Waiting for No Man: Bisexual Femme Subjectivity and Cultural Repudiation

This essay begins to trace a history of the relationship between the figures of the bisexual and the femme. Section One looks at how bisexuality is employed both historically and in the present to situate femme as a 'subject-in-process', always implicitly about to make a heterosexual object-choice. Section Two explores contemporary articulations of femme as repudiating heterosexual object-choice, again exploring how bisexuality functions to endorse that femme positioning. In Section Three, I suggest that a bisexual femme subject position does not only rely on notions of bisexuality as endorsing heterosexuality. I am interested in the discursive breaks that occur when bisexuality is read in terms of culture as well as object-choice, such that a bisexual femme subjectivity no longer appears to be a contradiction in terms. These three sections could also be read as charting a femme progression from a subject bound to heterosexuality to a lesbian/queer subject; linked to a bisexual progression from potential structuring heterosexuality to bisexual subject.[1]

Section One: Bisexual Meaning and the Femme 'Subject-in-Waiting'

Contemporary images of bisexuality mostly rely on the representation of more than one body. Charlotte Raven's 'Swap Shop' in the British *Observer Life* (1995) magazine is accompanied by a picture of two young, bald, slim, white people.[2] The one with the 'male' face and chest has female genitals, the one with the 'female' face and chest has male genitals. Two hermaphrodites? Two transsexuals? An attempt to represent a psychic bisexuality materially, perhaps?[3] The cover photograph of the 'bisexuality issue' of *Newsweek* (1995) shows two men and a woman looking confrontationally at the camera.[4] They are young, white and dressed in black and white. The woman is cross-dressed (but not butch); the men are androgynous-looking. The cover of *Anything That Moves* (1996) again shows two men and a woman (holding a copy of the *Newsweek* 'bisexual issue').[5] The woman's dress and demeanour code her as butch; the men are both coded as

effeminate gay men.[6] The two men, one white, one black, stand either side of the woman, who in this context reads as a Latina, bringing them into the picture, establishing their three-way relationship. It is fundamental to the functioning of this bisexual representation (and to bisexual representation more generally) that the 'three' be differently sexed, gendered and 'raced'. Bisexual representations commonly produce bisexuality as 'going beyond' any number of binaries (gender, sex and 'race' in particular) such that Marjorie Garber (1995) can say that: 'In a world in which a person could only be classified as male or female, black or white, gay or straight, bisexuality simply does not fit in'.[7] All three examples provide a dual reading of bisexuality. They represent both the bisexual body itself (as hermaphroditic, as dual-gendered or beyond gender), and the focus of bisexual desire. They are both bisexual subject, and the bisexual's object -- presented as a decadent display of available body parts to be devoured by the bisexual gaze, feasted upon with relish as part of a bisexual bacchanalia.[8] The bisexual subject and bisexual desire are produced in these images as a site for the fusion of oppositions, particularly sex and gender.

Given these dominant representations of bisexuality as beyond and/or inclusive of male/female and masculine/feminine it is easy to see how a bisexual femme subject position might be read as a contradiction in terms, if not an impossibility. In the above images, femme or butch figure as incomplete parts of the sexed and gendered bisexual 'whole'. It comes as no great surprise, then, that recent writings by femmes such as Joan Nestle (1992) still code bisexuality negatively,[9] or that as an 'out' bisexual, I am frequently asked by lesbian femmes or butches 'do bisexuals do butch-femme?' The phrasing of the question itself assumes there is no such thing as bisexual butch or femme subjectivity. Even if the answer to the question is 'yes, bisexuals do butch-femme', this is an affirmation of a gender play. Bisexuals are not seen as ontologically gendered, as able to *be* butch or femme.

These dominant representations of bisexuality as 'pseudo-hermaphrodite', androgyne, or polymorphous potential that make a bisexual femme identity difficult to accept in a contemporary queer arena, are, precisely, what link the figure of the femme with bisexuality.[10] In the sexological writings of Wilhelm von Krafft-Ebing (1894) and Havelock Ellis (1901),[11] a female subject is gendered partly in accordance with her sexual object-choice -- hence a 'mannish woman' typically desires a feminine woman. The feminine woman she desires, though, presents more of a theoretical problem. If the feminine invert desires masculinity, as she appears to, why is her desire not restricted to men? Havelock Ellis (1901) circumvents this indescribability of the feminine invert by rendering her passive (object, not subject, of desire), as well as most open to being 'cured' of her perversion.[12] The feminine invert's ability to be both 'errant heterosexual' and part of a particular class of homosexual is made possible only through a notion of bisexual human potential. Ellis's argument that 'the basis of sexual life is bisexual, although its direction may be definitely fixed in a heterosexual or homosexual direction at a very early period in life'[13] leaves open the possibility for misguided actions (the feminine invert is not particularly strong-minded) and cure. Within this canonical sexological formulation of the perverted feminine woman, Radclyffe Hall's Mary (1928),[14] to take the classic example, is always destined to be 'subject-in-waiting'. She is bound to be secondary subject to the 'mannish woman', and because she is only legible as (bisexual) 'subject-to-be-cured', her own subjectivity must always be deferred. It is no accident that Mary is presented as child-like in her desire. Mary can only become a subject /adult by making the heterosexual object-choice that has been her destiny from the start. Recent writers have pleaded the case for Mary generally in terms of greater tolerance,[15] as Frann Michel (1996) notes, 'Mary is thus represented as essentially passive and becomes the precursor to the negative image of the bisexual woman who leaves her woman love for a man'.[16] I would argue that the writing out of Mary seems to be a sleight of hand enacted by Hall, the sexologists and lesbian literary critics combined.

There is ample textual evidence for reading Mary as actively desiring Stephen (despite the latter's best efforts to ignore this). For example, in one scene where Mary and Stephen almost consummate their desire and love for one another, Mary asserts herself as the desiring agent in the face of Stephen's awkwardness, and inability to express what she wants.[17] And it is Mary's confession of her love for Stephen in Tenerife that finally precipitates the consummation of their lust.[18] It is possible to re-read *The Well* and trace Mary's *unwilling* consignment to heterosexuality, and her resistance to being cast as the (bisexual) 'subject-in-waiting'.[19]

Shifting historically to the present, the relationship between bisexuality and femme identity has been coded somewhat differently. Reading heterosexual oppression in part through the rigid codes of femininity women are expected to display and embody, US and UK lesbian feminists such as Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon (1972) and Janice Raymond (1979) in the 1970s, and Sheila Jeffreys (1993) and Julia Penelope (1996) in the 1990s, argue for the eradication of 'gender roles'.[20] What is particularly interesting to me is the ways that lesbian feminist conceptualization has changed very little over the two decades. Minnie Bruce Pratt (1995), writing about lesbian feminist politics of the 1970s, sketches the motivation for such conceptualizations of gender as bad:

> As women and as lesbians we wanted to step outside traps set for us as people sexed as woman, to evade negative values gendered to us. We didn't want to be women as defined by the larger culture, so we had to get rid of femininity. We didn't want to be oppressed by men, so we had to get rid of masculinity. And we wanted to end enforced desire, so we had to get rid of heterosexuality.[21]

Early US lesbian feminism figures in Pratt's story as the primary challenge to heteropatriarchy through its insistence on both non-femininity and lack of sex with men. Femininity and desire for men are fused, though not, in this case, naturalized. Continuing in the radical feminist tradition of femininity-trashing, Julia Penelope argues emphatically, in the 1990s, that femininity is always about passing as heterosexual and

internalized homophobia, and is, thus, barely distinguishable from bisexuality.[22] Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon, commenting on their contemporary lesbian roles and styles note:

> We have found some interesting anomalies in the butch-femme pattern over the years. One which crops up rather consistently is women -- usually divorced and, we suspect, not Lesbian at all -- who pair up with butch Lesbians. In these partnerships the entire male-female dichotomy is acted out to the nth degree. The femmes insist that their butches wear only male clothing and that they appear and act as nearly like the stereotyped male as possible..
>
> Most of these femmes have been divorced more than once. It appears that they have been so badly treated by men that they can't bear the thought of re-marrying[23]

Martin's and Lyon's repeated reference to 'divorce' in the above passage emphasizes these femmes' bisexual behaviour in terms of relationships with both men and women. Psychically, this bisexual/femme is only capable of male-female relations: whether those are actual or transposed onto butch/femme. Martin's and Lyon's bisexual/femme confirms the hegemonic link between femininity and heterosexuality, and shores up the assumption that femininity is always and only ever masculinity's closest relation. The bisexual/femme makes real the fear that female/femininity craves male/masculinity for its fulfillment, settling for a butch only when a man is unavailable.

The repeated association of the femme with heterosexuality through bisexuality provokes contemporary femme writers to wrestle the femme from the hands of both the sexologists and lesbians feminists, arguing for femme identity and history as an integral part of lesbian history, rather than its demon in the closet.[24] The status of the femme as lesbian is ensured only by detaching her from her 'bisexual' past, it seems. As femme writer Amber Hollibaugh (1981) suggests: 'it's absolutely critical to understand that femmes are women to women and dykes to men in the straight world'.[25] The femme becomes a contemporary subject by insisting on her absolute difference from the bisexual.

Section Two: Repudiating Heterosexuality, or the 'Not-Quite-Not-Straight' Femme

Some contemporary theorists have written on butch-femme culture and resistance from a slightly different angle: Teresa de Lauretis (1988), Judith Roof (1991) and Judith Butler (1990, 1993) suggest that femininity and butch-femme cultures are indeed embedded within heterosexual normativity, but not wholly reducible to it.[26] I want to focus here on how Butler discusses ways in which butch-femme highlights rather than replicates the constructed nature of the heterosexual matrix. In *Gender Trouble* Butler makes her most well-cited statement that:

> [t]he replication of heterosexual constructs in non-heterosexual frames brings into relief the utterly constructed status of the so-called heterosexual original. Thus, gay is to straight not as copy is to original, but, rather, as copy is to copy.[27]

Butler's theory of what makes butch-femme and drag so potentially subversive is their very closeness to heterosexuality, their making conscious of the mechanism of repudiation in sustaining our identities (though, of course, this is clearer in the 'masculine lesbian' than the femme).[28] The masculine woman repudiates 'the feminine', but remains female and thus incongruous to heterosexuality. She does not need the presence of the femme to 'prove' her non-heterosexuality. The feminine woman repudiates 'the masculine' but cannot be read as repudiating heterosexuality unless her masculine female is present. She needs the presence of a visibly non-heterosexual (masculine) subject in order for her repudiations of both masculinity and heterosexuality to make sense.[29] Such formation of the subject through repudiation means, of course, that the repudiated other is always hauntingly present. In the Butlerian psychoanalytic scenario, 'mimicry functions as an index of [the 'real'], gesturing towards it, and maintaining a certain contiguity with it.'[30] The non-heterosexuality of the femme, since she relies on the presence of the butch for the legibility of her heterosexual repudiation, is particularly precarious. For the femme, with her history of recuperation into heterosexuality (via

bisexuality as potential), accessing subjectivity through a repudiation that marks her as 'not-quite-not-straight'[31] has very specific cultural implications.

Rather than rejecting the established theoretical links between the femme and her heterosexuality, lesbian culture transfigures that relationship in terms of 'myth' -- the (lesbian urban) myth of femme abandonment of her butch lover for a man. Pat Califia's femme-butch poetry (1992) foregrounds the tension between the myth of femme abandonment and the assumption that she will stay both with her butch:

> And you can tell she's a femme
> Because she makes you cry
> When you can't give her everything
> You imagine she wants
> That a man could give her[32]

The butch lover imagines herself lacking in relation to a man; her femme (who is used to this scenario of course, structured as she is by its confines) who 'makes her cry' not by leaving her (she is femme after all) but through chiding her lover for her foolishness. Califia is the femme's champion, acknowledging her bravery and the taunts she receives from 'both sides':

> Being a successful femme
> Means making a butch desire you
> And then enduring when that lust
> Turns into suspicion.
> 'If you want me,' she sneers,
> 'You must really want a man.'
> Nobody knows how much it hurts
> When you go out on the street
> And straight men tell you
> The same damned thing.[33]

The 'successful femme' (who is, perhaps, the femme who does not fail/fall into heterosexuality), *endures* her butch's suspicion, rather than deflecting or circumventing it, presumably because she knows that is an impossibility. The poignancy of the poem

lies in Califia's astute perception that the straight men's and the butch's readings of the femme must necessarily co-exist. The shadow of Carole-Ann Tyler's grammatical structuring (1994) -- the femme as not-quite-not-straight[34] -- lurks between these lines, echoing Califia's earlier sentiment in the same poem that she's 'a sucker'[35] for

> .. women who can never have what they want
> Because the world will not allow them
> To be complete human beings -- that is, men. (417)

The structure of this sentiment allows multiple readings. Men are 'the world', that which prevents women having 'what they want'; or, what those women want *is* men, but the loss of human status attending such desire is too high a price to pay. The spectre of straightness that has always structured the femme is transformed in these poems into an 'operative myth' that enacts Butler's functional mode of repudiation.[36] In Califia's poems the unconscious heterosexual object-choice that the femme must necessarily already have made becomes conscious, becomes part of the social and erotic dynamic of the butch-femme play (that both femme and butch are aware of). As a result the femme may become a contemporary subject without having to deny her historical, cultural and grammatical locatedness.

This 'resolution' of the contemporary femme's subjectivity through conscious rather than unconscious repudiation of both opposite-sex object-choice and heterosexual culture helps make sense of why it is that the bisexual femme continues to be a misnomer. Non-heterosexual sites of resistance for Butler are created exclusively by subjects formed through repudiation of opposite-sex object-choice; Califia's femme repudiates the opposite-sex object-choice she has already made. Julia Creet (1995) argues that Butler's exclusive focus on lesbian and gay contexts marks less the site of subversion of heterosexuality than it does her own anxieties of 'coming undone'.[37] Creet discusses her own attraction to heterosexuality, and re-interprets lesbian and gay insistence on the distinctness of homosexual identity as a political 'defense against re-incorporation into

heterosexuality or into the categorization of what might more accurately be called bisexuality.'[38]

It is only by parodying the notion of bisexual potential that Butler and Califia can make the stereotype of the femme who will always eventually leave you for a man function as '(urban) myth'. The 'myth' functions, in other words, because (we know) the femme will not make the opposite-sex object-choice she is (bisexually) capable of. She is femme precisely because she is read as heterosexual, may even desire men, but finally (unlike Radclyffe Hall's Mary) refuses that object-choice. A bisexual femme, of course, does not necessarily refuse to act on her opposite-sex object-choice, and so calls into question the viability of the femme subject as structured only through that refusal. Acceptance of a bisexual femme subject position, then, would seem to be courting a re-enactment of the structural and personal erasure of the femme just as she is aggressively flirting with dominant cultures in order to secure her own legibility as lesbian, as queer, as a subject in her own right.

Section Three: Bisexual Femme Subjectivity and Cultural Repudiation

What enables femme identity always to be constituted as 'about to abandon' (however parodically) her butch is the perpetuation of bisexuality as only ever a structural phenomenon. I am not suggesting that Califia and Butler are wrong to creatively manipulate particular meanings of bisexuality in order to produce a contemporary femme subject. Bisexuality as sexological and psychoanalytic potential certainly does function as a refusal of femme -- historically, politically, and structurally. Indeed, such meanings of bisexuality as sex and gender merged subjects continue to circulate currently. However these are not the *only* meanings of bisexuality available. Bisexuality can also mean desire -- whether acted upon or not -- for both men and women (and transgendered people).[39] Bisexual identity can be taken on as an adult sexual identity rather than pre-oedipal potential structuring the heterosexual and homosexual opposition. These latter

meanings are overlooked in the work of Butler and Califia. I want to pursue a line of argument that imagines the development of a bisexual femme subjectivity as closely associated, with rather than analogous to, lesbian femme subjectivity.

To return to the problematic of Butler's non-heterosexual frames, what kinds of 'parodies' become possible if we imagine bisexual femme as a non-heterosexual subject position that is unable to divorce itself from opposite-sex desire, if, in other words, the 'spectre of straightness' cannot be dismissed? What might the implications for parody be if we consider the almost perfect copy (even down to sexed bodies as well as gender) that bisexuality can make of heterosexuality? What I want to look at in this section are the possibilities opened up by bisexual femme repudiations not of specific sexed (i.e. male) bodies, but cultural repudiations of heterosexuality. I want to explore, in other words, the possibility that non-heterosexuality might be read through something other than same-sex desire, such that bisexual femme subjectivity does not only figure through a (butch) same-sex lover -- such that bisexual femme subjectivity can, in fact, figure at all.

Lesbian femme writers of recent years have, of course, been similarly concerned with articulating lesbian femme subjectivity independent of desire for butches. It is not unusual for lesbian femme writers' desire to be sparked by men as well as women. As a way into my exploration of bisexual femme subjectivity I want to look at what happens when the lesbian femme makes the 'myth' of opposite-sex desire into a reality.

Joan Nestle (1994), for example, relishes the erotic component of her relationship with co-editor John Preston: '"Fondest of My Fantasies," he would greet me.. Dearest Love Goddess, Dearest Erotic Icon of My Soul, and finally, Dear Divine Being of My Groin. How could a girl resist?'[40] A couple of pages later, John Preston speaks of this desire as in no way qualifying the fact that he is 'totally a gay man, attracted to other gay men'.[41] Preston's confidence in this fact textually relies on his lack of desire to have sex with Nestle. Hence he is clear that 'there was never any genital intent', and that with that acknowledgment

> there is then room for play, for gentle exploration. I would never seek out a sexual relationship with a woman, but I could also never understand how any man - any human -- could not respond to Joan's voice, the sultriness of it, or the romance of dark eyes as they peer deeply into yours.[42]

What allows this passage to function as an acknowledgment of the desire between John and Joan as not heterosexual, is Preston's emphasis on the non-genital nature of that desire. Both his and Nestle's non-heterosexuality via repudiation of opposite-sex object-choice remains unchallenged by a scene that might initially seem to call same-sex object-choice into question. Both straight and lesbian/gay desire are assumed to reside in the actualization of opposite- or same-sex object-choice -- neither writer considers the fact that even straights also desire non-genitally sometimes.[43] For Nestle and Preston, the writing of their (opposite-sex) desire here only serves to reinforce the fact that they 'are so clear that each of us is devoted to the work and love of our own gender'.[44]

In *Public Sex* (1994), Pat Califia ruminates on the reasons she does not call herself bisexual, even though she does have opposite-sex sexual partners:

> Why not simply identify as bi? That's a complicated question.. A self-identified bisexual is saying, "Men and women are of equal importance to me." That's simply not true of me.. [W]hen I turn on to a man it's because he shares some aspect of my sexuality (like S/M or fisting) that turns me on despite his biological sex.[45]

Here Califia's opposite-sex desire is coded as not central to her lesbian identity. Her opposite-sex encounters are marked by some factor other than biological sex, such as the man's sexual practices (that mark him as deviant, often to gay male culture as well), and his own attachment to a gay identity:

> I know that a gay man who has sex with me is making an exception and that he's still gay after we come and clean up. In return I can make an exception for him because I know he isn't trying to convert me to heterosexuality.[46]

Califia's non-heterosexual desire is clearly partly inscribed through cultural repudiation. She has 'eroticized queerness, gayness, homosexuality',[47] and argues that '[i]t is very odd that sexual orientation is defined solely in terms of the sex of one's partners'.[48] Although it is finally her same-sex object-choices that frame her opposite-sex ones as marginal, as not fundamental to her identity (and resistance), Califia's sense of cultural repudiation in the production and maintenance of her non-heterosexuality, her lesbian identity, suggests a space where bisexual femme subjectivity might begin to articulate itself in non-heterosexual terms.

Lesbian femme desire for masculinity in FTMs or transgendered butches seems similarly to be a focused site for questions around femme subjectivity currently. Debra Bercuvitz, in 'Stand By Your Man' (1995), discusses the ways in which her sense of self as lesbian femme is challenged by her desire for her increasingly butch/transgendered lover Kris:

> My identity as femme was clear to me. But as Kris became more stone, then passed as a man, I realized that not only was I losing my external identity as a lesbian, but my own sense of self became clouded as I related more to Kris's masculinity.. I came into my femininity with her, into the full display of my sexy, femme glory. One clear dynamic was my need to give, hers to take. But, of course, not in the straight way.[49]

The history of other butch-femme couples read as straight is clearly extremely important to Bercuvitz. It is through this history that she can articulate her lover's struggles as her inextricable from her own.[50] Within the cultural repudiation of heterosexuality, Bercuvitz's object-choice can be read as 'same-sex', though in straight contexts it is less certain.[51]

Minnie Bruce Pratt's concern about the sexual identity of the femme is in part sparked by her desire for her transgendered lover. Throughout *S/HE* (1995), Pratt articulates concern about the narrow-ness of sex and gender as categories through which we can understand our sexual desires. Discussing how Brandon Teena's death[52] was

understood as the death of a lesbian rather than a transsexual by a particular lesbian writer, Pratt suggests that:

> [t]he writer admits Brandon lived as a man, but she strips him down to prove that he was not. For her, everything has to match -- genitals, clothes, pronouns.. [s]he decides he is a confused lesbian -- her kind of lesbian, she writes, a butch woman who turns her on, who gets her hot.. The writer never mentions he died when he insisted he would chose his own pronoun.[53]

Given the context (that Teena was 'stripped down' by his attackers before being raped to prove to his lover he was 'female') Pratt's words fix the lesbian writer as yet again erasing Teena to fit her own desire. Teena is lesbian -- we know, because s/he is the lesbian writer's 'kind of [butch] lesbian'. Pratt's critique could be read as highlighting the mis-readings that go on in order to preserve lesbian identity as formed through repudiation of heterosexual object-choice.

So, is Pratt's sense of self as (lesbian) femme formed through cultural or object-choice repudiation? When Pratt and her lover insist that their desire to enter Michigan Women's Festival is legitimate, it is not because they both have female bodies, but because they both are and have been a part of feminist and lesbian culture and history.[54] Throughout *S/HE,* Pratt traces a personal and political history of her place in and relationship to lesbian and feminist culture. In addition, Pratt's desire is certainly not only for 'women' as that is generally understood. As her (bisexual) friend points out , she is the lover of woman and man in one body,[55] and her lover is read as alternately man and woman.[56] Still, Pratt is uncertain: she questions how she might have negotiated her desire and identity if her lover were to have transitioned from female to male, were to have unrecognizably transformed her body to 'his body' -- 'perhaps I would have left you when your voice altered and your beard grew and your scent changed'.[57] In a sense Pratt's femme desire in *S/HE* is for the limits of womanhood (her own as well as her

lover's). She is a lover of the female form, of female history and struggle, and so part of her project is to suggest alternatives to where the boundaries of womanhood might be:

> I don't want *woman* to be a fortress that has to be defended. I want it to be a life we constantly braid together from the threads of our existence, a rope we make, a flexible weapon stronger than steel, that we use to pull down walls that imprison us at the borders.[58]

Thus, repudiation of opposite-sex object-choice is still an important part of being femme for Pratt, but the boundaries of that same-sex (female) object are no longer assumed to be self-evident. Both Pratt's and Bercuvitz's desires might be written as repudiation of heterosexual culture *and* as opposite-sex object-choice repudiation, in other words (much like Califia's above).

What interests me is that none of the authors I have discussed above consider bisexuality as an intervention in the current debates about what forms non-heterosexual subjectivity. Even Califia, whose article expressly addresses why she does not call herself bisexual, does not consider what bisexual desire or object-choice might consist of. Her frames of reference are heterosexual acts (that she distances herself from) and 'queer' acts (that she embraces). Yet all the authors open up a way of approaching the 'problem' of bisexual femme subjectivity. Just as Pratt and Bercuvitz emphasize the cultural histories that are combined in the conjunction of (lesbian) femme and transgendered subject, bisexual femme desire might be articulated as first and foremost a cultural repudiation of heterosexuality (that would also bring other such gestures as Pratt's, Bercuvitz's, Califia's and Nestle's into focus.

To stay with the example of femme desire for transgendered or transsexual subjects for a moment, bisexual writer Marcy Sheiner's predominant concern about her relationship with her transsexual lover, Rob, also surrounds the possibility of its being recuperated into heterosexual culture, mirroring Bercuvitz's anxiety almost exactly.[59]

Where the two writers differ, though, is in terms of the site of their potential loss of identity. Sheiner (1996) writes:

> It was as if his whole body became one giant cock, and I simply became cunt, opening up to receive the energy.. Ironically, I felt more female with Rob than I had ever felt with a genetic male. Maybe it was because I was more trusting of a he-who-had-been-she, and could therefore drop my survival skills, allowing myself to become pure, primeval woman. It felt liberating -- for awhile. Eventually, of course, there was a price to pay[60]

The 'price' Sheiner pays is being read externally as heterosexual (in particular by her family), rather than understanding losing her own sense of self because of her object-choice. Her blatant reductionism aside, the issue for Sheiner is how this particular relationship is not heterosexual *even though* it is between a man and a woman, rather than how this relationship is not heterosexual because it is *not* (in terms of sexed object-choice) between a man and a woman. The questions posed by desire for transgendered and transsexual bodies by both lesbian and bisexual femmes are similar: i.e. what are the implications of this desire for my sense of self as femme? How is this desire (and sense of self) different from heterosexuality? How do I mark this desire as non-heterosexual? These are certainly not new questions for femmes to be asking, but I want to show how a bisexual femme subject might answer these questions differently by situating herself as non-heterosexual through the process of cultural repudiation signaled as significant by Sheiner, as well as through specific object-choices.

What is interesting about the conjunction of bisexual femme and FTM is that here we have a coupling that may be read as non-heterosexual through their combined cultural repudiation. Both bisexual femmes and FTMs may, for example, have learned the form and expression of their desire in a lesbian context -- in a lesbian butch-femme context more specifically.[61] The way that a FTM-bisexual femme couple make sense of and give meaning to their desire may, in other words, be in reference to lesbian cultural forms and histories, even though the opposite-sex form of their desire might suggest it resonates

more within heterosexuality. For these subjectivities the male-female dynamic which haunts lesbian butch-femme does not need to be banished, can thrive without the relationship without always being reduced to heterosexuality.

This approach to the formation of a bisexual femme subject position raises a number of questions of course. I am aware that what I have chosen to focus on here is the repudiation of heterosexual culture (irrespective of object-choice). In a sense this is to over-state the case in search of (my) bisexual femme legitimation.[62] A bisexual femme position might also differentiate itself from lesbian culture. I would suggest that a bisexual femme subject position may, in fact, be occupied through vacillating cultural repudiation of both/either heterosexual and lesbian culture, as well as repudiation through sexed object-choices. So that, a bisexual femme who views herself as residing within lesbian culture might be understood as differentiating herself via a repudiation of heterosexual culture and lesbian object-choice (if she is in a relationship with a man, say); or repudiation of lesbian culture and heterosexual object-choice (if in a relationship with a woman, say). Thus the bisexual femme may gain meaning through the simultaneous utterances: 'I am a non-heterosexual' and 'I am a non-lesbian'.[63]

Such positioning of bisexual femme also opens up the possibility that at points, she may not be differentiable from lesbian femme. In my article on the 'indiscretion' of bisexuality in relation to lesbian identity in Northampton, I argue that it is only through 'naming' that bisexual women's experience becomes experienced as different from lesbian experience (1997).[64] One very real issue that this proposition of a bisexual femme subject as part of lesbian culture raises is that of appropriation. If a bisexual femme is at points distinguishable from a lesbian femme only in terms of her opposite-sex object-choice, can she not simply be accused of appropriation of lesbian femme culture? Such a gesture of blame marks the bisexual femme as 'inauthentic',[65] and perpetuates the notion that bisexual and lesbian femme are always separate, with the bisexual femme as the copy to the lesbian femme's original. My resistance to marking out bisexual femme

subjectivity as only and always separate from lesbian femme subjectivity is, firstly because this would appear to mis-represent the history of their relationship both historically and contemporarily, and, secondly, because there are bound to be points where the two subject positions are mutually informative, overlap, or are indistinguishable from one another. These moments do not necessarily involve the erasure of one subject over another.

My attempt in this article to imagine a bisexual femme subject position as a site of non-heterosexual resistance opens up a number of problems as well as possibilities at this point. My attempt to extend the notion of repudiation beyond desire to include culture risks collapsing the two into one another. This move could be read as suggesting that the cultural repudiations of the bi-femme, or the non-heterosexual subject, are unconscious ones which lead to a bi-femme or non-heterosexual subjectivity.[66] In fact, though, I see the bi femme's cultural repudiations I have been describing as social and political decisions that allow her to occupy a non-heterosexual subject position and hence offer a conscious parody of Butler's heterosexual frames.[67] Thus we could see the bisexual femme subject I have been delineating as either a subject who chooses to inhabit non-straight cultural locations; or as one whose subjectivity is formed through both unconscious and conscious repudiations.

This view of the bisexual femme as an unconsciously-formed subject whose cultural repudiations do not directly (in)form her subjectivity can easily turn to the accusation of appropriation I mentioned above, and her need to be there (as a way of consolidating her subjectivity) challenged. This view of the bisexual femme sees her rejection of straight culture and embracing of lesbian culture as voluntaristic and willful, as well as conscious. The bisexual femme is this set up as the 'knowing' subject, who can pick and choose cultures as well as object-choices. What I want to suggest is a bisexual femme's unconscious repudiation constitutes her as a sexual subject, and that her conscious repudiation constitutes her as a cultural subject. The combination of

unconscious and conscious repudiation produces a bisexual femme subject capable of expressing desire and surviving in a heterosexist world. I would argue that there is no meaningful bisexual femme subjectivity that precedes its formation through cultural repudiation. There is no 'bisexual femme' waiting in the wings to take advantage of lesbian femme community, to borrow what is not hers without permission.

It is my hope that such an approach to bisexual femme subjectivity can underscore the contemporary femme desire to signify independent of opposite-gendered same-sexed objects. Bisexual femme's (and lesbian femme's) mis-matching cultural and object-choice repudiations suggest, perhaps, a different historical and contemporary narrative of femme desire, one where Mary (as the femme who must ever be denied) is no longer a subject-in-waiting, or a failed lesbian femme, but a subject whose complex (and ambivalent) cultural and object-choice repudiations are a central part of non-heterosexual struggle.

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[1] Thanks go to Jo Eadie, David Hansen-Miller, Sally Munt and Merl Storr, for their careful readings and critiques of earlier drafts.

Throughout this article I use the term bisexuality in a number of different ways. Since one of the difficulties of theorizing bisexuality is precisely the number of different meanings it has (as potential, as hermaphrodite or androyne, as the desire for people of both sexes and gender, to name but a few), I have tried to be clear throughout this article how bisexuality is being used (and how I am using it). For a more in depth view of the different meanings bisexuality has currently and historically see the volume of contemporary bisexual theory, Bi Academic Intervention (ed.), *The Bisexual Imaginary: Desire, Representation, Identity* (London: Cassell, 1997).

[2] Charlotte Raven, 'Swap Shop','Future Sex', *Observer Life* (15 October 1995), pp. 10-11.

[3] Raven's depiction is not meant to be favourable. Her article is a diatribe against a contemporary trendy bisexual movement and identity. Bisexual writers have been consistently concerned to critique more blatantly 'negative' bisexual representations (as unstable, homophobic or untrustworthy, for example). E.g. Amanda Udis-Kessler, 'Challenging the Stereotypes', in S. Rose, C. Stevens et al, The Off Pink Collective (ed.), *Bisexual Horizons: Politics, Histories, Lives* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1996), pp. 45-57. Marjorie Garber also draws attention to the dominant unfavourable representations of bisexuals and bisexuality, and argues instead for 'bisexual readings' of 'lesbian', 'gay', or 'straight' representations in film and art. Marjorie Garber *Vice Versa: Bisexuality and the Eroticism of Everyday Life* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1995). The 'Editors' Introduction' to the UK bisexual theory volume *The Bisexual Imaginary* proposes a shift in emphasis towards examining how bisexuality is produced through dominant representations rather than a rejection of those in favour of creating new, and supposedly 'truer' or 'less oppressive' images. Bi Academic Intervention (ed.) *The Bisexual Imaginary: Desire, Representation, Identity* (London: Cassell, 1997). This latter approach is closer to my own.

[4] Front cover, 'Bisexuality: Not Gay. Not Straight. A New Sexual Identity Emerges', *Newsweek* (July 1995).

[5] Front cover, *Anything That Moves: the Magazine for the Bisexual-at-Large* Issue #10 (Winter 1996).

[6] In another context I imagine it might be possible to read the 'woman' as a female-to-male transsexual, In the context of bisexual representation, though, it is important that the image is of two effeminate men and a butch woman.

[7] Marjorie Garber *Vice Versa*, p. 156. Alternatively bisexuality as'in between' (gay and straight) is seen as parallel or equivalent to being 'mixed raced'. Articles that exemplify that slippage include: Brenda Marie Blasingame, 'The Roots of Biphobia: Racism and

Internalized Heterosexism', in B. R. Weise (ed.), *Closer to Home: Bisexuality and Feminism* (Seattle: Seal Press, 1992), pp. 49-50; and, June Jordan, 'A New Politics of Sexuality', in S. Rose (ed.), *Bisexual Horizons*, pp. 11-15.

[8] Jo Eadie points out that the 'hermaphroditic' representation in the Raven piece remains unsatisfactory in that it only represents bisexual desire for a mixture of genitals and mammaries of white, shaven-headed people. It fails in its attempt to represent bisexual insatiability, since it does not represent the ways in which desire for sexed bodies and genders is also a raced desire. Jo Eadie, 'It's going to be more difficult than that: bisexual desire and its objects', paper presented at University of Sussex (February 1997).

[9] Speaking of the ways in which 'the feminine invert' has been viewed as 'the imperfect deviant', Nestle critiques Frank Caprio 'add[ing] the final blow: "[The feminine type of Lesbian] is more apt to be bisexual and also apt to respond favorably to treatment."' (Joan Nestle, 'The Femme Question', in J. Nestle (ed.), *The Persistent Desire: A Femme-Butch Reader* (Boston: Alyson, 1992), p. 143.

[10] See Frann Michel, 'Do Bats Eat Cats? Reading What Bisexuality Does', in D. Hall and M. Pramaggiore (eds), *RePresenting Bisexuality: Subjects and Cultures of Fluid Desire* (New York and London: New York University Press, 1996), pp. 55-69, for another analysis of the relationship between bisexuality and femme.

[11] Wilhelm von Krafft-Ebing *Psychopathia Sexualis*, 9th edn (Stuttgart: Enke, 1894); Havelock Ellis *Studies in the Psychology of Sex* (1901), 3rd edn (Philadelphia: F. A. Davis Co., 1928). See Merl Storr,'The Sexual Reproduction of "Race": Bisexuality, History and Racialisation', in Bi Academic Intervention (ed.) *The Bisexual Imaginary,* for a reading of bisexuality and 'race' in Krafft-Ebing.

[12] In a particularly conflicted passage on 'the women to whom the actively inverted woman is most attracted' Ellis further justifies their perversion by rendering them less attractive to men than heterosexual women. Thus the feminine woman Ellis is speaking

of is ‘the pick of the women whom the average man would pass by’. Ellis de-feminizes her at the same time as he accounts for her willingness to reciprocate the ‘mannish woman’s’ advances: ‘So far as they may be said to constitute a class, they seem to possess a genuine, though not precisely sexual, preference for women over men, and it is this coldness, rather than lack of charm, which often renders men rather indifferent to them’. Ellis, ‘Sexual Inversion in Women’, *Studies in the Psychology of Sex*, p. 222.

[13] Ellis,‘Sexual Inversion In Men’, p. 86.

[14] Radclyffe Hall *The Well of Loneliness* (London : Jonathon Cape, 1928).

[15] Both Lisa Walker and Joan Nestle acknowledge that sexological paradigms prescribe the femme’s place as beside her man, yet still see Mary’s ‘betrayal’ as somehow a failure of will. Joan Nestle suggests that Stephen turns her lover over to Martin ‘so she may have a chance at a “normal” life, thus enabling the author to make a plea for greater understanding of the deviant’s plight’, though she remains uncertain as to why Hall does not hold up Lady Una Troubridge, her life-partner, ‘this steadfast femme woman’ as an alternative role model. Joan Nestle, ‘The Femme Question’, in J. Nestle (ed.), *The Persistent Desire*, p. 144. Lisa Walker, like Nestle, rather apologetically argues that both Mary and that other perverse heterosexual, Angela Crossby, lack ‘the strength, or finally the desire, to stay “in the life”’. Lisa Walker, ‘How to Recognize a Lesbian: The Cultural Politics of Looking Like What You Are’, *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* vol. 18, no. 4 (Summer 1993), p. 881. Both writers ignore the fact that, structurally, neither woman’s desire can be written any other way than through bisexual displacement onto heterosexuality for it to make sense within the sexological paradigm Hall uses. Similarly, Esther Newton and Teresa de Lauretis gesture towards the importance of Mary, yet are unable to offer a positive critique. Esther Newton, ‘The Mythic Mannish Lesbian: Radclyffe Hall and the New Woman’, in M. B. Duberman, M. Vicinus, and G. Chauncey Jr (eds), *Hidden From History: Reclaiming the Gay and*

Lesbian Past (New York: New American Library, 1989); Teresa de Lauretis, 'Sexual Indifference and Lesbian Representation', *Theatre Journal* 40, 2 (1988), pp. 155-177.

[16] Frann Michel, 'Do Bats Eat Cats?', p. 60.

[17] Hall, *The Well of Loneliness*, pp. 299-302.

[18] Hall, *the Well of Loneliness*, pp. 315ff.

[19] See also Jay Prosser's exemplary work on the production of the invert as early transgendered/transsexual rather than lesbian narrative in *The Well of Loneliness* and sexology.(Jay Prosser *Second Skins: the Body Narratives of Transsexuality* (New York: Columbia University Press, forthcoming).

[20] Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon *Lesbian/Woman* (New York: Bantam Books, 1972); Janice Raymond *The Transsexual Empire: The Making of a She-Male* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1979); Sheila Jeffreys, 'Butch and Femme: Now and Then', in Lesbian History Group *Not a Passing Phase: Reclaiming Lesbians in History 1840-1985* (London: The Women's Press, 1993), pp. 158-187; Julia Penelope, 'Passing Lesbians: the High Cost of Femininity', in L. Mohin (ed.), *An Intimacy of Equals: Lesbian Feminist Ethics* (London: Onlywomen Press, 1996), pp. 118-152. For all these writers, while masculinity is certainly not vindicated, femininity is targeted as a particularly personal affront.

I am wary in writing this part of the essay of perpetuating what I perceive as an over-simplification of what often gets termed ''70s radical/separatist feminism'. The image conjured up by this gloss is, firstly, of a progressive narrative where radical feminism is displaced by cultural feminism, is displaced by sex radical/postmodern feminism. This is clearly untrue, since the Mohin collection and other radical feminist anthologies are contemporary publications. Secondly, there is a widespread tendency to 'blame' radical feminists for highjacking lesbianism, and forcing butch-femme underground singlehandly. It seems highly unlikely that radical feminists really had that much power, or that this can have been the primary factor involved in political and

personal moves towards 'androgyny'. The tensions embedded in butch-femme relationships and lives themselves, for example, must also be contributory factors. Amber Hollibaugh and Cherrie Moraga discuss openly and beautifully the difficulties of negotiating masculinity and femininity differently (i.e. in non-oppressive ways) within butch-femme communities and identities (though it does seem to me that feminism is scapegoated in rather universalized ways at times too -- 'It seems feminism is the last rock of conservatism' (252)). Amber Hollibaugh and Cherrie Moraga , 'What We're Rollin' Around in Bed With: Sexual Silences in Feminism' (1981), in J. Nestle (ed.), *A Persistent Desire*, pp. 243-253. It would certainly be a shame if femme and butch identities were only to gain validity *in opposition* to a projected notion of feminist history. See 'Radically Speaking', one of a number of recent radical feminist volumes that highlights different attempts to re-write radical feminist history. Diane Bell and Renate Klein (eds) *Radically Speaking: Feminism Reclaimed* (Melbourne: Sinifex Press, 1996).

[21] Minnie Bruce Pratt *S/HE* (Ithaca, New York: Firebrand Books, 1995), p. 19.

[22] Julia Penelope, 'Passing Lesbians: the High Cost of Femininity', pp. 118-152. Penelope also argues that femininity oppresses working class, fat lesbians. This is in direct contradiction to the narratives of her more accurate contemporaries, femme theorists Joan Nestle, Madeleine D Davis and Elizabeth Lapovsky Kennedy, who have researched the importance of femme-butch identities in the establishment of working-class lesbian communities. Joan Nestle *A Restricted Country* (Ithaca, New York: Firebrand Books, 1987); Madeleine D Davis and Elizabeth Lapovsky Kennedy *Boots of Leather, Slippers of Gold: the History of a Lesbian Community* (New York: Routledge, 1993). Clearly, not all femmes and butches are working-class, as Sheila Jeffreys points out -- Sheila Jeffreys, 'Butch and Femme: Now and Then', pp. 158-187 -- but to claim, as Penelope does, that lesbian femininity *only ever* denotes class privilege (as well as bisexuality) is

fundamentally inaccurate. An altogether different approach to femmes and class is taken by Betty Rose Dudley in her 'in-your-face' article 'A Fat, Vulgar, Angry Slut', *Anything That Moves: the Magazine for the Card-Carrying Bisexual* Issue #11 (Summer 1996), p. 14, who rages against middle-class girls 'doing' butch and femme as ' "stud" and "slut" ', when 'they expect a privilege that no slut or stud that I grew up with ever envisioned'.

[23] Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon *Lesbian/Woman*, p. 67.

[24] See Nestle, 'The Femme Question', pp. 138-146; Hollibaugh and Moraga, 'What We're Rollin' Around in Bed With', pp. 243-253; Madeline Davis, Amber Hollibaugh and Joan Nestle, 'The Femme Tapes', in J. Nestle (ed.), *The Persistent Desire*, pp. 254-267; Madeline Davis and Elizabeth Lapovsky Kennedy *Boots of Leather, Slippers of Gold*; Minnie Bruce Pratt, *S/HE*. This is, of course, not an exhaustive list.

[25] In, Amber Hollibaugh and Cherrie Moraga, 'What We're Rollin' Around in Bed With', p. 249. As Frann Michel argues, 'the visual indistinguishability of the femme from the straight or bisexual woman is frequently resolved through narrative, one version of which collapses bisexuality into a wayward heterosexuality'. Frann Michel 'Do Bats Eat Cats?', pp. 55-69.

[26] Teresa de Lauretis, 'Sexual Indifference and Lesbian Representation'; Judith Roof *A Lure of Knowledge: Lesbian Sexuality and Theory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991); Judith Butler *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990); Judith Butler *Bodies That Matter* : *on the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (New York: Routledge, 1993). All three theorists draw on (whether explicitly or not) the work of Sue-Ellen Case, in 'Towards a Butch-Femme Aesthetic', *Discourse* 11 (Winter 1988-1989), pp. 55-73, which argues that butch-femme (seen by Case as an indivisible unit) necessarily provides a critique and parody of heterosexual gender roles. Case in turn draws on the work of Joan Riviere, as does Butler, to argue for the radical positioning of butch-femme. Joan Riviere, 'Womanliness as Masquerade', in

V, Burgin, J. Donald, C. Kaplan (eds), *Formations of Fantasy* (London: Methuen, 1986), pp. 35-44.

[27] Judith Butler *Gender Trouble*, p. 31.

[28] Judith Butler *Bodies That Matter*, pp. 85-88, 234ff. Butler addresses more explicitly the question and performance of drag in *Bodies That Matter*, or of the 'masculine woman', though I think her notion of repudiation in *Bodies That Matter* can be extended to a discussion of the femme and of butch-femme.

[29] In itself, this is hardly a new insight of course. Lisa Walker makes the same point when she says that 'the femme is invisible as a lesbian unless she is playing to a butch'. Lisa Walker, 'How to Recognize a Lesbian: the Cultural Politics of Looking Like What You Are', p. 881.

[30] Carole-Anne Tyler, 'Passing: Narcissism, Identity, and Difference', *Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 6, 2+3 (1994), p. 235.

[31] As suggested by Carole-Anne Tyler's formulation of the penis as '(k)not the phallus' (Carole-Anne Tyler, 'Passing', pp. 241-243.

[32] Pat Califia, 'Diagnostic Tests', in J. Nestle (ed.), *The Persistent Desire*, p. 484.

[33] Pat Califia, 'The Femme Poem', in J. Nestle (ed.), *The Persistent Desire*, p. 417.

[34] See page 7, note 31.

[35] Pat Califia, 'The Femme Poem', p. 416.

[36] That the shadow of straightness is not a structuring trope for butches can be seen in the upfront clear acknowledgment of butch desire for a man.

> You can tell she's butch
> Because she's one of the boys
> (And fucks one of them occasionally
> To prove it). (Califia, 'Diagnostic Tests', p. 485)

Here the butch is 'saved' from the spectre of straightness through her ability to identify

with (as well as/as a way of desiring) 'the boys', and through the tone of irony that marks this representation of butch desire for men, a tone that is absent from her femme representations.

[37] Julia Creet, ''Anxieties of Identity: Coming Out and Coming Undone', in M. Dorenkamp and R. Henke (eds), *Negotiating Lesbian and Gay Subjects* (New York and London: Routledge, 1995).

[38]Julia Creet, ''Anxieties of Identity', p. 186. Creet's own rather shy hints at a bisexuality that threatens to undo her own lesbian identity resonate throughout her text.

[39] Lani Ka'ahumanu and Loraine Hutchins define 'bisexual' as: 'people who have erotic, affectionate, romantic feelings for, fantasies of, and experiences with women and men, and/or who self-identify as bisexual.' Lani Ka'ahumanu and Loraine Hutchins (eds), *Bi Any Other Name: Bisexual People Speak Out* (Boston: Alyson, 1991), p. 369.

[40] Joan Nestle, in Joan Nestle and John Preston, "Introduction', J. Nestle and J. Preston, (eds) *Sister and Brother: Lesbians and Gay Men Write About Their Lives Together* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1994), p. 7. Most of the articles in this collection touch on the desire as well as the friendship between gay men and lesbians. What is often written as 'queer appreciation', as the exception to same-sex desire that proves the rule, could also be written as cultural repudiation of straightness that does not have to marginalize that desire as accidental and marginal (which is not the same as saying that these writers are all bisexual).

[41] John Preston, in Joan Nestle and John Preston, 'Introduction', J. Nestle and J. Preston (eds) *Sister and Brother*, p. 10.

[42] Preston and Nestle (eds) *Sister and Brother*, p. 10.

[43] Thanks to Merl Storr for pointing this aspect of Nestle's and Preston's slippage to me.

[44] Ibid.

[45] Pat Califia, 'Gay Men, Lesbians, and Sex: Doing It Together', *Public Sex: The Culture*

of Radical Sex (San Francisco: Cleiss Press, 1994), p. 185. It is important to note that Califia acknowledges that biphobia may also be one reason preventing lesbians or gay men identifying as bisexual. In a different context I might also want to elaborate on the fact that self-identified bisexuals are actually *not* necessarily saying that men and women figure equally for them. In fact, it is common for bisexuals to desire men and women to different degrees. However, in 1983 (when this article was first published) there was little writing on bisexual desire that was not psychology or sexology-based, and Califia's piece was one of the first to defend the right of bisexual women to be a part of lesbian sub-culture.

[46] Califia, 'Gay Men, Lesbians, and Sex', p. 186.

[47] Ibid., p. 185.

[48] Ibid., p. 186.

[49] Debra Bercuvitz, 'Stand By Your man', in L. Newman (ed.), *The Femme Mystique* (Boston: Alyson, 1995), pp. 90, 93.

[50] Bercuvitz, 'Stand By Your Man', pp. 93-4.

[51] Clearly there is a certain irony in the last sentence of Bercuvitz's words. That irony does not change the fact that, throughout her article, Bercuvitz gives voice to her deep concern with being 'read' correctly as lesbian femme. As I highlighted with both Califia and Butler, parody in itself does not release butch-femme from relationship to straightness.

[52] Brandon Teena was a young transsexual man living in Nebraska, who was killed by two men who had discovered his gender identity and sexed body did not match. The police were responsible for both braodcasting his sexed identity (in a small town where he was widely-known) and not taking his earlier rape by the same men seriously. See Minnie Bruce Pratt *S/HE*, p. 173; and Leslie Feinberg *Transgender Warriors: Making History from Joan of Arc to RuPaul* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1996), p. 132.

[53] Pratt, *S/HE*, p. 174.

[54] Ibid., pp. 179-185. So that entry is not something that should have to be 'earned' (again, by stripping) -- 'the rumour was that the transsexual woman could have stayed last year, if she'd been willing to strip. The femme didn't want her butch to have to go through that'(p. 181).

[55] Ibid., p. 103.

[56] Butches have commonly been read as both men and women. The difference in Pratt's story is that her lover has the option of 'transitioning' to become male as well as identifying as transgendered.

[57] Ibid., p. 177.

[58] Ibid., pp. 184-5.

[59] Marcy Sheiner, 'What?', *Anything That Moves: the Magazine for the Bisexual-at-Large* Issue #10 (Winter 1996), pp. 19-21.

[60] Marcy Sheiner, 'What?', p. 20.

[61] This may be partly what is implied by Sheiner's use of the term 'he-who-had-been-she'. Ibid., p, 20.

[62] So far, it would seem that a bisexual femme subjectivity differs from a lesbian femme subjectivity only insofar as a bisexual femme's opposite-sex object-choices are not inconsistent with non-heterosexuality. This would appear to repeat the same gesture of repudiation formed ultimately through object-choice, since clearly lesbian femmes also make (and are made through) heterosexual cultural repudiations.

[63] Which is a similar point to the one made by bisexual theorist Michael du Plessis, who uses the term 'para-naming' to provide a way in which one can assert oneself 'totally bisexual' through negation ('not gay, not straight, but totally bisexual' as the slogan goes). Michael du Plessis, 'Blatantly Bisexual: or, Unthinking Queer Theory', in D. Hall and M. Pramaggiore (eds), *RePresenting Bisexualities*, p. 22. Such a construction of self

through what one is not is, of course, also drawn from Monique Wittig, who argues that lesbians are not women. Monique Wittig, 'One is Not Born a Woman', *Feminist Issues* vol. 1, no. 1 (Summer 1980).

The emphasis in this article on repudiation of straight culture is really a personal one. I see myself as residing very much within 'queer' culture. It is not my intention to create a hierarchy of good (repudiating straight culture) and bad (repudiating lesbian culture) bisexual femmes, though.

[64] Clare Hemmings, 'Bisexual Theoretical Perspectives: Emergent and Contingent Relationships', in Bi Academic Intervention (ed.), *The Bisexual Imaginary.*

[65] See Mariam Fraser, 'Lose Your Face', in Bi Academic Intervention (ed.), *The Bisexual Imaginary*. Fraser discusses Claudia Card's and Marilyn Frye's use of the term 'inauthentic lesbian' to describe 'bisexual' women.

[66] Thanks to Merl Storr for pointing out the implications of my discussion of cultural repudiation and for providing me with the language to express my knotted thoughts in, even though she may still disagree with my conclusions.

[67] Though, of course that makes it sound far too easy and cleanly delineated than it really is! As Jo Eadie points out in a reading of an earlier draft of this paper, cultural repudiation may really be a cover for unwanted connection , and linked to bisexual guilt about opposite-sex/same-sex attractions.