

**No ordinary boy:
Language, masculinities and queer
pornography**

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The text

Carol Queen (1994), 'The leather daddy and the femme':
two-part short story, expanded into a novel (1998)

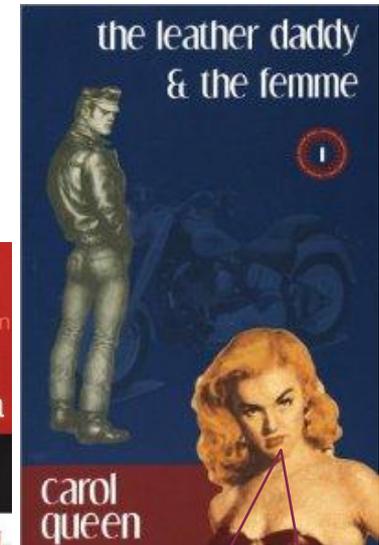
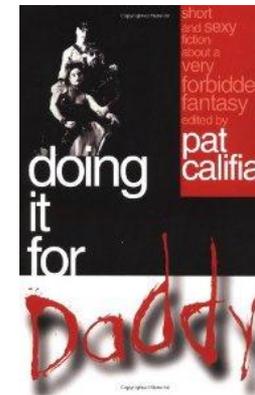
Sexual encounter between a (mostly) gay man
and the female-bodied first-person narrator
Integrates discourses on and by gay men

1st part: narrator is sexually submissive, first
enacts 'twink'/'boi' persona, then restyles
him/herself into a hyper-feminine woman

2nd part: narrator is sexually dominant, gender
undefined

Protagonists enact gay male and queer heterosexuality, interspersed with flashbacks
and anticipations of lesbian sex

Subverts gay male connotations of 'leather daddy' and lesbian connotations of
'femme'



'I felt like a *Vogue* model who'd
stumbled into a Tom of Finland
painting'

More on the text

Genre: ‘self-consciously literary pornography’

Decontextualised encounter between allegorical characters (Pendleton 1992)

Exaggerated and ideal type gender identities

Appropriation and subversion, reference to the protagonists’ emotions, experiences and attitudes



Historical context: US early 1990s, heyday of queer theory and activism

Text draws on ‘the identificatory and behavioral possibilities offered by emerging postmodern notions of the fluidity of gender’ (Morrish & Sauntson 2011: 137)



“he was looking right into my eyes, taking in my ... leather jacket, much rattier than his with all its ACT UP and Queer Nation stickers”



Queer discourse studies

- Most contemporary LGS research subscribes to social constructivism
- Discourse producers perform 'appropriate' genders across a range of contexts
BUT disregarding 'non-appropriate' genders risks reinforcing norms
- Studies of queer discourse: analyse instances of discourse that subverts hegemonic notions of gender and sexuality

Queer studies of discourse:

'destabilise naturalised notions of gender and sexual identity and ... relativise their absoluteness'
(Motschenbacher 2010: 180)

- Discourse: textually mediated social action
 - ideational function: representing experience and fantasies
 - interpersonal function: construct identities, gain power in social relationships

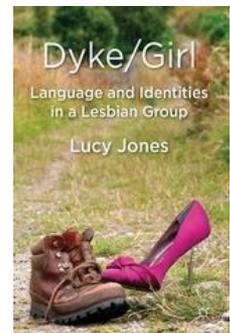
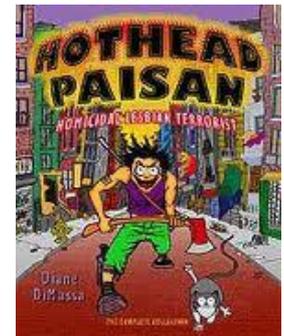
Female masculinity

An alternative reality and a way of relating to others

Decouples masculinity from maleness and links it to a variety of sexual roles

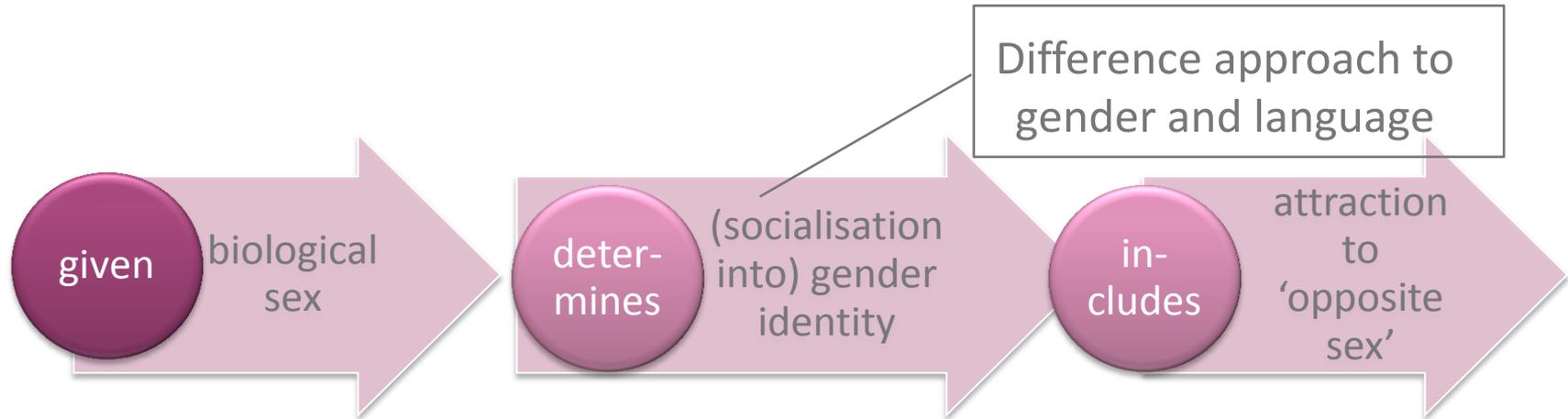
Linguistic studies:

- Bucholtz 1996: sociolinguistic variation and 'geek girls'
- Queen 1997: linguistic stereotypes in representing lesbian masculinity
- Koller 2009: 'butch camp' as a queer identity position
- Jones 2012: dyke and girl identities in a lesbian group



Sex and gender

Gender as biologically determined difference:



Hegemonic discourse

- prioritises sex over gender
- conflates gender and sexuality

Gender as performed and negotiated in discourse and other semiotic modes (e.g. clothing, movement)

Sexuality

‘the systems of mutually constituted ideologies, practices, and identities that give sociopolitical meaning to the body as an eroticized and/or reproductive site’
(Bucholtz & Hall 2004: 470)

‘the socially constructed expression of erotic desire’
(Cameron & Kulick 2003: 4)

Erotic dimension of sexuality encompasses the passively eroticised body AND the actively desiring mind

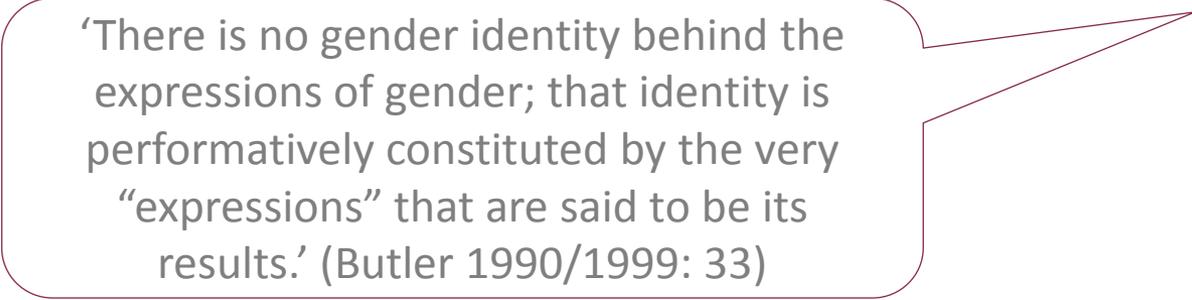
Sexuality minimally includes desire and fantasy, and may also include practice and/or provide the grounds for identity.

Sexual identity as a facet of the self that is based on erotic preference, fantasy and, potentially, practice

Performance and performativity

Performance: enacting identities

Performativity: constituting identities through repeated performances



‘There is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very “expressions” that are said to be its results.’ (Butler 1990/1999: 33)

Gender and sexual identity as a series of reiterable acts, including discursive and sexual acts, quoting previous identity performances

Sexual acts can be partly or wholly discursive, e.g. online chat rooms (Jones 2008, King 2011) or pornography.

Queer texts both reinforce and subvert gender and sexual identity categories.

Relational identities

- Elements of a dichotomy are mutually constitutive, they authenticate each other.
- For example, hegemonic masculinity exists only in relation to emphasised femininity (Connell 1995, Connell & Messerschmidt 2005).
- Relational identities are constructed in discourse through ‘tactics of intersubjectivity’ (Bucholtz & Hall 2004: 493–4).
- Relational identities are realised linguistically through cohesive devices, e.g. conjunctions and anaphora.

Analytical parameters

**Context
analysis:
explanatory**

Discourse
goals

- arouse and entertain reader
- subvert hegemonic discourses on gender and sexual identity

Discourse
functions

- interdiscursivity
- intersubjectivity

Discourse
features

- actor reference, metaphor
- epistemic modality, cohesion

**Text
analysis:
descriptive**

Linguistic
devices

- nouns and attributes, metaphoric expressions
- modal verbs, comparative reference and antonyms

Analytical parameters

Context analysis – social:
Why are these identities constructed and why in this way? What ideologies are relevant?

Context analysis – discourse practice **Why** are these identities constructed and why in this way? Who is involved in the discursive practices around the text and in what role? What discourse goals and functions does the text realize? What procedural scripts are enacted?

Macro-level
 social context

Meso-level
 discourse practice context (production, distribution, reception, appropriation)

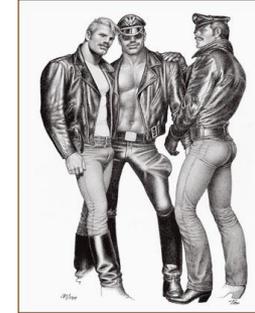
Micro-level
 text

Text analysis - content:
What identities are constructed?

Text analysis – linguistic and semiotic: **How** are identities constructed? What are the linguistic devices and discourse features at work? What SCRs do text producers draw on?

Actor reference

the/my daddy, leather daddy, guy, this man, Jack



I was looking pretty boyish that evening, when boy-energy gets into me I look like an effete young Cambridge faggot, my angelic Vienna-Choirboy face

I could be ... an adventurous gay boy, I was no ordinary boy, I love being a faggot for him ... I love being the boy

“this hot little schoolboy”, “little boy”



the whole me: the woman in the boy, the boy in the woman; “I’m no ordinary boy ... and I’m no ordinary woman”

“faggot in a woman’s body”

a strange, gender-schitized boy-girl from out of nowhere

big-dicked alley-cat girl (cf. his alley-cat-getting-fucked noise), “Randy-Miranda”



Attributes of masculine actors

physical strength:

‘he collared me and hauled me’, ‘the hard curves of his biceps’

emotional self-control as shown in physical control:

‘I felt weak-kneed and wildly dishevelled; he was immaculate yet’, ‘[t]he powerful feeling of having him in my hands’

linguistic assertiveness:

- challenging tag questions: ‘you know what comes next, don’t you?’
- commands as prevalent speech acts
- taboo language

Metaphor

PEOPLE ARE MACHINES

physical actions: 'pounding', 'slamming', 'pumping', 'a kiss that seared and melted'

physical attributes: 'He had steely blue Daddy-eyes', 'Those steel blue eyes were lit'

ORGASM IS EXPLOSION/SHOOTING: 'he could come without shooting', 'my touch triggered him'

drawing on hegemonic,
essentialist discourse:
reinforcing and subverting

PEOPLE ARE ANIMALS: '[my] teeth holding the back of his neck like a cat does', 'My sleek daddy had metamorphosed into a horny weasel', 'not man and woman, just animals, two sated animals'

SEX IS RIDING: 'the wild ride was over with half a dozen bucking thrusts'

Interdiscursivity

Discourse function: interdiscursivity

Discourse features: actor reference, metaphor

Interdiscursive link with gay male pornography

- random sample of texts, both pulp and literary, 1970s to early 1990s
- linguistic studies ascertaining focus on (first-person) narrator (Patthey-Chavez & Youmans 1992, Baker 2005)
- obsession with physical appearance, sexual rather than romantic orientation, metaphor MEN AS SEXUAL MACHINES, independence and lack of commitment, focus on conquest (Glenn 1981)

Differs in elaborating on characters' emotions and past experiences

Queers both gay male and straight pornography

Epistemic modality and cohesion

I was looking pretty boyish that evening, when boy-energy gets into me I look like an effete young Cambridge faggot, I could be ... an adventurous gay boy

I was no ordinary boy, I love being a faggot for him ... I love being the boy

Comparative reference and antonyms:

‘he wanted it as badly from me now as I’d wanted it from him the night before’, ‘just like me, he could come ... but I could also come... just like him’, ‘even as I had given him control ... I would take it now’

Discourse features: epistemic modality, cohesion

Discourse function: intersubjectivity

Gender and sexual roles as fluid, interdependent and interchangeable

Discourse practice and social contexts

Pornographic genre:

- explicit but decontextualized descriptions of sexual acts
- constructing exaggerated gender identities

Dual discourse goal of arousing reader and destabilising hegemonic discourse: queer text

Form of activism: ‘An erotic classic for the gender revolution’ , ‘Fuck sex differences, fuck “men are...” and “women are...”’

Reflection of socio-political context: confrontational activism in the wake of the aids crisis, queer theory as new philosophical paradigm

Queer research on language, gender and sexuality

Masculinity as a linguistic resource to construct particular identity positions:

1. Characters speak in a way that is culturally connoted as masculine: masculinity constructed in and for 1st person
2. Characters address each other in gendered ways ('daddy', 'little boy', 'bitch'): masculinity constructed in and for 2nd person
3. Author employs discourse features to endow characters with different kinds of masculinity: masculinity constructed in and for 3rd person

Linguistic expression of desire shows more explicit performances of gender and sexual identity

Queer masculinity outside the decontextualized space of sex and desire?

Sex and desire as utopia where language is used to experiment with identities, inspiration for everyday contexts

Thank you very much

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