'The Lesbian Phallus': Deconstruction, Subversion ... and Rape?

by

KelleyAnne Malinen

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts

at

Dalhousie University
Halifax, Nova Scotia
July 2007

Your file Votre référence
ISBN: 978-0-494-31598-9
Our file Notre référence
ISBN: 978-0-494-31598-9

DALHOUSIE UNIVERSITY

To comply with the Canadian Privacy Act the National Library of Canada has requested that the following pages be removed from this copy of the thesis:

Preliminary Pages
- Examiners Signature Page (pii)
- Dalhousie Library Copyright Agreement (piii)

Appendices
- Copyright Releases (if applicable)

Table of Contents

Abstract

This thesis addresses the question 'What can lesbian-on-lesbian rape tell us about gender deconstruction and subversion as anti-rape strategies?' More specifically, I ask whether these strategies can recognize, problematize and/or offer solutions for such violence. Lesbian-on-lesbian rape is a phenomenon which has only recently been uncovered and it has proven problematically unintelligible through the frames we customarily apply to sexual violence. Certain investigators of violence in the lesbian context have turned to thinkers like Marcus and Butler who apply deconstruction to violence and gender. As a practice which challenges our understandings and reveals their exclusions, we might reasonably expect deconstruction to provide a useful resource for updating both the lenses through which we see sexual violence and the anti-rape strategies which follow. With regards to the first appeal, I am not disappointed. Butler's 1993 article 'The Lesbian Phallus', for example, helps us to see lesbian-on-lesbian rape as a possibility. However, with regards to the second appeal, we come up against some difficulties. Butler and Marcus are working to overturn the gender regime which frames dominant feminist analyses of rape. They wish not only to show us that women's lives need not be fully circumscribed by their normative positions, but also to encourage women's subversive access to stereotypically male traits or tools. It is upon these that lesbian-on-lesbian rape relies. Thus, such tools merit some suspicion, even in women's hands. We will want to think carefully about which tools we will take up, when and how to use them. The capacity for such critical assessment is not indigenous to deconstructive and subversive strategies. Communicative ethics, particularly as advanced by Benhabib, may prove helpful in this area.

Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge the assistance I have received from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. I also thank my committee members Dr. Emma Whelan and Dr. Sue Campbell as well as Dr. Pauline Gardiner Barber for their advice and encouragement. Most of all I thank Dany for her unfailing support.

Chapter 1: Introduction

As Gatens (2000) puts it, "The threat of rape is often taken to be the paradigm expression of the power of a man to command a woman to obey, that is, to command the recognition of his attempt to impose his possible world on her as the *only* world, the real, inevitable world" (p. 71). A number of feminists have suggested we deconstruct and/or subvert gender categories to demonstrate that rape is *not* inevitable; to show that there are other possible worlds and to encourage their enactment.

In one other possible world, "Lucy's" (in Girshick, 2002, p. 79) girlfriend ties her to the bed and rapes her with a broom handle. Clearly, from an anti-rape perspective, not all other possible worlds are equal. Lesbian-on-lesbian rape is one other possible world which certainly doesn't advance our anti-rape politics. It does, however, need our attention. "Roxanne" recalls confronting her perpetrator: "when I said to her, 'You raped me,' she just laughed at me. She said, 'That's impossible'" (in Girschick, 2002 p. 100). Many rape laws and even feminist theories apparently concur that Roxanne's experience could never really have taken place. And so women like "Lucy" and "Roxanne" are silenced.

This thesis addresses the question "what can lesbian-on-lesbian rape tell us about gender deconstruction and subversion as anti-rape strategies?" Focusing particularly on Butler's (1993) 'Lesbian Phallus' and Marcus' (1992) 'Theory and Politics of Rape Prevention', I ask whether these strategies can recognize, problematize and/or offer solutions for such violence. The current project was inspired by the observation that while deconstruction has the promising capacity to bring "Lucy's" world into view, deconstructive theories have a vexing tendency implicitly to recommend such assaults.

Let me tread cautiously: surely no such implication is intended by the authors I will be engaging with. But the suggestion is nonetheless worrisome.

Ristock (2002), for example, sees an opening for recognition of intimate lesbian violence in Marcus' efforts to "deconstruct limiting categories and discourses" (p. 21). Indeed, Marcus' efforts are very useful to the extent that she exposes the possibility of women's violence. But more than that, in a prescription which has achieved remarkable popularity, this article promotes women's violence as a mode of rape prevention. Surely the prescription hasn't been informed by lesbian-on-lesbian rape, for in light of this phenomenon, women's capacity for violence allows more than the disarmament of potential assailants which Marcus seems primarily to envision. In a permutation of the rape script she seems not to have foreseen, it also enables women to perpetrate sexual assault.

I will be making two assumptions here. Firstly, acknowledgment of the female rapist presupposes a deconstructive fissure in the gender dichotomy. We might define deconstruction, following Norris, as "a matter of taking a repressed or subjugated theme . . . , pursuing its various textual ramifications and showing how these subvert the very order that strives to hold them in check" (in Handler, 1992, p. 699). Like the women's violence to which Marcus appeals, lesbian-on-lesbian rape is deconstructive; it is marginalized by and has the potential to challenge common discourses on gender and sexual violence.

Secondly, lesbian-on-lesbian rape is an instance of subversive performativity as Butler formulates the notion. This term describes the way in which we can take up conventions and use them – or "resignify" them – in surprising ways which may challenge the order from which they are drawn. Insofar as under the current gender order

rape is understood to be "the paradigm expression of the power of a man" (Gatens, 2000, p. 71), the lesbian rapist takes up convention and dramatically twists it. Of course, the victim in the scene is a woman, as we have learned to expect. In this sense, stories of women who rape men are even more radically subversive. They do happen (Sternac, Sheridan and Dunn, 1996; Hickson, Davies, Hunt, Weatherburn, McManus, F.R.C.O.G. and Coxon, 1994, p. 286; Rumney, 2001). Nonetheless, lesbian-on-lesbian rape is a significant subversion which is very much true to Butler's thinking. Insofar as stereotypically masculine and feminine positions play out between two women who are both in some sense positioned contrary to heterosexual norms, this situation is analogous to Butler's thinking on butch/femme relations. This does *not* mean that lesbian rapists are butch or that butches are rapists.

> Within lesbian contexts, the "identification" with masculinity that appears as butch identity is not a simple assimilation of lesbianism back into the terms of heterosexuality. As one lesbian femme explained, she likes her boys to be girls, meaning that "being a girl" contextualizes and resignifies "masculinity" in a butch identity. As a result, that masculinity, if that it can be called, is always brought into relief against a culturally intelligible "female body." ... [T]he object ... of lesbian-femme desire is neither some decontextualized female body nor a discrete yet superimposed masculine identity, but the destabilization of both terms as they come into erotic interplay (Butler, 1999, p. 156).

Here, we are not talking about butch/femme roles, but perpetrator/victim roles; we are not talking about sexual attraction and pleasure but about fear and pain. The woman who incites these feelings takes us by surprise, as does the one who experiences these feelings to the extent that she suffers at the hands of a non-paradigmatic perpetrator. Like butch/femme, lesbian-on-lesbian rape cannot simply be assimilated to man-on-woman rape. Similarly, we are compelled to question what we are taught about women and the ways in which women have been opposed to men: passive/active; victim/perpetrator; object/subject.

Perhaps because rape is so predominantly understood as an expression of male power, researchers working on violence in the lesbian context have frequently failed to look for evidence of such assaults. Given this deficiency, Ristock (2002, p. 52) is particularly struck by the number of lesbians who report that their partners have assaulted them in this way. Statistical investigations of lesbian-on-lesbian rape are few and the samples they draw on are far from representative. Nonetheless, the data and testimony to be presented in the coming chapter more than suffice to demonstrate beyond a doubt that lesbian-on-lesbian rape occurs.

Chapter Two will also discuss the formidable barriers to recognition and assistance faced by survivors of this form of violence. For example, the single victim of lesbian-to-lesbian sexual assault who attempted to lay charges in Ristock's (2002, pp. 100-1) study was dismissed by the police because the perpetrator was a woman. Our legal and theoretical frameworks, along with our common sense, tend to tell us that rape is a crime committed by men. As such, lesbian-on-lesbian rape tends to fall through the conceptual cracks. I hope to help stop those gaps so that lesbian-on-lesbian rape

prevention and response efforts can gain conceptual ground on which to move forward. Butler's (1993) 'Lesbian Phallus', to be addressed in Chapter Three, will help to achieve that aim by illuminating manifold possibilities for gender and bodily power through a critique of Freudian and Lacanian understandings of the 'Phallus'.

The term 'Phallus' is traditionally defined as "the image or representation of the penis as a symbol of power" (phallus, 1995, *The Penguin Dictionary of Psychology*). Although such a definition has been particularly contested by certain Lacanian thinkers, I will maintain that in the end, it holds even for Lacan's ideas. Much psychoanalysis has advanced the association of the male sex organ with "potency, virility, manliness, and strength and power generally" (Rycroft in Bendle, 2006, p. 79). I will explore Freudian and Lacanian conceptions of the Phallus, each of which draw on and contribute to views of women as passive sexual objects; as male property. In bolstering such views, these conceptualizations normalize man-on-woman rape. They also encourage blindness to the possibility of woman-on-woman rape. How could a passive sexual object perform such violence?

Freudian and Lacanian views are not removed from the social problems we may face on any given day. While, of course, most people don't operate from a fully Freudian or Lacanian perspective, we do attribute a particular power, sexual and otherwise, to penises and the men they hang from. Rape as an expression of a man's real, inevitable power to command a woman's world makes sense to us, and we are prone to behave in accordance with these views (McCaughey and King, 1995, p. 377). Armed with manhood (euphemistically or otherwise), men may see rape as a possible way to gain or affirm power. Most men perish the thought, not because they see themselves as lacking the physical capacity to violate a woman, but because they are decent people.

Still, American National Violence Against Women Survey statistics for the year 1995-1996 found that eighteen percent of women had been subject to rape or attempted rape over their lifetimes (Carlson, 2005, p. 120). Haunted by the spectre of such violence, many women experience at times a certain level of paralysis, afraid, say, to be seen alone at night. Essentially, this is the circumstance which Marcus quite reasonably wishes to reorganize. It is not, however, a universal experience. As we will see in Chapter Six, at least one survivor of lesbian-on-lesbian rape fears being alone with women far more than being alone with men (Marlowe, 1999, p. 398). But Marcus does take aim at an aspect of our society which I, like many other women, generally experience as intractable. To the extent that attribution of phallic power to the penis articulates with this circumstance, intervention on the level of the phallus might be enormously helpful.

Without speaking directly to rape, 'The Lesbian Phallus' provides such an intervention. In developing this piece, Butler (1993) locates contradictions in Freudian and Lacanian formulations alike. In each case, the definitive attribution of phallic power to the penis is reinterpreted as symptomatic of a desire to retain phallic control. It should be noted from the start that 'The Lesbian Phallus' is not really the Phallus at all – at least not in the Freudian or Lacanian sense. It is nothing like the definition offered above. It largely defies definition, although certain qualities can be listed: it provides possibilities for imagining our bodies which may manifest in physical interactions; it has power; it is unpredictable; it is displaced from "traditional masculinist contexts" (Butler, 1993, p. 89). In challenging the connection of the phallus to the penis and to the male body, it takes on the gender dichotomies (passive/active; object/subject) which that version of the phallus was supposed to enforce.

Butler (1993) argues that the phallus, "symbolized by . . . an array of [body parts or] purposefully instrumentalized body-like things" (p. 88), can just as legitimately be weilded by lesbians. Hoping that "new sites of erotogenetic pleasure" might replace Freudian and Lacanian dichotomies, Butler "promotes" (p. 91) her artifice. Given that lesbians (and others) often deploy phallic body parts and objects for mutually pleasurable purposes, I am convinced of and applaud that potential. But does it exhaust the possibilities? If it is not male anatomy, but rather the phallic power associated with it which makes rape possible, what is to stop 'The Lesbian Phallus' – in any of its multiple, unpredictable forms – from becoming a tool for this sort of assault? Butler's article begins with a discussion of the traditional phallus which inhibits apprehension of lesbian-on-lesbian rape and deconstructs that symbol with a set of morphologies which can perform that previously hidden violence.

To a great extent, this thesis is an effort to provide 'The Lesbian Phallus' with some moral direction which is lacking, not because it is lesbian, but because as it stands we do not know that Butler's phallus will be less corrupt than Lacan's. To help with this, I enlist Jessica Benjamin (2005; 1980; 1990) in particular. Benjamin, a psychoanalyst herself, also challenges the misogyny of traditional psychoanalytic accounts. Her work tends to paint a rather monolithic and heterosexist picture of intimate relationships, but it proves enormously useful nonetheless; for she discusses not only the attribution of phallic power to men, but the *kind* of interaction which consolidates phallic power and the *kind* of interaction which escapes this sort of violence. Whether or not the phallus is lesbian, the framework can be applied.

As you can see, a trend is emerging. I want to welcome the acknowledgment that the traditional gender paradigm does not fully describe our world so that women will not

be defined as inherently rapeable and so that we can see lesbian-on-lesbian sexual violence. On the other hand, it becomes important to ask whether 'The Lesbian Phallus' might be used to effect violence and what women's violence might do. The latter question will be further explored through the efforts of Marcus (1992) and McCaughey and King (1995) in Chapter Four.

It is the deconstructionist proclivity for welcoming all that is novel with open arms – indeed for pursuing what has been seen as impossible – that seems vexingly to promote, or at least not to interdict, lesbian-to-lesbian rape. Once again, surely no such promotion is intended. But it is not at all clear that deconstruction can distinguish the problematic nature of subversions like lesbian-on-lesbian rape from the sort of delightful challenge to gender assumptions posed by, say, a drag show. Fraser puts the problem thus:

> "Critique" is logically connected to the concepts of warrant and justification, so its positive connotations are rooted in a claim to validity. This is not the case, however, with "resignification." Since Butler's term carries no implication of validity or warrant, its positive connotations are puzzling. Why is resignification good? Can't there be bad (oppressive, reactionary) resignifications? In opting for the epistemically neutral "resignification," as opposed to the epistemically positive "critique," Butler seems to valorize change for its own sake and thereby disempower feminist judgment (1995, pp. 67-8).

Chapter Five addresses these issues, asking if the strategies we've been discussing can provide the anti-rape norms we require. Some thinkers have their doubts. As Fraser (1995) would have it, a poststructuralist framework is "structurally incapable of providing satisfactory answers to the normative questions it unfailingly solicits" (p. 95). Butler (2003) will finally recognize these difficulties, but her relationship to normative critique will remain a highly ambivalent one, unsurprisingly given some of her prominent assumptions.

For instance, Butler has suggested that performative subversion simultaneously undermines the performer's intent and heterosexual ideals. A performance, she has argued, is subversive insofar as we cannot predict its effects (Lloyd, 1999, pp. 203-206). 'The Lesbian Phallus', then, may be immune to feminist direction. How are we to pursue any kind of norm if the subject can neither assess nor direct her actions? Never mind what lesbian-on-lesbian rape can tell us about gender deconstruction and subversion as anti-rape strategies; are these processes compatible with strategy at all?

This question has had a role to play in an ongoing debate between Butler and Benhabib. As a discourse ethicist, Benhabib (1992; 1994) believes that mutual, uncoerced and, most importantly, ethical agreements about what we should do in the world can be approached through respectful argument in an egalitarian situation. Certain thinkers (Anderson, 1992; McNay, 1992; Fraser, 1995) have suggested that discourse ethics might furnish norms for deconstruction. Fraser (1995, p. 69), for example, seeks a compromise which takes into account Butler's insistence on the constructedness of the subject and Benhabib's critical orientation. For reasons which will be explored in the pages to come, Butler (1995) and Benhabib (1995) stubbornly resist their would-be matchmaker. Over their objections, I will attempt to bring the normative insights of

communicative ethics and the broadening capacities of deconstruction together to recognize, problematize and offer solutions for lesbian-on-lesbian rape.

What I am looking for is a feminist strategy which can manage all of the above. Importantly, I am not trying to debunk feminism with the insight that women are capable of the same kinds of violence which have generally been associated with men. The point must be specified, given that the existence of women's violence has been used in efforts to discredit the feminist movement (Ristock, 2002, p. 5). In Chapter Six, it will be my position that although analyses which take a uniform view of rape as a male offence clearly need to be opened up, we would be remiss in forgetting the ways in which rape continues to be interwoven with the social positioning of women relative to men.

The seventh and final chapter of this work draws together some theoretical conclusions and also offers what I suppose are some more practical suggestions for the future. For example, legal and educational interventions could help us to recognize, problematize and address lesbian-on-lesbian rape outside of the academy, where we frequently find ourselves talking "in philosophical generalities rather than [with] particular populations that might benefit" (Scholsberg, 1995, p. 292). It is my hope that the theoretical conclusions drawn here might have effects beyond the academy, in a broad range of communities, institutions and services from policing agencies to rape response hotlines.

Why does all of this matter? Grace Giorgio's (2002) article on intimate lesbian violence contains the following journal excerpt: "I call the hotline. She just raped me . . . She left, zipping up her zipper and telling me I liked it and to be good. A woman answers the phone. I tell her my story. She balks. She tells me I'm taking up the hotline's precious time" (p. 1239). Situated beyond the pale, beyond our understandings of gender

and beyond what feminist theory is constituted to deal with, in the margins of the margins, Giorgio was left isolated, unrecognized and unaided. There are many such stories, some of which have surely never been heard. The question I am beginning to ask is: what we are going to do about that?

Chapter 2: In the Margins of the Margins

> I was asleep and was awakened by my wife, who was rubbing my vaginal area with her hand in my underwear. . . I grabbed her hand to stop her. She grabbed my hand back and pushed it away. She forced herself on top of me and proceeded to penetrate me with so much force that she caused bleeding and cuts with her wedding ring that she was wearing ('Ariel' in Girshick, 2002, p. 73).

In the closing paragraph of a section entitled 'Understanding Rape', Burgess-Jackson (1999) remarks that "one thing," at least, "is clear." Namely, rape law "has not ceased, and in all likelihood will not cease, to evolve. Nor, arguably, should it, for the law of rape, like any body of law – perhaps *more* than other bodies of law – reflects changing social attitudes and conditions, normative as well as material" (p. 24, original emphasis). This chapter creates a statistical and qualitative picture of lesbian-on-lesbian rape. It also discusses my potentially controversial choice to conceptualize the violence being discussed as "rape" in the first place. Finally, it considers legal and other social barriers to the recognition of this form of assault. I suggest that if we are to deal effectively with lesbian-on-lesbian rape, we must work on the conceptual frontiers of sexual violence.

Parentheses

Before going any further, I would like to make two remarks. Firstly, my focus on lesbians should in no way be taken as an indication that this is the only population of women known to commit rape. Heterosexual women, for example, have also been known to commit such offences not only against minors (Elliot, 1994; Vandiver and Walker, 2002) and men (Sternac, Sheridan and Dunn, 1996; Hickson, Davies, Hunt, Weatherburn, McManus, F.R.C.O.G. and Coxon, 1994, p. 286; Rumney, 2001, p. 894-5) but also occasionally against other women (Girshick, 2002, p. 82).

Secondly, my frequent posing of 'sexual violence' as a problem in the pages that follow is not meant in any way as a judgment against the practice of sadomasochism. Of course, rape *can* occur in S/M contexts. Girshick (2002, p. 97), for instance, relates a story of a woman who set out to pose as a "victim" in a rape scene created with her partner. During this scene, the woman became uncomfortable and used her "safe word" to halt the game. Her partner failed to respect the rules which had been set forth and went ahead with what was now quite truly a rape. Yet another informant, who had no interest in practicing S/M, related a tale of having been taken hostage, repeatedly raped and left with broken bones by a lesbian business contact who was managing some S/M websites for her.

Importantly, the vast majority of those who identify as S/M practitioners would be appalled by such a story, let alone the suggestion that it has anything to do with their own sexual interests. While Langdridge and Butt (2004) note that certain "dissident" S/M communities disregard or explicitly reject principles of "'safe, sane and consensual' play," for the majority of S/M communities these practices are "*the* key condition for membership" (p. 42, original emphasis). In fact, these thinkers argue that there is

generally greater emphasis placed on "equality, mutual respect and understanding of the other" in sadomasochistic than in "vanilla" sex. They suggest that in the former practice more than the latter, players realize that communication is essential (2004, p. 48). Indeed, one lesbian-on-lesbian rape victim with whom Girshick (2002) spoke found S/M sex to be "the best part of her otherwise abusive relationship" (p. 97). In sum, when I use the terms rape or sexual violence here, I am speaking of activity which is unwanted and non-consensual and not of violence which is consented to and mutually pleasurable.

Statistics and Testimony

It is questionable whether reliable statistics for any form of rape exist. Crime reports are notoriously unreliable, and more so for rape than any other violent crime. In the United States, there may be 3.5 unreported rapes for every reported one (Stewart, Dobbin and Gatowski, 1996 p. 164). Measures which do not rely on victims' willingness to lay charges, such as the American National Violence Against Women Survey, are believed by many to provide a more accurate picture of rape victimization than law enforcement agencies can. This instrument suggests that as of the year 1995-1996, eighteen percent of women had been subject to rape or attempted rape over the course of their lifetimes (Carlson, 2005, p.120).

Researchers investigating any form of woman abuse face barriers including victim distrust of the legal system, embarrassment and reluctance to name perpetrators with whom victims may have close relationships. These issues are often more pronounced when the victims concerned are women assaulted by other women. These victims may fear homophobia or disbelief on the part of legal authorities, may feel shame not only about their abuse histories but also about their sexual orientations, and may wish to protect the marginalized communities to which they and their perpetrators belong.

Further, given the need to access the lesbian population through trusted institutions or service providers, research on violence between lesbians is unfailingly non-random.

Studies on abuse are notoriously inconsistent in their operationalizations of violence, making comparisons a challenge. Surveys of intimate lesbian abuse are no exception. Thus, largely depending on how research terms are defined, violence appears to occur in anywhere from 17 to 52 percent of lesbian relationships (Ristock, 2002, p. 10).

Frequently, studies looking at sexual offences in the lesbian context offer no fixed distinction between sexual abuse and forced sex, instead allowing participants to distinguish between the two terms. Girshick (2002) finds that when asked to define rape, victims of lesbian-on-lesbian sexual assault offer definitions ranging from "forcibly penetrating another's body with a body part or object against their will" to "any sexual act against my will" (p. 106). The former definition arguably recalls the penis as a symbol of power, if only because we think of penises doing such things. The open-endedness of the latter definition, on the other hand, is consistent with the myriad possibilities presented in 'The Lesbian Phallus,' as will become more vivid in the following chapter. Out of respect for such myriad possibilities, it makes sense for researchers of lesbian-to-lesbian violence to avoid imposing definitions; the silencing exclusions which precede us have given us good reason to be suspicious of fixed delineations. But such methods can make it impossible to know exactly what is being discussed.

Ristock is the exception here. In a 2002 report, which also supplies the only Canadian-based research I have located, Ristock (2002, p. 53) reveals that of 102 lesbians who reported involvement in relational violence, twenty had experienced rape and three had experienced attempted rape. Rape was here defined as forced and unwanted vaginal, anal or oral penetration of the victim with an object, weapon, hand or finger. The

difficulty with Ristock's definition is its inattention to the possibility of non-penetrative rape, a category which is important given that lesbians may experience forced vagina to vagina contact or non-penetrative cunnilingus, to offer two examples, as acute sexual assault.

Despite the definitional difficulties surrounding this and other forms of sexual violence, some data is available. A pioneer of research on intimate lesbian violence, Claire Renzetti has generated research which may be more commonly cited than that of any other researcher in the field. In a 1988 article, Renzetti (1988, p. 390) reported that 48% of 100 self-identified victims of lesbian-on-lesbian abuse had experienced incidents of forced sex, four involving vaginal insertion of a gun or knife. A 1989 study by Waterman, Dawson and Bologna reported that of 36 lesbian students and activists recruited to take part in a study on conflict resolution, 30.6% reported being victims of forced sex in their current or most recent relationships, and 8.3% indicated they had forced sex on their partners. Because the majority of reported victims did not also identify as victims of violence, it appears that the sort of force in question was most often psychological in nature (1989, pp. 119-123).

In her research on abuse in lesbian and gay relationships, Turrell (1999, p. 41) analyzed surveys completed by 227 men, 265 women and 7 people identifying as transgendered. Respondents were informed prior to participation that issues of power and control would be considered, but the issue of abuse was not brought up. Twelve percent of respondents reported same-sex sexual abuse with 9% reporting incidents of forced sex.

Information about lesbian-on-lesbian rape outside of intimate relationships is even more difficult to come by. Writing under a pseudonym, Marlowe recalls being raped by a woman she had just met and driven home at the urging of some mutual friends:

> I went into her house to make the phone call. She came up behind me, as though we were lovers and knew each other quite well. The move was so sudden; I didn't have time to push her away. She forced me down on a bed, pulled aside my clothes, forced her fingers into my vagina and held me down until she came by rubbing herself against me. As soon as I felt her relax her grip, I pushed her aside, jumped up and ran (1999, p. 399).

Girshick's (2002) work is exceptional in that it offers numerous reports of woman-to-woman sexual violence both inside and outside intimate relationships. The resulting text is a singularly rich source of information for this effort. Her research covers the testimony of seventy survivors who discuss ninety-one assaults inflicted by ninety-five perpetrators. Forty-nine assaults took place in domestic situations, forty-two outside of such circumstances. Respondents took part in both surveys and interviews.

Thirteen percent of respondents shared stories of "S/M sex gone awry" (2002, p. 109). Four percent related histories of sexual harassment, one at the hands of a stranger, another by a classmate and a third by a coworker. Another four percent recalled having been taken advantage of or assaulted sexually as minors. Ten percent of participants were violated by people who were in positions of authority such as therapists, teachers, and a doctor, while twenty-seven percent of perpetrators were dates or acquaintances (2002, pp. 83-96). Girshick's text also offers some testimony about sexual violence at the hands of ex-partners who become stalkers. 'Brandie' took out a restraining order against her ex-partner after the following occurred:

> She showed up at my home and broke through the glass of the back door to gain entry. Before I could finish a phone call for help, she ripped the phone from the wall and bound me with it. She repeated over and over that she loved me and that no one else could have me. She then removed my shorts and panties and forced herself on me. Even with all of my kicking she was able to "gain entry."... She was able to do this again a few weeks later but was waiting inside on the second occasion (in Girshick, 2002, p. 71).

Given the nascent and challenging character of this field of research, efforts to explain why lesbian-on-lesbian rape occurs remain speculative. Many researchers have suggested that perpetrators of intimate lesbian violence are attempting to access or affirm power and control (Ristock, 2002, p. 72; Lockhart, White, Causby and Isaac, 1994, p. 471; Renzetti, 1988; McClennen, Summers and Daley, 2002, p. 278). Of course, the category of lesbian-on-lesbian rape implies fewer forms of violence and need not take place between intimates. However, investigations of man-on-woman rape tend to advance similar explanations (Shafer and Frye, 1977, p. 334; Hesford, 1999; Herberle, 1996). For example, Groth, Burgess and Holstrom (1977) find that rape is "a pattern of sexual behavior that is concerned much more with status, aggression, control, and dominance than with sensual pleasure or satisfaction" (p. 1240). The view of rape as an instrument for power and control has also been adopted in investigations of man-on-man rape (Hickson *et al.*, 1994, p. 282).

As Girshick (2002, p. 166) recognizes, data is currently insufficient to support or disprove the transferability of this explanation to lesbian-on-lesbian rape. Yet she finds that this phenomenon does appear to be one of "power and control exercised by perpetrators." 'Evon', for example, tells her story in this way:

> She would tie me up and force her fingers inside of me, and sometimes she would leave me there. She would forcibly attack me, physically hurting me and at the same time forcing herself inside of me ... Many times after a physical assault from her she would end it with sexual violations ... to show that she was always in control (in Girshick, 2002, p. 66).

Conceptual Frontiers

Here, I discuss my decision to use the term 'rape' rather than 'sexual assault' – a decision which has its benefits, but also involves some risks. According to Young and Maguire's (2003) findings, the terminology which women prefer to apply to their experiences of sexual violence is variable; some prefer the term "rape", others the term "sexual assault", and still others prefer to simply describe their experiences without labeling them. Thus, these thinkers promote an approach which allows survivors to "generate their own terminology to self-define their lived experiences" (2003, p. 50). I appreciate the importance of such practices. I also appreciate the risk that victims who do not identify with the term I have chosen may see themselves as excluded from my analysis, although I hope that even those who identify as survivors of sexual assault, for

example, might see something of their experience reflected and validated. Here, I needed to choose which terms I would make prominent for my investigation.

Various definitions have been applied to the term "rape" from "any form of sexual contact committed against an individual's will" to "vaginal penetration with the penis ... without the individual's consent" (Young and Maguire, 2003, p. 41). The latter definition is clearly heterosexist and is far too limited for our purposes. To the extent that people associate with this definition, misunderstanding might ensue. But I hope that the various experiences recounted here will prevent the reduction of 'rape' to heterosexual penetration or even penetration more generally. Some might argue that "any form of sexual contact committed against an individual's will" would more appropriately be referred to as "sexual assault." The term "sexual assault" has been promoted by some feminists in an effort to make the violent nature of the crime explicit while overcoming the exclusive quality of the second, heterosexist definition of 'rape' I offered.

In 1983, partially in response to feminist voices, Canadian rape reform legislation replaced the offences of indecent assault and rape with "sexual assault; sexual assault with a weapon, threats to a third party or causing bodily harm; and aggravated sexual assault" (Roberts, Grossman and Gebotys, 1996, p. 134). The aims of this legislation were threefold. Firstly, it was hoped that the term "sexual assault" would evade some of the stigma attached to the term "rape", encouraging higher rates of reporting. Secondly, the word "assault" was thought to emphasize aggressive over sexual aspects of this crime. Thirdly, the change was meant as a vehicle for informing the public about certain substantive legal changes. These included the removal of spousal exemptions, the fact that rape could now be legally recognized in the absence of a weapon or lasting injury,

the move to gender neutrality, and the extension of legislation to include assaults other than forced intercourse. These are all important advancements.

Roberts, Grossman and Gebotys (1996) decided to look into how effective rape reform initiatives had been in each of these three areas. They began with extensive survey research. This revealed that thirteen years after the initiative was implemented only sixteen percent of respondents were aware that what had once been legally referred to as rape was now legally referred to as sexual assault. Rather, when presented with the term "sexual assault" participants imagined some third class of offence, less severe than rape and more severe than indecent assault. This, however, does not mean that respondents retained antiquated understandings of who might be charged with the crime or what it might comprise. The substantive changes of the law were quite widely recognized. Seventy-seven percent of the sample realized that both sexes could be charged with the offence; eighty-three percent were aware that a man can be charged with raping his spouse; eighty-four percent knew that neither proof of lasting injury nor of the use of a weapon was required to bring charges; and seventy-six percent realized that this crime was not limited to forced sexual intercourse. In other words, while popular Canadian understandings of the forms acute sexual violence might take seem to have evolved in recent years, this violence is still commonly referred to and thought of as rape. Of course, although these findings suggest the heterosexist connotations of the term "rape" have been tempered on Canadian soil, there will be evidence below that heterosexist views continue to thwart survivors of lesbian-to-lesbian rape who reach for help both in Canada and elsewhere. This is one of the reasons why the present effort matters.

The second part of the research carried out by Roberts and colleagues was a laboratory experiment in which participants responded to questions regarding identical scenarios of sexual violence variously labeled as indecent assault, sexual assault, or rape. No statistically significant difference was observed in the levels of aggression or stigma participants associated with the crimes based on the various labels attributed them. However, there were statistically significant differences in the areas of preferred and expected punishments. Specifically, preferred punishments for the crimes in question became increasingly severe when scenarios were described as indecent assault, sexual assault and rape, respectively. While respondents expected equally punitive responses to the crime described as sexual or indecent assault, they expected a more punitive response to the same crime described as a rape.

Such findings appear consistent with those of Noland, Daley, Drolet, Fetro, McCormack Brown, Hassell & McDermott (2004, p. 523). These researchers find that among men and women alike, the terms "rape" and "date rape" elicit more negative semantic responses than does the term sexual assault. In sum, to use the term "sexual assault" as opposed to the term "rape" may be to minimize the crimes described here, leaving them somewhere below "rape" on an imagined scale of offence severity. This is the first reason for my decision.

While Young and Maguire (2003, p. 41) note that the risk of minimization is very real when we use the term "sexual assault," they see this issue as a "double edged sword." Because "rape" is for many a more emotionally loaded term than "sexual assault", the latter term may lead to greater ease in discussing experiences of sexual violence. This is yet another risk I have incurred. Yet for many, the term "rape" seems to be quite an empowering one, which is the second reason for my decision.

One of Girshick's (2002) most fascinating contributions is her investigation of the terms according to which participants remember defining – or not defining – their assaults over time. Over one third of victims initially "could not access words to describe their experience[s]," using vague descriptors like "the stuff she makes me do" (p. 110). Eventually, thirty-nine percent of participants came to use the term "rape."

The importance of such developments should not be underestimated. Some research has suggested that when a woman applies the label "rape" to her experience, she attributes blame to her perpetrator and ceases blaming herself (Botta and Pingree, 1997, p. 209). 'Cecile' began by using the term 'miscommunication', thus sharing the blame for her assault with the woman who perpetrated it. At the time, like the community she belonged to, she was unwilling or unable to concede that a woman might commit such violence. She explains: "Later, using 'stronger' language about it helped me understand, stop blaming myself, and heal" (in Girshick, 2002, p. 109). It has been observed that when a woman is raped in the context of an intimate relationship, coming to call her experience "rape" allows her to feel justified in leaving (Young & Maguire, 2003, p. 41). We might expect such findings to hold for lesbian-on-lesbian rape scenarios. Thus, not only does the word "rape" urge the public to recognize the severity of the crimes we are discussing, it also helps the survivor to take her own experience seriously. It is worth our while, then, to use this term. But before victims of lesbian-on-lesbian rape can use this term confidently and consistently, much work remains to be done.

In their investigation of dominant (heterosexual) rape paradigms, Stewart and colleagues (1996) note that rape victims often assess their experiences according to "culturally dominant definitions" of what counts as a "real rape" or a "real victim" (p. 173), reaching out or remaining silent accordingly. They further find that even survivors

who perceive themselves to have been raped are unlikely to file reports for incidents not adhering to dominant paradigms (also see Pino, 1999, p. 980). Similarly, four of Girschick's (2002, p. 109) participants note that although they considered their experiences rapes from the start, to avoid being met with incredulity they habitually avoided using the term. The concern is not unreasonable. The single victim of sexual assault who attempted to lay charges in Ristock's (2002, pp. 100-1) Canadian study was dismissed by the police because the perpetrator was female.

Such barriers are especially pronounced for victims read as more "masculine" than their perpetrators. Importantly, the literature in no way indicates that these women are more likely to rape than those read as "feminine." In looking at intimate lesbian violence more generally, Taylor and Chandler (in Giorgio, 2002) have found that "violence is no more a part of butch/femme relationships than any other" (p. 1243). Disconcertingly, reports do seem to suggest that women read as masculine and also non-white women are less likely to be believed when they are assaulted (Ristock, 2002, p.50; 101; Girshick, 2002, p. 54). Giorgio (2002) remarks that when domestic violence erupts in a lesbian home, "police officers often arrest the victim if they perceive her to be the more masculine and racially marked partner" (p.1243).

This is not to say that gender is absent in incidences of lesbian-on-lesbian rape. Rather, it is often present, not as a predictor of who assaults, but as an element of what and how rape signifies. Perhaps gender is always present in this way, but I am uncertain of that, as we will see shortly. In any case, the act of rape is usually if not always socially gendered male, the experience of rape socially gendered female. Not only do we understand rapists as powerfully masculine and their victims as weak and feminine, but the act of rape tends to inscribe these meanings.

Many feminist investigations of man-on-woman rape have long concluded that rape confirms and congeals the social subordination of women to men. Foa (1977) suggests that in a world where women's voices are not accorded a listening ear, "rape is a case where only the pretence of listening has been stripped away" (p.355). Shafer and Frye (1977) argue that rape functions to remind the violated woman that she is "a being without respect, that she is not a person" (p. 342). This male rapist/female victim scenario is what we might call the 'normative' rape script. In a sense it confirms, in Foa's (1977) words "what we [women] have all been trained to expect" (p. 355). But such are not the only manifestations of rape.

According to Knowles (1999), in prison culture, rape is a hierarchical tool which operates through inscribing femininity, understood as weakness. He suggests that in prison, a man's "weakness both invites and justifies exploitation" (1999, p. 274). Here, "the ultimate humiliation" is to be forced "to assume the role of a woman" (1999, p. 273). As Pino (1999) puts it, there is a cultural "belief that rape is synonymous with the loss of masculinity" (p. 981).

Relatedly, one of Girshick's (2002) informants feels that because she is butch she was particularly degraded when "tied to a tree [by a femme] and raped anally with a dildo" (p. 54). While I do not concur that the pain of rape is necessarily correlated with the "masculinity" of the victim, such comments speak to the continued figuring of gender in non-heterosexual rape scenarios. Stereotypical gendered positions are pronounced as one woman's partner furiously tells her it is her "job" as a "wife to give it up" before dragging her to bed by the arm (Girshick, 2002, p. 72). It is entirely possible that in this incident the woman dragged to the bed is generally read as equally or more masculine than her partner. But the idea of woman in the wifely position of sexual object is

unmistakable. The inscription of such paradigmatically heterosexual ideas retains force, even as the notions in question are decontextualized. Here, subversive gender performance is identifiable. Bear with me, as I explore this concept for a bit.

In Derrida's (1982, p. 317) 'Signature, Event, Context', it is observed that not only can a text be displaced in its entirety, but particular elements can be removed from the body of writing and cited elsewhere. Written marks depend on prior usages to signify and are understood in their relationships to other marks. Thus, signification relies on convention and yet is prone to change from one context to another.

Judith Butler has followed Derrida (1982) in his application of these ideas to the 'performative' – that utterance which purportedly "allows us to do something by means of speech itself" (p. 321). Butler (1993) argues that our genders belong to a regulative regime which we enter at birth with the performative "It's a girl!" or "It's a boy!" These declarations do not reflect nature, but institute its appearance by referencing history. In other words, we can only become girls because girlhood already has cultural meaning. Following the initial declaration of gender, we are compelled to 'cite' – to identify and behave in accordance with – the genders attributed to us. It is these performances which construct us as subjects, rather than our subjectivities which are expressed by our performances (1993, pp. 226-232). For example, in our culture the act of rape is one among a repertoire of possible enactments of manhood, while to be raped is among the normative possibilities for femininity.

But the regulative regime of gender enjoys limited success. This is where subversion comes in. Although prior conventions are all we have at our disposal, these can be used in unexpected ways, possibly instituting new realities and subjectivities in the process. For Butler this is quite promising, a theme which will be carried through in the

chapters to come. The formerly sanctioning term "queer" can be taken up as the basis for resistance (1993, p. 232); drag performers cite gendered conventions read as inappropriate to their bodies (1993, p. 237); the lesbian phallus cites masculine power but appends it to a woman (1993, pp. 87-89). In each case gender conventions are cited, or "reiterated" in unexpected contexts, and so denaturalized. Lesbian-on-lesbian rape, though deeply disturbing in stark contrast to the above examples, also constitutes a subversive performance. The lesbian rapist cites a stereotypically masculine matrix of violence, control, independence and ownership.

If rape often congeals women's normative subjugation to men, it can also be lifted from this normative script and applied to men or by women. In these cases, rape continues to depend on its traditional context in order to signify subordination – to feminize – in a decidedly unconventional milieu. In Girshick's (2002) study, "The most common violations ... were forced finger penetration (often with injuries) and vaginal and anal dildo penetrations" (p. 142). Here, citation of the phallus seems quite evident. But instances of the rape script can become more unconventional yet, instituting forms of subjugation we might never have predicted and leaving us hard pressed to identify the signifying role of gender.

Consider that 'Shelley' remembers being tied up against her will before her partner straddled her face so she couldn't breathe. "The only way she let me breathe," this survivor recalls, "was if I performed oral sex on her" (in Girshick, 2002, p. 73). 'Rhonda' remembers incidents of forced penetration, but also forced "grinding of ... vaginal areas" (2002, p. 74). There are numerous instances in Girshick's text of women forced to penetrate female rapists.

Likely something of gender is still at play. The lesbian rapist still cites a stereotypically phallic matrix of violence, control, independence and ownership, while the victim will still likely feel, according to our unfortunate cultural understandings, weak, diminished, feminized. But not only is this rape unexpectedly performed by a female subject, it is also split from penetration. The raping body part is the body part which we normally envision as rapeable, while the violated body part is forced into a stereotypically masculine position. Our gendered lenses become blurred and perhaps even inapplicable. Thus, we should be prepared for the possibility of rape scenarios in which gender neither predicts victim and perpetrator roles nor signifies in any clear fashion. Our paradigms must evolve in accordance with these possibilities. We simply cannot continue to count, as we currently do, on our gendered assumptions in identifying where a rape has occurred and who requires support from rape-response agencies and legal bodies.

There is of course no absolute and timeless answer to the question of which acts belong to this category of violence. As Chasteen (2001) notes, the historical development of discourse on rape exemplifies that "situations must be convincingly constructed as problematic before they will be publicly recognized as harms" (p.102). Rape laws tend both to reflect and affect "prevailing sentiments" toward this offence (Burgess-Jackson, 1999, p. 15). In this way, the legal status of the victim of lesbian-on-lesbian rape reflects not only her chances of being protected by law enforcement bodies, but also her chances of being heard at all.

While in some places definitions for rape have become quite inclusive, this is not the case everywhere. In the American State of Georgia, for example, rape continues to be legally restricted to instances of "penetration of the female sex organ by the male sex organ" (Girshick, 2002, p. 143). North Carolina has a somewhat broader vision of how

rape can be performed, but retains a male rapist/female victim definition of the offense (2002, p. 142).

In England, a 2000 juridical review titled The Review of Sex Offences was assembled to make recommendations for legal reform. The process ended with an anti-climactic re-affirmation that rape only occurs through penile penetration of the vagina or anus (Rumney, 2001). Already in 1975 Brownmiller recognized that such definitions of rape were heterosexist and outdated. As she put it:

> Sexual assault in our day and age is hardly restricted to forced genital copulation, nor is it exclusively a male on female offence ... the invasion may occur through the mouth or the rectum as well ...Sticks, bottles and even fingers are often substituted for the 'natural' thing. And as men may invade women through other orifices, so, too, they may invade other men (1975, p. 378).

While Brownmiller argued that the legal gravity of rape should not vary with the victim's gender, she did not acknowledge that the perpetrator's gender too might vary. This is one oversight among many for which Rumney (2002) takes The Review of Sex Offences to task: "Despite the fact that the Review found that 'there was evidence that a woman could force a man to penetrate her against his will' it rejected any suggestion that rape should be redefined to recognize this fact" (p. 143). Further, it failed even to discuss the possibility that a woman might rape another woman or a child.

Washington State law is extremely progressive, but still excludes the possibilities of non-penetrative genital-to-genital rape. Here, rape can involve heterosexual penetration as well as

> Any penetration of the vagina or anus however slight, by an object, when committed on one person by another, whether such persons are of the same or opposite sex, except when such penetration is accomplished for medically recognized treatment or diagnostic purposes, and also means any act of sexual contact between persons involving the sex organs of one person and the mouth or anus of another whether such persons are of the same or opposite sex (Girshick 2002, p. 143).

Even where gender-neutral language has been introduced, courts and police officers may fail to intervene as a result of the dominant view that men perpetrate violence while women suffer it or at worst aren't capable of any real damage (Girshick, 2002, p. 44; Ristock, 2002, p. 99; Giorgio, 2002, p. 1242). Further, in sixteen states, "Sodomy, usually defined as cunnilingus, fellatio, analingus, and anal intercourse" (Girshick, 2002, p. 142) remains on the books as an offence. As such, a homosexual attempting to bring a sexual assault charge might well find her or himself charged with a crime against nature.

The news isn't all bad. While Turrell (1999, p. 45) affirms that police, shelters and hotlines are of little help to homosexual victims of domestic violence, she finds that many survivors have positive experiences with legal, medical, religious, and domestic

violence agencies as well as with friends, family and the queer community. Ristock (2002, p. 94) too finds that these last three resources in particular often provide enormous support for lesbians in abusive situations. I feel hopeful that these findings hold when lesbian-on-lesbian rape occurs, in or outside intimate relationships.

Yet we can't always count on our social circles. Lesbian communities too are prone to miss the significance of a sexual assault in their midst. Girshick's participant, 'Cecile' felt profoundly misunderstood when she tried to discuss her rape with members of the lesbian community:

> People had never heard of it and they, they couldn't believe that it really happened, and that's not what rape is, you know, how can a woman rape? Like those kinds of things. And I got a lot of responses about how the dynamics of our relationship just weren't very healthy but there were two of us and how I was playing out my old issues, and maybe we needed to work on communication (2002, pp. 59-60).

Further, Ristock (2002, p. 95) relates cases in which victims' friends have ignored or minimized abuse, or even joined in the abusing. These findings are more consistent with Giorgio's less optimistic observations. As her informant 'Ronna' knows all to well, not every community is willing or able to respond effectively to violence:

> No one was allowed to come over without calling, and I had casts on and my face was all black and blue and I was sitting on the

> couch, which pulled out into a bed, which was right by the front door, and a friend of mine from work who was actually someone [my partner] had known before ... came over. She knocked on the door and Max answered the door, and that Mary was real pushy and so she poked her head in and she looked at me and she said "Oh, my god," and she walked away. And she knew, she knew I was totally beat up and she was totally disgusted ... I knew that she went back and told everyone ... The people, they get so mad at the one going totally through it, so that was after a year, maybe, that, Lana told me that she didn't want to hear about it anymore so I was being quiet (2002, pp. 1241-2).

In light of such possibilities, I hope to see a change in the conceptual paradigms with which legal authorities, shelters and hotlines operate, so that even those lacking efficacious social networks might have somewhere to turn.

While there is no absolute and timeless definition of rape, the definitions we offer have profound effects in the world. Opportunities to be heard and helped cannot arise for victims who are not even recognized. Waterman and colleagues (1989) note that research on forced sex between heterosexuals has created a greater level of awareness "among helping professionals and the public" (p. 118) and a proliferation of response and prevention programs. Further, there is some evidence that when national efforts are focused on a given form of domestic violence, a decrease in that form of violence follows (Waterman et al., 1989, p. 123). The phenomenon of lesbian-on-lesbian rape deserves this sort of attention.

By this time, I am sure the reader is wondering how lesbian-on-lesbian rape will be defined here. In trying to formulate a response to this inevitable question, I found myself continuously imposing problematic exclusions. I realize that for legislators terms must be delineated in some way. Thus, I am thankful not to be a legislator. There are certain activities which I believe should be included in our definition of rape. Certainly forced and unwanted vaginal, anal or penile contact with an object or body part should be included. In this way, perpetrators who penetrate, engulf or force genital to genital contact with victims could be held accountable. As in Washington State, "forced and unwanted contact involving the mouth of one individual and genitals or anus of another" (Girshick, 2002, p. 143) should also be included. The examples of lesbian-to-lesbian rape recounted above and in the chapters to come fit this catalogue. But this is a list of inclusions rather than a foreclosing definition.

Things only get more complex from here. For example, we would probably want to include some instances of non-genital oral penetration on this list. Although this is not a scenario I have encountered in the literature, forced oral penetration with a dildo may also be enormously invasive, uncomfortable and subjugating. Other objects might operate similarly. On the other hand, having one's mouth forcibly penetrated by, say, a candy would be unlikely to have the same effect. But then again, depending on the context, it might. As 'The Lesbian Phallus' will demonstrate, the range of objects and body parts with the capacity to rape may only be limited by the incalculable turns of our imaginations. Thus, I am unwilling and unable to close the issue.

There is likely to be some disagreement about whether certain of the items on my list are feasible inclusions. A rapist who forces her own penetration? Certainly not all of these scenarios sit comfortably with commonsense understandings of our bodies. But

common sense is not a reliable reference here. In fact, it has been a significant roadblock to recognition for victims of lesbian-on-lesbian rape. In medicine, the variable, unpredictable, and subjective character of pain has led clinicians to conclude that "pain is what the patient says it is and exists whenever the patient says it does" (Resnik, Rehm and Minard, 2001, p. 278). In rape response and research settings, a similar maxim – "rape is what the survivor says it is," – is called for.

In the deconstructionist view, each text relies on "an order of subordination" (Derrida, 1982, p. 329); certain terms are included on the condition that others are excluded. If there is the impression that lesbian-on-lesbian rape just "isn't what rape is" this is due to "an order of subordination" in those texts which dictate what counts as rape. When the possibility of lesbian-on-lesbian rape is introduced, these texts face a much needed challenge. Taking this form of violence seriously means being able to seriously reconsider – to deconstruct – our assumptions about which bodies have force and where that force might be carried.

In the coming chapter, I will follow the deconstruction and subversion instantiated by 'The Lesbian Phallus' in an effort to do just that. But the accomplishments of Butler's intervention will prove somewhat ambiguous. For while 'The Lesbian Phallus' is usefully revealing, we will find ourselves wondering what, exactly, is being recommended.

Chapter 3: 'The [Ambiguous] Lesbian Phallus'

> In the violent landscape inhabited by primitive woman and man, some woman somewhere had a prescient vision of her right to her own physical integrity, and in my mind's eye I can picture her fighting like hell to preserve it .... Fleet of foot and spirited, she would have kicked, bitten, pushed and run, *but she could not retaliate in kind* (Brownmiller, 1975, p. 14, original emphasis).

On the first page of *Against Our Will,* Brownmiller (1975) wonders how it is that "The Father of Psychoanalysis, who invented the concept of the primacy of the penis, was never motivated, as far as we know, to explore the real-life deployment of the penis as a weapon" (p. 11). She goes on to compare male and female genitalia to key and lock, the former irrevocably capable of raping the latter, the latter irrevocably rapeable (1975, p. 14). Like Freud, Brownmiller could not see lesbian-on-lesbian rape. Let's not hold it against her. Nobody had even broached the issue in 1975.

Against Our Will was groundbreaking at the time of its writing, and in many ways remains relevant (see Chapter Six). Yet contrary to Brownmiller's fears, not all penises have the peculiar power we westerners attribute them. While ethnographers have long struggled with the question of how rape ought to be defined given the variability of sexual norms in their fields of research, there *is* agreement that rape is foreign to some cultures. According to various definitions, rape has been found to occur in between forty-two and ninety percent of societies (Rozée-Koker, 1987, pp. 104-5). In Gerai society, for example, rape is unthinkable and people are puzzled by the notion that a penis could hurt

anyone. Here, as Helliwell (2000) puts it, "the penis, or male genitalia in general, is not admired, feared, or envied, nor is the phallus a central signifier in the way postulated by Lacanians" (p. 808). This suggests that it is not the penis but the representation of the penis as a symbol of power which renders the traditional rape script a possibility. Indeed, the Phallus is classically seen as "the image or representation of the penis as a symbol of power" (phallus, *The Penguin Dictionary of Psychology*, 1995).

The current chapter will begin with Freudian and Lacanian understandings of the phallic symbol and end up with something quite different, namely, 'The Lesbian Phallus' (Butler 1993). It is my contention that those ideas forwarded by Freud and Lacan both encourage and reflect cultural beliefs which have, to some extent, been constitutive of our social reality. On the one hand, such beliefs promote manifestations of the traditional rape script. On the other hand, they foster blindness to events such as lesbian-on-lesbian rape.

By way of contrast, 'The Lesbian Phallus' enables us to reconsider Freud and Lacan's widely shared assumptions about which bodies have force and where that force might be carried. The term "phallus" is and is not misleading here. Butler does not attempt to cast the term out, but neither can we precisely say that she retains it. For retaining the term and applying it liberally is a tactic aimed at deflating the phallus rather than allowing it to loom large. In the end, Butler's phallus bears little if any resemblance to the bloated figure which has often been proposed. For example, she dispenses with the notion that the phallus need be related to the penis over and above other body parts. As such, Butler dissipates penile force, countering the beliefs which promote the traditional rape script and providing a lens by which lesbian-on-lesbian rape can be seen as a possibility. Further, to the extent that the possibilities this lens presents are taken up,

not only may de-privileged forms of erotic exchange come to the fore, but more problematically, lesbian-on-lesbian rape may become more possible. Thus, I will conclude this chapter by drawing on Benjamin to explore how this latter possibility might be prevented.

The question of why the penis, as opposed to any other body part, should enjoy a symbolic relationship to power has been a subject of debate between traditional psychoanalysts and feminists. Many hold that psychoanalysis was born when Freud conceptualized the Oedipus complex. Aside from initiating an enormously influential and multi-faceted branch of theory, his work points to the integral relationship between one's history and one's sexuality (Morgenstern, 2003). Freud's thinking invites important questions such as "How are sex and gender produced? ... Whom do I desire and why? Can oedipal configurations help us to read complex and politically charged relations? What configurations answer back to, or complicate, the Oedipus complex?" (Morgenstern 2003, p. 786). As we shall see, 'The Lesbian Phallus' responds to Freud with just such a challenging configuration. Thinkers like Rubin and Mitchell have identified a descriptive value in Freud's thinking, and so followed it in considering women's social positions. As Mitchell puts it to us, "If we are interested in understanding and challenging the oppression of women ... we cannot afford to neglect it" (in Morgenstern, 2003, p. 785). That being said, it is widely acknowledged "that Freud had a problem conceptualizing female sexuality ... (It does not help matters that Freud incorporates and dismisses arguments by 'the feminists' as symptomatic attempts to rebel against feminine inferiority)" (2003, pp. 782-3)

For starters, Freud supposes that we must reproduce and that reproduction must be directed or even imposed by men. He assumes that there is no "feminine libido,"

postulating that "the accomplishment of the aim of biology has been entrusted to the aggressiveness of men and has been made to some extent independent of women's consent" (Freud in Krausz, 1994, p. 310). In this way, power adheres to the penis by which women are obliged to abide. As far as I am concerned women both choose and enjoy hetero-sex on a regular basis. At issue is the irrelevance of women's choice and the incomprehensibility of women's pleasure on the Freudian account. In keeping with such views, Deutsch, a follower of Freud, once asserted that "the dread of rape characteristic of puberty and the infantile anxieties of little girls are based on vaginal organ sensations (or the instinctual impulses issuing from these), which imply that something ought to penetrate into that part of the body" (in Brownmiller, 1975, p. 321).

The super-ego is seen by Freud (1960, pp. 24-5) to arise through the repression of the Oedipus complex at which time the boy learns that he must be like his father, that he is not permitted everything his father is and that if he exceeds this limitation he might suffer castration. In the traditional resolution of the oedipal situation the male child who once loved and identified with his mother establishes his individuality by breaking with her (Benjamin, 1980, p. 147). Such violent destruction of the Oedipus complex leads, according to Freud's thinking, to a male super-ego which is "inexorable, impersonal and independent of emotion," while the female super-ego remains underdeveloped (Bendle, 2006, p. 74). Moral law is given by the super-ego and where women are moral, it is through "cross-inheritance" from men (Freud, 1960, p. 25). Women can never know the law as men do, given that we are never introduced to it through the threat of castration. Rather, for girls, the Oedipus complex only gradually fades away (Bendle, 2006, p. 74). In this way, part of the power attributed to men through the phallus is the power to

represent the law which women are compelled to respect (Ver Eecke, 1994, p. 131). In Bendle's (2006) words, "Freud very nearly absolutised sexual difference" (p. 74).

Freud also connected the under-developed sense of justice he supposed he observed in women to envy of the male sexual organ: "The fact that women must be regarded as having little sense of justice is no doubt related to the predominance of envy in their mental life" (Freud in Krausz, 1994, p. 134). In a development which, for Lacan, introduced the concept of desire, Freud would find that the phallus – which a woman could never have – is the only possible answer to the question "What … does woman want?" (Mitchell, 1985, p. 24) Given Freud's views that male aggression is necessary for reproduction and that women only ever want the phallus, we might suspect that the Father of Psychoanalysis was unfazed by the penis-as-weapon because it was the most normal thing in the world to him.

Bendle (2006) is among thinkers who have congratulated Lacan for shifting explanations for sexual divisions away from anatomy and toward language, or in Lacanian parlance, into the symbolic realm (Rose, 1985, p. 31). Here, gendered terms of division such as "male/female; masculine/feminine; penis/vagina" have values which are not intrinsic but acquired in a symbolic order dominated by the phallus (Bendle, 2006, p. 80). To Lacan's credit, he does not see submission to this order as a good thing. As Mitchell (1985) puts it, Lacan believed that "psychoanalysis should not subscribe to ideas about how men and women do or should live as sexually differentiated human beings, but instead it should analyse how they come to be such beings in the first place" (p. 3).

For Lacan too, castration plays an important, if less literal role in the formation of the human subject. Here, the phallus symbolizes the rupture which must occur between mother and child through the introduction of the symbolic, represented by the

metaphorical place of the father (Rose, 1985, p. 38). The castration complex operates to position the subject in accordance with the ideals structuring his sex (Lacan, 1985, p. 75). It is here that the sexual order of exchange is initiated (Rose, 1985, p. 38).

In Lacan's 'mirror stage', a reflected image conceals the infant's lack of motor control while occasioning self-recognition. Lacan means for the notion of the mirror to be extended to a variety of sensory activities which seem to confirm the efficacy of the child's will. Ultimately, however, this is an illusion. The child's body is not the image he sees; the vision of totality and control is a myth; a "*misrecognition.*" The 'mirror stage' represents the point at which the subject is located outside itself and in the symbolic order. Ironically, the subject gains a sense of control by becoming subjected to language (Rose, 1985, pp. 30-1). There is a loss inherent here, for "symbolisation turns on the object *as* absence ... Symbolisation starts, therefore, when the child gets its first sense that something could be missing; words stand for objects, because they only have to be spoken at the moment when the first object is lost" (Rose, 1985, p. 31).

Be that as it may, the image of the self becomes the narcissistic structuring principle of every object perceived. Further, certain organs are particularly implicated in "the narcissistic relation, insofar as it structures both the relation of the ego to the other and the constitution of the world of objects" (Lacan in Butler, 1993, p. 77). As Butler notes, while it is tempting to conclude that here the penis is promoted to phallic status, Lacan explicitly rejects this connection.

In *The Meaning of the Phallus*, Lacan (1985) holds that the Phallus is neither fantasy nor object and "even less the organ, penis or clitoris which it symbolises" (p. 79). Rather, it is the privileged signifier. He argues that "If the phallus is a signifier then it is in the place of the Other that the subject gains access to it" (1985, p. 83). In other words,

in seeing the Other conform to the power of the phallus the subject can convince himself he has it, and in a very real way, the phallus comes into effect. It is in her bid for love that woman, expecting to be loved and desired only "for what she is not" (1985, p. 84), will masquerade as the Phallus; as the property of the man, as that which he has the power to name. She will locate this naming power in the man's penis.

It is in this sense that "having" the Phallus implies ownership of woman, and "being" the Phallus implies a feminine position of servitude (Butler, 1993, p. 63). This is not to suggest that the woman has some quality prior to entry in the phallic masquerade, for Lacan holds that she is constituted by language as a purely negative term (Rose, 1985, p. 55). In our phallocentric culture, there is some descriptive value in this business of "having"/"being". As Cahill (2000) observes, for many of us, the threat of an "attack with the penis" has at least some relation to "feminine bodily comportment" (p. 60). In the protectively crossed knees of the feminine subject, the Lacanian Phallus may be affirmed, though perhaps out of fear as opposed to desire. In sum, while nobody "has" the phallus in a strictly anatomical sense, men carry on as if they do, a privilege which grants them the force to subjugate women.

Be that as it may, the woman's love is bestowed on the penis as she attempts to access the phallus she will forever be denied. She will continue to desire that which can never really become hers; her desire can never be satisfied. Lacan (1985) expects that this is why "frigidity" is "relatively well tolerated in women" (p. 84). Notably, Frieze (1983, p. 535) points out that not uncommonly, men who rape their wives make accusations of frigidity against them. When it comes to men, Lacan tells a different story. A man may satisfy his demand for love from a woman "to the extent that the signifier of the phallus constitutes her precisely as giving in love what she does not have." But this

satisfaction will be his cue to move on and bolster his phallus "under various guises, whether as a virgin or prostitute" (1985, p. 84). Thus, Lacan confirms that men tolerate impotence poorly, and have a particular tendency for infidelity. He also confirms Freud's claim that there is one libido which is male (1985, p. 85).

Lacan's normative sexual positions are symbolically lodged in what he refers to as "True Speech." According to this theory, truth is created as the "Other" confirms the speaker's statement, sending it back in inverted form. The speaker's claim is confirmed as an affirmative response is proffered. The sexual dichotomy instituted under "True Speech" is apparent, as Derrida (1987, pp. 470-1, n. 45) points out, in Lacan's view that the "reciprocal position of the sexes" is exemplified by the phrase "'You are my wife' through which the man constitutes his partner" (Lacan, 1985, p. 94).

True Speech reflects the masculine form of individuation installed with the traditional oedipal resolution. Benjamin draws a parallel between this masculine form of individuation and the Hegelian conflict in which the desire for complete independence is undermined by the need for recognition. The subject says: "I want to affect you, but I want nothing you do or say to affect me, I am who I am" (Benjamin, 1990, p. 39). This conflict is a stereotypically masculine one, and violence appears to be an apt mode of resolution, operating as it does to establish the perpetrator's boundary by denying the other's subjectivity (1980, p. 150). We can see this dynamic playing out where the threat of rape operates as "the paradigm expression of the power of a man to command a woman to obey, that is, to command the recognition of his attempt to impose his possible world on her as the *only* world, the real, inevitable world" (Gatens, 2000, p. 71).

On Lacan's reading, in becoming a subject, the (male) child sees his mother's desire for the Phallus, and so first wishes to be the sole object of her love by becoming

the phallus for her. However, while his mother's desire gives him no information about whether or not he has the phallus, he does come to understand that his mother lacks it. The prohibition introduced in the form of 'The Law of the Father' establishes what happens from here (Lacan, 1985, p. 83). The child finds that he cannot be the phallus, or the sole object of the mother's desire (Lacan in Rose 1985, p. 38). Indeed, the mother desires the phallus because she lacks it; she therefore cannot have it in the form of the child or any other – it does not belong to her. The duality of the mother/child relationship is broken as both parties in it are referred to the true location of the phallus; "the dimension of the symbolic which is figured by the father's place" (Rose, 1985, p. 38). The child is thus inaugurated into normative sexual exchange, through symbolic castration.

If Lacan offers a discussion of why the girl child would not follow this same route to "having" the phallus, I have been unable to locate it. Perhaps in the end the system does fold into anatomical references. This point has been made on several counts. As Derrida (1987) puts it, the system described above is based upon a "determined *situation*" (original emphasis) where the phallus is "the mother's desire to the extent that she does not have it" (p. 480-2). Fraser (1990) notes a collapse of the penis and phallus in Lacan's assertion that the latter "becomes the master signifier because of its 'turgidity' which suggests the transmission of vital flow in copulation" (p. 90). Rose (1985) explains that while sexual difference is symbolically established according to whether or not individuals possess the phallus, this is not a reduction to anatomical difference. Rather, anatomical difference "becomes the sole representative of what (sexual) difference is allowed to be" (p. 38). If, as Lacan proposes, subjection to the symbolic order is unavoidable (Bendle, 2006, p. 81), this distinction neither helps to achieve

change nor to see other possibilities. Finally, Butler (1993) remarks that "If the phallus only signifies to the extent that it is *not* the penis ... then the phallus is fundamentally dependent on the penis in order to signify at all" (p. 84).

If the phallus establishes and enforces meaning and the law, and if this symbol depends on the penis in any number of ways, it appears unfeasible that a woman might establish her own views, desires or boundaries (for example, the desire not to have sex) against a man's will. There is little doubt that such views reflect something of our social order. Chapter Six will include a discussion of women's not so historically distant status as non-humans and the related positioning of women as men's property which continues to have dire consequences for the ways in which rape is thought about and dealt with. All of this could be read quite effectively through a Lacanian lens. But feminists are not only interested in women's subjugation, but also in exceptions to it and of course in the possibility of change. Lacan failed to address these latter concerns.

Very reasonably, then, many feminists have a different take, locating no necessary originating power in the phallus. Rather, such feminists identify patriarchy masquerading as anatomically determined in a "phallocentric" culture. The term "phallocentrism" describes a culture in which sexuality, or a society more broadly, is structured around masculine force and desire (Smart, 1995, pp. 78-80; Corteen, 2004, p. 173). Feminists often share the view that men have phallic power, but only as a consequence of deeply held yet changeable cultural beliefs. As Smart (1995) puts it, the term "phallocentrism" "attempts to give some insight into how patriarchy is part of women's (and men's) unconscious" (p. 78). At the same time, she remarks that phallocentric meanings must be continuously reconstructed as we work to make sense of our experiences. That

phallocentrism is only sustained through continuous reproduction provides an opening for subversive intervention. For example:

> The lesbian phallus may be said to intervene as an unexpected consequence of the Lacanian scheme, an apparently contradictory signifier which, through a critical mimesis, calls into question the ostensibly originating and controlling power of the Lacanian phallus, indeed, its installation as the privileged signifier of the symbolic order (Butler, 1993, p. 73).

To the extent that traditional conceptions of the Phallus bolster the traditional rape script, such a deconstruction is a hopeful prospect. I have no hesitation in suggesting that 'The Lesbian Phallus' is effective in this way, demonstrating that the avenues by which phallic power has been made to flow from the penis, and thus from men, are open to challenge.

Butler's (1993, p. 59) article points first to Freud's suggestion that body parts become delineated through our focusing upon them in a manner which allows for the increase or decrease of "erotogenicity" in any organ of the body. The penis as phallus first appears as an example of this process; there is nothing particularly special about it. But Freud later backtracks to authenticate the connection between the penis and power. Now Freud wishes to convince us of the immanently improbable claim that the penis is the original and genuine article for which other body parts can only supply lackluster substitutions. Butler reads Freud's production of the "primacy of the penis" as a

symptom produced to repress the manifold possibilities of "erotogenicity" he earlier suggested, possibilities which need not privilege male bodies (1993, pp. 59-61).

Butler then turns her attention to Lacan. She takes issue with the Lacanian epistemological scheme insofar as it forms the groundwork for "andocentric epistemological imperialism" (1993, p. 73). In order to address these issues, Butler returns to 'The Mirror Stage' and 'The Meaning of the Phallus'. In the former and earlier essay, bodily organs are imaginatively invested with power through the narcissistic relation. Only then do they generate the forms of knowable objects. In the latter essay, the phallus comes to establish the bounds of what can be signified (1993, pp. 77-8). Despite Lacan's insistence that the phallus is not an imaginary effect, Butler wonders how it takes on its privileged position if not through the narcissistic relation described by 'The Mirror Stage'.

> If the position for the phallus erected by Lacan symptomizes the specular and idealizing mirroring of the decentered body in pieces before the mirror, then we can read here the phantasmic rewriting of an organ or body part, the penis, as the phallus, a move effected by a transvaluative denial of its substitutability, dependency, diminutive size, limited control and partiality. The phallus would then emerge as a symptom, and its authority could be established only through a metalpytic reversal of cause and effect. Rather than the postulated origin of the signifier or the signifiable, the phallus would be the effect of a signifying chain summarily repressed (Butler, 1993, p. 81).

Butler's article functions to release morphological and relational possibilities which are repressed in just such a process. This will have important consequences for phallic privilege, which may be "contested by the very list of alternatives it discounts, and the negation of which constitutes and precipitates the phallus" (1993, p. 83).

Enter the abject. Having shown the plasticity of the phallus, Butler (1993) is positioned to argue that, "symbolized by . . . an array of [body parts or] purposefully instrumentalized body-like things," (p. 88) it can just as legitimately be had by lesbians. Two lesbians might both have and be the phallus; each might claim control and each might have the power to confirm or reject the other's claim.

This seems as good a time as any to offer Butler's response to a potential worry; one which I myself have struggled with in offering up the concept of 'The Lesbian Phallus' and one which is particularly poignant given the various ways in which the phallus has been seen to reduce to the penis. Butler notes that mere usage of the former term may be seen to confer a special value on the latter body part. She answers that she is making the phallus transferable, and destabilizing the kinship relations it purportedly must give rise to (1993, pp. 62-3). Whereas for Lacan, the phallus is that which stabilizes sexed morphologies and relations, 'The Lesbian Phallus' sends these into crisis. Further, Butler questions whether a feminism which summarily rejects the phallus can perform these services. She holds – quite correctly – that a morphology dependant on such repudiation presumes that which it rejects. Her model, by way of contrast, takes up the phallic term, and changes it such that it is "neither the privileged signifier nor the unspeakable outside" (1993, p. 87).

With 'The Lesbian Phallus,' active women can assert boundaries and make claims. Rape certainly cannot be seen as a crime of property, for women escape the position of 'being' the phallus reflected in early rape law, and have something to say about it (see Smith, 1999, p. 32-3). Butler (1993) "promotes" her "alternative imaginary," challenging our assumptions about which bodies have force and where that force might be carried: "the lesbian phallus offers the occasion (a set of occasions) for the phallus to signify differently, and in so signifying, to resignify, unwittingly, its own masculinist and heterosexist privilege" (pp. 90-1).

It is important to note that Butler does not view 'The Lesbian Phallus' as some unrealized future. In one interview, Butler put it thus: "Gender trouble is not new. It's already arrived. It's not a utopian vision, but a way to lend a language of description to what has been foreclosed from that normative discourse for too long" (Breen, Blumenfeld, Baer, Brookey, Hall, Kirby, Miller, Shail and Wilson, 2001, pp. 22). Similarly she suggests that there are likely myriad answers to the question of how 'The Lesbian Phallus' currently emerges in sexual exchange, though she leaves the uncovering of possible answers to others (Butler, 1993, p. 85). The present project, I believe, is such an investigation. Of course, there can and should be others. A much happier one is already at our disposal. Halberstam (2002, p. 363) reads 'The Lesbian Phallus' in considering possibilities for identification with historically abjected female masculinities.

Perhaps unwittingly, Butler offers us a vehicle for thinking about lesbian-on-lesbian rape. She asks us to "consider that 'having' the phallus can be symbolized by an arm, a tongue, a hand (or two) ..." (1993, p. 88). Recall those victims of lesbian-on-lesbian rape who have been subjected to forced and unwanted vaginal, anal or oral penetration with an object, weapon, hand or finger (Ristock, 2002, p. 53). Some sort of

phallus seems to be present, for example, when "Evon" (in Girshick 2002, p. 66) describes the way in which, to demonstrate control over their relationship, her partner would violently penetrate her until blood flowed. But we have already noted that penetrative rape does not exhaust the vile possibilities.

Butler (1993, p. 88) does not stop with hands and arms. As she puts it, "if the phallus symbolizes only through taking anatomy as its occasion, then the more various and unanticipated the anatomical (and non-anatomical) occasions for its symbolization, the more unstable that signifier becomes" (1993, p. 90). She wants us to take our imaginations further beyond our expectations, challenging the Lacanian Phallus by pushing it beyond recognition. "[A] knee, a thigh, a pelvic bone ...." (1993, p. 88); she approaches the vaginal orifice, seeing a potential force where Lacan saw passivity. Recall 'Shelley' (in Girshick, 2002, p. 73), for whom cunnilingus was the price for air.

The Lesbian Phallus does not make each instance described above one in which the perpetrator is attributed the normative position of a man in heterosexual exchange; it does not reattribute penile power by making a facile reference to it. Rather, it shows that the penis, in its traditionally intimate association with the phallus, does not alone have the power to rape. It further shows us that there is no reason to believe that any of the above instances is less severe or subjugating than a rape-by-penis, whether it recalls such an event in some sense, or departs more radically from that script. The penis need not be peculiarly powerful.

Early on in this article, I offered a standard definition of the Phallus as "the image or representation of the penis as a symbol of power" (phallus, *The Penguin Dictionary of Psychology*, 1995). Following the discussions of Freud and Lacan offered above, this definition still seems fair enough. But to offer a definition of 'The Lesbian

Phallus' is an altogether more challenging project, and I suspect one which Butler would reject.

'The Lesbian Phallus' seems to require some body part or object, although beyond that it might be anything; it is "various" and can be "unanticipated" (Butler, 1993, p. 90). While Butler offers no examples of what the material occasioning her artifice might do, I suspect that she would insist on a similar proliferation. 'The Lesbian Phallus' definitely requires an imagining to sustain it, for its possibility rests on Butler's ability – and ours – to reduce the Lacanian Phallus to an imaginary effect, and insist that other such effects may occur. Certainly the 'Lesbian Phallus' has power, both to challenge the ideal heterosexual economy and to produce other forms of eroticism. With it, the "phantasmatic status of 'having' is redelineated ... and the eroticism produced within such an exchange depends on the displacement from traditional masculinist contexts" (1993, p. 89). So it does not play out in the way Lacan would expect his phallic figure to work. It also has the power to produce decidedly undesirable effects. As we shall see shortly, Butler is aware of that. But just as I was unable to offer a comprehensive definition of rape in the last chapter, 'The Lesbian Phallus' is not any one thing. That is the point.

In the end, we may only be able to answer the question of which body parts and body-like things might take on the power to rape by looking to the unpredictable frontiers of our own imaginations from which Freud and Lacan eventually shrank. In other words, we may not be able to answer that question at all. One thing, however, is sure: we have come a long way from Brownmiller's (1975) vision of some primitive woman, who "*could not retaliate in kind*" (p. 14).

The introductory chapter of this thesis ended with a recollection of an angry reception from a hotline worker who one survivor of lesbian-on-lesbian rape had the misfortune to fall upon when she called for help (Giorgio, 2002, p. 1239). "Christy" shares a similar memory: "The hot line worker didn't know how to react because it was a woman who attacked me. She could not even tell me if I was entitled to a protection order. She didn't seem to react and she didn't seem concerned" (in Girshick, 2002, p. 31).

Without recognition that dangerous and subjugating force proliferates beyond the borders of the penis, beyond the borders of the male body and whatever weapon that body might be wielding, lesbian-on-lesbian rape is invisible. The 'Lesbian Phallus' gets us beyond this impasse. But what, exactly, does it promote? We can't be sure.

Butler (1993) closes hoping that the 'Lesbian Phallus', will affect the "release of alternative imaginary schemas for constituting sites of erotogenic pleasure" (p. 91). Given that lesbians and others often deploy phallic (and less phallic, and not-phallic-in-any-recognizable sense) body parts and objects for purposes of mutual pleasure, I grant and even celebrate the potential here. But that potential was Butler's focus, not mine.

I would like, instead, to attend to an earlier and fleeting remark: "It may well be through a degradation of a feminine morphology, an imaginary and cathected degrading of the feminine, that the lesbian phallus comes into play ..." The phrase is no sooner articulated than overtaken by the general optimism of the text: "... or it may be through a castrating occupation of that central masculine trope, fueled by the kind of defiance which seeks to overturn that very degradation of the feminine" (1993, p. 87). Let us not allow speculation about potentially destructive manifestations of 'The Lesbian Phallus' to slide

by so easily, as if Shelley's suffering is a necessary risk, an expected casualty. Instead, let us follow Jessica Benjamin for a bit.

Benjamin's work reads as uncomfortably deterministic. She only occasionally acknowledges the variability of our sexual identities and expressions. For example, 'The Bonds of Love: Rational Violence and Erotic Domination' notes that women too, and non-heterosexuals in general, may be subjects of control and also that mother is only usually "the bestower of recognition" (Benjamin 1980, p. 144). But for the most part, her articles read as an explication of a rigidly dichotomous version of heterosexuality. I worry that Benjamin's reading, though it acknowledges broader cultural influences, overemphasizes the mother's role in establishing the dynamics she criticizes. As such, we might be led to hold the mother figure responsible for behaviours which might originate with some other parental figure – the father, for example – or even culture more broadly.

What Benjamin adds to this analysis is a discussion of the *kind* of subjugating interaction which Lacan imagined would constitute his phallus, and the *kind* of interaction which escapes it. This sort of analysis is not restricted to the gender of the person who is acting; rather it allows us to look at the sort of acting which is done. These tools may be deployed to analyze those practices which subvert traditional heterosexuality just as much as those which are consistent with it. They may enable us not only to distinguish between the degradation of a feminine morphology and an overturning of that order, but also to pursue the latter possibility.

That Hegelian subject who wants to affect others yet stand autonomous and unchanged cannot be satisfied, for one cannot enjoy recognition of one's own subjectivity without recognizing the subjectivity of others (Benjamin 1990, p. 39). Thus, whereas

traditional psychoanalysis envisions a radical break from the mother, Benjamin (1980, p. 147) argues that the child cannot become aware of his or her subjectivity without a simultaneous recognition of the mother's subjectivity. But in recognizing other minds, we also come to see that other minds are prone to be in discord with our own (1990, p. 39). From an intersubjective perspective, this epiphany ideally is resolved not by violence, but by an ongoing tension between recognition of the other *subject* and assertion of the self. In order to overcome the violence of masculine individuation, Benjamin turns to intersubjectivity in the Habermasian tradition of communicative or discourse ethics (1990, pp. 35-6).

I am going to hold off a detailed conversation about this tradition for the fifth chapter. Here, I begin merely to foreground that discussion. Within communicative ethics, intersubjectivity is a learned process. As Benjamin (2005) would have it, it is a form of recognition which begins with "simple forms of affective exchange ... and becomes the basis for our symbolic functioning, our subjective ability to perceive others' intentions, trust our own perceptions, express ourselves, and mutually validate each other" (p. 449). This perspective is able to address "the development of the child's responsiveness, empathy and concern" through relationships with responsive but not entirely predictable or assimilable communicative partners (1990, p. 36).

Benjamin describes the location for this exchange as a "third space" in which "some consensual validation" of sentiments, meanings and intentions can occur. Unfortunately, in a culture such as ours where subjectivity is too often made to ride on the denial of others, our capacities in this area are frequently limited (1990, p. 35). When intersubjectivity fails, the third space collapses into a circumstance where one person perceives her or himself to be merely reactive to the other's activity as in the violent

attempt to resolve the Hegelian conflict, perhaps through rape (2005, p. 459). In other words, this is a circumstance where one is situated as "having" the phallus, the other as "being" it.

A "third space" of intersubjectivity, on the other hand, is one in which consent is established between subjectivities, where communication overrides violence. Benjamin is interested in using intersubjective theory to shift from relations of push and pull to those of communication (2005, pp. 450-5). Her deconstruction pulls the repressed subject, marginalized by violent individuation processes, to the fore: "where objects were, subjects must be" (1990, p. 34). If we are to move toward a new paradigm where, as in Gerai society, neither the penis nor any other body part or object is able to threaten rape (Helliwell, 2000, p. 808), we might start with attending to our intersubjective capacities.

This is not, for Benjamin (1990, p. 44), to negate intrapsychic creativity in a "triumph of the external," but to balance internal dynamics with a recognition of "the outside." Because we frequently fail to achieve such a balance, Freudian binaries between activity and passivity remain usefully descriptive. But the recognition advanced by intersubjectivity offers a "more hopeful cast" (Benjamin, 1990, p. 45) to a paradigm formerly conceptualized as irrevocably destructive. Indeed, because human relations have an impact upon our psychic development, Benjamin remarks that communicative ethics have the potential to negate unconscious motives for violence (1990, pp. 35-45).

In short, Benjamin imagines possibilities for resisting the degradation which 'The Lesbian Phallus' might impose, advancing instead hopeful prospects for "the kind of defiance which seeks to overturn that very degradation of the feminine" (Butler, 1993, p. 87). These ideas contribute to and preview the sort of direction this thesis attempts to

provide for 'The Lesbian Phallus', again, not because it is lesbian but because as it stands, like the Lacanian phallus, it may be prone to corruption.

Chapter 4: Deconstruction, Subversion and Rape

> I must explain again that we are floundering here. To feel the firm ground of prejudice slipping away is exhilarating, but brings its revenges (Austin in Derrida, 1982, p. 327).

In those increasingly rare corners of the feminist academy where discussions of rape survive, it has become modish to take issue with the "molar politics" (Gatens, 2000, p. 71) of many Freudian and feminist efforts alike. There is little patience for visions according to which the male body inevitably threatens rape while the female body is inevitably threatened. MacKinnon's "highly deterministic account" (Butler, 2003, pp. 238-9) which defines the female in terms of "violability" (Gatens, 2000, p. 70) has become a particularly popular foil (Mardorossian, 2002, p. 744). Such representations seem to offer nothing else; no way out.

Marcus, on the other hand, has become a popular example of the sort of feminist who does not self-defeat by grounding her politics in phallocentric knowledge. "Like Butler," it is said, "Marcus argues that iterative linguistic and physical habits and practices engender us as masculine and feminine identities." This enables Marcus to treat "sexual violence as a variable practice of dominance rather than as an immutable reality of gendered identity" (Herberle, 1996, p. 70). This sounds very promising.

More worrisome is Marcus' recommendation of women's violence as a subversive anti-rape practice. The current chapter examines that proposal. While I do not reject women's violence out of hand, I hold that it is a strategy which should not be made to stand alone, and which only belongs in certain circumstances. I bring a normative

critique to Marcus' deconstruction. Before getting to that, allow me to set things up in the fashion of the day.

MacKinnon has rightly been described as "one of the most influential feminist thinkers over the past decade and a half" (Henderson, 1991, p. 419). Her contributions to our thinking about the interactions between patriarchy, the state and legal systems are not to be underestimated. She has long spoken of the need to listen to women's voices in a context where male power is deeply implicated in the organization of our perceptions of truth (e.g. 1982). She has directed feminist attention to the important role of sexuality in constructing our subjectivities. She speaks to problematic beliefs which remain widely internalized in western culture, for example, "notions that women desire and provoke rape" (MacKinnon, 1982, p. 529). It is indeed important that we work to counteract such myths, but it is also important that we avoid reducing women's experiences to them. It is here that MacKinnon has some trouble.

According to MacKinnon (1982), sexuality is "the primary social sphere of male power" (p. 529). Constituted by the heterosexual requirement, men are made dominant and women submissive (1982, p. 533; 1983, p. 635). "Our sexuality, meaning gender identity, is not only violable, it *is* (hence we are) our violation" (1983, p. 656). In this context, MacKinnon argues that rape is not exceptional but a normal experience for women:

> The point of defining rape as "violence not sex" or "violence against women" has been to separate sexuality from gender in order to affirm sex (heterosexuality) while rejecting violence (rape). The problem remains what it has always been: telling the

> difference .... [W]here the legal system has seen intercourse in rape, victims see the rape in intercourse. The uncoerced context for sexual expression becomes as elusive as the physical acts come to feel indistinguishable (1983, p. 646).

As Moore and Reynolds (2004, p. 33) note, on MacKinnon's reading, rape is no longer defined by force or threats, but only by the fact that a man is copulating with a woman. Nothing is more normal than for a man to rape. His sexuality is violent by definition (MacKinnon, 1983, p. 646). Women's consent to heterosexual intercourse is meaningless under current conditions of male domination (1983, p. 650). Further, in patriarchal society, it is questionable whether "rape is definable as distinct from intercourse" (1983, p. 647). For MacKinnon (1983), "penetration itself is known to be a violation" (p. 648). This last comment of course has implications not only for the heterosexual context, but for the penetrative sexual practices of those living other sexual identities as well. I do not concur that penetration necessarily violates. I believe that penetration can be legitimately desired. Furthermore, in stark contrast to MacKinnon's assumption, as noted in the Chapter Two (pages 21-2), rape victims may be forced to penetrate perpetrators.

One problem with MacKinnon's views on rape, duly noted by Moore and Reynolds (2004), is that there is no way to account for the specific experiences of women who *know* they have not consented, or those who know they have for that matter. As Henderson (1991) puts it, "it is ironic that MacKinnon considers women's voices in consciousness raising to be trustworthy until it comes to positive descriptions of sexual experiences" (p. 422).

Moore & Reynolds (2004, pp. 32-4) are among thinkers who find MacKinnon's position overly rigid. Not only does she assume that all men oppress all women and that no women have genuinely positive experiences of heterosexuality, but she assumes that lesbian relationships are egalitarian by definition. For MacKinnon (1982), the way out of women's permanent position of violation appears to be lesbianism, for lesbians "so violate the sexuality implicit in female gender stereotypes as not to be considered women at all" (p. 530).

Corteen (2004), for example, reasonably accepts that consent is undermined by a heterosexual dichotomy where, to some extent, men are still expected to chase women who are still expected to say "No" without really meaning it. But gays and lesbians face their own challenges in this area. Discussions about consent have largely centered on heterosexual intercourse. Marginalized as they are, homo-sexual encounters may occur in invisible and "potentially perilous situations" where norms of consent have not been thought through (2004, p. 187). Lesbian-on-lesbian rape is one sort of violence which demonstrates that "no means no" needs to find its corollary beyond the boundaries of the more visible heterosexual context. On Corteen's reading, MacKinnon is blind to such issues. But perhaps this is unfair.

On second glance, MacKinnon does not see lesbian-on-lesbian rape as impossibility so much as misnomer. For her, "forced sex as sexuality ... constitutes the social meaning of gender," whoever is perpetrating it. She quotes Shafer and Frye:

> Rape is a man's act, whether it is a male or a female man and whether it is a man relatively permanently or relatively temporarily; and being raped is a woman's experience, whether it

> is a female or a male woman and whether it is a woman relatively permanently or relatively temporarily (1983, p. 650).

Thus, MacKinnon does recognize the important point that women can rape and men can be raped. However, at this point, we find ourselves chasing our tails. As noted above, for MacKinnon, heterosexual intercourse is our cue that rape is occurring (Moore and Reynolds, 2004, p. 33). Or at least, the one can't be distinguished from the other (MacKinnon, 1983, p. 647). Meaningless as it is, women's consent does not help us to make the distinction (1983, p. 650). Other than through locating rape in any instance of hetero-sex (1983, p. 648), there is no clear way to identify it. On the other hand, the notion that forced sex constitutes our genders suggests that it is by identifying who is raped and who rapes that we can speak of gender in the first place. If we cannot see rape prior to gender and we cannot see gender prior to rape, we will have a good deal of difficulty seeing rape (or gender for that matter) at all.

One way to escape this circularity is to dispense with the assumption that there is a rigid one-to-one relationship between gender and rape. It is possible to accept that rape has feminizing implications in our society without holding that heterosexual intercourse and rape are synonymous (MacKinnon, 1983, p. 647), that women equal violability (1983, p. 656), or that male sexuality is necessarily violent (1983, p. 646). Indeed, even in rape scenarios, as I demonstrated in Chapter Two (page 22), gendered causes and effects may be quite muddy. It is time, as Ristock (2002) puts it, that our analyses of violence move to disrupt "grand narratives" and "interrogate the boundaries of categories we use" (p. 22).

Similarly seeking openings for recognition, Giorgio (2002) cites Butler: "the specificity of lesbian experience [has] no necessary common element ... except homophobia" (p. 1255). Indeed, we might even question the claim that homophobia always characterizes life as a lesbian. Claiming variability for lesbian experiences here serves to dispel beliefs that silence the victim of lesbian-on-lesbian abuse.

This de-universalizing approach is typical of analyses of women's violence. Many authors who do not refer to themselves as deconstructionists nonetheless deploy the strategy of challenging dominant scripts with marginalized ones. For instance, Waldron (1996, p. 44), Elliot (1994, p. 6), Elliot (1996, p. 2), Island and Letellier (1991, p. 99) and Girshick (2002, pp. 9-10) are united in problematizing the monolithic attribution of violence to men. They emphasize that this tendency obscures or silences women's victims. As Girshick puts it,

> To speak of woman-to-woman sexual violence breaks a barrier of silence, to admit what society denies, and to debunk a myth of lesbian utopia ... [There is a] societal belief that women are not violent—women do not rape and women do not batter. This denial of female perpetrators means they are free to move on to the next victim (2002, pp. 9-10).

As Ristock (2002) remarks, "deconstructive thinking becomes almost a practical necessity when we are studying the lives of people who are marginalized within dominant discourses" (p. 41). With this in mind, it makes perfect sense that we should turn to those eminent feminists associated with deconstruction, such as Butler or Marcus. For

example, Ristock (2002) believes that in striving "to disrupt or deconstruct limiting categories and discourses" (p. 21) Marcus creates a context in which lesbian-to-lesbian violence might be recognized.

But there is a difficulty with this alliance. Whereas deconstructionists theorizing women's violence show one disagreeable way in which gender subversion already happens, those thinking about man-on-woman rape want to encourage women to subvert the gender dichotomy. As we have seen, 'The Lesbian Phallus' does not merely show us the possibility of alternative imaginaries, it "*promotes*" them (Butler, 1993, p. 91, my emphasis). The view that "belief in essential difference [between men and women generates] the possibility of rape in the first place" (Smart, 1995, p. 50) typically leads these thinkers to the apparently innocuous conclusion that anti-rape projects should consist of gender subversions. Yet this view does not see lesbian-on-lesbian rape, which depends not on the success of the traditional gender paradigm, but rather upon our ability to subvert it, reworking the victim/aggressor dichotomy on non-traditional bodies.

In her article, 'Fighting Bodies, Fighting Words: A Theory and Politics of Rape Prevention' Marcus (1992) puts the issue straightforwardly: "the criteria of feminine beauty and worthy feminine behaviour, if enacted without any modification, create a trammelled, passive person ... the perfect victim of sexual aggression" (p. 393). Concomitantly, men are positioned as legitimately violent and entitled to women's bodies. Rape both expresses and enforces this dynamic (1992, pp. 390-1).

So far, Marcus and MacKinnon are in perfect agreement. However, Marcus wants to change the subject. She argues that this dynamic is not an inevitable one. She urges us to understand "rape as a language" and to imagine women as "neither already raped nor already rapeable" (1992, p. 387). She argues that "rape does not happen to preconstituted

victims; it momentarily makes victims" (1992, p. 391). While language provides the cultural meanings which script, it does not exhaustively determine us. The script can be changed.

How? This is where we run into difficulty. Marcus suggests a deconstruction and a subversion. Namely, she recommends we "develop a feminist discourse on rape by displacing the emphasis on what the rape script promotes—male violence against women—and putting in place what the rape script stultifies and excludes—women's will, agency, and *capacity for violence*" (1992, p. 394, my emphasis). This prescription been endorsed by Hesford (1999), Herberle (1996) Gatens (2000) and McCaughey and King (1995). To be entirely fair, Marcus seems mainly if not uniquely to have the possibility of women's self-defence in mind. Like Card (1995, p. 111), I am perfectly willing to accept the legitimacy of this form of violence insofar as it aims to escape rather than institute domination.

Of course, the project of distinguishing the one from the other can be quite complex. In legal forums, the question of when violence can properly be considered self-defence rides on the question of whether or not an assault was imminent. This leads to a further question. Whose assessment of the situation is relevant? That of the individual claiming self-defense, or that of some imagined "reasonable person"? (Nourse, 2001, p. 1235) While I will not be addressing these important and vastly complicated issues here, I do suggest that Card's distinction is one we should have in mind and strive to respect. At no point does Marcus make such a distinction, or anything like it. How could this be?

Marcus explicitly rejects what Butler (1993) has referred to as "a feminine morphology in its radical distinctness from the masculine" (p. 86). She takes issue, for example, with Brownmiller's view of the male capacity to rape as objective reality:

> These views enact, in effect, a gendered polarization of the grammar of violence in which the male body can wield weapons, can make itself into a weapon, and benefits from an enforced ignorance concerning its own vulnerability; the female body is predicated by this grammar as universally vulnerable, lacking force, and incompetent to supplement its deficiencies with tools which could vanquish the penis's power by dissimulating it (Marcus, 1992, p. 395).

Instead, Marcus (1992) wants us to "place ourselves as subjects who can engage in dialogic violence and respond to aggression in kind" (p. 397). But one begins to suspect that a feminine morphology has found refuge in her thinking. Marcus must assume that women have some positive quality that men lack or lack some negative quality that men have. Why else would she expect women's violence, as compared to that of men, to have positive consequences? Marcus seems only to see "sexual violence as a variable practice of dominance" (Herberle, 1996, p. 70) within certain limits. Like many before her, she recognizes that women are not the only targets of sexual violence (Marcus, 1992, p. 394), but not that we may perpetrate such offences. Were Marcus to recognize the latter fact, I wager she would be less eager to posit women's violence, undifferentiated, as a solution to rape.

This lack of recognition draws out a similarity between Hoagland's *Lesbian Ethics*, which looks to feminine characteristics for solutions in a patriarchal world, and Marcus' 'Theory and Politics of Rape Prevention,' which sees feminine comportment as

enabling patriarchy. Hoagland wants lesbians to 'attend' to one another, thus learning from and supporting each other in our experiences. She opposes this sort of engagement to the patriarchal practice of control (1988, p. 139). In those cases where another lesbian begins to attack us or make choices we find deeply unacceptable, Hoagland (1988, p. 131) suggests that rather than trying to establish authority we withdraw our attention. While these suggestions may function quite well most of the time, Card (1995) has raised the theory's incapacity to deal with lesbian batterers and stalkers. When faced with such individuals, practices of control may be our only recourse.

Where I see Marcus relying on an underlying supposition that women cannot or will not initiate acts of sexual violence, Card (1995) identifies in Hoagland's work an "underlying supposition ...that among lesbians ... the need does not arise to defend ourselves against deep hostility that refuses even to respect withdrawal" (p. 126). The parallel in the gendered assumptions of these works becomes evident when we compare how Hoagland understands "attention" between heterosexuals versus between lesbians. Much like Marcus (1992, p. 393), Hoagland (1988) views paradigmatic heterosexuality as a "balance between masculine predation upon and ... protection of a feminine object of masculine attention" (p. 29). In this context, women's dedication of attention to men results from and enables men's destructiveness (Hoagland, 1988, p. 127; Marcus 1992, pp. 393-4). Just as Marcus seems to believe that women's violence might be different, Hoagland (1988) holds that attention between women might be different: "When instead, you attend me, our channels of communication are open and we are sending and receiving energy" (p. 127). Card (1995, p. 128) wants to remind us that while a lesbian's attention can be rewarding, it can equally be "crazy-making," for example where a lesbian becomes a stalker. While Marcus should be commended for taking up the cause of rape

prevention, she should be mindful that women's violence can be and sometimes is used for more than self-defence; for example, women too can rape. Tactics of control and self-defence are sometimes necessary even against women who can also use tactics of violence in deplorable ways.

Marcus worries that stereotypically feminine stances of empathy and responsiveness fail the rape victim by sustaining the rape script on the perpetrator's terms. Within the context of the rape script, these stances may often be worth overcoming. I support schooling in self-defence tactics accompanied in the usual way by an ethical code for when and where these tactics should be put into play. For women, training in self-defence is itself subversive. In the course of jujitsu and karate classes, Brownmiller (1975) recognized that "the sudden twists, jabs and punches that were so foreign to [her] experience and ladylike existence, were the stuff that all little boys grow up learning." She found that she too had "natural weapons" which could "inflict real damage" such as "elbows and knees" (p. 403). Brownmiller had a phallus all along, though she never did recognize that hers had the potential to be used in the same devastating way a penis might be.

But where our whole politics of rape prevention turns on such strategies, I have some concerns, not all of which are directly related to the central problematic I have taken on. As Mardorossian (2002) notes, the assumption that rape succeeds because of the victim's "passive compliance with a sexual and linguistic script" (p. 753) problematically assumes that rape victims are the kind of people defined by violability while taking the responsibility for rape off the perpetrator's shoulders. Male rape victims, who tend to see themselves as the kinds of people who should be able to "defend themselves against threats" (Pino, 1999, p. 981), already stifle their painful experiences out of shame. This is

a situation which should be rectified, not proliferated. We should not lose site of the fact that sometimes passivity may be the best shot at survival. Victims who take this avenue may be entirely correct in their assessments of the available possibilities.

Marcus' insight that women can engage in violence might serve both to encourage women's legitimate tactics of self-defence and, as Ristock hopes, to illuminate women's tactics of illegitimate aggression. But in order to see that the former sort of subversion is possible, we are required to read between Marcus' hopeful lines. Advancing women's violence as an undifferentiated solution to rape may in fact be a dangerous prospect.

Let us turn to one well-intentioned deployment of Marcus' thoughts. One of the ways in which Marcus (1992) frames rape as linguistic is by looking to the ideology producing "images of rape our culture turns out." These, she argues, "collude in and perpetuate rape in definite ways" (p. 389). Indeed, film and television cultivate ideologies and models for behaviour which link masculinity to violence and femininity to victimhood (Escholz and Bufkin, 2001, p. 659).

McCaughey and King (1995) have learned through their teaching experience that even when used to problematize the cultural dominance of rape fantasies, the screening of videos containing such messages takes a toll on female students. A feeling of disempowerment arises among women when "dangerous men" videos are screened. Further, they worry that male students may "manage their behavior" in accordance with the possibilities depicted in such films (1995, p. 377).

With these reasonable concerns in mind, McCaughey and King have developed *Mean Women*, a video collage of scenes from popular films in which women engage in violence against men for purposes of defense, revenge, or fun. They explain:

> Both "dangerous men" videos and our "mean women" video offer sets of assumptions about male and female natures, each of which can shape behavior in complex ways. They differ mainly in that one is a male dreamworld and the other is a male nightmare (1995, p. 377).

After the showing of the film, responses were collected. Most male students expressed enthusiasm, leading the authors to hopefully conclude men may "be able to accept women as equals in this way." However, some were concerned, making comments including "The images to me show how violent this world is becoming" and "Had the roles been reversed the reaction would have been one of disgust" (1995, p. 381). Certain colleagues worried about the impact the film might have on women's "moral outlooks" (1995, p. 383). McCaughey and King are quick to discount such concerns, convinced that their fifteen minute video will not undo their students' socialization to femininity or "make women inappropriately violent" (1995, p. 384). True, a single film isn't likely to change the viewers' worldly comportment. But it is meant as a debut. I quote: "In Marcus's terms, we hope that 'we can begin to imagine the female body as subject to change, as a potential agent of violence, and object of fear'" (1995, p. 378).

Given the current lack of information about how representations of women's violence affect female viewers (Escholz and Bufkin, 2001, p. 671), it is difficult to say how or even if *Mean Women* or similar projects might be integrated by the target audience. As Derrida reminds us, we are hard pressed to calculate all the eventual effects of our messages. If the overwhelmingly enthusiastic responses of McCaughey and King's female students are any indication, the messages of the film are likely to be taken

up in various ways. One woman commented: "I think watching females take action and defend themselves is a good thing. In a way it empowers women, makes them feel more competent." Another more disconcertingly remarked: "I thought these clips were great. It means that women are finally taking their place as violent, bloodthirsty, savage, testosterone-fueled egomaniacs next to the men. I love women with guns!" (1995, p. 380) Firstly, it is important to note that most men are neither "bloodthirsty" nor "savage". Some worry about "how violent this world is becoming." That aside, isn't it possible that the respondent who was so enthused over "bloodthirsty" and "savage" women might be more likely, with a little approval and encouragement, to work at making herself equal to men in this way? And is this really what we want?

Hesford (1999) doesn't think so. She offers a critique of the film *Rape Stories* which traces filmmaker Margie Strosser's experience of rape and its aftermath, culminating in a fantasy of revenge in which Strosser achieves victory over the rapist who is now positioned as victim. In this way, the film powerfully "rewrites" the rape script (1999, p. 206). While Hesford (1999) is hopeful that *Rape Stories* will "challenge dominant rape scripts" (p. 194), she worries that the "the survivor's agency appears to pivot on the symbolic order of the patriarchal system," on a simple reversal rather than undoing of the "binary opposition of male/power and female/powerlessness" (1999, p. 207).

While I am immediately uncomfortable with the prospect of critiquing a rape victim's processing of her experience, I am similarly troubled by a piece of cinema which displaces the traditional rape script only to put another one in place. As Derrida (1982) argues, "To attempt an exit and a deconstruction without changing the terrain, by

repeating what is implicit in the founding concepts of the original problematic ... one risks ceaselessly confirming ... that which one allegedly deconstructs" (p. 135).

Whether or not *Mean Women* has the force to fulfill its stated goal, that is, to influence the possibilities according to which women "manage their behavior" (McCaughey and King, 1995, p. 377), we should be concerned about a feminist turn which orients our efforts toward creating "the female body ... as a potential agent of violence" (1995, p. 378), particularly where violence is presented as a good time rather than a sometimes necessary way to maintain one's bodily integrity. Only in these latter cases should we become "objects of fear," for one cannot be an object of fear without a subject of fear. For Girshick's (2002) participants, becoming subjects of fear involved "flashbacks and nightmares" (p. 127) along with feelings of fragility and hopelessness.

Violence may in fact be increasingly available for women's use. It is a fact that female college students displayed increasingly higher scores on measures of masculinity from 1970 to 1995, a development attributed to women's movement into formerly male dominated realms (Escholze and Bufkin, 1995, p. 657). There is no question that feminism has had an effect on women's construction as subjects, and has the potential to continue doing so. The question becomes, what kinds of subjects do we want to be? When the feminist dream is reduced to inciting nightmares, it is time we step back and reassess.

There is recognition among certain promoters of gender subversion that subversive performances may fail us politically (e.g., Lloyd, 1999, p. 207). But the kinds of failures anticipated tend to be a disappointing retention of the status quo rather than a disappointingly destructive change. For example, will drag be read as a denaturalization of heterosexuality or disappointingly mistaken for its affirmation as gold standard?

Butler (1993), for example, notes that parody may "re-idealize heterosexual norms *without* calling them into question" (p. 126, original emphasis). But there are other, very important concerns which need accounting for. "Violent, bloodthirsty, savage, testosterone-fueled ... women with guns" (McCaughey and King, 1995, p. 380) may well point to the contingency of gender constructs. But I doubt that Renzetti's (1988, p. 390) informant, with some woman's gun forced into her vagina, would see this as feminist progress. From an anti-rape perspective, not all other possible worlds are equal.

This is definitively not to suggest a reversion to the status quo, in which violence by men against women is the norm. As Marcus does well to realize, this cultural script is an enormously harmful one. I am sure that Marcus and McCaughey and King would be deeply disturbed by the notion that women might really engage in gratuitous violence. I believe that these thinkers are deeply concerned to prevent rape as they know it, and wish to pull from the margins a world in which women are not defined by vulnerability. MacKinnon's deterministic theory of rape and gender does have to be deconstructed in the process of creating a world where women do not live in fear.

But as survivors of lesbian-on-lesbian rape know, it does not look better upside down. Certain essentialist residues seem to remain in Marcus' work, allowing her inattention to the possibility of such a reversal. It must be remembered that the margins are ambiguous. We must bring caution to our deconstructive and subversive projects; some method for choosing what will be taken up and what will be taken over. It would be useful to keep a goal of broad social change in mind. If the idea is not to retain a marginalized stance, but to create a better world, we must ask ourselves what kind of world we want to live in.

Let me return to those stances of empathy and responsiveness which Marcus finds so suspect. At the risk of sounding – well – feminine, I suggest that these characteristics have enormous value. We may want to set them aside at times, for example, in attempting to prevent an imminent rape. But these are the kinds of qualities with the potential to positively transform the social world in which rape is situated. McCaughey and King (1995) dismiss concerns about the level of violence present in our world: "Only male viewers regard the 'mean women' fantasy as a danger to be avoided. Women do not express fears about making the world a more violent place because they already know too well that the world is violent" (p. 381). Has it come to a sexual arms race? Have we totally abandoned the ideal of non-violence?

In Scully's (1988) discussions with convicted rapists, she found that empathy was decidedly absent. Rather, these men viewed women as meaningless objects and so saw no reason to be responsive to their resistance. These findings suggest that we might usefully work to draw into focus a quality just as marginalized by the dominant rape script as women's violence, namely, men's empathy for women's humanity. That like some men, some women also rape suggests that empathy may be found lacking on either side of the purported gender divide. Thus, while we may want to expand our repertoires of self-defence tools by learning when and how to deploy stereotypically masculine skills, we would do well at the same time to continue valuing and encouraging characteristics of empathy and responsiveness.

Deconstruction, however, may not be an easy fit with such specifications. Is the failure to distinguish between positive and deplorable gender subversions a peculiar oversight or a symptom of deconstructive and subversive tactics? Indeed, can such

distinctions be broached at all? Can deconstruction bear normative principles such as empathy and responsiveness? In the coming chapter, I will explore these issues.

Chapter 5: Deconstruction, Subversion and Communicative Norms

In 1992, Anderson (1992) commented that Butler's characterization of "the heterosexual matrix as dominant and oppressive" suggests a normative stance against marginalization which "only cryptically informs her account" (p. 75). As Fraser (1995, p. 71) notes, the conception of liberation as "liberation *from* identity" tends to lead to a deconstruction of those "normative, reconstructive" concepts which Butler inevitably interprets as oppressive. Butler has since drawn normativity into the foreground of her work, but with impressive ambivalence. This element of her thinking is explicitly paradoxical; norms are both necessary and hazardous to feminist politics. For the most part, we get the distinct impression we would be well advised to keep our intellectual distance.

How will this approach articulate with values such as respect, communication and non-violence which were suggested at the ends of the last two chapters? I here investigate whether the strategies of gender deconstruction and subversion can accommodate such ideals. The specific issue of lesbian-on-lesbian rape will remain largely in the background until this chapter is drawing to a close.

Fraser's concerns about the limitations of Butler's approach appear in *Feminist Contentions: A Philosophical Exchange*. This 1995 volume contains a pronounced debate between Benhabib and Butler. Fraser contributes a remarkable but, so far as Butler and Benhabib are concerned, ineffectual effort at mediation. These three authors' contributions to the text first appeared in 1990 at a symposium on the topic of feminism and postmodernism. Butler and Benhabib were presenters; Fraser was their respondent (Nicholson, 1995, p. 1). This exchange will provide a focus for the current section.

While of course neither Butler's nor Benhabib's remarks represent all the complexities of their respective theoretical fields, both have been quite influential. Butler's thinking on the performative construction of our identities has certainly marked feminist interpretations of gender (McNay, 1999, p. 175). Perhaps Butler's best known and most insistent critic, Benhabib is distinguished in her own right as a discourse ethicist (Magnus, 2006, p. 81; Canaday, 2003). Broadly speaking, this chapter moves from the exchange which occurs in *Feminist Contentions* to a later and more normatively oriented offering by Butler titled *The Question of Social Transformation*. But to begin, I offer a brief overview of Benhabib's communicative ethics.

Benhabib (1994, p. 174) sets out to defend "moral and political universalism" in a "post-metaphysical" world where there can be no appeal to "self-grounding reason" or disembedded subjectivity. This is an aim which Habermas (1998, p. 11) shares and so to meet it, Benhabib turns to communicative rationality in the Habermasian tradition.

Habermas (1998) asks: "Does not the recognition of cultural forms of life and traditions that have been marginalized ... require guarantees of status and survival?" (p. 205) Answering in the affirmative, he advocates a democracy centered on processes of reciprocal recognition in an egalitarian situation. Within this system, norms are validated through public argumentation to the point of consensus between interested parties (Anderson, 1992, p. 81). Habermas envisions this as an interaction between generalized others with identical rights and responsibilities (Benhabib, 1994). Within these procedural limits, philosophy does not try to detail the form a just society must take, but merely sets the groundwork for social reconstruction (Habermas, 1998, p. 72).

Following Habermas, Benhabib (1994) takes up the reconstruction of morality through conversation guided by "the principles of universal moral respect and egalitarian

reciprocity" (p. 175). Yet she also takes leave of her predecessor on several points. On her assessment, the full social reconciliation upon which Habermas bases validity is a pipedream. Nonetheless, she holds that the process Habermas advocates is a fair and workable guide for the future (1992, p. 37; 1994, p. 189; 1995, p. 31). With this in mind, Benhabib (1992, p. 38) shifts the normative emphasis of communicative action from ultimate agreement to ongoing conversation. Her question is: "how can moral conversation can be sustained?"

The ideals of communicative speech operate not only to enable moral conversation, but also to extend its scope. The aim is to expose "those partial interests that represent themselves as if they were general." Ideals of communicative action become "a critical yardstick by which to uncover the under-representation, the exclusion and silencing of *certain kinds* of interests" (1992, p. 48, original emphasis).

With this concern in mind, Benhabib wonders just who Habermas's 'generalized other' will be. A white heterosexual European man, perhaps? Thus, Benhabib (1994, p. 179) invites each of us as concrete others, with particular qualities and needs, to join the general party. It is in the course of conversation with the concrete other that points of contention about who we are, what matters, and how we should proceed can come to light and expose the partiality of the ostensibly general.

Importantly, as a "critical yardstick," communicative ethics becomes an ideal rather than a fully realizable future. We can refer to the principles of communicative ethics as we work to better ourselves, our relationships and our social institutions. We can ask ourselves whether we are listening to others' perspectives, erecting unnecessary hierarchies, breeding or feeding on stereotypes and discrimination. Almost certainly, reaching for the ideal speech situation will be an unending task (Benhabib, 1992, p. 9).

One problem which has been identified with communicative ethics is its admittance of the kinds of principles mentioned above prior to the communicative generation of consent. Benhabib (1992) describes the problem with reference to the Habermasian scheme: "the very presuppositions of the argumentation situation ... have a normative content that precedes the moral argument itself" (p. 29). Coming at it from another angle, what happens if a community comes to the consensus that non-democracy is preferable to ideal speech? Can and should communicative ethics respect such a position, given its starting suppositions?

Benhabib's (1992) answer to Habermas is to suggest that even those positions at the heart of communicative ethics "can be challenged within the moral conversation itself" (p. 32). This comment comes from a discussion of whether the exclusion of certain voices (what she refers to as inegalitarianism) might be admitted to the communicative-ethical order through moral conversation. It is interesting to see the way Benhabib manages to admit conversations about non-egalitarianism, but foreclose its implementation. Within communicative ethics, the test of validity is consent. Therefore,

> if such inegalitarianism is to be "rational" it must woo the assent of those "others" into the conversation. But if these "others" can see the rationality of the inegalitarian position, they can also dispute its justice. To assent entails just as much as the capacity to dissent, to say no. Therefore, either inegalitarianism is irrational, i.e. it cannot win the assent of those it addresses, or it is unjust because it precludes the possibility that its addressees will reject it (Benhabib, 1992, p. 33).

In other words, the ideals of communicative ethics ensure, at the very least, that we each have some say in our futures. The system is constitutionally unable to abide revocation of the franchise. We can see how a similar argument might operate were democracy thrown into question. For example, an entire society might initially assent to such a system, but there would henceforth be no way to secure their assent to the kinds of initiatives and rulings which might be established. Further, members born into such a society would not have provided consent. On Benhabib's view, the system could not be validated. As Benhabib (1992) puts it, her proposition is "not 'morally neutral,' in that it maintains that only certain moral positions are comprehensive and reflexive enough such as to be able to generate norms of coexistence and conduct which would be acceptable to *all* in a modern society" (p. 44). Here she oversteps herself, for she holds from the start that total consent is not guaranteed (1992, p. 9). Some will wish for a non-egalitarian system, others perhaps for a non-democratic one. Nonetheless, given the alternative of setting up a system in which some or even most members of society have no opportunity for input whatsoever, I hold that she offers a fairly good compromise.

For Benhabib as for Benjamin, the human infant develops into the author and actor of her life narrative, endowed with the capacities of language, reason, and a sense of justice through contingent, intersubjective processes. While Benhabib does not believe that we can 'get in other people's heads' she does believe that we can develop a significant capacity for perspective reversal. It is by asking "how would I feel if ..." that we may begin to overcome our prejudices and learn how to act justly toward others (1994, p. 189).

Such ideas are of immediate interest to this discussion. Rape occurs where perspective reversal fails and communication is shut down (Scully, 1988). Thus, I am drawn to a perspective which attempts to rectify such breakdowns. Further, as we have seen, lesbian-on-lesbian rape is a phenomenon which has been marginalized through the kinds of exclusionary discourses Benhabib also works to redress. How will these ideas work for Butler?

The Benhabib/Butler debate is ignited with Benhabib's first contribution to *Feminist Contentions*, a chapter entitled 'Feminism and Postmodernism: An Uneasy Alliance'. Benhabib (1995, p. 18) interrogates three postmodern theses as articulated by Jane Flax: the deaths of 'Man', 'History' and 'Metaphysics'. In each instance, two versions are offered, one 'weak', the other 'strong'. Benhabib reads these as amenable and antithetical to feminism, respectively.

Central to Benhabib's (1995, p. 118) position is an insistence that feminist politics can and must rationally justify "the norms of universal moral respect and egalitarian reciprocity." Anyone who sees it otherwise is trying to "jump over [her] own shadow" – a pathetic vision indeed. Butler (1995), for her part, holds that "recourse to a position—hypothetical, counterfactual, or imaginary—that places itself beyond the play of power, and which seeks to establish the metapolitical basis for a negotiation of power relations, is perhaps the most insidious ruse of power" (p. 39). And so the tone is set for the debate.

On Benhabib's (1995) reading, the weak version of the 'Death of Man' thesis replaces the foundational subject with a socially, linguistically and discursively situated figure. Few feminist thinkers would see fit to argue that the subject stands outside the social and on her own, and Benhabib is no exception. After all, Benhabib's author-character learns her capacities in a social context. But the strong 'Death of the Subject'

thesis, to her thinking, is dead in the water. Here, the subject dissolves into a signifying chain along with "intentionality, accountability, self-reflexivity, and autonomy" (1995, p. 20). This is a view which Benhabib (1992, p. 21) associates with Butler's performatively constituted subject. Because on Butler's view the subject is produced by her citational performances rather than producing the performances she puts on, Benhabib sees her as fully determined and unable to make decisions or effect change.

Deconstructionist ire aroused, Butler (1995) responds with 'Contingent Foundations: Feminism and the Question of "Postmodernism"'. To insist on a stable subject for politics, she argues, is domineeringly to disqualify "*political* opposition to that claim" (1995, p. 36). In any case, Butler insists her subject *does* have capacities, and furthermore, they are accounted for, which is more than Benhabib can say. Namely, our capacities are born of the discursive political field which always precedes us (1995, p. 46). Of course, Benhabib has said nothing about making the subject stable and on the face of it at least, Butler's discursive field may be compatible with Benhabib's contingent social learning processes. There is little thus far to distinguish the two views apart from Butler's proclivity to emphasize the processes which structure our capacities and Benhabib's fondness for emphasizing what might be done with the capacities we acquire.

The weak, and for Benhabib (1995, p. 23) acceptable version of the 'Death of History' implies an end to the presentation of "essentialist", "monocausal" or "hegemonial" groups as historical representatives. As Benhabib articulates the strong version of this thesis, it rejects analyses of macro-social practices and their historical roots in favour of local, uncontextualized tales. Benhabib sees an interest in histories of subjugation as integral to "the aspirations of all struggling historical actors." She suggests that efforts to recover from such histories are at the basis of feminist movements.

Again, Butler (1995, p. 39) turns the tables on modernists, arguing that the "new" is *their* preoccupation and pursuit, one which postmodernism has shown to be untenable, for there is nothing new under the sun; the "old" is always implicated in present social manifestations . She equally wishes to find an exit from historical subjugations, not by ignoring the past, but through subversive repetitions of its terms which might "displace them from the contexts in which they have been deployed as instruments of oppressive power" (1995, p. 51).

When it comes to the 'weak' 'Death of Metaphysics' thesis, Benhabib (1995, p. 24) expresses both agreement and irritation. This thesis sees as delusional the modernist belief that philosophy can establish truth through privileged access to the real. Benhabib agrees that such access is impossible, but disagrees that modern philosophy has uniformly proceeded on the basis of such an error. The view that it has, itself a metanarrative, merely sets up a straw man for postmodernists to kick at.

Promptly rebuilding that straw man where it stood, Butler argues that the very use of the term "postmodern" is a characteristically "modern" ruse (1995, p. 38) deployed by those who would insist that philosophy refers to some stable and exterior truth (1995, pp. 35-6). The very concept of the postmodern is made of straw: "It is paradoxical, at best, that the act of conceptual mastery that affects this dismissive grouping of positions under the postmodern wants to ward off the peril of political authoritarianism" (1995, p. 38). Not only does Butler deny the existence of some theoretical totality called "postmodernism", she also resists association with certain positions attributed to this fiction. Prominent among these is "antifoundationalism". It is not, Butler insists, that foundations don't exist, but that they are unstable, contingent and exclusionary structures

which ought to be questioned (1995, p. 41), a point with which Benhabib readily and explicitly agrees (1995, p. 118).

So what have we got? Benhabib thinks that Butler is a postmodernist, which Butler takes as an accusation of antifoundationalism. Butler refuses to be saddled with either title. Butler thinks that Benhabib is a modernist, and thus believes in stable foundations. While Benhabib indeed sees herself as a modernist, she rejects Butler's characterization of this branch of theory. Finally, there is agreement that foundations are contingent.

It is in terms of the strong version of the "Death of Metaphysics" that a genuinely polarized dispute arises. This thesis states that philosophy can no longer function as a "meta-discourse of legitimation", can no longer critique or justify, and thus becomes entirely impotent (Benhabib, 1995, p. 25). In a strange omission, Benhabib makes no reference to her own substantial theorizing toward methods of legitimation in a post-metaphysical situation. Rather, she launches an attack on what she sees as a common feminist response to this position, namely, "situated criticism" in which localities "pass judgement on themselves" (1995, p. 26).

Situated criticism is risky, Benhabib (1995, p. 27) holds, because some social locations are decidedly devoid of emancipatory tools. Further, it is impracticable because our locations are subject to multiple and often conflicting values which we cannot avoid normatively ordering. Her take on this method suggests a simple appeal to the cultural norms which shirks "the responsibility of normative justification" (1995, p. 28). This, I think, is what disturbs Benhabib the most.

Fraser seeks to defend situated criticism, but her version of this approach includes normative justification. Fraser makes the reasonable point that even if we take a dim

view of the cultures in which we are situated, it remains that we are in some sense situated by them. She also notes that "the clarifying and reconstructing" of social norms are themselves socially situated processes (1995, p. 64). On her view, it is important to remember that gender dominance "takes different forms at different junctures and sites, and its character varies for differently situated women" (1995, p. 159). Yet for Fraser (1995), "situated criticism does not preclude general claims or appeals to general norms; it only requires that these, too, be regarded as situated" both "culturally and historically" (p. 64). Specifically, she advocates a project permitting us to "project utopian hopes, envision emancipatory alternatives, and infuse all of our work with a normative critique of domination and injustice" (1995, p. 159). Her ideas, then, are not particularly distinct from Benhabib's hope for utopian aspirations generated in the modern era by communicative actors. As Benhabib (1992) puts it, "individuals do not have to ... define themselves independently either of the ends they cherish or of the constitutive attachments which make them what they are" (p. 73). The disagreement appears to be another false antithesis. Benhabib envisions situated criticism as an absence of general norms; Fraser as a recognition of difference and historicity.

Butler (1995, pp. 128-9), for her part, sees insistence upon normative ordering as a "fundamental mistake." Why? "To set "norms" of political life in advance is to prefigure the kinds of practices which will qualify as the political and it is to seek to negotiate politics outside of a history which is always to a certain extent opaque to us in the moment of action" (1995, p. 129). The claim that attempts to "prefigure" politics are problematic is consistent with the form of coalition Butler advocates in *Gender Trouble.* Here, she cautions against imposing ideal forms of dialogue upon coalitional structures in an effort to "guarantee unity as the outcome" (1999, p. 21). Rather, Butler encourages us

to accept fragmentation as a part of a democratic process through which coalitions take form organically. Certainly forms of dialogue should not be imposed without discussion, the possibility for revision, and in the best of worlds, full consensus.

But at times Butler goes beyond exhorting us to accept that conflict will occur and seems to place a normative value on discord above all else. As she puts it in 'Contingent Foundations': "I would argue the rifts among women over the content of the term [women] ought to be safeguarded and prized, indeed, that this rifting ought to be reaffirmed as the ungrounded ground of feminist theory" (1995, p. 50). For Butler, 'rifting' over identities may be the sign of political change:

> No signifier can be radically representative, for every signifier is the site of perpetual *méconnaisance* ...Paradoxically, the failure of such signifiers—"women" is the one that comes to mind—fully to describe the constituency they name is ... what opens the signifier to new meanings and new possibilities for political resignification. It is this open-ended and performative function of the signifier that seems to me to be crucial to a radical democratic notion of futurity (1993, p. 191).

But surely sometimes we do well to overcome our rifts and even to reduce the differences between us. For example, Fraser (1995) draws our attention to the conflicts which have arisen between "professional white middle class First World women and the Third World women of color they employ as domestic workers" (pp. 70-1). Fraser's example is highly instructive, reminding us of the kinds of oppression around which

conflict often arises; circumstances which are surely not to be "prized." She goes on to note that Butler's efforts tell us nothing of whether it is possible to alter social circumstances so as to really resolve the issues at play in conflicts. While we should be alert to the fact that abuses of power may take place in the name of consensus, I hope, with Fraser, that it may sometimes be possible to come to agreements which alleviate oppression rather than aggravating it. As Allen (1998, p. 468) argues, there are distinctions which need making between genuine and forced agreements. Such distinctions will be important to pursue as we work to resolve the oppressions which may lie at the roots of our conflicts.

Interestingly, not only does Butler resist efforts to control our politics; at times she seems to see such efforts as hopeless. Butler (1993, p. 219) holds that she who deploys the signifier is herself part of the signifying chain and thus cannot predict or control the effects her usage of a term might have. Something like agency arises through our repetitions of the terms which constitute us; something which doesn't involve making choices, but being confronted by the "*impossibility* of choice" (1993, p. 124, original emphasis). Those changes which may be affected by unexpected reiterations of available discourses arise when the subject meets with an unfamiliar "juncture of discursive demands" (1993, p. 124). Recall the crossroads of prohibitions where 'The Lesbian Phallus' emerged (1993, p. 86). The subject comes into contact with some unprecedented person, situation or part of herself. Compelled as usual to perform a repetition, she finds that no convention is an exact fit. In such cases, the subject must do something hitherto impossible which, because it is novel, will have unpredictable consequences (1993, p. 124). It is at such moments that the potential for change arises. Typically poetic, Derrida puts it as follows:

> That is what an event worthy of the name [freedom] can and ought to be, an *arrivance* that would surprise me absolutely … what happens, what arrives and comes down upon me, that to which I am exposed, beyond all mastery. Heteronomy, then—the other is my law … The other who or which comes upon me does not necessarily *present* itself before me in a horizontal perspective; it can fall upon me, vertically (not from the Most High, and yet from so high!) or surprises me by coming at my back, from behind or from below, from the underground of my past, in such a way that I don't see it coming … (in Derrida and Roudinesco, 2004, p. 52)

A politic that never sees beyond its reflection is dangerously colonial and disturbingly common. We saw this sort of arrangement appear under the auspices of the Lacanian phallus. Yet a politic based on self-negation through an encounter with the 'purely other' harbours two dangers which Falzon (1988) points out. Firstly, it denies and thus fails to take responsibility for its own inevitable organizing activity. We will always organize our interpretations of others through our own frameworks. Others may influence our frameworks, helping us to understand where they are coming from. As Benhabib emphasizes, it is morally important that we should listen. Indeed, I firmly believe that genuine agreement may arise in such circumstances, a possibility which pleases me. But there is no 'purely other' who can take us over, and this is a lucky thing.

Because secondly, a politic based on self-negation leaves us dangerously "vulnerable to seduction by external forces" (Falzon, 1988, p. 38).

In Butler's more psychoanalytic passages, the "impossibility of choice" and "the radically other" are prominent. In *Bodies that Matter*, Butler (1993, p. 234) adopts a psychoanalytic view that what is performed is only explicable in relation to what is proscribed. On this understanding, drag 'acts out' the figure of an "object/Other" whose loss can neither be acknowledged nor grieved. Equally, the heterosexual male takes on the status of an impossible love whose loss is repressed (1993, p. 236). The 'Lesbian Phallus', in all its subversive glory, is no chosen politic but an exteriorization of that which has been "defensively foreclosed" (1993, p. 86). Butler (1993) describes the gender performance which she sees as symptomatic of some repressed passion, in a Derridian turn of phrase, as "the impossible within the possible" (p. 236). That which is unthinkable – some unthinkable love, for example – remains marginalized even as it is expressed in a thinkable context.

When our gender performances are understood in this way, lesbian-on-lesbian rape – any act of rape – might be taken to spring from the subconscious and surprise the perpetrator as much as the victim. As Lloyd (1999, p. 204) notes, in *Bodies that Matter* critical engagement shrinks as the political is increasingly relegated to the level of the unconscious. We might as well stop bothering about trying to effect change; change will either happen or it won't but it has nothing to do with our intentions (Lloyd 1999, p. 207).

I am highly sceptical of a reading which reduces our politics to the level of the subconscious. Certainly the political consequences of our activities, and at times our activities themselves, can surprise us. But as we mull over the expected and unexpected effects of our actions we are availed of new knowledge which we can at least try to apply

in the future. Doubtless much comes to pass below the level of consciousness. We often have particular difficulty explaining our desires to act in particular ways. I am convinced that those genders with which we identify and in accordance with which we are prone to behave are largely dictated from an unconscious level. Still, there is plenty of room for planning. One may have no idea why 'doing drag' is appealing, but when it comes to envisioning, preparing for and participating in a drag show, there is plenty of time to consider what the performance will consist of and imagine how the audience might respond. If things don't play out as planned, the performer will likely consider what went better or more poorly than expected and why. Efforts will likely be made to adjust future performances accordingly.

Even if we hold deep beliefs that appropriate manifestations of masculinity involve violence, we may be brought to reconsider these assumptions and modify our behaviour, perhaps as Benjamin suggests, through a realization that the 'other' is in fact a human being too. Such processes involve conscious engagement on the one hand, and social interaction on the other. They also articulate with the unconscious. As Benjamin (1990, p. 35) points out, human relations effect our psychic development; social arrangements will have an impact on what our psyches are prone to produce. For example, if processes of masculine individuation were altered on a social level, the exteriorization of masculine attributes would likely be expressed differently. Thus, it is important to consider how conscious, interactive and planned processes articulate with psychic ones.

For Butler, there also seems to be a normative element to knowing that we don't know what will happen, and that we are never really in control. In 'Contingent Foundations', we are offered American military engagement in Iraq as a dramatic

example of that "insidious" (1995, p. 47) version of the subject which imagines itself to be in control:

> The demigod of a U.S. military subject which euphorically enacted the fantasy that it can achieve its aims with ease fails to understand that its actions have produced effects that will far exceed its phantasmatic purview; it thinks that its goals were achieved in a matter of weeks, and that its action was completed. But the ... effects of its actions have already inaugurated violence in places and in ways that it not only could not foresee but will be unable ultimately to contain, effects which will produce a massive and violent contestation of the Western subject's phantasmatic self-construction (1995, p. 45).

Certainly, the U.S military was in error when it thought it had Iraq 'under control'. But this doesn't mean our intentions are never realized. And of course, there are some definite distinctions we might make between feminist movements and the U.S. military. For example, I hope that, in general, our aims are more emancipatory than imperialist. In any case, the point I was trying to make was that Butler sees the ideal of the intentional subject not only as impossible, but also as "insidious." If this isn't a normative indictment, I don't know what is.

But can Butler even sustain such normative claims? We have come full circle to the point which opened this paper. In Fraser's (1995) words, "Butler has explicitly

renounced the moral-theoretical resources necessary to account for her own implicit normative judgements" (p. 162). This disconnect, Anderson (1992, p. 67) suggests, is avoided by the communicative ethical position, according to which, if domination comes to "undermine" or "foreclose the communicative ideal" – if we are only seeing our own reflections – then our ethical obligation is to revitalize the "communicative ideals of recognition and respect."

The utopian aspiration which Benhabib wishes to foster strongly recalls the Derridian *impossible*. It is a "longing for the 'wholly other'... for that which is not yet" (Benhabib, 1995, p. 30). But Benhabib is consciously and explicitly working on organizing that possibility toward particular aspirations. While she wishes to counter exclusionary practices, she does not shrink from basing this effort on certain minimal norms. There is no possibility that a rapist might be located among Benhabib's projections:

> It is a matter of political imagination as well as collective fantasy to project institutions, practices and ways of life which promote non-violent conflict resolution strategies and associative problem solving methods ... [C]ommunicative ethics may supply our minds with just the right dose of fantasy such as to think beyond the old oppositions of utopia or realism, containment or conflict. Then, as today, we still can say, "L'imagination au pouvoir"! (1992, p. 49)

This sort of critical engagement is an element which Butler, at least until recently, has lacked. In *Feminist Contentions*, Fraser (1995, pp. 67-8) rightly observes that Butler's focus on "resignification" takes on positive connotations which are inexplicable given her explicit if sometimes unrealized resistance to validity claims. Rather than explaining why the terms which structure her analyses are helpful in the world, Butler (1995, p. 138) responds by denying that resignification has any positive implications at all. The notion, she insists, merely describes a situation in which what is called critique is always immanent to the forms of power it aims to "adjudicate."

Yet in her second offering to *Feminist Contentions*, Butler accepts that, despite all of her protestation, to "set norms, to affirm aspirations, to articulate the possibilities of a more fully democratic and participatory political life is …a necessity." She goes on: "I would claim the same for the contested status of 'universality'" (Butler, 1995, p. 129). The question of normativity in general would be quickly abandoned. But the notion of universality, which certainly rings normative, would be pursued.

For Butler, the term 'universal' is an enormously political one under which human rights are granted and outside of which they are denied (1995, p. 130). The term will always be culturally delimited, paradoxically temporal and constituted through exclusion. Although Butler calls on us to work at extending the term, she holds that we will likely never arrive at a final articulation of it, nor perhaps should we:

> What any of those terms will mean …will not be determinable outside of the conflicts, institutional arrangements, and historical conditions in which they emerge. The lure of a transcendental guarantee, the promise of philosophy to "correct existence," ….

> is one which seduces us away from the difficulty of political life. This urge to have philosophy supply the vision that will redeem life, that will make life worth living, this urge is the very sign that the sphere of the political has *already* been abandoned. For that sphere will be the one in which those very theoretical constructions ... are in the very process of being lived as ungrounded, unmoored, in tatters, but also, as recontextualized ... as the very resources from which a postfoundational politics is wrought (Butler, 1995, p. 131).

In a phrase which Fraser (1995) addresses to Benhabib, "everything depends on what is meant by ... 'philosophy'" (p. 64). If what is meant is some God's eye view, then we can do without it, and notably Benhabib (1994, p. 174) has agreed that we must. That is the point of her project. But if philosophy is used, as by Benhabib (1995, p. 118), to establish norms in a post-metaphysical situation, then it is not the sort of thing we want to see shredded. Let us return to some real conditions of real lives for a moment and remember that lesbian-on-lesbian rape, for example, may leave its victim "ungrounded, unmoored" and sometimes quite physically "in tatters." For many, such experiences "completely crack apart the belief in lesbian utopia" (Girshick, 2002, p. 49) leaving residual feelings of confusion, fragility, hopelessness and worthlessness. "Sense of direction" may be lost (2002, pp. 127-8). Certainly these circumstances recontextualize the female subject. But they should be the focus of reconstructive work rather than naïve celebration. So long as we don't create silencing exclusions with the delusion that 'lesbian utopia' exists, it remains a useful dream to pursue.

In a 2003 article entitled 'The Question of Social Transformation', Butler finally comes, somewhat uncomfortably, somewhat evasively, to more fully articulate some semblance of a set of norms. The article begins with manifest discomfort but impressive candour: "It was a jarring moment, the moment in which I received this invitation. Would I have to write some essays making plain the relationship of my view of feminist theory to the question of social transformation?" (2003, p. 1)

In articulating a response to this apparently "surprising" demand, Butler generates some surprises herself. Specifically, she argues that norms, in the form of guiding aspirations of "non-violence and respect" are necessary "in order to live, and to live well, to know in what direction to transform our social world" (2003, p. 3). She acknowledges that 'resignification' alone is an insufficient politic prone to precipitate wonderful or abhorrent consequences (2003, p. 24). Thus, Butler wishes to direct this process in the service of radical democracy to extend the realms of universality and justice.

With no discussion of how this theoretical reversal comes about, we find ourselves in a situation where we can and should orient our actions in advance and toward specific aims. All of this, from the norms of non-violence and respect to talk of justice and universality to the implication of a volitional subject capable of pursuing these goals, would appear to be an enormous concession to Benhabib ... sort of. Hot on the heels of Butler's development of normative claims follows a more familiar note. On the other hand, norms can operate as constraining criteria for what counts, or should count as life. In this way, norms do violence of the sort that "for reasons of social justice, we must oppose" (2003, p. 3). Moreover, these are not two kinds of norms, but two sides of a 'double bind' which, it seems, we encounter with every invocation of normativity.

Here, Butler takes as an example the Habermasian scheme. She acknowledges that the Habermasian norm does not aim to regulate subjects according to, say, some heterosexual ideal. Rather, it is part of a more open-ended reasoning process which provides coherence for any given order. She further recognizes that for Habermas, certain "orders clearly ought to be disrupted, and for good reason." What is lacking, I suppose what is always lacking to Butler's mind, is a way to distinguish oppressive from positive forms of integration. Oppressive and democratic regimes alike may be maintained by normativity. "Is there not," she asks, "an inherently conservative function of the norm when it is said to preserve order?" (2003, p. 20-1) Particularly suspect is Habermas's projection of a common view. Butler reasonably speculates that the common is instituted through productions of exclusions. Part of non-violence, she suggests, must be the recognition that there is no 'common' upon which to base our politics (2003, p. 21).

I find suspect Butler's choice to overlook the specific character of the norms to which Habermas appeals; to reiterate, those of universal respect and egalitarian reciprocity. So long as Butler refers to these merely as 'integrative ideals', the spectre of totalitarianism quickly arises. Once named, these norms appear as antithetical to the oppressive state of affairs Butler is interested in discouraging; they may in fact distinguish oppressive from non-oppressive orders and they are perfectly in line with Butler's own hopes for non-violence and respect.

On the other hand, Butler's suspicion toward the criterion of consent is well placed. This is a suspicion which Benhabib fully shares and has effectively addressed. Indeed, what dazzles me most in this article, given the history of their engagement, is Butler's neglect of Benhabib's contribution to Habermasian thought on this level:

> Consent alone can never be a criterion of anything, neither of truth nor of moral validity; rather, it is always the rationality of the procedure for attaining agreement which is of philosophical interest ... Consent is a misleading term for capturing the core idea behind communicative ethics: namely the processual generation of reasonable agreement about moral principals via an open-ended moral conversation. It is my claim that this core intuition, together with ... the principles of universal respect and egalitarian reciprocity, are sufficient ... (Benhabib, 1992, p. 37)

Benhabib's framework recognizes and attempts to navigate the dangers of insisting upon commonality, and in so doing goes a good distance toward disarming the "double bind" critique according to which the norms we select to guide us must be dangerously oppressive. She assumes that "institutions can function as channels of illegitimate exclusion and silencing" and believes that "the task of critical discourse theory is to develop a moral presumption in favour of the radical democratization of such processes" (1992, p. 48). Through such democratization, she too wants to extend and open the realm of universality.

The paradoxical status of the latter term, Butler (1995, p. 130) assures us, does not render it useless but signals that its current articulations are neither full nor final. Why, then, is Butler so resistant to the pursuit of new, fuller but in no way final articulations under the communicative ethical frame? Benhabib and Butler share an ethical interest in moving beyond the "real" to "future identities and as yet undiscovered communities"

(Benhabib, 1992, p. 8) through respectful and non-violent processes. Both value democracy enormously while recognizing its contingency.

A significant remaining difference is that, whereas Benhabib formulates a strategy for moving forward with the norms she and Butler share, Butler cannot stop going in circles. 'The Question of Social Transformation' suggests that Butler is increasingly willing to accept critically engaged strategies although she continues to hedge her bets, insisting on "paradoxes" and "double binds". She still gives us the distinct impression that we would be well advised to step back from the very norms to which we must appeal. But as we have seen, doing so involves some rather remarkable textual omissions. One begins to wonder if this is a case of obstinate heel digging.

Gender deconstruction and subversion can co-exist with injunctions against lesbian-on-lesbian rape. But this means submitting to certain critical limitations. As Fraser (1995) argues, "Feminists *do* need to make normative judgements and to offer emancipatory alternatives" (p. 71). While, as shown in the last chapter, lesbian-on-lesbian rape fits quite comfortably with Butler's concept of rearticulation, it is decidedly at odds with the utopian aspirations that Benhabib promotes and that Butler still dances around. What will be sewn from the tatters of transcendentalism? Neither Butler nor Benhabib pretend to be clear on that. But the communicative norms of respectful, reciprocal and non-violent communication provide a good starting point.

Given Scully's (1988) finding that rapists see their victims as sexual objects rather than human subjects, I am inclined to believe that, from an anti-rape perspective, there are significant gains to be made by encouraging 'perspective taking.' As Benhabib(1994) holds, an intersubjective position requires "the complex coexistence of self and other in intrapsychic space" (p. 188). Recall the "third space" to which Benjamin (2005) referred

in the third chapter. For Benhabib (1994), since selves only come into being by "learning to reverse perspectives in moral and social space" (p. 188), some level of perspective reversal is always within reach. This is likely an overstatement. Surely for each of us there are some perspectives that we just cannot get our heads around. But we can work at that, and implementing the ideals of communicative ethics will help.

The discourse in discourse ethics helps us to understand other points of view and to avoid mistaking them for our own: "The whole point of discourse ethics is, in fact, to promote participatory political structures, which would eliminate substitutionalism and augment public chances for articulating one's standpoint as one sees it and in one's own language" (1994, p. 188). Communicative ethics may breed "reversibility of perspectives," a dynamic which in turn enables "social learning around issues like sexism, racism, and ethnic discrimination" (1994, p. 189). Benhabib is well aware that such learning, "like psychoanalysis, is an interminable process; for social life generates conflicts and distortions of perspectives, idealizations and mythologizations as well as demonizations of others" (1994, p. 189).

The nearer we can come to a world in which non-violence, respect and processes of perspective-taking are normative, the more likely it is that the rape script will never get off the ground. I am not suggesting that we can eliminate rape altogether. I suppose I have become too cynical for that. But what I am suggesting is that these 'guiding utopian aspirations' offer a hopeful vehicle for getting us closer. Pursuing these norms will require conscious and collective engagement. It is highly unlikely that our unconscious minds will spontaneously produce the solutions we are looking for. Giving ourselves over to whatever is other will not be the solution either, for unbidden others do not always come peaceably, as lesbian-on-lesbian and other forms of rape demonstrate. Not every

other should be welcomed with open arms, as we have the right to guard or own integrity just as we have the responsibility to engage with rather than dominate others.

Deconstruction will also help. It will help us to keep asking questions, to keep from becoming overly comfortable with our assumptions. As Caputo puts it:

> Whenever a legal system has been good, whenever it has been something more than a blind and inflexible tyrant, whenever the laws have protected the weak against the strong and prevented the winds of injustice from sweeping across the land, then the law has been deconstructible. Deconstructibility is the condition of legal progress, of a perfectible and gradually perfected, a self-revising and self-correcting ensemble of norms that distils the knowledge of the generations (Caputo in Caputo and Derrida, 1998, p. 130).

I will conclude this chapter as Benhabib (1995) concludes hers: "Postmodernism can teach us the theoretical and political traps of why utopias and foundational thinking can go wrong, but it should not lead to a retreat from utopia altogether. For we, as women, have much to lose by giving up on the utopian hope for the wholly other" (p. 30).

Chapter 6: Women's Violence and Feminism

Since the 1970s, "rape has been framed as both an instance and an example of larger patterns of gender inequality ... [S]truggles around the legal and public constructions of rape, rape victims, and rapists have served as a crucible for larger feminist concerns about women's subordination to men" (Chasteen, 2001, p. 106). Does feminism begin to lose its relevance when such a basic, longstanding, and focal issue as rape strays from the patriarchal moorings we once believed to be clear and permanent? Here, I argue that it does not.

This chapter is in part a pre-emptive one. The existence of women's violence, and lesbian-on-lesbian violence specifically, has already been used in efforts to discredit feminist projects (Ristock, 2002, p. 5). Given the continuing importance of feminist analysis in a world where many women are disadvantaged in innumerable ways, it is vital to tread cautiously. But this chapter is not protectionist. It comes to feminism offering new ground for thinking, looking for doors which may already be open and hoping to open doors which may be shut, with faith that welcome will be extended.

When I planned to write this chapter, I thought I might talk about the numbers. I would show that while lesbian-on-lesbian rape is a very real concern, man-on-woman rape continues to create the lion's share of suffering. I would not have been the first to use such an approach. Recognizing that lesbian-on-lesbian violence involves the same control, harm and danger identified in man-on-woman violence, Worchester (2002, p. 1404) emphasizes the fallibility of statistics like Renzetti's which have shown equal frequencies of violence in lesbian and heterosexual relationships.

Evidence suggests that women are more likely than men to own up to their violent acts. Further, Worchester suggests, women's expectations for non-violence in lesbian

relationships may lead to greater sensitivity and thus higher rates of reporting. Notably, many researchers have come to the opposite conclusion that lesbian violence will tend to be under-reported given the shame these women might feel and/or their desire to protect the lesbian community (Renzetti, 1988, p. 397; Girshick, 2002, p. 57; Ristock, 2002, pp. 84,180). Perhaps Worchester offers the more accurate speculation, perhaps not.

Ristock uses a similar tactic to Worchester's, concurring with Melanie Kaye/Kantrowitz who questions the equivalence of women's violence to that of men in quantitative and qualitative terms. She cites Kantrowitz as follows:

> ... Lesbians do not go out on to the street and attack women, nor do they climb into windows or assault them on dates. How often do you hear of a lesbian serial rapist or killer? ... [E]ven as sexual abuse explodes in the media and women figure as abusers in several of these cases, most people of whatever age and gender victimized by sexual abuse are victimized by men (2002, p. 16).

Certainly no cases of lesbian serial killers come to mind. But Girshick's (2002) text reveals stories of women who have climbed in windows and women who have assaulted other women on dates (2002, pp. 71-82), some of whom make a habit of such practices (2002, pp. 63; 81; 83). Further, as Girshick (2002, p. 76) notes, given the current paucity of information, we just don't know what the true statistical picture might be. In preparing to write this chapter, I quickly realized that I could not produce reliable

statistics with which to provide a comparison. And if I could show that three quarters of sexual violence is perpetrated by men, what then?

We might reasonably and unsurprisingly conclude that patriarchy is a significant causal factor in this area, confirming that we must not give up on that important fight. In this way, such numbers might be useful and informative, although I will be arguing that whatever the numbers might reveal, the fight against patriarchy is not over and must not be conceded. On the other hand, such numbers could serve to reassure us that this isn't really 'our' problem, perhaps cleanse us of fault and allow us to forget.

I worry, for example, that Worchester's (2002, p. 1394) insistence on contextualization of women's violence within a patriarchal framework allows us to sidestep self-reflection. If we could only get men to fix themselves, it is implied that everything would be okay. At times, it seems that Worchester wants not to contextualize women's violence but to situate it as a bizarre anomaly. It is, she argues, "possible to simultaneously acknowledge individual female violence and show how the pattern of male violence against women reflects and perpetuates social inequalities." But neither is women's violence individual – a term which would suggest separateness, disconnectedness from "a family or group," and singularity (The Canadian Oxford Dictionary, 2001, p. 719). Women's violence is not separate or disconnected from the pain it causes or the social context in which it occurs and to which it contributes. It is not singular either. How many women must rape before their victims' experiences cease to be the exception that proves the rule?

I prefer Girshick's approach, which doesn't make patriarchy the "real" problem behind women's violence, but situates it as one component of a world saturated with numerous hierarchies, including those of race, class, age, ability and sexual identity: "No

aspect of our lives is free of the dynamic of hierarchy, and the effects are played out in our interpersonal relationships" (2002, pp. 164-5). Women too are implicated in maintaining such structures; the same structures which both challenge and call for communicative ethical intervention. Seen in this way, women's violence is not simply a result of men's faults. Rather, female author-characters, to use Benhabib's term, are both contextualized by and contribute to the violence or non-violence which characterizes our social world. We still contribute less to violence on the global stage than do men, as few of us have had the opportunity to become war mongers. I can't speak to what the possibilities there might be. But we make our contributions.

We can deal with that. Amongst researchers considering the issue of women's violence, there is a perception of some vast other body of feminist thinkers imagining a siege, denying women's violence and circling the wagons around the dominant analysis which "assumes a male perpetrator" (Ristock, 2002, p. 4, see also Girshick, 2002, p. 57; Worchester, 2002, p. 1404). I am less pessimistic, perhaps because I have come to the field twenty years after it was first ploughed. The recognition of lesbian-on-lesbian rape is newer than that of lesbian domestic abuse more generally (Ristock, 2002, p. 53), but maybe by now some of the shock which first met the fact of women's violence has worn off.

I believe that there is some level of discomfort over the topic, and some worry about backlash effects. This worry is expressed equally by feminists investigating women's violence, including myself. Ristock (2002, pp. 5-8) dedicates a section of her text to this danger. Worchester (2002) argues that there is an urgent need for "antiviolence thinkers, researchers, workers, and activists" to take the lead in investigating women's use of force so that the field will no longer belong to "antiwomen,

backlash perspectives" (p. 1392). Such concerns may precipitate the sorts of approaches which I questioned above. But I have yet to see evidence of stonewalling.

For example, the service providers with whom Ristock (2002, pp. 36-7) spoke were worried that the information they shared might be used against feminists and/or lesbians. But once comfortable with Ristock's aims, they were eager to speak and requested inclusion in a list of resources. I recently attended a conference where I was interrogated by a mediator prior to presenting: "Why focus on the negative?"; "This research doesn't reflect the lesbian community I know"; "What about male rapists?" Indeed, many lesbians, like many heterosexual women, never live the horror of an actual attack. Perhaps some lesbian women only know experiences that approach utopia. This mediator and I had a conversation during which she appeared to be convinced that while most lesbians are never raped by other lesbians, those who are deserve recognition and assistance. I, on the other hand, found myself reflecting on the possibility of anti-feminist misappropriations of my work and so I have written this chapter.

Second wave feminists revealed a history of rape which now appears partial but nonetheless factual and continues to play out to this day. This is a history of women's subordination to men in which women have only recently been granted the status of human being and in which women's bodies have been constructed as alienable (Haag, 1996, p. 41). As Smith (1999) puts it: "There is no question that before the 19th century the crime of rape was a crime against men (as owners of their wives and daughters)" (pp. 32-3). Commonly, legal reparations were considered made once the perpetrator had been obliged to marry the damaged goods and make payment to her father accordingly. Of course, this legislation only held for women who had value in the first place. "Slaves, serfs, peasants, racial and ethnic minorities, and all working class women" could be

violated without retributive or punitive consequences. Certainly "no one asked the woman how *she* felt about it. She simply had no ... interests or standing of her own" (1999, p. 33, original emphasis).

In the nineteenth century, things began to change as women acquired legal identities. Rape came to be defined as "carnal knowledge by a man of a woman (not his wife) by force and without her consent" (Smith, 1999, p. 33). While this was definite progress, men could still freely violate 'their' wives. Further, there were multiple barriers to prosecution. Rape was a crime of strangers. Women were expected to remain within the narrow bounds of domestic safety, not to tempt rape with their clothing or behaviors, and to resist any aggressor very nearly to the death. If these conditions were not met, the victim had invited her assault. Due to prejudices which saturated the legal system, upper class white women had the greatest chance of bringing charges to fruition (1999, p. 34).

In the 1970s, with voices like that of Susan Griffin, "angry feminists gave up being polite, declared rape the "All American Crime" and a "male protection racket" that kept women off the streets, confined to their homes, and unsafe even there" (Smith, 1999, p. 35). In *Against Our Will,* Brownmiller (1975) held that rape is "nothing more nor less than a conscious process of intimidation by which *all* men keep *all* women in a state of fear" (p. 15, original emphasis). The text has since come to serve as an example of those much maligned molar politics which, in Marcus' (1992) terms, enact "a gendered polarization of the grammar of violence" (p. 395). *All* men and *all* women? Men as a group indeed gain certain privileges from the fact that many women take most men as potential rapists, and to this extent, Brownmiller has a point. Men circulate more freely, for example, and women often meet men with a level of subservience. But certainly not all men are engaged in conscious intimidation. Further, as we shall see shortly, some

women may actually feel safer from the danger of rape around men than around other women.

Be that as it may, Brownmiller helped deliver a courageous call to consciousness. Through the 1960s and 70s western women achieved more sexual and other autonomy than ever before. Thanks to the advancements of that era, at least officially, women are no longer obliged to demonstrate superhuman levels of resistance to rapists and no woman is exempt from legal protection against rape whether the perpetrator is her husband or not (Smith, 1999, p. 35). Notably, the marital exemption survived until the mid-1980s in Canada (Roberts, Grossman and Gebotys, 1996, p. 134).

These advancements should most certainly not be forgotten let alone revoked. Indeed, much of the work which feminists like Brownmiller brought to our attention remains to be done. Unofficially, legal officials and also rape victims continue to assess the validity of rape cases brought by women against men on the basis of sexist double standards. White and colleagues (1996, p. 167) report that if a woman drinks excessively or kisses a man at a bar before being raped, police and district attorneys often react to her rape report with a shrugging "what did she expect"? Butler (1995) cites the defence attorney in the New Bedford Gang Rape Case who asked the plaintiff "If you're living with a man, what are you doing running around the streets getting raped?" (p. 52) In common conceptualizations of and approaches to sexual violation, the belief that a woman is property belonging to a man and in his house remains strong (Bulter, 1995, p. 53). Despite the absence of marriage exemptions in law, the closer a woman is to her male assailant, the less likely prosecutors are to press charges. Sexist views continue to meet other social hierarchies as non-white and lower class women continue to be received

as less credible or worthy victims by the justice system (White, Dobbin and Gatowski, 1996). As feminists, we must continue to dedicate attention to these issues.

In 1977, Griffin wrote a paper which I'd be willing to wager still describes a familiar experience for many women:

> From a very early age I, like most women, have thought of rape as a part of my natural environment—something to be feared and prayed against like fire or lightning. I never asked why men raped; I simply thought it one of the many mysteries of human nature (1977, p. 313).

Today many of us still experience uncomfortably accelerated heart rates if there is a man too close behind us on an empty street at night. Even if we are quite sure that most men do not pose a threat and would rather not be feared, we walk faster and cross to the other sidewalk. Or some of us admonish ourselves to keep a relaxed gate in order not to appear as ready victims. In any case, we are relieved to turn the corner and find the company of other human beings. Likely this doesn't happen to all women, or in every such circumstance, and it doesn't happen in every culture. But it happens too much.

The specter of man-on-woman rape begins to restrict many women's movements as we are still learning the skills of mobility (Cahill, 2000, p. 60). As Marcus (1992, p. 389) suggests, we are bombarded by images of female violability which do incite fear. While these fears may in some contexts be maladaptive, preventing us from defending ourselves against male aggressors, they are not entirely unreasonable. But women's experiences are more varied than Brownmiller or Marcus allow.

I keep insisting on 'sometimes' and 'some women' because, as Riley (1990) argues, it is impossible to pin down the term 'woman' at all. This term manifests in various ways in different places, over historical periods and lifetimes. Gerai women, for example, do not fear rape (Helliwell, 2000). Indeed, they have quite a different notion of what it means to be a woman at all, which I will not describe here, but which is really quite fascinating. This is not all. "Gendered self-consciousness has a mercifully flickering nature," Riley (1990, p. 96) reminds us. However we conceive of the category 'woman,' we won't always fit it and we won't always feel it.

Writing under a pseudonym, 'Erica Marlowe' recounts her experience:

> The self-defense instructor asks us to think about places where we feel safe, and places where we feel vulnerable. Someone mentions crowds; she feels vulnerable in crowds. Someone else remarks that, on the contrary, she feels safer in crowds; safer, say, than alone on the street with a man. The instructor nods, adding that at women's music festivals women feel safe because, despite the fact that there are 5000 people there, all are women and most are lesbians. I say nothing. I understand I am supposed to feel safe among women, especially lesbians. This is not new to me. I know this is what women believe (1999, p. 398).

Or at least, this is what many women believe much of the time. What 'Marlowe' doesn't say is that she was raped eight years prior by a woman, that she feels "safer in mixed crowds than with women only," that before setting foot in "a music festival attended by

5000 lesbians [she] would want to see a police station every 200 yards" (1999, pp. 398-9). As Giorgio (2002, p. 1253) notes, such stifling silence may only be broken as survivors of women's violence are "engaged in deconstructing" our sex-based assumptions.

The history of rape culled by Brownmiller *et al.* from texts which systematically silenced women's voices tells us a great deal. We must continue to ask how the lessons this history has contained about the place and value of women have been carried forth, how they continue to be lived out, and how we can shake them. As I argued in the second chapter, rape often reiterates this history, no matter the gender of the perpetrator or victim. It 'feminizes' by recalling the inscription of women with property rather than human status; as rapeable and rape-worthy. This is a feminist concern, insofar as the dynamic necessarily defames women. But where this dynamic is reiterated by lesbians, it is one we have generally been blind to, not only because of how feminist texts have been constituted, but also because of the masculinist texts which preceded them and continue to be written.

The same silence that Brownmiller confronted when she initiated her historical analysis of rape has rendered the writing of lesbian history a formidable, even unrealizable project. As Vicinus remarks:

> Conceptual confusion is perhaps inevitable in regard to lesbians, given the historical suppression of female sexuality in general ... We must first decode female sexual desire, and then within it, find same-sex desire ... If we look to the margins, to the ruptures and breaks, we will be able to piece together a history of women speaking to each other. Nevertheless, lesbian history will remain

> a history of discontinuities: we rarely know precisely what women in the past did with each other in bed or out ... (1992, pp. 469-70)

Given these circumstances, the history of lesbian-on-lesbian rape is likely one we will never have the empirical resources to write. Perhaps it is a relatively short history, perhaps not. We can only speculate on the matter. This is a history of a more Derridian sort; a history which is only now surprising us. As such, it is a "condition for ... our potential transformation" (Butler, 1995, p. 133), but a terrible and disillusioning one which, like all rape, we must seek to overcome. As 'Lauren' puts it "I always suspected that men could hurt you, but never, ever fathomed that a woman would take that away from another woman. It left me absolutely unable to trust another woman's sexual advances and to be able to trust my body" (in Girshick, 2002, p. 9).

Something good might come of this terrible circumstance, with some critical effort. As this unknown history emerges into a known present, it reminds us that values such as non-violence, respect, and empathy are not secured with the label "woman" or "lesbian", but must be diligently worked for. There is no lack of evidence for the fact.

Ristock (2002, p. 168) tells us of a transgendered woman who filed a human rights complaint against the Vancouver organization "Rape Relief", which had helped her escape an abusive relationship, and where she was training to help others. Halfway through the training process when she revealed that she had been born male, she was told she would have to leave. After living through the violence of being raped, she was violently ejected from the organization she had trusted and was ready to serve. Lesbian-

on-lesbian rape dramatically underlines the fact that we are not immune to violent abuses of power.

The radical feminists of the second wave conceptualized rape as a barometer for social change: "its disappearance, [they] imagined, would indicate that a substantial revolution has succeeded, but it would not constitute one" (Haag, 1996, p. 38). So the question is this: "what is going wrong?"

In a world which is, as Girshick (2002, pp. 164-5) suggests, saturated by values of dominance and control, where sexual violence is one way of securing or establishing power, it shouldn't really surprise us to see women sexually assaulting others. As Worchester (2002) argues, consistent anti-violence messages rather than rewards for violent behaviour will be necessary if we hope to avoid giving girls (or boys) "the message that violence is acceptable or even glamorous" (p. 1392). She holds that

> The anti-violence against women movement ... was about building a fundamentally different, violence-free society. Asking hard questions about women's possible use of force may be an important way of remembering the social change work that still needs to be accomplished (2002, pp. 1412-3).

It is my hope that the utopian aspiration for a "violence-free society" is one around which feminists can unite. This project will require two approaches. Partly, it will mean listening for those forms of violence which have been silenced, looking deconstructively for "what isn't being said" (Ristock, 2002, p. 39). This is a process to which feminism has become somewhat accustomed. Orne (2003) draws our attention the

theoretical and practical contributions of various feminist movements to revealing and addressing violence in numerous guises, including child abuse and elder abuse. Feminist histories of and positions regarding rape, if problematically partial, have been impressively pulled from the margins of a masculinist script in which women were once taken to be without "interests or standing" or indeed humanity (Smith, 1999, p. 33). This will not be just any deconstruction, but a deconstruction in the service of non-violent norms.

In pursuing this project, we are not required to give up the yet unfinished fight to see women recognized and treated as fully human – in fact, we would be negligent in doing so. Rather, we ought to work, wherever possible, at extending the realm of humanity to one another through non-violence.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

I began this thesis with the question of whether the strategies of gender deconstruction and subversion can recognize, problematize, and/or offer solutions for lesbian-on-lesbian rape. In this final chapter, I draw together some conclusions and suggest future directions for anti-rape theorizing, research and practice.

We have seen that, in a context where lesbian-on-lesbian rape is often understood as impossible, its survivors confront formidable legal and social barriers to speaking their experiences. These barriers can leave offenders "free to move on to the next victim" (Girshick, 2002, pp. 9-10) and victims unable to access assistance from legal authorities, rape-response agencies and even from their own communities. In their investigations of lesbian-to-lesbian violence, thinkers like Ristock (2002, p. 22; 38) and Giorgio (2002, p. 1253; 1255) have quite naturally appealed to deconstruction to overcome such impediments.

Recognition of lesbian-on-lesbian rape requires a deconstructive rethinking of the capacities often attributed to "masculine" and "feminine" bodies. Brownmiller (1975, p. 14), like many before and after her, imagined that although rape does not require a penis, women were somehow incapable of committing such an offense. In recognizing and addressing lesbian-on-lesbian rape, we must come to see that subjugating force proliferates beyond the borders of the penis where Freud (1960) would locate it; beyond the borders of the male body and whatever weapon that body might be wielding.

The deconstruction performed by the 'Lesbian Phallus' (Butler 1993) takes us back to the repressed Freudian moment when the penis-as-phallus was one instance of a world of possibilities and releases our imaginations there. Unwittingly, I think, this piece

allows the possibility of lesbian-on-lesbian rape to come into view. But to see this potential, we must look beyond the text, for it is never explicitly mentioned. What we are told, ever so briefly, is that 'The Lesbian Phallus' will perhaps operate "through a degradation of a feminine morphology" (1993, p. 87). Lesbian-on-lesbian rape shows that this permutation of 'The Lesbian Phallus' does not bode well for our anti-rape strategies.

Nonetheless, I believe that 'The Lesbian Phallus' provides fertile ground for feminism, insofar as it takes on the andocentrism of Freudian and Lacanian notions – notions which are as of yet too representative of social reality. As Butler (1993, p. 85) suggests, there is no one answer to the question of how her alternative imagining emerges between lesbians. Halberstam (2002) offers some suggestions which are quite different from my own. I would encourage a proliferation of thought on this issue aimed at further destabilizing andocentric worldviews and realities. Each investigation would also provide an opportunity for further examination of our own practices and their ethical implications.

Deconstructionists like Sharon Marcus (1992) have reminded us that women's violence is a possibility, allowing us to see women's bodies as having the same capacities for violence as do men's ... almost. Marcus' efforts ride on the un-stated assumption that rapists must be men, and for this reason women's violence is able to appear, undifferentiated, as a solution to rape. She believes that if we could just be less feminine – less non-violent – we would no longer appear as violable. She may well be correct. But lesbian-on-lesbian rape shows that women's violence is also a condition for certain permutations of the rape script. Insofar as it does not appear to occur to Marcus that with our violence we might also be able to perform violation, we must appeal to the margins

she has left intact to identify the possibility of lesbian-on-lesbian rape. In light of this possibility, it no longer seems so reasonable to suggest women's violence, undifferentiated, as an antidote to "the rape script".

In effect, rather than problematizing the specific characteristics of the interactions which take place in the Lacanian imaginary or the rape script, these thinkers problematize the gendering of such interactions. The result is that we are left without the tools to problematize lesbian-on-lesbian rape – a violent phenomenon which depends not on the success of the gender regime, but on its subversion. And so alliances with deconstructionists such as Butler and Marcus have proven problematic.

How are we to distinguish between 'The Lesbian Phallus' which opens new worlds, and the one which violently imposes them? Benjamin (2005; 1990) suggests intersubjectivity, in the Habermasian tradition. Intersubjectivity ideally establishes the kind of dynamic in which communication overrides violence. The intersubjective dynamic appears as antithetical to the "degradation of a feminine morphology" (Butler, 1993, p. 87) performed, for example, by rape. Butler has, at least until recently, railed against normativity in general, and so by implication against those intersubjective norms of reciprocal respect and egalitarian reciprocity advanced by discourse ethicists.

But as Fraser (1995) argues, "Feminists ... need to make normative judgements and to offer emancipatory alternatives" (p. 71). 'The Lesbian Phallus' is helpful insofar as it overcomes violent subjectivization and destructive insofar as such violence is repeated. Thus, it is not just any old deconstruction that will help us to overcome violence, sexual or otherwise. To ensure that aim, deconstruction must make its bed with critical theory. Butler has finally begun, in her halting and circular way, to concede these points.

If Butler has upheld her explicit resistance to intersubjective theory from the debate with Benhabib exhibited in *Feminist Contentions* (1995) to her chapter entitled 'The Question of Social Transformation' (2003), her resistance to many intersubjective premises has begun to dissolve. Like Benhabib, Butler (2003) has begun to emphasize the norms of respect and non-violence. She has also opened a door to the pursuit of these norms by beginning to ascribe a long denied intentionality to the subject. This is definite progress. We will need more than a norm-refusing philosophy of tatters or a leap into the arms of whatever is other as we work to transform the world away from the rape script, heterosexual or otherwise. The norms of respect, reciprocity and non-violence – those notions which sustain Benjamin's (1990, p. 35) third space – have the potential to usefully inform our political pursuits.

This is not to say there is no place for violence in anti-rape strategies. Communicative ethics form, as Benhabib (1992, p. 37) realizes, an ideal which we can usefully strive for, but which is unlikely to ever fully describe our interactions. At present and likely in the future, we will continue to find ourselves in situations where we must choose between doling out and receiving violence. As I suggested in Chapter Four, schooling in self-defence tactics, for example, may usefully broaden the range of rape-prevention tools we have at our disposal in the way Marcus envisions. But self-defence courses generally are and should be accompanied by an ethical code for when and where violence should be put into play. The particular intent of self-defence is to maintain one's humanity and even one's life, not to reduce or obliterate the humanity or even life of another. Throughout this text, I have gestured at some ideas about how legitimate violence might be distinguished from illegitimate violence. This is a complex question which has preoccupied many thinkers, as perusal of the literature on legal issues of self-

defence makes clear. Feminist investigations of this question have often centered on issues of spousal abuse in heterosexual situations (for example, Nourse, 2001). Thus, a feminist rethinking of this issue for the lesbian context is called for; one much more comprehensive than I have been able to provide here.

For the moment, in the real world – that place that theory too often forgets – I would advocate teaching self-defence as an anti-rape strategy. For women, as Marcus would suggest, this sort of learning is deconstructive. But the ethical code which should always accompany such learning is critical, it is normative, it prefers non-violence. What else would I suggest in the real world? Firstly, I suggest a widespread deconstructive recognition of the possibility of lesbian-on-lesbian rape, accompanied by the normative assumption that rape – performed by any body part or body like thing – is wrong. This assumption should be reflected in law.

Clearly, to realize this aim, rape laws in many regions need revision. Minimally, forced and unwanted vaginal anal or penile contact with an object or body part should be recognized as forms of rape. So too should forced and unwanted contact involving the mouth of one individual and genitals or anus of another (Girshick, 2002, p. 143). Until this happens, certain rape victims will continue to lack legal recognition or recourse as well as police protection. That such reform is called for suggests the need to think about just how radically inclusive rape laws might be. Clearly, legislators need to delineate their terms. This is a project I put off here, but which cannot be put off indefinitely. While deconstructionist impulses can usefully propel a questioning of whatever definition is imposed, there will need to be thinking about what definition might be proposed for the time being.

Police, shelters and hotlines are often of little use to victims of assault within the homosexual context (Turrell, 1999, p. 45). Thus, education about lesbian-on-lesbian rape should be directed toward a broad range of institutions responsible for responding to rape incidents. These would include policing agencies, rape response centers and hotlines, women's shelters and hospitals. No victim of this violence should be told, as Giorgio (2002) was by one impatient and uncomprehending hotline worker, that she is "taking up the hotline's precious time" (p. 1239). In preparing for such initiatives, it would be useful to investigate how employees and volunteers within these various institutions understand rape and what prejudices they carry in responding to rape reports.

Victims of lesbian-on-lesbian rape are, as Girshick (2002, pp. 108-13) observes, often at a loss for words to interpret or describe their painful experiences. Even where they do interpret their experiences as rape, they may be silenced by queer communities that may not share a framework for recognition of the possibility or seriousness of lesbian-on-lesbian rape (Girschick, 2002, pp. 59-60; Ristock, 2002, p. 95; Giorgio 2002, p. 1241). Thus, it is vitally important that awareness of this issue is diffused throughout the queer community. Queer youth and other social groups as well as web forums would be well-positioned to create awareness of the problem at hand.

The Canadian Rainbow Health Coalition, for example, distributes information about intimate gay and lesbian violence including sexual assault on their website. I applaud and encourage this work. In the future, it will also be useful to recognize that non hetero-sexual assault can occur outside intimate relationships. This area, in particular, requires more research. While Girshick's (2002) work on this issue is an impressive start, corroboration, similar efforts outside the United States and statistical filling out is called for. At least until social circumstances alter such that lesbians in general are more

comfortable openly discussing inter-lesbian violence, that research will have to be non-random. The same institutions and groups mentioned a moment ago might also help to initiate a queer-oriented discussion of sexual consent. This is sorely needed given that, as Corteen (2004, p. 187) observes, talk of consent currently centers largely on heterosexual copulation, reiterating the penetrative imagery of the traditional rape script. How will this discussion be conceptualized? What kinds of action will or will not require consent?

Where do communicative ethics come in? As Scholsberg (1995) notes, "communicative action is primarily discussed and applied in philosophical generalities rather than to particular populations that might benefit from its attention" (p. 292). However, this needn't be the case, nor is it always so. The communicative norms of reciprocal respect and egalitarian reciprocity should be central to discussions of consensual sexuality. Benjamin's (1990, p. 35) vision of a third space between communicating subjects, in which "consensual validation" of sentiments, meanings and intentions can occur, might usefully frame this conversation. While Benjamin's suggestions for intersubjective action can be applied across genders, her explanation for problematic forms of individuation remains quite rigidly gendered. A careful, gender-inclusive consideration of problematic individuation processes from a psychoanalytic perspective would be helpful.

Communicative norms should also be dispersed through the social body. The intersubjective practice of "asserting oneself" while "recognizing the other" (Scholsberg, 1995, p. 295) has already been successfully introduced into some elementary and secondary schools by communicative-ethics based organizations. The diffusion of communicative ethics might help to create a social context in which rape scripts, however traditional or subversive, will be less likely to arise. To my knowledge, no research

reflects the long-term effects of such initiatives. How might exposure to communicative-ethical environments of various kinds at various times of life effect social interaction? How might these exposures effect proclivity for various kinds of violence, and rape in particular? What would be learned and how long would these lessons last?

Most fundamentally, I hope that the feminist future will not be about "a degradation of" anyone's morphology (Butler, 1993, p. 87), about a simple reversal of the "binary opposition of male/power and female/powerlessness" (Hesford, 1999, p. 207), or about inciting the nightmares that McCaughey and King promote (1995, p. 377). In theory and in practice, I would like it to be remembered that the "anti-violence against women movement ... was about building a fundamentally different, violence-free society" (Worchester, 2002, pp. 1412-3). Or if this has not been the case, I hope that in the future it will be. As Escholz & Bukin (2001) point out, there is currently little information on how media and other environmental factors influence girls' and women's inclinations toward violence. More research is called for in this area.

To the extent that presently, "third spaces" seem continually to collapse into discourses of control and subjugation as we seek to individuate ourselves (Benjamin, 1990, p. 43), reaching this future will require some deconstruction. It will be no easy feat to move toward a world in which "where objects were, subjects [will] be" (1990, p. 34). Maintenance of this third region requires the stereotypically feminine stances of empathy and responsiveness which Marcus (1992, pp. 393-4) finds so suspect. Let us not be too hasty in dispensing with those characteristics. Rather, let us – women and men – use them whenever we can do so without subjecting ourselves to danger. Indeed, what might a deconstruction of perpetrator roles in the traditional rape script look like? What kinds of educational media might encourage each of us to take one another's humanity into

account? Finally – God forbid – is it naïve, given the current state of our society, to think such efforts at education, at the implementation of communicative ethical practices, at rape prevention, might be effective? I like to think not. Often at a painfully slow pace, things change. Rape law has changed. Men and women have changed. At one time, women were legally inhuman. Do you believe that?

In sum, deconstructive and subversive tactics may be put to service in order to demonstrate that rape is *not* inevitable; to show that there are other possible worlds and to encourage their enactment. Let us go forward with that utopian aspiration and a critical bent, always asking ourselves "which other world?", because from an anti-rape perspective, not all other possible worlds are equal.

References

Allen, A. (1998). Power trouble: Performativity as Critical theory. *Constellations, 5*(4), 456-471.

Anderson, A. (1992). Cryptonormativism and double gestures: The politics of post-structuralism. *Cultural Critique, 21*, 63-95.

Bendle, M.F. (2006). Jouissance – 'right off the scale': Lacan, sexual difference and the phallic order. *Culture, Theory & Critique, 47*(1), 71-86.

Benhabib, S. (1992). *Situating the self: Gender, community, and postmodernism in contemporary ethics*. New York: Routledge.

Benhabib, S. (1994). In defense of universalism. yet again! A response to critics of situating the self. *New German Critique, 62*, 173-189.

Benhabib, S. (1995). Feminism and postmodernism: An uneasy alliance. *Feminist contentions: A philosophical exchange* (pp. 17-34). New York and London: Routledge.

Benjamin, J. (1980). The bonds of love: Rational violence and erotic domination. *Feminist Studies, 6*(1), 144-174.

Benjamin, J. (1990). An outline of intersubjectivity: The development of recognition. *Psychoanalytic Psychology, 7*(Suppl.), 33-46.

Benjamin, J. (2005). Creating an intersubjective reality: Commentary on paper by Arnold Rothstein. *Psychoanalytic Dialogues; 15*(3).

Botta, R. A., & Pingree, S. (1997). Interpersonal communication and rape: Women acknowledge their assaults. *Journal of Health Communication: International Perspectives, 2*(3), 197-212.

Breen, M. S., Blumenfeld, W. J., Baer, S., Brookey, R. A., Hall, L., Kirby, V., et al. (2001). "There is a person here": An interview with Judith Butler. *International Journal of Sexuality and Gender Studies, 6*(1/2), 7-23.

Brownmiller, S. (1975). *Against our will: Men, women and rape*. New York: Simon and Schuster.

Burgess-Jackson, K. (1999). A history of rape law. In K. Burgess-Jackson (Ed.), *New philosophical essays on rape* (pp. 15-31). New York Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Butler, J. (1993). *Bodies that matter: On the discursive limits of sex.* New York: Routledge.

Butler, J. (1995). Contingent foundations: Feminism and the question of postmodernism. *Feminist contentions: A philosophical exchange* (pp. 35-54). New York and London: Routledge.

Butler, J. (1999). *Gender trouble: Feminism and the subversion of identity.* New York and London: Routledge.

Butler, J. (2003). The question of social transformation. *Women & social transformation* (pp. 1-28). New York: Peter Lang.

Cahill, A. J. (2000). Foucault, rape, and the construction of the feminine body. *Hypatia, 15*(1), 43-63.

Canaday, M. (2003). Promising alliances: The critical feminist theory of Nancy Fraser and Seyla Benhabib. *Feminist Review, 74*, 50-69.

Canadian Rainbow Health Coalition. *Domestic violence.* Retrieved 05/31, 2001, from http://www.rainbowhealth.ca/english/domestic_violence.html

Caputo, J. D., & Derrida, J. (1997). In Caputo J. D. (Ed.), *Deconstruction in a nutshell: A conversation with Jacques Derrida.* New York: Fordham University Press.

Card, C. (1995). *Lesbian choices.* New York: Columbia University Press.

Carleson, B. E. (2005). The most important things learned about violence and trauma in the past 20 years. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 20*(1), 119-126.

Chasteen, A. L. (2007). Constructing rape: Feminism, change, and women's everyday understandings of sexual assault. *Sociological Spectrum, 21*(2), 101-138.

Corteen, K. (2004). Beyond (hetero)sexual consent. In M. Cowling, & P. Reynolds (Eds.), *Making sense of sexual consent* (pp. 171-194). England & USA: Ashgate.

Derrida, J. (1982). Signature event context. *Margins of philosophy*(A. Bass Trans.). (pp. 307-330). Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Derrida, J. (1987). Le facteur de la verité. *The post card*(A. Bass Trans.). (pp. 411-496). Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press.

Derrida, J., & Roudinesco, E. (2004). *For what tomorrow . . . A dialogue*(J. Fort Trans.). Stanford, California: Stanford University Press.

Elliot, P. (1996). Shattering illusions: Same-sex domestic violence. In C. M. Renzetti, & C. H. Miley (Eds.), *Violence in gay and lesbian relationships* (pp. 1-8). New York & London: Harrington Park Press.

Elliott, M. (Ed.). (1994). *Female sexual abuse of children*. United States: The Guilford Press.

Escholz, S., & Bufkin, J. (2001). Crime in the movies: Investigating the efficacy of measures of both sex and gender for predicting victimization and offending in film. *Sociological Forum, 16*(4), 655-676.

Falzon, C. (1998). *Foucault and social dialogue*. New York: Routledge.

Ferguson, A. (1977). Androgyny as an ideal for human development. In M. Vetterling-Braggin, F. A. Elliston & J. English (Eds.), *Feminism and philosophy* (pp. 45-69). Totowa, New Jersey: Rowman and Littlefield.

Foa, P. (1977). What's wrong with rape. In M. Vetterling-Braggin, F.A. Elliston & J. English (Eds.), *Feminism and philosophy* (pp. 347-359). Totowa, New Jersey: Rowman and Littlefield.

Fraser, N. (1995). False antithesis. *Feminist contentions: A philosophical exchange* (pp. 59-74). New York and London: Routledge.

Fraser, N. (1990). The uses and abuses of French discourse theories for feminist politics. *boundary 2, 17*(2), 82-101.

Freud, S. (1960). *The ego and the id*(J. Riviere Trans.). New York: The Norton Library.

Frieze, I. H. (1983). Investigating the causes and consequences of marital rape. *Signs, 8*(3), 532-553.

Gatens, M. (2000). Feminism as "password": Re-thinking the "possible" with Spinoza and Deleuze. *Hypatia, 15*(2), 59-75.

Giorgio, G. (2002). Speaking silence: Definitional dialogues in abusive lesbian relationships. *Violence Against Women, 8*(10), 1233-1259.

Girshick, L. B. (2002). *Woman-to-woman sexual violence: Does she call it rape?*. Boston: Northeastern University Press.

Griffin, S. (1977). Rape: The all-American crime. In M. Vetterling-Braggin, F. A. Elliston & J. English (Eds.), *Feminism and philosophy* (pp. 313-332). Totowa, New Jersey: Rowman and Littlefield.

Groth, N., Burgess, A. W., & Holstrom, L. L. (1977). Rape: Power, anger, and sexuality. *Am J Psychiatry, 134*(11), 1239-1243.

Haag, P. (1996). "Putting your body on the line": The question of violence, victims, and the legacies of second-wave feminism. *Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies, 8*(2), 23-67.

Habermas, J. (1998). *The inclusion of the other: Studies in political theory.* The MIT Press: Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Halberstam, J. (2002). The good, the bad, and the ugly: Men, women, and masculinity. In J. K. Gardiner (Ed.), *Masculinity studies and feminist theory: New directions* (pp. 357). New York: Columbia University Press.

Handler, J. F. (1992). Postmodernism, protest, and the new social movements. *Law & Society Review, 26*(4), 697-732.

Helliwell, C. (2000). "It's only a penis": Rape, feminism, and difference. *Signs, 25*(3), 789-816.

Henderson, L. (1991). Review: Law's patriarchy. *Law & Society Review, 25*(2), 411-444.

Herberle, R. (1996). Deconstructive strategies and the movement against sexual violence. *Hypatia, 11*(4), 63-76.

Hesford, W. S. (1999). Reading rape stories: Material rhetoric and the trauma of representation. *College English, 62*(2), 192-221.

Hickson, F. C. I., Davies, P. M., Hunt, A. J., Weatherburn, P., McManus, T. J., F.R.C.O.G., et al. (1994). Gay men as victims of nonconsensual sex. *Archives of Sexual Behaviour, 23*(3), 281-294.

Hoagland, S. L. (1988). *Lesbian ethics: Toward new value.* Palo Alto, California: Institute of Lesbian Studies.

Island, D., & Letellier, P. (1991). *Men who beat the men who love them.* New York, London & Sydney: Harrington Park Press.

Knowles, G. J. (1999). Male prison rape: A search for causation and prevention. *The Howard Journal, 38*(3), 267-282.

Krausz, E. O. (1994). Freud's devaluation of women. *Individual Psychology, 50*(3), 298-313.

Lacan, J. (1988). In Miller J. (Ed.), *The ethics of psychoanalysis 1959-1669*(D. Porter Trans.). New York and London: W.W. Norton and Company.

Lacan, J. (1985). The meaning of the phallus. In J. Mitchell, & J. Rose (Eds.), *Feminine sexuality: Jacques Lacan and the École Freudienne*(J. Rose Trans.). (pp. 74-85). New York and London: W.W. Norton Company.

Laclau, E. (1995). "The time is out of joint". *Diacritics, 25*(2), 85-96.

Langdridge, D., & Butt, T. (2004). A hermeneutic phenomenological investigation of the construction of sadomasochistic identities. *Sexualities, 7*(1), 31-35.

Lloyd, M. (1999). Performativity, parody, politics. *Theory, Culture & Society, 16*(2), 195-213.

Lockhart, L. L., White, B. W., & Causby, V. (1994). Letting out the secret: Violence in lesbian relationships. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 9*(4), 469-492.

MacKinnon, C. A. (1982). Feminism, Marxism, method, and the state: An agenda for theory. *Signs, 7*(3), 515-544.

MacKinnon, C. A. (1983). Feminism, Marxism, method, and the state: Toward feminist jurisprudence. *Signs, 8*(4), 635-658.

Magnus, K. D. (2006). The unaccountable subject: Judith Butler and the social conditions of intersubjective agency. *Hypatia, 21*(2), 81-103.

Marcus, S. (1992). Fighting bodies, fighting words: A theory and politics of rape prevention. In J. Butler, & J. Scott (Eds.), *Feminists theorize the political* (pp. 385-403). New York: Routledge.

Mardorossian, C. M. (2002). Towards a new feminist theory of rape. *Signs, 27*(3), 743-775.

Marlowe, E. (1999). Five thousand lesbians and no police force. *Feminism & Psychology, 9*(4), 398-401.

McCaughey, M., & King, N. (1995). Rape education videos: Presenting mean women instead of dangerous men. *Teaching Sociology, 23*(4), 374-388.

McClennen, J. C., Summers, A. B., & Daley, J. G. (2002). The lesbian partner abuse scale. *Research on Social Work Practice, 12*(2), 277-292.

McNay, L. (1992). Self and others. *Foucault & feminism* (pp. 157-191). Boston: Northeastern University Press.

McNay, L. (1999). Subject, psyche and agency: The work of Judith Butler. *Theory, Culture & Society, 16*(2), 175-193.

Moore, A., & Reynolds, P. (2004). Feminist approaches to sexual consent: A critical assessment. In M. Cowling, & P. Reynolds (Eds.), (pp. 29-44). England and USA: Ashgate Publishing.

Morgenstern, N. (2003). The Oedipus complex made simple. *University of Toronto Quarterly, 72*(4), 777-788.

Nicholson, L. (1995). Introduction. *Feminist contentions: A philosophical exchange* (pp. 1-16). New York and London: Routledge.

Noland, V. J., Daley, E. M., Drolet, J. C., Fetro, J. V., Brown, K. M. R., Hassell, C. D., et al. (2004). Connotative interpretations of sexuality-related terms. *Sex Roles, 51*(9/10), 523-534.

Nourse, V. F. (2001). Self-defense and subjectivity. *The University of Chicago Law Review, 68*(4), 1235-1308.

Orme, J. (2003). 'It's feminist because I say so!' feminism, social work and critical practice. *Qualitative Social Work, 2*(2), 131-153.

phallus. (1995). In *The Penguin Dictionary of Psychology.* Retrieved July 11, 2007, from http//www.credoreference.com/entry/153860

Pino, N.W. (1999). Gender differences in rape reporting. *Sex Roles, 40*(11/12), 979-990.

Renzetti, C. M. (1988). Violence in lesbian relationships: A preliminary analysis of causal factors. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 3*(4), 381-399.

Resnik, D. B., Rehm, M., & Minard, R. B. (2001). The undertreatment of pain: Scientific, clinical, cultural, and philosophical factors. *Medicine, Health Care and Philosophy, 4*, 277-288.

Riley, D. (1990). *"Am I that name?" feminism and the category of 'women' in history.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Ristock, J. L. (2002). *No more secrets: Violence in lesbian relationships.* New York: Routledge.

Roberts, J. V., Grossman, M. G., & Gebotys, R. J. (1996). Rape reform in Canada: Public knowledge and opinion. *Journal of Family Violence, 11*(2), 133-148.

Rozée-Koker, P. D. (1987). Cross-cultural codes on seven types of rape. *Cross-Cultural Research, 21*(1-4), 101-117.

Rumney, P. N. S. (2001). The review of sex offences and rape law reform: Another false dawn? *The Modern Law Review, 64*(6), 890-910.

Safer, C. M., & Frye, M. (1977). Rape and respect. In M. Vetterling-Braggin, F. A. Elliston & J. English (Eds.), *Feminism and philosophy* (pp. 333-346). Totosa, New Jersey: Rowman and Littlefield.

Schlosberg, D. (1995). Communicative action in practice: Intersubjectivity and new social movements. *Political Studies, XLIII*, 291-311.

Scully, D. (1988). Convicted rapists' perceptions of self and victim: Role taking and emotions. *Gender & Society, 2*(2), 200-213.

Smart, C. (1995). *Law, crime and sexuality*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.

Smith, P. (1999). Social revolution and the persistence of rape. In K. Burgess-Jackson (Ed.), *A most detestable crime: New philosophical essays on rape* (pp. 32-48). New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Stermac, L., Sheridan, P. M., Davidson, A., & Dunn, S. (1996). Sexual assault of adult males. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 11*(1), 52-64.

Stewart, M. W., Dobbin, S. A., & Gatowski, S. I. (1996). "Real rapes" and "real victims": The shared reliance on common cultural definitions of rape. *Feminist Legal Studies, IV*(2), 159-177.

Turell, S. C. (1999). Seeking help for same-sex relationship abuses. *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Social Services, 10*(2), 35-49.

Vandiver, D. M., & Walker, J. T. (2002). Female sex offenders: An overview and analysis of 40 cases. *Criminal Justice Review, 27*(2), 284-300.

Ver Eecke, W. (1994). Gender and sexuality: Some unconscious articulations. In J. H. Smith, & A. M. Mahfouz (Eds.), *Psychoanalysis, feminism, and the future of gender* (pp. 121-136). Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press.

Vicimus, M. (1992). "They wonder to which sex I belong": The historical roots of the modern lesbian identity. *Feminist Studies, 18*(3), 467-497.

Waldron, C. M. (1996). Lesbians of color and the domestic violence movement. In C. M. Renzetti, & C. H. Miley (Eds.), *Violence in gay and lesbian domestic partnerships* (pp. 43-52). New York & London: Harrington Park Press.

Waterman, C. K., Dawson, L. J., & Bologna, M. J. (1989). Sexual coercion in gay male and lesbian relationships: Predictors and implications for support services. *The Journal of Sex Research, 26*(1), 118-124.

Worcester, N. (2002). Women's use of force: Complexities and challenges of taking the issue seriously. *Violence Against Women, 8*(11), 1390-1415.

Young, S. L., & Maguire, K. C. (2003). Talking about sexual violence. *Women and Language, 26*(2), 40-52.