

Judith Butler, *Gender is Burning: Questions of Appropriation and Subversion*

The article looks at subjectivity, the law, and the possibilities of subversion and appropriation. It suggests, that subjects are always both occupied and occupying the law. Where the uniformity of the subject is expected, however, there might be produced a refusal of the law in the form of parodic inhabiting of conformity that subtly calls into question the legitimacy of the command. The performative, the call by the law to produce a lawful subject, produces a set of consequences that exceed and confound what appears to be the disciplining intention motivating the law.

This space for possible subversion and appropriation is analysed in relation to the quasi-documentary film *Paris is Burning* (Jennie Livingston, USA 1991). The film depicts the drag balls organised by the House of Xtravaganza in Harlem, New York, and attended by and performed by "men" who are either African-American or Latino. The Article is especially concerned with the effect of realness in drag performance, and the promises invested in passing as female, or as white. Becoming a "real" woman constitutes in the film the site of the phantasmatic promise of a rescue from poverty, homophobia, and racist delegitimation. Failing to pass can, however, also result in death, as with the film's protagonist, Venus Xtravaganza.

The article also considers the role of the camera, and the film maker, as both the object and vehicle of desire: the camera enters the drag ball culture as the promise of phantasmatic fulfilment: it promises a wider audience, national and international fame for the "children" of the ball. If the camera is thus the vehicle for transubstantiation, what is the power assumed by the one who wields the camera, drawing on that desire and exploiting it? And what is the status of the desire to feminise black men and Latino men that the film enacts?

Sue-Ellen Case, *First Contact: Murderous Heavenly Creatures*

A successful film from 1994, *Heavenly Creatures* revisits the matricide committed by Pauline Parker and Juliet Hulme in New Zealand in 1953. In this article, Sue-Ellen Case looks at the multiple links between the lesbian, the matricide, the law, and the end of print culture. In the Greek classical theatre and myth, the matricide of Clytemnestra was the originary

crime, that set up the origins of trial law, and it was literally resolved by two heavenly creatures, Athena and Apollo. This myth of first contact is revised in *Heavenly Creatures*, which looks at the events leading to a lesbian matricide, as well as its aftermath, the trial. The Parker and Hulme case coincided with the first contact with new virtual technologies, such as satellites and television, but also with anti-communist and homophobic policing practices of the 1950s.

The myth of young, murderous intellectual homosexuals fuelled this discrimination. The myth was not only at play in the Parker and Hulme case, but also in that of Leopold and Loeb, which has been retold in literature, theatre and cinema alike, most recently in *Swoon* (1992). Both *Swoon* and *Heavenly Creatures* depict the intimacy of young homosexuals, as well as the importance of the private world of fantasy and fiction shared by them. Both cases lead into murder and trial, which are centrally trials on homosexuality as symptom of wider disorder.

With Parker and Hulme, fandom was a central part of their own private world, which rotated around the singer Mario Lanza, movie stars, and the "fourth dimension", a virtual reality that was described in Parker's diary. The article discusses the construction of fandom as pathology, and the importance of cultural production, of writing stories, for the relationship of Parker and Hulme. There is an interesting shift in cultural production, when Hulme later launches a career as mystery writer Ann Perry, in her own words obsessively returning to the scene of the crime, the guilty self, in the act of writing.

Martta Kaukonen, The Most Beautiful Woman in the World meets the Filthiest Person Alive: Divine, Transvestism, and Filth

Actor, and later disco artist Divine is best remembered from his performances in John Waters' trash films, particularly *Pink Flamingos* (1972), in which his performance includes eating dog shit. Indeed, one might say that Divine's star image, or the "Divine myth," is marked by filth as it is by transvestism. This article analyses the links made between transvestism and filth (both in a physical and moral sense) in Divine's public image.

The focus is on the different conceptualisation of transvestism, and their relations to the recurring attempts to deny Divine's transvestism. On the one hand, transvestism can be seen as upholding gender

categories. Particularly male-to-female transvestites are often said to reproduce stereotypes concerning femininity in their attempts to reach "true" womanhood. However, on the other hand, transvestites cross gender boundaries and remain on the borderlines that mark gender as bipolar structure, and thus there is an element of subversion in these acts of crossing. Transvestites blur the categories of sex and gender, male and female. In order to successfully patrol the bipolarity of gender it has been necessary to disclose transvestism outside the socio-cultural order, into the margins. Thus transvestism has become filth. The article takes a look at the uses of filth in Divine's career, and the meanings invested in attempts to define his transvestism as a role, an ungrateful job that a character actor is obliged to perform, rather than an activity one can derive pleasure from.

Liora Moriel, A Proud Song Bird: Dana International and The Eurovision Song Contest

In 1998, the Israeli singer Dana International became the first transsexual to win the Eurovision Song Contest. Liora Moriel argues that Dana International's success means that she is not only accepted as a singer, but also as a woman. The article discusses her performance of femininity as theatre that asks to be taken as reality. Transsexuality and transvestism have been variously viewed as either liberatory strategies or conservative cultural mechanisms that support the binary gender system. As a glamorous figure of subversion, Dana International is able to exploit her position as a commodity in the market place. However, Moriel also draws attention to transsexuality as a lived experience. In a culture characterised by a binary gender system, transsexuals face difficult dilemmas on an everyday basis. Unlike many other idols of Israeli transsexuals, Dana International has presented herself as a gay-identified transsexual and spoken unambiguously on behalf of transsexuals.

Dana International is discussed in the article as a figure situated between many categories of gender, nationality and ethnicity. Moriel analyses some lyrics written by Dana International, in which she mixes words and syllables from different languages. The lyrics are described as campy comments located within an Israeli tradition of mixing up the secular and the divine, the low-brow and the high-brow, the local and the global. As her made-up

name implies, International attempts to cross national boundaries. She has been very successful all over the Levant, crossing areas of ethnic and religious conflict. As a Mizrahi (non-European) Jew in Israel, Dana International belongs to a marginalized ethnic group, and she has publicly supported the Mizrahi movement that has increasingly challenged the ethnic hierarchies of the state of Israel.

Jennifer Robertson, Pathology and Desire: Fans of Japan's All-Female Takarazuka-Revue

The all-female Takarazuka revue was founded in 1913, and it has since become something of an institution, but also a site of debate over the meanings of fandom, gender, performance, and teenage girlhood in Japan. Actors in the revue are divided into *otokoyaku*, who play the roles of men, and *musumeyaku*, who play the roles of women. Particularly the *otokoyaku*, with their devoted fans, have been resurfacing in discussions on the masculinisation of Japanese teenage girls, westernisation, and non-heterosexual desire. The article focuses on the debates over Takarazuka and its fans, which have been carried out in hundreds of thousands of newspaper articles since the 1910s.

Although the revue audience was, and remains rather heterogeneous, social critics have regarded young girls and women as the most visible and problematic audience. Categorised under the rubric *shōjo* ("not quite female"), they are seen as being in-between childhood and adult womanhood. The all-female theatre, again was seen as a safe outlet for their budding passions which would eventually and "naturally" shift to anatomically correct men. The fascination of married women to the masculine *otokoyaku* has been, however, more difficult to explain for those, who take for granted the "natural" alignment of sex, gender, and sexuality.

The article looks at the operations of fandom and desire surrounding the revue. In addition to analysing the categorisation and pathologisation of *shōjo* fandom, the article also discusses male fans of the *otokoyaku*, girls running Takarazuka fan-clubs, and the wider subcultures or cross-dressing in Japanese culture.

Leena-Maija Rossi, How does one learn to be straight? Pick the 3rd Rock from the Sun and follow the example...

Not many cultural products denaturalise the formation of heterosexual subjects quite the same way as the

popular TV series *Third Rock From the Sun*. In fact, one might think that the script writers of the series have been deeply inspired by Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble*, for nearly every episode has represented heterogender and heterosexuality as bodily performance, linguistic performance, and through repetition in general. The iteration of the codes of heterosexuality does not result in naturalisation, nor the approximation of the norms of "normality". Quite the contrary, the series dwells on repetitions with a difference, crossdressing and cross-talking, productive incoherence, exaggeration and natural "unnatural-ity".

The *Third Rock from the Sun* depicts the life of four aliens – Sally, Tommy, Dick and Harry – on Earth as they try to grasp the appropriate norms governing gendered dress, discourse, and behaviour. The article focuses on the characters' and their unstable heteroperformances through close readings of the televisual text. Characters' efforts to learn gender from model personae around them leads constantly into dissonance, and these unsuccessful iterations make strange the key moments of normative heterosexuality, such as weddings, childbirth, and dating. Even the model of the nuclear family is turned "queer" by the four unrelated aliens, who have difficulties in playing the roles of "dad", "sister", and "brother".

**Maureen G. Shanahan,
L'Inhumaine (1924) – The
Inhuman Woman as Lesbian**

The article discusses Marcel L'Herbier's film *L'Inhumaine* (France 1924), a collaborative project among avant-garde artists, musicians, designers and performers interested in advancing the French ideal of film as "the seventh art". *L'Inhumaine* is a story of an "inhuman" woman, a world famous singer called Claire Lescaut, who is played in the film by the actress and singer Georgette Leblanc. Maureen Shanahan point out that the what makes Claire Lescaut "inhuman" is her indifference to men and heterosexual romance. She argues, however, that the film allows space for a queer or lesbian reading in which the "inhuman" woman is not condemned but celebrated.

L'Inhumaine is discussed in the context of contemporary discourses on art, sexuality and modernity and read in relation to its critical reception. The film is centrally concerned with the possibilities of the new media of the early 20th century. Its narrative concerns the romance be-

tween Claire Lescaut and a young scientist played by Jaques Catelain. Leblanc's heterosexual screen romance with Catelain failed to convince contemporary critics who viewed Leblanc as too dominant and associated Catelain with the homosexual dancer Jean Börlin. Thus heterosexual romance becomes an object of camp, which in turn has historically had strong gay connotations.

Shanahan argues that the Claire Lescaut character can be read as a lesbian. The lesbian connotations of the character derive partly from the figure of actress Georgette Leblanc, herself at that time involved in a lesbian relationship, and partly from the association the "inhuman" and the "lesbian". In the film the "inhuman" woman is put "on trial" before a crowd that is furious for her apparent lack of interest in men. In the end, however, Lescaut's singing wins over the audience which also includes some women who are coded as lesbians. Shanahan stresses the participation of Margaret Anderson, Leblanc's partner, in the creation of this scene, as well as the importance of the scene in constructing a lesbian spectatorial position for the film.

**Ilona Virtanen, *Fucking Amâl* –
A lesbian film for all tastes**

Fucking Amâl (Sweden 1998) tells the story of two teenaged girls who fall in love and end up coming out to their friends and family. The lesbian theme of the film was, however, downplayed by the film's director and screenwriter Lukas Moodyson as well as the Finnish critics, who stressed that *Fucking Amâl* was centrally about universal feelings: love and being different from others. The article considers how the film itself enables these views.

The lesbian relationship is shown to be a natural part of reality and similar to heterosexual relationships through conventions of realistic storytelling. Lesbian love becomes a satisfying way of resolving the narrative tensions in *Fucking Amâl*. Furthermore, it is constructed as normal in comparison to physical disability, which is depicted as visible difference. Lesbian and heterosexual love are shown as identical feelings, but disability remains a difference that one cannot overcome.

According to Jackie Stacey and Lynne Pearce, romantic love can be seen as a narrative discourse that is constantly rewritten in fiction and everyday life. Within the "clas-

sical" narrative, romance is a quest for heterosexual love, and the goal is to see love conquer all obstacles. *Fucking Amâl* applies these conventions to lesbian romance and thus parallels lesbian and heterosexual love. The lesbian relationship actually affirms the narrative of romantic love: in comparison to the unsatisfying heterosexual relationships of the film, all obstacles can be overcome through lesbian love.

In some feminist theories the category of "lesbian" has been seen as a utopian and automatically subversive position outside language, representation or norms of society. *Fucking Amâl* leaves open the consequences of taking on a lesbian identity, and thus lesbianism can be used as a utopian space in which all the problems can be resolved. Although lesbianism is constructed as an "unknown space" where anything is possible, it is still recognisable due to its similarity to heterosexuality. It is not surprising, then, that critics described *Fucking Amâl* as a film about universal feelings, rather than young lesbians.

**Lasse Kekki: Queer Identity,
Performativity, and Tony
Kushner's Play *Angels in America***

Tony Kushner's (1956-) apocalyptic play *Angels in America I-II* (1991, 1992) has been a great success both in America and in Europe. The play tells about AIDS and gay men.

During the 1980s the field of gay studies was dominated by an endless quarrel of constructionism versus essentialism. For a long time the question was whether homosexuality is something one is born with or something one has to build or construct. Since the beginning of the 1990s queer theory has been trying to go beyond this quarrel. Queer theory is both a political movement and an academic field of inquiry the best-known representatives of which are Judith Butler and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick. Queer theory questions such so called natural oppositions as that between gay and straight.

Angels in America calls into question the idea of a unitary and coherent gay identity. All the main characters in the play are gay, but they are all different. There is a Black gay man (Belize), a conservative closet case (Roy Cohn), a Jewish gay (Louis), a Mormon gay (Joe) and a gay man of Puritan descent (Prior) who becomes the prophet of the play. The main idea is that there is no true gay identity and that any gay identity is something that is constantly changing. This identity is rather a queer identity maintained by reiteration.