major difference centers around owning or disowning a lesbian or gay identity.   Bannon's characters pass into the straight society of New York's Upper East

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[20] The socio-cultural situation for most gays and lesbians has changed since the late 1950s.   Now gay, lesbian, and queer communities are well established in most major cities in North America, Europe, and (to a lesser extent) other parts of the world.   So when Michael Warner's polemical critique was published and when Carter's article appeared a decade later, the possibilities for lesbians and gay men to develop a strong communal sense were much more prevalent than they had been when Bannon wrote her novels.   A further inquiry, or response to Carter's argument, might ask how important questions of community are in Bannon's novels compared to today, and whether Jack and Laura's homonormative marriage is still an appropriate model for queer experience; whether abandoning the rudimentary same-sex community of the 1950s is a different act than abandoning the now well established gay and lesbian communities.

Side, living publicly as a married couple, and keeping their same-sex lovers private.[21]

Modern campaigns to legalize gay marriage want to create social space for gays and lesbians to live openly without needing to pass, or to remain closeted. What we should understand, therefore, is that Jack and Laura enter straight society without trying to open space for themselves as a gay man and a lesbian, while modern homonormative campaigners want straight society to allow gays and lesbians to enter as equal social participants.

Despite the socio-cultural changes from the 1950s to now—which I am not sure that Carter adequately accounts for—one of his central arguments remains: individuals almost never perceive their inclusion into straight society as collusion with normative forces. It is interesting that queer theorists have been the loudest critics of homonormativity, though gay and lesbian academics (many of whom do queer theory to one degree or another) are among those most able to reap the rewards of homonormative inclusion. As professionals in a traditionally respectable workplace, academics are very much implicated in patterns of normativity, even as we engage with and (at least ostensibly) resist normativities through Marxist, feminist, post-colonial, critical race, deconstruction, or queer theory. We are, metaphorically, CEOs preaching Marx on street corners. But we collectively believe that we remain faithful to our brothers and sisters who have not "made it" to respectability. And I don't mean to suggest that we are not true believers in our communities, but when one "makes it" out of the most obvious

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[21] This passing is mirrored racially in the novel by Tris, a light skinned African American dancer, and Laura's lover, who passes as white—though her husband is too dark skinned to pass—and presents herself publicly as an exotic South Asian dancer (598). Carter is extremely interested in the racial dynamics of homonormativity, which I have mentioned without nearly doing justice to its importance, but issues of race, class, religion, and so on are tangential at best to my project.

bonds of oppression it becomes increasingly difficult to maintain those bonds of community.[22] However, I would imagine few academics—whether gay, lesbian, female, African American, Asian American, Hispanic—took their professional positions to damage the community, whatever community that may be, by reinforcing systems of normativity inherent in the academy and the socio-cultural institutions that make the academy possible.

It is, therefore, important to qualify any serious critical discussion of homonormativity as a socio-cultural phenomenon by acknowledging that those who use homonormative strategies are not necessarily rejecting their membership in oppressed communities. The meanings of homonormativity are much more complex than that, although in works like *The Twilight of Equality* and *The Trouble with Normal* homonormativity theorists often gloss over the individual affect that leads one to seek social acceptance. It takes a selfless person, one who is decidedly optimistic, to choose to remain in oppression rather than accept an avenue to social acceptance (at least, acceptance relative to non-homonormative queers). Of course, the counter-point to this is that homonormative inclusion has the unintended consequence of shoring up neoliberal and capitalistic power structures. The question for homonormativity theorists is, therefore, how can we challenge neoliberalism and capitalism in such a way that everyone can enjoy a more equitable system (whatever that would be), not just the most socially acceptable members of any outsider group?

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[22] One example we might look to is the July 2009 arrest of Henry Louis Gates, Jr. outside his Cambridge, MA home. Gates raised issues of racial profiling by the white police officers, which was probably a legitimate point, but the public response to Gates' defense (and to President Obama's support for Gates) often shrugged off the notion that race was an issue. Partly because Gates is a respectable member of the Harvard University faculty, portions of the press (particularly right leaning media) rejected the notion that Gates could be subject to the same type of racism as non-bourgeois African Americans.

Section II: Performativity and Parody

I am intrigued by Judith Butler and her theorization of performative parody because I believe her work offers a way to challenge homonormative and neoliberal systems of oppression. Her notion that performative parody of gender and sexualities can disrupt the hegemonic "naturalness" of normativities is one I find compelling. As homonormativity has expanded horizons traditionally closed to almost all queers, it has further legitimated the values and ideology of neoliberalism, of which homonormativity is a cultural sub-set. This expansion has moved gays and lesbians into the realm of the "thinkable," while leaving other queers still "unthinkable." The movement of the frontier of "thinkability" has meant that those queers who remain unacceptable are further outcasts because they do not fit within the expanded boundary of acceptability. In this section I am also interested in theorizing parody/parodic performance, which Butler does not devote enough attention to, but rather presents as a strategic form of resistance without what I consider significant explanation.

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Judith Butler begins from the supposition, without which it is impossible to understand her work, that sex and gender are constructed, rather than anatomically or psychologically inherent. She continuously cites Simone de Beauvoir's claim "one is not born, but, rather *becomes* a woman," repeated throughout *Gender Trouble* and in "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution," both of which are early texts laying out Butler's theories about performativity. What this means for Butler is that gender is culturally imposed upon bodies in order to construct or reflect social meanings and power hierarchies. However, Butler's analysis is much more nuanced than this. She argues

that gender is a set of performative rituals that create meaning by placing people into pre-constructed categories for social meaning. One critic, Peter Digeser, argues that Butler's theory "depends upon [naturalized or reified conceptions of gender and sex] being repeated and reexperienced. . .If this is true, then the best response would be to stop acting out the script: Refuse to play one's part" (659). However, Butler's analysis already contains a response to this argument—there is no subject capable of stepping outside of gender. Digeser acknowledges this argument, but his tone suggests that he dismisses it as just a result of Butler's critical "genealogical position" (659). However, Butler devotes a good portion of *Gender Trouble* to critiquing her theoretical precursors, including the existentialism of de Beauvoir, which implies a possible subject existing prior to the imposition of gendered attributes. Butler suggests rhetorically "Perhaps the subject, as well as the invocation of a temporal 'before,' is constituted by the law as the fictive foundation of its own claim to legitimacy" (*Gender Trouble*, 5). Following Lacanian analysis, in Butler's theory gender, sex, and sexuality are constituted by a linguistic law that constructs the subject and its inscription on the subject obscures the processes of the law's construction.

Because the law pre-dates the creation of individual subjects and is inscribed upon them by entrance into a linguistic system, the law also uses individual subjectivities as a means to sustain and reproduce itself. Of this self-reproducing function, Butler writes, "Discrete genders are part of what 'humanizes' individuals within contemporary culture; indeed, those who fail to do their gender right are regularly punished.[23] Because there is

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[23] This failure to "do" gender right is the focus of books like *Female Masculinity*, which I discuss in a footnote in Section I. Halberstam's analysis follows from Butler's notion that gender performativity can

neither an 'essence' that gender expresses or externalizes nor an objective ideal to which gender aspires; because gender is not a fact, the various acts of gender creates the idea of gender, and without those acts, there would be no gender at all" ("Performative," 522). What this means is that gender continues to exist because individual subjects are compelled to continue performing the various acts of which gender as a system is composed.   The punishments faced by dissenting individuals obviously vary across time and socio-cultural contexts, but Butler argues that gender as a law is necessarily imposed on individuals and can only sustain itself through that imposition.[24]   It is important to note, however, that the linguistic law of gender does not merely use a set of punishments to keep would-be dissenters in line; the performance of gender impresses itself upon the subject.   By acting as a woman, a man, straight, gay, lesbian and so on, one becomes accustomed to the role, and it becomes virtually impossible to adopt a different role (and any new role one does adopt will be informed and shaped by earlier roles).

Michael Corleone's famous statement "Just when I thought I was out they pull me back in," expresses (in a non-gendered context) the same type of imposition of roles and the difficulty of escaping those roles (*The Godfather*).   If we think of the gender binary as the law—indeed the paternal law—*The Godfather: Part III* plays with that notion of the law as self-reproducing.   By the third film, Al Pacino's Michael Corleone parallels Marlon Brando's Vito Corleone of the first film, and the events of the films mirror one another: the Godfathers' (both Michael and Vito) tiredness, gravelly voice, hospitalizations, attempts to restrain Vincent and Sonny (respectively; these characters

be inscribed upon any body, and that the inscription of a masculine gender identity on a body socially constructed as female can disrupt the regulatory patterns of heteronormativity and neoliberalism.

[24] I cannot recall any specific point when Butler considers whether this gender imposition is a specifically Western phenomenon, but she generally discusses it as though it is a universal condition.

also suggest the paternal law's self-reproduction), and so forth.   Beyond reproducing the

paternal law, in a way comparable to the gender binary's self-reproduction, *The*

Godfather: Part III also revolves around Michael's difficulties to escape the role he has

played as Godfather of the Corleone crime family.   Michael's dream throughout the

three films has been to bring the Corleone family into legitimate business, but he

continuously bumps up against stumbling blocks that pull him back in.   But we might

speculate that it is not a "they" which pulls Michael back in, but his own past and the

inability to escape the psychical impressions made by his role as the Godfather.

When the law of binary and anatomical gender imposes itself, it seeks to establish

legitimacy by hiding its own act of imposition, by obscuring its origins in a mythos of

"naturalness."   Attacking this mythos is a way to strike at hetero- and homonormativities

by undercutting neoliberalism.   Neoliberalism invests a tremendous importance in

distinct boundaries between male and female genders, because a distinct gender binary is

one of the key bases of normalcy in the Western tradition.[25]   Duggan cites Andrew

Sullivan's appeal to traditional Western gender roles, writing "He advocates a. .

.privatized, gendered, hierarchical family. He only asks that gays be allowed to exist

within this neoliberal landscape, so long as they support sentimental masculinist

nationalism and challenge nothing" (63).   In contrast to Sullivan's assumption of

anatomical sex, Butler's argument (and many other theorists, for that matter) seeks to

disrupt the ostensible naturalness of binary genders by arguing that all gender is reified

performance.

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[25] Neoliberalism, which is a comparatively new trend in Western socio-culture, obviously did not create the binary gender system, though it has incorporated that system as a crucial cultural presumption. Neoliberalism seeks to present its precepts as self-evident and therefore "normal" in the cultural sense.

For Butler—and this is where she offers the potential for subversion—gendered

subjects can expose the artifice of natural or reified gender through parody.   Although

"Actors are always already on the stage, within the terms of the performance"

("Performative," 526), they can make clear that gender is an act, rather than the natural or

biologically determined condition the law would have us accept.   The ways to undo

gender as a structure that seems monolithic "are to be found precisely in the arbitrary

relation between such acts, in the possibility of a failure to repeat, a de-formity, or a

parodic repetition that exposes the phantasmatic effect of abiding identity as a politically

tenuous construction" (*Gender Trouble*, 179).   Although one can never step outside

gender, an already gendered subject can create a "glitch" in the system.[26]   Through

parodic performance or some other refusal (or failure) to properly perform, a person

exposes the performative nature of all gender; those who "follow the script," to borrow

Digeser's phrasing, act as much as those who challenge the script.   The ultimate goal of

Butler's project is to create widespread understanding of gender and sex as performative,

and thereby disrupt the law's cultural authority by destroying its self-reproducing façade

of naturalness or biological inherency.   I do not think, however, that Butler envisions this

as an achievable goal but rather as a project that is always underway.[27]

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[26] In his insightful essay "Staging Psychic Excess," Ryan Claycomb illustrates a potential parallel between
Butler's theory of parodic gender performance and Bertolt Brecht's notion of alienated performance.
Claycomb discusses Butler's theory as a possible theatrical style, while she is ostensibly only interested in
non-theatrical performance of identities.   Claycomb explains that the "Brechtian *verfremdungseffekt* or
alienation effect, which provides the basis for gender critique, is produced by the gestus, the moment in
which the actor of the epic theatre distances herself from her character, gesturing towards it rather than
identifying with it" (106).   He argues that this is one way to engage in (and stage) the type of gender
performance Butler suggests is subversive—by emphasizing the existence of gender as independent of,
rather than inherent to, a performer.

[27] This rejection of a liberatory future ideal forms the basis of Martha Nussbaum's critique of Butler.
Nussbaum's major complaints are that 1) "symbolic gestures, it is believed, are themselves a form of
political resistance; and so one need not engage with messy things such as legislatures and movements in

Butler does not hold out hope for an imagined future with either no gender hierarchy or a matriarchal system.   I believe Butler has seen that the strides made by feminists in securing legislative protections for women's rights were insufficient for dismantling systems of gender oppression.   No matter what laws were passed or court cases won, if the socio-cultural systems of power continued to privilege straight men, then women and gay men would always be oppressed.   We might say the same thing about homonormativity; no matter how many gay men and lesbians find places within straight society, the fundamental structures of inequality will remain.

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What I find most problematic about Butler's analysis is the limited discussion of the possibilities and limitations of *parody* as an approach to or tactic for subversion. Butler does an excellent job analyzing parody's relation to gender performativity, but she is less thorough when discussing what parody *is*.   For a critic who has become famous for theorizing parodic performance, this is a surprising lapse.   Butler argues that parody disrupts normative forces, but by examining works that theorize parody as such we find that parody's disruptive potential is extremely complex.   Even as parody disrupts, it reinforces the normative power structures it works against.

We can go back to Mikhail Bakhtin for a theorization of parody's value in early performance.   In his analysis of the carnivalesque, Bakhtin examines how medieval folk festivals often parodied official religious and monarchical rituals, which simultaneously undercut the seriousness of those festivals and reinforced their cultural authority.   With

order to act daringly," and 2) "The new feminism, moreover, instructs its members that there is little room for large-scale social change" (38).   Butler certainly believes that a subversive use of language is one method to disrupt gendered power structures, though this condenses Butler's notion of performance into the notion of performative utterance, which is only one form of parodic subversion.

these folk rituals, the "essential principle of grotesque realism is degradation, that is, the

lowering of all that is high, spiritual, ideal, abstract; it is a transfer to the material level, to

the sphere of earth and body in their indissoluble unity" (Bakhtin 19-20).   The work of

Rabelais and the folk festivals Bakhtin analyzes challenge the seriousness of rigid

religious and political hierarchies.   For Bakhtin, humor is a crucial component of folk

parody, in which "A boundless world of humorous forms and manifestations opposed the

official and serious tone of medieval ecclesiastical and feudal culture" (4).   By lowering

and making laughable the rites and rituals of official culture[28]—with the King of Fools,

parodic rewritings of common prayers, and festivals that disrupted society's normally

ordered social relationships—folk celebrations exerted a parodic challenge to a highly

regimented society.   However, Bakhtin also emphasizes the role religious and feudal

power structures played in shaping these festivals—both as a means of dispersing

potentially revolutionary anger and as a means of reinforcing their own legitimacy

through the repetition of their rituals.

   Bakhtin focuses in *Rabelais and His World* on a specific time and type of parody,

and although his theory contributed a foundation for later projects, his basic goal is not a

definition of parody.[29]   I think that Butler begins with some suppositions about what

parody is and how it works.   She fleshes out some of these suppositions, but there are

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[28] It is important when theorizing parody to discuss the importance of laughter and intent, and I will explore this more at the end of Section III.

[29] According to Linda Hutcheon, "Despite Bakhtin's rejection of modern parody, there are close links between what he calls carnivalesque parody and the authorized transgressions of parodic texts today. . .Parody is fundamentally double and divided; its ambivalence stems from the dual drives of conservative and revolutionary forces that are inherent in its nature as authorized transgression" (26).   To save time and space, I have not done justice to Bakhtin's analysis of the conservative uses or tendencies of the carnivalesque.   In this study, however, I am much more interested in theorizations of parody in a modern context.

elements of parody I feel require more clarification than Butler gives in *Gender Trouble*.

In order to fully develop a theory of parodic social subversion, we must answer the

following question: what is parody? The question may be deceptively simple.[30]

One reason parody is not as simple as it might at first seem is that the answer to

what it is will depend on who is answering.   Keeping this in mind, I am drawing the

basis of my definition from Linda Hutcheon's book *A Theory of Parody*, with additional

comments and clarifications drawn from some other sources.   One major limitation of

many definitions of parody, at least for my project (and for understanding Butler's

project) is that these works tend to focus on artistic or literary parody, rather than the kind

of gender/sexuality parody interesting both Butler and myself.   I will note here one

particularly important difference between Butler and Hutcheon—intent.   Because

Hutcheon is dealing with artistic and literary parody, she can assume the artist's parodic

intent, that is, she can assume the artist meant to create a parody (this may, of course, be a

faulty assumption).   Butler, by contrast, is not interested in parodic intent.   For Butler,

an act can be received as parodic whether the actor intended it to be so or not.   For my

own part, I am not tremendously invested in the question of intent—an intentional parody

can be as disruptive as an unintentional one, so I (perhaps uncritically) discuss both

intentional and unintentional parodies as disruptive performances.

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[30] Butler writes, "*In imitating gender, drag implicitly reveals the imitative structure of gender itself*"
(*Gender Trouble* 175).   This means that for Butler gender performance is always already an imitation;
there is no original gender.   Linda Hutcheon, whose work I am drawing on below, assumes that there is an
original text parodic works of art draw from.   We could, however, look at any work of art more broadly as
parodying the artistic, rhetorical, literary, and musical traditions in which these texts work.   However, I
think this presents a problem because if every text (or action) parodies a set of conventions, then the term
parody ceases to have any useful meaning because it does not signify that certain texts have a unique
relationship to the "original"—nothing is *not* parodic.

For Hutcheon, parody is a multi-faceted concept.   Offering a very broad

definition from which to become increasingly specific; she writes that parody "is a form

of imitation, but imitation characterized by ironic inversion, not always at the expense of

the parodied text" and that "Ironic inversion is a characteristic of all parody. . .criticism

need not be present in the form of ridiculing laughter for this to be called parody" (6).

While for Bakhtin, humor and degradation were crucial components of medieval folk

rituals, Hutcheon argues that laughter is not inherent to parody.   For instance, Mel

Ramos' 1973 painting *Plenti-Grand Odalisque* parodies J.A.D. Ingres' *La Grande*

Odalisque (48) without necessarily mocking the earlier work; Ramos uses Ingres' image

to comment on the similarities and differences between contemporary and earlier visions

of eroticism.   Many definitions include mocking criticism as an inherent component of

parody, because many definitions blur the line between parody and satire.

The two forms—parody and satire—are closely related, and are often used

together.   But, as Hutcheon tries to make clear, the techniques are not the same.   She

describes the relationship between satire and parody:

> parody's "target" text is always another work of art or, more generally, another
> form of coded discourse[31]. . .even the best works on parody tend to confuse it with
> satire. . .which, unlike parody, is both moral and social in its focus and
> ameliorative in its intention. (16)

The basic ideas in this section of text which interests me are the notions of intent and

purpose.   Mockery, we might even say cynical mockery, is in the very nature of satire;

while parody may mock, it is not defined by that mockery.   In a lecture titled "The

Nature of Satire," James Sutherland cites the theatre critic Kenneth Tynan describing

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[31] Parody of a "coded discourse" is what both Butler and I are interested in when discussing performative
parody of gender/sexuality.   This will be discussed more below.

George Bernard Shaw as "a demolition expert" who excelled at "intellectual slum-

clearance" (1); this, I think, describes the value of satire.   The "satirist feels driven to

draw attention to any departure from what he feels to be the truth, or honesty, or justice.

He wishes to restore the balance, or correct the error; and often, it must be admitted, to

correct or punish the wrongdoer" (4), but the parodist may have no such intention.

Indeed, while the satirist senses a violent division between the real world and his or her

ideal world—a division that can and must be closed by mocking it with equal violence

into submission—the parodist may or may not have this same sense; the parodist can, in

fact, have the greatest admiration for the discourse or art he or she parodies and may not

feel a need to correct anything.

Although the goal may not be mocking correction, the parodist always reproduces

an earlier recognizable form, whether discourse or art, with some kind of critical distance.

One of the problems facing this reproduction with distance, however, is the dependence

on a savvy and literate interpreter.   While the satirist "must compel his readers to agree

with him; he must persuade them to accept his judgment of good and bad, right and

wrong" (Sutherland 5), parody—which again may not be as violently corrective as

satire—tends to rely more heavily on viewer interpretation; the satirist tells you *what* to

think, while the parodist invites you *to* think.[32]   Because the satirist has a definite

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[32] If we think of the modern day satirist Steven Colbert—who parodies conservatives like Bill O'Reilly and Glenn Beck—his effectiveness as a commentator depends on making clear to his audience(s) the act of mockery, and by extension the desire for an ideal world, which is violently separated from the real world. Of course, an unaware viewer could take Colbert's faux-ultra-conservative commentary as serious (indeed, when we look at some things Glenn Beck and others have said the line between serious and satirical can become blurred), which would completely reverse the satirical intention.   However, Colbert's and the audience's laughter work against a serious interpretation.   We therefore see the satirist using parody, but providing enough evidence of satirical intent to prevent viewers from misreading his intention.

agenda, he or she cannot leave any doubt in the viewer or reader's mind about the

satirical message, which means that satire will generally be rather heavy handed.

Hutcheon devotes a significant amount of attention to parody as a semiotic

system, or a system of signs constructing and commenting upon itself as (in) a context.

She writes, "as readers or viewers or listeners who decode parodic structures, we also act

as decoders of encoded intent. In other words, parody involves not just a structural

énoncé but the entire *énonciation* of discourse. This enunciative act includes an addresser

of the utterance, a receiver of it, a time and a place, discourses that precede and follow –

in short, an entire context" (23). To comprehend and decode this context as a *significant*

context, rather than as pieces in isolation, however, demands a great deal of interpretive

effort from a viewer. In order to comprehend parody as parody (i.e., as a reproduction,

rather than an original) a viewer must recognize that some text or discourse is being

parodied. This seems rather obvious, but is extremely important. [33] This is not to

suggest that there is a "proper" or "correct" way to read a parodic text (though

Hutcheon's rather structuralist analysis might suggest so), but rather that not seeing a

work as parodic limits the ways in which an audience can read it. What the parody (and

the text itself) means is subject to any number of understandings.

Of course, reader-response theorists and some discourse theorists would argue

that all texts depend on a complex system of encoding by an author and decoding by a

reader. While this is certainly true, Hutcheon suggests that the question becomes one of

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[33] One potential problem with theorizing parody as reproduction with critical distance is that almost text
reproduces with critical distance to some degree. I mean by this, we cite Ramos' painting as a parody of
Ingres' earlier work, but the components and images of Ingres' work also reproduce with some kind of
critical distance the work of earlier painters who influenced Ingres' style. It is, therefore, with the utmost
uncertainty and trepidation that I use the term *original* here, while knowing full well that the concept is
tenuous at best.

degree, and that effective parody requires a greater cognitive and interpretive effort from readers than most other texts.   Hutcheon provides a nice summation of this argument:

> Readers are active co-creators of the parodic text in a more explicit and perhaps more complex way than reader-response critics argue that they are in the reading of all texts. While all artistic communication can take place only by virtue of tacit contractual agreements between encoder and decoder, it is part of the particular strategy of both parody and irony that their acts of communication cannot be considered completed unless the precise encoding intention is realized in the recognition of the receiver. In other words, in addition to the usual artistic codes, readers must also recognize that what they are reading *is* a parody, and to what degree and of what type. They must also, of course, know the text or conventions being parodied, if the work is to be read as other than any piece of literature – that is, any non parodic piece. (93)

The success of a parodic text, therefore, depends on a reader or viewer's ability to interpret a number of component parts beyond the normal interpretive demands made by literature or art.

Considering parodic performance, specifically of gender or sexuality, the multiple demands made on a viewer's interpretive capabilities will be significant obstacles to successfully disruptive performances.   This is particularly important when we consider performative parody as an intentionally disruptive act.   When dealing with an audience that uncritically assumes (as many people do) that gender is a stable binary, to parody or mock gender conventions might challenge a viewer's decoding abilities.   Comparably, because we know from Hutcheon's work that parody is not inherently corrective, gender parody can be used without intending to question binary, socio-cultural constructions. For instance, drag is the standard parodic style Judith Butler cites, and drag certainly has disruptive potential.   However, drag can also be used to reinforce conceptions of innate and binary gender.   For instance, when the comedians of Monty Python wore dresses and imitated horrible female voices, they were probably not trying to complicate their

viewer's notions of gender.[34] The laughter a sketch comedy show elicits is laughter at

the absurdity of the performers, not an uncomfortably inward looking laughter that laughs

at our own ideas about the world[35]; by making drag into a ridiculous spectacle, Monty

Python helped reinforce binary and biological gender by making men in drag a laughable

spectacle.[36] Certainly some viewers will be open to examining notions of gender and

sexuality as socially constructed, but the difficulty in effective parody would be to find a

balance between the ridiculous and the explicitly theoretical.   What this indicates is how

difficult it is to challenge deep seated understandings of the world through spontaneous

gender performance.

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     There are, of course, queer performative traditions already attempting to

undermine or undo the reified gender and sexuality structures of a neoliberal ideological

organization.   These performativities are, in most cases, more or less parodic.   Camp is

one strategy many queers have used to resist a society that seeks to exile or marginalize

them.   This has been a defensive strategy because "Throughout history there has always

been a significant minority whose unacceptable characteristics – talent, poverty, physical

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[34] I am, of course, assuming Monty Python's intention.   For Hutcheon, a parodist's intent is important insofar as he or she intends to parody, but she is not particularly concerned with what the parody says. Butler, on the other hand, is not at all interested in intentionality—an act that is not intended to be parodic can be received as parodic as validly as if the act was intentionally parodic.   This is, perhaps, a result of the differences between constructed art works and spontaneous gender/sexuality performance.

[35] At the end of Section III, I will discuss laughter(s) and their uses/usefulness.

[36] Perhaps a more complicated example of drag are 1980s hair metal bands like Twisted Sister, who dressed in gaudy make up and wigs.   As a band embedded in the hair metal tradition, Twisted Sister had a rebellious element (notable in their most famous song "We're Not Gonna Take It"), but they remained within a tradition that was strongly masculine despite the prevalence of long hair, make up, and a pre-occupation with fashion (or anti-fashion).   Twisted Sister, with their acknowledgment of traditionally feminine styles in metal are perhaps a logical reaction to metal's topical focus on male sexuality.   It is, however, difficult to say how Twisted Sister conceives of or relates to binary, biologically determined gender because their drag "might best be described as clownish" (Piggford 287).

unconventionality, sexual anomaly – render them vulnerable to the world's *brutal laughter*. Hiding their mortification behind behavior which is often as deviant as that which is concealed is the mainspring of camp" (Core 81, my emphasis).   Camp—as a lifestyle, aesthetic sensibility, artistic style—often parodies straight forms, reproducing them with critical distance, emptying the earlier forms of their socio-cultural content.

Susan Sontag's "Notes on 'Camp'" is probably the most well known text attempting to define camp, though later critics have pointed out a number of limitations in her thinking.   Sontag provides a list of 58 notes or statements about camp, beginning "Camp is a certain mode of aestheticism. It is one way of seeing the world as an aesthetic phenomenon. That way, the way of Camp, is not in terms of beauty but in the degree of artifice, of stylization" (54).   The delight in artifice works, in many cases, along the same lines as the Bakhtinian carnivalesque, by dragging down through humor those things socially held up as most valuable and placing above them those things most considered valueless.   Even the Bakhtinian devotion to humor returns in camp; "The old-style dandy hated vulgarity. The new-style dandy, the lover of Camp, appreciates vulgarity. Where the dandy would be continually offended or bored, the connoisseur of Camp is continually amused, delighted" (Sontag 63).   Most commentators on camp recognize humor and delight as crucial components to camp sensibility, but while Sontag de-politicizes campy humor, many later theorists followed a more Bakhtinian argument that by degrading what is classically beautiful and valuable, while promoting the artificial and bad, camp disrupts the schema through which aesthetic and social values are organized.[37]

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[37] Sontag's second note is that "To emphasize style is to slight content, or to introduce an attitude which is neutral with respect to content. It goes without saying that the Camp sensibility is disengaged, depoliticized

For George Piggford, among other critics, camp is a political movement because it disrupts and disorganizes regulatory forces that seek the veil of naturalness to establish their legitimacy. Piggford's article "'Who's that Girl?' Annie Lennox, Woolf's *Orlando*, and Female Camp Androgyny" suggests that "the camp androgyne both performs drag and produces a deliberate 'camp effect' – a period of disorientation that encourages its viewer to question his/her assumptions between the relationship between gender performance and biological sex" (287).[38] Interestingly, the laughter or humor that is so central for Bakhtin, and mentioned by Sontag, finds little attention in Piggford's article, which presents camp androgyny as a threat to normative gender systems. Certainly for those with a vested interest in maintaining the gender binary and the notion of anatomically determined sex, a body that is unreadable as male or female is disorienting. Especially focusing on Annie Lennox (the lead singer of Eurythmics), Piggford claims "These female/androgynous figures do not simply dress as men; rather, they are women who dress, perform, write, appear as gendered identities that might be placed in a range between masculine and feminine. These women employ a camp sensibility – a code of appearance and behavior that mocks and ironizes gender norms" (284). Lennox's gender indefinability, or rather gender changeability, in the "Love is a Stranger" music video "clearly posed some sort of perceived threat [for MTV's censors] to an assumedly stable and proper relationship between biological sex and gender performance" (285). Camp (and) androgyny, with its/their fascination with the

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– or at least apolitical" (54). Many theorists not only argued that this does not go without saying, but is actually the opposite of camp humor's project.

[38] Sontag notes that camp tends toward a fascination with androgyny. See Note 9, on page 56 in the cited printing.

ephemeral and the indefinable is almost certainly the kind of socially disruptive parody

Judith Butler means when she discusses parodic gender/sexuality performance.

Of course, even female androgyny as a means of parody is not inherently

disruptive—like all parody it still depends on a context. Annie Lennox and Eurythmics

used the construction of a music video, a form of mass media designed to be viewed

repeatedly in a certain context, as a vehicle for challenging assumed gender. However,

when, as Butler suggests, performance is daily performance, as opposed to say theatrical

or cinematic, an audience can fail to understand or comprehend that a performative

parody is either performative or parodic. In the novel *Valencia* Michelle Tea sets a

scene of gender confusion in a women's bathroom.[39] After seeing *A Nightmare on Elm

Street* while visiting her girlfriend's family in Georgia, Iris and Michelle were "horsing

around in the big empty bathroom" when a lady came in and accused them of being in the

wrong room (90). The woman "stood there looking horrified until Iris said, *She thinks

we're* boys, and I started laughing, and said, We're *girls* and the old woman looked even

more frightened and said, *Oh my, I am so sorry*, and darted into a stall" (90).[40] We can

read the woman's horror, fright, and desire to hide in a bathroom stall as some kind of

existential terror caused by approaching her own conceptions of gender and realizing

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[39] Judith Halberstam devotes a section in the introduction to *Female Masculinity* to "The Bathroom Problem," as a common problem faced by masculine women and a generic convention in butch literature. Tea (who does not, as far as I can tell, self-identify as masculine, but is perhaps closer to androgynous) uses the bathroom setting in a similar way to Halberstam. Halberstam writes, "in public bathrooms for women, various bathroom users tend to fail to measure up to expectations of femininity, and those of us who present in some ambiguous way are routinely questioned and challenged about our presence in the 'wrong' bathroom" (20). For Halberstam and the masculine women of whom she writes, this gender policing in public bathrooms is a constant source of anxiety; Tea's description of she and her girlfriend being mistaken for boys sounds more like a novelty than an experience of fear or anxiety, and we do not see a continuous anxiety about this gender policing in the novel.

[40] Michelle and Iris unintentionally reproduce the socially constructed performances of boys, but with the critical difference of being anatomically female.

their falseness. The gut reaction of fear at finding two boys in the women's bathroom and then learning that the boys are actually girls probably pre-empts any critical or rational reflection on the constructedness of gender. However, this kind of violent shock can (and does) unsettle deep-seated convictions about gender/sexuality. The shock is unsettling in a situation like the one Tea describes, though Tea and Iris did not intend a parodic performance. Parodic performance demands both the ability and willingness to read semiotic signs, and when a viewer is disoriented she or he cannot rationally respond to or interpret parody's complex repetition with critical distance. However, because notions of gender roles and identities are deeply seated, the unexpected and irrational shock caused by parodic performance can unsettle them. We must remember though, that because performative parody is spontaneous it is difficult for a viewer to reflect on and rationally evaluate the disruptive meaning of parody.

Section III: Negative Affect and Performative Resistance to Homonormativity

We had long ago identified one another and realized that because of everything we had in common, we could never be friends. To socialize would have drawn too much attention to ourselves. We were members of a secret society founded on self-loathing. When a teacher or classmate made fun of a real homosexual, I made certain my laugh was louder than anyone else's. When a club member's clothing was thrown into the locker-room toilet, I was always the first to cheer. When it was my clothing, I watched as the faces of my fellows broke into recognizable relief. Faggots, *I thought.* This should have been you. (Sedaris 85)

David Sedaris' essay "I Like Guys" deals with his shame and self-hatred as a boy in a homophobic North Carolina community.   The issues he encounters in the essay are common fare for gay and lesbian writers—the desire to escape oneself and one's position as outsider and blend in to the mass of straight society; confusion, disgust, and delight in early sexual encounters; fear of punishment by authority figures who implicitly or explicitly enforce the law of heteronormativity.   The self-defensive measures Sedaris discusses, however, are what really interest me: these strategies are both performative and parodic.   In the section above, Sedaris writes about performing heterosexuality—passing for straight—through the rituals of public shaming.   In other words, he engages in the ritual abuse of other gays in order to deflect public attention away from his own homosexuality.   This is Sedaris' attempt to escape the consequences of being homosexual in a homophobic community, and an attempt to distance himself from what could be a community formed around the shared experiences of shaming social rejection and same-sex desire.   In this portion of the essay, Sedaris' performance is parodic—that

is, a repetition with critical distance—because his performance of straightness/homophobia is not a direct performance, it is heightened acting designed to obscure Sedaris' position as an outsider.   To hide his shameful condition, Sedaris out-straights the straights.   In the experience this is more imitative camouflaging than parodic subversion, but to the essay reader this sexuality performance is a parody.

However, even as Sedaris mockingly performs straightness at school, he does establish communities with the other homosexual boys.   One type of community is based around denial of an identity component and the desire to pass for straight, which we saw above.   The other type of community occurs with a boy named Jason.   Bunk mates on a trip to Greece, Sedaris and Jason begin calling one another faggot in mockery of a homophobic comment by a camp counselor.   As Sedaris explains, "We couldn't protest the word, as that would have meant acknowledging the truth of it. The most we could do was embrace it as a joke. Embodying the term in all its clichéd glory, we minced and pranced about the room for each other's entertainment when the others weren't looking" (90).   The two boys' performance of faggotness draws them together through the bond created by their shared knowledge—that is, through their self-knowledge of their own homosexuality—and the shared joke at the expense of their homophobic counselors, teachers, and peers.   Sedaris and Jason parody the public displays of shaming.   Through this parody they expose the ridiculous performativity of shaming rituals, and they are drawn into a sort of conspiracy to resist the experience of shame by making the homophobic performances of mockery themselves laughable.[41]

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[41] This is not, of course, as simple and clean as it might sound.   Although Sedaris and Jason performatively undermine shaming rituals, exposing the rituals as laughably empty, there remain serious physical,

This is what I wish the theorize.   As Judith Butler tells us, gender and sexuality

are stylized repetitions of performances, but shame and shaming are equally stylized and

equally performative, and these conditions all imprint themselves upon the subject and

hide their genesis in a mythos of naturalism.[42]   But, as Butler also tells us, the

possibilities of failed repetition can expose the performative nature of gender.   I suggest

that performances of shame and shaming can be deployed strategically to undercut or

expose the regulatory functions of shame in maintaining hierarchies.[43]   By this I mean

not only that shame keeps those on the bottom of hierarchies from attempting to assert

their humanity in the face of a shaming socio-cultural position, but it also regulates the

behavior of those in the top portion of the hierarchies.   This means that the behavior of

men is defined, controlled, and limited by their opposite *not-men* (a broad categorization

that traditionally includes women, children, and homosexuals); to perform a *non-manly*

action casts doubt on a subject's *manliness*.   Shame is the force/discourse behind the

social injunction to maintain one's *manliness* (i.e., to not slip into the disadvantaged

positions of woman, child, or homosexual); that is, if one wants to avoid shame, one

performs properly.[44]   While it is probably not possible to get most men to parodically

psychological, and emotional consequences to being identified—either self-identified or identified by others—as homosexual in a homophobic community or culture.

[42] Barry Adam writes, "Shame is not an originary experience; it is an attitude demanded of the inferiorized" (304).

[43] As I will discuss later in this section, there is a tremendous risk to using shame and shaming from a queer perspective because queers have traditionally been victimized by shaming.   However, I will consider below how queer performances of shaming can expose "the inadequacies of queer narratives of progress" (Love 27), as well as straight or neoliberal narratives of progress.

[44] I think it is fairly clear that I am not fundamentally challenging Judith Butler's project, since she advocates the disruption of notions about gender and sexuality's inherent naturalness, and I am proceeding from the same suppositions and toward the same disruptive goal.   What I am proposing is a tactical shift to utilize shame and shaming as strategies to expose the regulatory fiction of gender and sexuality; what I propose is not so much a challenge to Butler as a modification to the theory she developed.   I will explain further below why I believe this is an important and useful shift, and why I feel it is necessary.

perform their gender, the way we meet gender performances can expose them as already parodic—I mean by this that we can meet gender performances with humor.

The paradoxical action of shame is that it both disrupts and creates identities, and "shame and identity remain in very dynamic relation to one another, at once deconstituting and foundational, because shame is both peculiarly contagious and peculiarly individuating" (Sedgwick, "Shame" 50). Although shame isolates individuals, the emotion (particularly as it is deployed to regulate gender and sexuality performance) only works within a community because shame exists in response to a failure to meet communal standards. In this sense, *shame* is different from *guilt*, though the two emotions are similar: "shame attaches to and sharpens the sense of what one is, whereas guilt attaches to what one does" (51). This is, of course, why shame tends to attach to marginal identity groups like homosexuals, who have traditionally been outside "normal" society, or to historically disempowered groups like women. However, the process of shaming has also formed the unity of both heterosexuals and homosexuals as insiders and outsiders of a specific identity; insiders shame, outsiders are shamed, and this divided relationship to shame helps solidify the phantasmatic unities of the inside and outside. As we saw in Sedaris' essay, shame isolates him from the other homosexual boys in his class because acknowledging their joint shame would further open them to the ridiculing laughter (not to mention other forms of violence) of classmates and teachers.[45] However, the experience of being shamed for a shared sexual identity also brings Sedaris and Jason together, and their performance of shaming rituals creates a communal bond

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[45] Of course, Sedaris' experience with Jason shows us the complex and inconsistent action of shame, which isolates but also creates unities.

between them, but also a performative bond with the straight peers and authorities who mocked homosexuals.[46]   We see, therefore, the complex action of both shaming and parodic performance in creating and undermining communities and identities.

One force maintaining the unity of heterosexual normalcy (as illusory as that unity is) is shame, a shame directed both outward (at all those outside the heteronormative order) and inward (to regulate the behavior and performance of gender normative heterosexuals).   This same experience—deploying shame both internally and externally—is a component of neoliberal regulation that maintains hierarchical power structures.[47]   Duggan describes neoliberalism's investment in hierarchies of identity, and how those hierarchies structure society.   As one example, she outlines how the neoliberal discourses of *privatization* and *personal responsibility* have structured welfare reform policies under both President Clinton and President George W. Bush's administrations, explaining "welfare reform has been presented as a boon to recipients lifted out of welfare *dependency* and into the low-wage labor market. The new policies have also been touted as helping to promote marriage and reduce youthful 'out of wedlock' pregnancy" (17).   In relationship to shame and social shaming, the discourses of privatization and personal responsibility, which neoliberalism holds as two of the most important social values, place those who depend on welfare or public assistance in a shameful position; these people are disproportionately women, ethnic minorities, and queers.   Neoliberal discourses "use 'neutral' economic policy terms to hide their investment in identity-based

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[46] Because, as Butler tells us, intention does not matter as much as reception, Sedaris' straight sexuality performance may be received as non-parodic.   This is one pitfall of performativity.   Sedaris performs the same rituals as his straight peers, bringing him into the same performative hierarchal position.

[47] It is important to remember that both heteronormativity and homonormativity are sub-ideologies of neoliberalism, and therefore share many of the same ideological assumptions.

hierarchies" (15). Both Michael Warner and Lisa Duggan argue that homonormativity represents a new style of socio-cultural regulatory injunctions, which include a co-optation of certain sets of gays and lesbians into the fold of neoliberal "normality," leaving outside those who are less socially desirable. I argue that when homonormative gays and lesbians enter straight society as (more or less) equal participants with the rights and responsibilities thereof, they cease to be outside the neoliberal order, and therefore are less subject to some of the shaming mechanisms that regulate, obscure, and oppress queer life, but they become subject to the shaming regulatory mechanisms of straight, gender normative life.

I feel that with the rise of homonormative inclusion, and the correspondingly increased legitimization of neoliberal values and regulatory practices, we must continue to make use of Butler's theorization of performativity, but change focus from exposing the arbitrary and regulated performance of an illusory gender to exposing the mechanisms of shame that maintain and naturalize that regulated gender. I suggest that we use the exposure of shaming mechanisms as a tactic to help undermine the ostensible naturalness of gender. That is, by exposing the techniques through which the illusion of gender uses socio-cultural discourses and performances like shame to maintain proper gender and sexuality performances, we can show how the notion of gender oppresses not only queers, but straight, gender normative people as well, thereby making resistance to gender and sexual normativities their fight as well.

The 1953 film *Calamity Jane* unintentionally exposes the role of shame in creating proper femininity. The film stars Doris Day as the title figure, a masculine acting—gun toting, swaggering, swearing, horseback riding—woman, who seems to be a

great favorite with the men of Deadwood, Dakota Territory.   Jane is the kind of masculine woman Judith Halberstam discusses, though Jane does not initially seem subject to shaming regulation.   However, Jane soon experiences shame when she brings Katie Brown to perform in the music hall.   Brown's femininity challenges and shames Jane, who feels for the first time that she is failing to perform her gender properly. When Jane is in her buck skins and gun belt she is in drag because her anatomical sex should require a female performance; however, when she puts on a dress for the dance, Jane is still in drag because her customary gender performance is masculine.   At one point Wild Bill Hickok (whom Jane initially competed with to prove her superior masculinity) demands that Jane "Act like a lady," that is, a proper lady like Katie Brown, rather than the monstrous hybrid of Calamity Jane.   Against the proper femaleness of Katie Brown and the anatomical maleness of Hickok and Lt. Danny Gilmartin, Jane is a pitiful imitation, and her failure to properly *be* gendered marks her as a social pariah. However, in true conservative 1950s fashion, the film resolves Jane's gender confusion through marriage.   Jane marries Hickok, thus bringing her into the regulatory space(s) of marriage and reproductive futurism (see Lee Edelman's theory, summarized in Section I). Jane's gender ambivalence is resolved—or at least the resolution is suggested—when she becomes the *woman* to Hickok's *man*, adopting, however imperfectly, her femininity and the socially designated space for that femininity, thereby escaping her shameful position for a shameless one.

I think the shift to exposing shaming mechanisms is an important strategic move because, as Barry Adam phrases it, "queer theory will never be able to account for why so many men and women defy the odds to affirm identity again and again" (306).   His

use of the term *never* might be overstating the case somewhat, but I think he is essentially correct.[48] Decades after Simone de Beauvoir's famous statement that "one is not born a woman," and over two decades after Judith Butler published *Gender Trouble*, and alongside the myriad queer theory and feminist analyses arguing that gender and sexual identities are regulatory social fictions, individuals continue to identify as gendered and with sexual identities.[49] Despite the claims of queer theorists and feminists, gender and sexual normativities continue to cling tenaciously to our self perceptions.   As much as we critically or theoretically expose identity categories like gender, sexuality, or race as fallacies, they continue to exert influence in popular culture and structure the popular consciousness.   It is for this reason—combined with the increased legitimacy of normativities resulting from homonormative inclusion—that I believe the tactical shift I am proposing is useful for disrupting gender hegemonies.

   We can use queer performativity, which is historically linked with shame, to expose the interrelatedness of shame, queerness, and normalcy.   As Sedgwick writes in "Shame, Theatricality, and Queer Performativity," "'queer performativity' is the name of

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[48] Although this quotation suggests essentialism or voluntarism, Adam's essay raises questions about the social contexts that create/influence/enforce identities.   Like Judith Butler, I believe that gender performance and the notion of identity are primarily social phenomena.

[49] The 2007 documentary *Trained in the Ways of Men* examines the murder of transgender teen Gwen Araujo in 2002.   Araujo was murdered by four men after they discovered that she was anatomically male, and the two trials sharply divided both the juries and communities over the status of transgender people and the acceptability of the so called "gay/trans panic defense."   Toward the end of the documentary several people are interviewed—some that were involved in the trials, a queer sociologist, some transgender people, and some seemingly random community members.   The interviewer asked three main questions: "Are you a man or a woman?" "How do you know?" and "How would you react if a DNA test said you have the opposite gender's DNA?"   From CJ Pascoe (the queer sociologist) and the transgendered individuals interviewed, the answers to these questions were predictably nuanced.   The community members and most of the people directly involved with the trial picked a gender identity almost instantly, but many struggled to articulate how they knew their gender.   Some, especially the men, cited sexual desire for women or having a penis.   Many used phrases like, "that's a really good question" when admitting that they could not articulate a reason for their gender identity.   From the facial expressions and the uncomfortable looks on many faces it was clear that most of these people had never considered the ground of their gender identity, but had simply accepted that they were gendered in a certain way.

a strategy for the production of meaning and being, in relation to the affect shame and to the later and related fact of stigma" (58). When we perform queerness—whether linked to same-sex eroticism, gender, or some other behavior like art or music[50]—we map meanings onto our existence, but they are meanings in defiance of normativities. These performances are, according to Sedgwick, a natural and almost inevitable result of shame through which the shamed subject attempts to efface its shame[51]; "Shame, it might finally be said, transformational shame, is *performance*. I mean theatrical performance. Performance interlines shame as more than just its result or a way of warding it off, though, importantly, it is those things. Shame is the affect that mantles the threshold between introversion and extroversion, between absorption and theatricality, between performativity and—performativity" (51-52). When we perform as shamed subjects, we are *performing* the conditions of our own isolation. The physical markers of shame— "the 'fallen face' with eyes down and head averted—and, to a lesser extent, the blush" (50), as well as slumped or hunched posture, nervousness and attempts to move out of sight—are all physical manifestations of the inward experience of shame. But these physical manifestations perform for others our own inward experience, acting as performative markers of our shamed or shameful condition(s).

However, we also perform shaming through a series of rituals which map meaning onto existence. The experience of shame, and the accompanying performance of being shamed, works as the counterpart to the performative shaming by others. These

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[50] Hutcheon discusses art and music, though I am not specifically interested in these. We might mention though that camp frequently involves the visual arts or theatre/cinema.

[51] Sedgwick acknowledges that she is not sure to what degree we can say queer performance is *always* a result of shame, or how thoroughly we can understand the relationship between shame and specific forms of queer performativity (58-59).

two performances reinforce the existence and stability of the constructed hierarchies they ostensibly enact; like gender, the hierarchies are only constructed and only survive through continued performance of rituals that are assumed to represent a natural or inherent condition of the various performers. What I propose is that, as Butler argues for gender, a parodic performance of shame or shaming can disrupt the illusion of gender and sexual normativities. This process is already underway through the work of radical organizations like Gay Shame.

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> *GAY SHAME is a Virus in the System. We are committed to a queer extravaganza that brings direct action to astounding levels of theatricality. We will not be satisfied with a commercialized gay identity that denies the intrinsic links between queer struggle and challenging power. We seek nothing less than a new queer activism that foregrounds race, class, gender and sexuality, to counter the self-serving "values" of gay consumerism and the increasingly hypocritical left. We are dedicated to fighting the rabid assimilationist monster with a devastating mobilization of queer brilliance. GAY SHAME is a celebration of resistance: all are welcome. (Gay Shame)*

Gay Shame is an organization engaged in the type of radical resistance through shaming performance I am theorizing. Their stance is in complete opposition to all forms of normativity: hetero- and homonormativity, capitalism and consumerism, ethnic and racial bigotry, "and all other hierarchies" (*Gay Shame*). Their radical resistance is almost anarchistic in its disruptive struggle. The first event sponsored by Gay Shame's San

Francisco branch—whose Statement of Purpose is reprinted above— "featured speeches critiquing gentrification and the U.S. colonization of Vieques, Puerto Rico, and tried to bridge antiprison, youth, and trans activism" (Weiss 90). Considering all of Gay Shame's causes it is a remarkably *queer* organization, opposing almost every type of regulatory hierarchy, primarily through street activism and performance, and by "spectacularizing the intersections of gender, race, class, and sexuality;. . .This open, accessible culture does not rely on a stable constituency or the privileging of sexuality as an axis of identity" (92).[52]

Gay Shame commonly uses shaming tactics directed at cultural and political authority figures, and the systems of normalization they represent. Radical Right religious and political conservatives have been special targets in Gay Shame's anti-capitalist actions. For instance, "gay shamers enlivened the traditionally leaden approach of the usual Left critique with a touch of queer genius by adding a fashion runway of the gay shameful to its counterpride event and bestowing 'awards' upon a leading real estate developer and on Mary Cheney for 'helping the right wing cope'" (Adam 303).[53] These kinds of rituals, certainly not restricted to targeting conservatives, attempt to activate and direct at those atop various hierarchies the same kind of public spectacle and humiliation that queers have been historically shamed by, and continue to

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[52] Duggan argues that neoliberalism attempts to compartmentalize various issues, denying the interrelatedness of economic, political, social, and other issues. She explains how homonormative corporate organizations engage in this project by "focusing primarily on two issues—gay access to marriage and the military—then demobilizing the gay population to a 'prepolitical' condition" (60).
[53] I do not imagine Mary Cheney or any of the other national figures targeted by Gay Shame actually felt shamed (or rather, guilty) over the actions for which they received the awards. Some of the local San Francisco organizations that have to live and work with queers may have been a bit more affected. But, even if Mary Cheney did not experience shame, the awards still utilized a parodic performance which challenged (probably) someone's perception of gay organizations and the national discourse surrounding homosexuality.

face.   In other words, Gay Shame and other anti-normative organizations parody traditionally heterosexual shaming rituals and the discourses of heteronormativity and binary genders.

Those who parody shame through street activism and performance often do so confrontationally, which is hardly surprising, but it is important to the anti-assimilationist stance Gay Shame and others have adopted.   The idea of resistance has always been tied to change, but, and this is a big but, it is hard to create substantive change in systems that are as elastic as capitalism and neoliberalism.   The challenge is always to find a method of resistance that will either be impossible to incorporate or will so distort hegemonic systems that the attempt to incorporate the resistance will cause disintegration. Historically, we have seen surface changes—Civil Rights legislation, Title IX, Roe v. Wade, Social Security and Medicare, the EPA—but fundamental conditions of inequality remain.   I do not envision shame as the political weapon that will destroy capitalism and neoliberalism, or even imagine that such a weapon exists, but shame does offer a unique challenge to the hegemonic order, in that shame tends to isolate individuals.   As I discussed earlier, because shame creates a shared experience it can form the basis for a provisional unity between shamed subjects[54]; however, the negative experience of shame is something the subject seeks to avoid (generally).   Because most people try to avoid shame, or acknowledging shame, it is difficult to form a community around shame; people do not want to open themselves as shamed subjects or acknowledge some component of their identities as shameful.

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[54] I mentioned before that shame often has contradictory results, and here we can see that again.   As a general rule of thumb, we might say that shaming unites, being shamed isolates, and parodying shame unites.   However, we must complicate this formula by acknowledging that the shared experience of being shamed can create group identities.

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Of course, because queer experience has been historically marked by shame and negative affect, the queer relationship to shame and shaming rituals will always be different from that of straight people.[55] In *Feeling Backward* Heather Love examines the literary heritage of queer shame, arguing that these experiences must be included in queer identity, because negative affect has shaped the queer world view.[56] As she writes early in the introduction, "For groups constituted by historical injury, the challenge is to engage with the past without being destroyed by it" (1). In Love's examination, she looks backward to some of the most important queer figures in literature and the importance of these figures' negative affect and experiences in shaping modern queer identity. Even, she argues, the Gay Pride Movement is inextricably tied to the legacy of shame and self-denial; "on the one hand, [homosexual identity] continues to be understood as a damaged or compromised subjectivity; on the other hand, the characteristic forms of gay freedom are produced in response to this history. Pride and visibility offer antidotes to shame and the legacy of the closet" (2). While Love argues for the need to retain the negative as fundamental to queer identity, I would suggest turning the history of negative affect against the forces of normative regulation. Love suggests that "Backward feelings serve as an index of the ruined state of the social world;

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[55] Adam points out that not all queers experience shame in the same way or to the same degree; "Although few LGBT people escape some degree of humiliation or degradation aimed in their direction. . .the degree to which would-be humiliators succeeded in inducing shame is highly variable" (304).

[56] As Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick writes, "To say. . .the epistemology of the closet has given an overarching consistency to gay culture and identity throughout this century is not to deny that crucial possibilities around and outside the closet have been subject to most consequential change, for gay people. There are risks in making salient the continuity and centrality of the closet, in a historical narrative that does not have as a fulcrum a saving vision" ("Epistemology," 46). The same caution could and should be applied to my project—to emphasize the political usefulness of negative affect is extremely risky for any group whose historical experience has been marked by shame and suffering. However, the importance of these emotions in shaping queer consciousness (as much as such a thing can be said to exist) cannot be ignored.

they indicate continuities between the bad gay past and the present; and they show up the inadequacies of queer narratives of progress" (27).   We can take this formulation a step further, however, by arguing that reaching back to negative feelings exposes the regulatory and disciplinary action of normativities—negative affect being a result of shaming those who do not meet normative standards—and "the inadequacies of queer narratives of progress" cast doubt on the adequacy of straight social progress narratives, which form the basic model for queer narratives.[57]   As Gay Pride parades parody straight celebrations (Independence Day, Thanksgiving Day Parades), queer temporal progress narratives parody—that is, reproduce with a critical distance—straight progress narratives (expanding democratic inclusion, increasingly effective telecommunications, medical advances).   It is this kind of reasoning that, I think, suggests a continuity more than a discontinuity between the socio-cultural forces regulating queer and straight life.

Performativity is a major force regulating both queer and straight life, partly through the action of shaming.   Although we know shame is characterized by the performative repetition of certain actions and postures, and therefore already an experience conveyed publicly, it is also a performative gesture that seeks to remove the shamed subject from public view.   The cliché phrase involves wishing one could crawl away and die.   It is difficult to mobilize an affect that wishes not to be seen, or even to be experienced, but through parody and humor we can expose how the rituals of shaming regulate and maintain both straight and queer existence as distinct identity groups.

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[57] Duggan points out that neoliberalism is an outgrowth of classic Liberalism, which provided "an organizing narrative" for social conditions and change (4).   As one example, Duggan explores the passing of universal white male suffrage in the U.S., which was understood to expand democracy, but in practice disenfranchised some (5-6).

I want to consider now, after all that I've said thus far, the role of humor in resistance through parodic performance.   For Bakhtin, laughter is a crucial component of the carnivalesque; Hutcheon suggests that humor is a common element of parody, but is not a necessary component of the form; Butler says almost nothing in *Gender Trouble* about the role or importance of humor.   I am inclined to agree with Hutcheon's position, that humor is not crucial to parody but it is *very* important, particularly in countering the power and experience of negative affect.[58]

To the degree that we can deploy parodic performances (of shame and shaming, or parodic performances in general), we must also consider that there are different types of laughter, which suggest different relationships to both the performance of parody and the norms or cultural codes being parodied.[59]   When deploying parodic performances, the type of laughter we hope to inspire will be significant.   The type of humor encoded in Gay Shame's demonstrations and awards ceremonies is often a malicious or satirical humor, suggesting that those shamed are either willfully or blindly ignorant; Gay Shame deploys the cruel laughter of ridicule to produce shame (or guilt) in its targets.   Gay Shame uses irony and satire to ridicule and critique their targets, even if *laughter* as such is not their primary goal.   There is dismissive laughter, uncomfortable laughter, cruel or satirical laughter, ironic laughter, communal laughter, triumphant laughter, defiant laughter, and many more.   And the ways we could/can/do deploy or evoke these laughters will display our attitudes toward the subject matter being parodied, and our own

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[58] As I mention in Section II, Butler is not concerned with intentionality.   It is important to acknowledge that a performance may be received as parodic without being intended that way, which complicates the notion of humor; one who views the act as parodic may see humor that is not apparent to one who views the act as serious.

[59] It is important to note that I am focusing here on intentional parodic performance because I am considering parodic performance as a deployable tactic.

relationship(s) to that subject matter.   I do not have the expertise, nor would it be within the scope of this project to attempt a thorough analysis of what meaning(s) these laughters could and do have.

I have framed this discussion of laughter and the relationship between humor and parody as a discussion of how we *deploy* parody, or how we *use* parody as a disruptive tactic, which I do want to maintain can be an effective tactic.   However, the other use of/relation to laughter is how we (choose to) laugh at acts that may not be intentionally parodic.   Judith Butler's notion of parody is not tied to the performer's intention—an act can be parodic whether or not the actor wants to disrupt normative codes—but we can respond to a performance with humor, thereby exposing the performance as already parodic.   Of course, even the act of laughing, with whatever inflection or intention, is a performative act.   Like parodic performances of gender, sexuality, shame, or shaming, we can use specific forms of laughter as a meaningful and disruptive response to the notion of normativities.   Particularly if we respond to shaming with something like dismissive laughter, we can create a disconnect between shaming rituals and the experience of negative affect.   Because laughter is uncharacteristic of how we perform shame, that response disconnects the perceived result from the socially structured rites of shaming.[60]

Laughter is particularly useful for groups like queers, who have traditionally been the victims of shaming rituals, because laughter challenges the power of shaming. Shaming rituals depend for their effectiveness on the seriousness of all involved—those

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[60] Looking back to the portion of Sedaris' essay from the beginning of this section, we see that laughter is often a part of ritual shaming—in the process of shaming we laugh at those perceived as shameful. However, when the shamed subject redirects laughter at the shamer(s), this laughter takes the sting out of the shaming rites.

shaming and those being shamed—and what makes shame such a powerful emotional motivator is that we will often go to great lengths to avoid the emotion.   But when the performative acts socially designated as producing shame fail to evoke negative emotion, but are instead met with laughter, that radically unexpected reaction disrupts the social patterns upon which gender and sexual normativities are built, and their regulatory power.   This kind of disruption, disconnecting shaming rites from the negative affect of shame, troubles normativities because it challenges the importance of hierarchies, and thereby challenges the relative power positions involved in those hierarchies.   It is particularly important to resist normativities and the hierarchies they represent as the cultural logic of neoliberalism expands to include gays and lesbians, thereby pulling some (former-)queers into the "normal," and increasing the ostensible legitimacy of the norm.   When the norm seems laughable, or laughably arbitrary its regulatory power decreases as its role in mapping cultural experience is exposed as an arbitrary social construct used to regulate human behavior.

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