TRANSSEXUALISM AND THE HETEROSEXUAL MATRIX:
A CRITICAL AND EMPIRICAL STUDY
OF JUDITH BUTLER'S
PERFORMATIVE THEORY OF GENDER

Patrícia Soley Beltran
Science Studies Unit

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ABSTRACT

TRANSSEXUALISM AND THE HETEROSEXUAL MATRIX: A CRITICAL AND EMPIRICAL STUDY OF JUDITH BUTLER’S PERFORMATIVE THEORY OF GENDER

This thesis aims to clarify Judith Butler’s performative theory of gender and to study the general processes of gender acquisition. Butler’s notion of the body, her account of gender acquisition and her problematisation of the sex/gender distinction is widely misunderstood as being radically constructivist. However, the importance of her contribution to feminist debates on antiessentialism and the political value of the sex/gender distinction requires careful examination. Butler’s attempt to capture the collective definition of body and identity beyond the Foucauldian framework invites further development of her theory.

In order to elucidate Butler’s position and remove some shortcomings in her work exposed by her critics, I present a sociological reconstruction of her theory of gender and the body in terms of the performative theory of social institutions (mainly developed by Barry Barnes and David Bloor) and the notion of artificial kind (developed by Martin Kusch). In order to complement and critically evaluate the theoretical reconstruction, as well as to generate new ideas within the theoretical framework, I have conducted qualitative empirical research on transsexual people. The study uses transsexuals as informants of common sense knowledge concerning sex and gender. The study is comparative in that it is based on fieldwork in Scotland and Catalonia.

According to my reconstruction, the Heterosexual Matrix is a folk theory about sex and gender and a social institution. Put differently, the Matrix is a body of collectively defined knowledge categories and practices; these practices have a circular, self-validating and self-referential structure; they involve the mastery of a language; and they regulate the normative standards of acceptable identities. Moreover, the Matrix’s coherence is protected by collective sanctioning of deviant behaviour. The consensus regarding its basic categories is sustained through the reflexive monitoring of gender identity. I argue that Butler’s notion of citationality can be reconstructed as a contingent case-by-case application of norms and categories. The possibility of subversion is an inevitable by-product of such contingency. I reconstruct the Matrix as a self-fulfilling prophecy that validates itself by shaping bodies, desires and identities according to its laws. Put differently, the category of ‘sex’ is not simply descriptive of a pre-existing biological reality, or natural kind; instead it constitutes the body and our conceptions of it.

The qualitative data gathered from in-depth interviews with transsexual people, including a cross-cultural comparison between Spain and the UK, reveal the circularity and self-referentiality of the Matrix terms both in expert and in folk discourse. The empirical case study demonstrates the existence of gender myths that are cited as standards of normative identities. It also identifies the ways in which sanctions protect meaning stability. Transsexuals’ accounts and practices corroborate the importance of gender as surface performance and substantiate the view that repetitive citation of the Matrix categories performs the body as an artificial kind. Moreover, the cross-cultural comparison demonstrates the conventionality of the Matrix. In sum, the case study confirms the theoretical reconstruction of the Heterosexual Matrix as a conventional, performative, collectively defined and self-referential social institution, and supports its conceptualisation as a self-fulfilling prophecy.
DECLARATION

7 November 2000

I declare that this thesis is my own work throughout.

Patricia Soley Beltran
Science Studies Unit
University of Edinburgh
An emblem of androgyny from *Emblemas Morales* by Sebastián de Covarrubias Orozco ([Madrid, 1610] 1973). This emblem presents a picture of a bearded lady. The text reads:

I am the 'hic', the 'haec' and the 'hoc'. I declare
I am male, I am female, I am a third,
Which is neither the one nor the other, nor is it clear
Which one of these it is. I am a third
Of those that regard me as a sinister and bad omen,
As a horrible and strange monster.
Watch out each one of you that has looked at me,
For it is another I who lives as a woman would.
DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my parents:
Lola Beltran Eixarch and Benet Soley Català
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Firstly I would like to thank my supervisor Dr. Martin Kusch for his inspiration and careful academic guidance which he maintained throughout the different stages of my research despite geographical distance. Also many thanks to my supervisor Dr. Steve Sturdy for his support of my argument and for his assistance with the textual detail.

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I am greatly indebted to all the transsexual people who very generously granted me interviews or informal chats, particularly to the Grampian Gender Group and the Associació de Transsexuals de Catalunya. I would also like to thank Dr. Richard Ekins, Dr. Stephen Whittle and lawyer Sra. Fernández for helping me to understand issues related to transsexualism.

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INTRODUCTION

Since the 1970s most feminist scholarship in the Anglo-American world has been based on the distinction between "sex" and "gender". "Sex" stood for human biology, and "gender" for social and cultural factors. "Femininity" and "masculinity", as construed by a given culture and time period, were thought of as the effect of an interplay between these two partial causes. The sex-gender dichotomy seemed promising and helpful in the feminist fight to de-naturalise essentialism.1

The concepts of sex and gender were also used to make sense of the purported need for surgical treatment of intersexed people. Sex and gender allowed the construction of patients' lack of conformity with their assigned identity as a contradiction between their 'sex', understood as their body, and their 'gender', understood as their social role. The sex/gender distinction as well as other notions that structure the protocols for the treatment of intersexed people exist within an analytic framework strongly reliant on the nature/culture distinction, for instance Stoller's core gender identity - "a conviction that the assignment of one's sex was anatomically, and ultimately psychologically, correct" (Stoller 1985: 11). In this analytic framework, the nature/culture distinction are associated with other dichotomies characteristic of the post-Enlightenment Western epistemology such as mind/body, biology/psychology, nature/culture, object/subject, abstract/concrete. In brief, within this framework "sex" is to nature what "gender" is to culture. Hence, the sex/gender distinction as developed in medical discourse presents two important ideas: the existence of a material basis for self-identity ('sex'), and the social constitution of human psychological make-up ('gender').

In feminist politics the notion of core gender identity offered a possibility for undermining the argument that biology dictates difference, since it put forward an idea of the human character as socially constituted. If it could be established that it was not biology/nature that determined gender/culture, then the essentialist notion of the 'natural' body as the determining cause of male/female social differences could be banished. Hence, the sex/gender distinction was used by feminist scholars to focus on the cultural and historical variability of gender in order to counter essentialism in the definition of gender identity and the biological determinism of roles.

The feminist usage of the sex/gender distinction for the political fight against women's subordination is now several decades old. In feminist theory, the sex/gender distinction pervades a number of related issues such as the social constructionism/biological determinism debate, the theorisation of heterosexuality as an institution, essentialism in the definition of women as a category, and so on. The sex/gender distinction became paradigmatic in sociology, thus carrying the assumed duality between the biological and the cultural into sociological research. To use Nicholson's apt

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1 Essentialism here refers to the assumption of universal characteristics in the definition of women.
metaphor (Nicholson 1994), 'sex' was thought of as an empty coatrack, whereas 'gender' were the clothes that different cultures hung over it. However, from the early 1980s the sociological usage of the sex/gender distinction has been widely criticised and challenged by authors influenced by several currents: Freud and Freudianism, the sociology of scientific knowledge, post-structuralist and post-modernist ideas. The critiques focus on the appropriateness and clarity of the sex/gender distinction as an analytical framework, and on the need for developing the distinction's genealogy in order to detect its epistemological premises, such as the assumption of the body as a given.

The history, sociology and anthropology of scientific knowledge has revealed scientific knowledge as a social product often reflecting the political and social preconceptions under which it is produced. To define the findings of this approach in terms of the coatrack metaphor: our theories of the coatrack are a reflection of the clothes we are wearing. Also several currents in sociology such as Bourdieu's practice theory or Foucault's genealogy have emphasised that human bodies in their very biology are shaped and moulded by society; i.e. the coatrack is itself a cultural artefact.

Another challenge to the sex/gender distinction came from postmodern philosophy - particularly Derrida's deconstruction of the metaphysical tradition. Derrida's critique of 'phallogocentrism' has revealed the inextricability of Western central figures of thought, such as mind versus matter, or male versus female, from the so-called "metaphysics of presence". Phallogocentrism conveys the idea that the Western metaphysical tradition is logo- and andro-centric, for it tends toward a static picture of reality by suppressing change and overemphasising presence. The suppression of process is accompanied by an excessive belief in the possibility of control and a concomitant exploitation and domination of nature, as well as by a belief in the transparency of reason - traditionally male reason - and its associated Eurocentrism. Derrida's deconstructionism contributed to the denouncement of the sex/gender distinction as mapped into traditional oppositions, like those of the natural versus the social realm, the natural versus the social sciences, fact versus value, body versus mind, matter versus form, and nature versus culture.

The inherent biologism of the sex/gender distinction has also cast doubts on its usefulness for feminist politics, particularly in relation to 'woman' as a political category. The incorporation of non-Anglo-Saxon women and non-heterosexual women into feminism brought a different problematic which challenged the unifying category of 'women' as partial and Western-centred. The rigidly dichotomised framework of the gender identity paradigm was criticised for being ethnocentric, individualist and male-dominated, as well as for objectifying nature.

In sum, the sex-gender distinction is now being perceived as "founded on outmoded materialism and dualism" (Worthman 1995: 609-10), and feminist theorising aims to find new conceptual frameworks that transcend the distinction and its associated dichotomies. This climate has

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2 For a very famous example of feminist sociology of science see Fausto-Sterling 1985.

3 I am indebted to Martin Kusch for this adaptation of Nicholson's metaphor.
led to a re-appraisal of sex and gender from different standpoints and with various degrees of involvement: from elaborated attempts to blur the distinction to purely stylistic terminological changes. Since the late 1980s and particularly after the publication of *Gender Trouble* in 1990, Judith Butler has made an influential contribution to the sex/gender debate.

Butler aims to problematise the sex/gender distinction "from within" (Cealey Harrison and Hood-Williams 1997: 104) in order to challenge the notion of the body as a pre-cultural 'natural' given. Butler's performative theory of gender aims to find a new way of thinking about the sex/gender distinction in order to carry a critique of compulsory heterosexuality. Borrowing from Austin's pragmatics, Butler argues for an understanding of gender as resulting from the performative reiteration of normative gender acts. As a 'performative' construction, the gendered body is not determined biologically, but it is the result of compulsive repetition of 'gender' norms. Thus, inverting the hegemonic discourse of the Heterosexual Matrix on sex, Butler argues that socially created gender differences are naturalised as sex, rather than being the product of a given 'natural' body. Butler's ideas and their background, particularly concerning the sex/gender distinction, are presented in Chapter 1: Summary of Butler's Thought.

Butler's notion of the body, including her account of gender acquisition and her problematisation of the sex/gender distinction is widely misunderstood as being radically constructivist - that is, as theorising the body as a purely social category. Misreadings of Butler's work are widespread perhaps due to the way in which she constructs her arguments by making reference to a considerable number of theorists, and couching the text in psychoanalytic terms. However, the importance of her contribution to feminist debates on antiessentialism and the political value of the sex/gender distinction requires careful examination. Butler's attempt to capture the collective definition of body and identity beyond the Foucauldian framework, invites further development of her theory.

The aim of the present thesis is to demonstrate that Butler could contribute to social theory. In order to establish my point I took up the performative theory of social institutions (mainly developed by Barry Barnes and David Bloor) and the notion of artificial kind (developed by Martin Kusch) as the interpretative framework to conduct a sociological reconstruction of Judith Butler's theory of gender. This reconstruction is developed in Chapter 2: A Sociological Reconstruction of Butler's Theory of Gender. The reason why I have chosen the performative theory of social institutions as an interpretative framework through which to reconstruct Butler's ideas is because both theories rely heavily on the work of Austin and Searle. Moreover, as I argue in Chapter 3: Butler's Critics, it seems that the reconstruction can clarify and complement Butler's ideas, as well as remove some of the shortcomings in her work exposed by her critics.

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4 Butler coins the notion of the Heterosexual Matrix as a culturally specific regulatory framework for gender identity.
In my reconstruction I focus on Butler's thought as presented in *Gender Trouble* and *Bodies That Matter*, since I consider these two works the most interesting ones from the point of view of sociology. Nevertheless, I will also take into account Butler's ideas as developed in selected later publications and interviews. Although the present study makes some contributions to political debates (see Section 7.1.7.4), I will not specifically address questions of feminist politics or psychoanalysis even though I am aware that, as a result, two important themes of Butler's work will be missing from my reconstruction. However, for reasons of angle and space I cannot concern myself with these issues in the present thesis.

In this thesis I take up the challenge to "incorporate biological and material factors in social theory and develop constructive as well as critical views of the relations of culture to individual" (Worthman 1995: 609). In taking up this challenge, three pitfalls need to be avoided: (a) a fallback into biological determinism - such fallback might easily occur under the influence of new developments in genetics or cognitive science, (b) an idealistic reduction of the body to mere "talk about the body", and (c) an over-sociologising of the body into a mere *tabula rasa* for cultural inscriptions.

According to my reconstruction, the Heterosexual Matrix is both a folk theory about sex and gender and a social institution. I reconstruct the Matrix as a body of collectively defined knowledge categories and practices; these practices have a circular, self-validating and self-referential structure. I argue that the Matrix has the structure of a language and that the stability of the meaning of its categories functions as a collective good protected by sanctions. Also, the Matrix knowledge categories define and regulate the normative standards of acceptable identities. The members of the collective account for their actions and other people's actions by citing and referring to this body of knowledge. Thus, subjects shape their identities in accordance with the Matrix norms and judge others in the light of their conformance to its identity standards. Moreover, the consensus supporting the Matrix's basic categories is sustained through the reflexive monitoring of gender identity.

I argue that Butler's notion of citationality can be reconstructed as a contingent case-by-case application of norms and categories. The possibility of subversion is an inevitable by-product of such contingency. I reconstruct the Matrix as a self-fulfilling prophecy that validates itself by shaping bodies, desires and identities according to its laws. Put differently, the Heterosexual Matrix is not descriptive of a mind-independent reality called 'sex'; instead it constitutes the body and our conceptions of it. Hence, sex and gender can be reconstructed as social processes which create a reality that is self-referential.

In order to complement and to compensate for the widely criticised abstractness of Butler's thought, I have conducted qualitative empirical research on transsexual people. In adopting an empirical approach I avoid restricting the analysis of a philosophical problem to purely abstract speculation. Also, the empirical data allows me to examine the possible applications of my sociological reconstruction of Butler as an explanatory model in the social sciences. Moreover, it
generates new ideas within the theoretical framework. However, I must make clear that my empirical research is theoretically informed, and hence it does not have the scope of an ethnography.

As explained in Chapter 4 on the Earlier Work on Transsexuals, the choice of transsexuals as informants of common-sense knowledge concerning sex and gender was established by Garfinkel (1967) and Kessler and MacKenna (1978). The assumption underlying the choice of informants is that, given that transsexuals must learn how to 'act' efficiently in their chosen gender in order to pass and hence be socially accepted, the transsexual population are more aware of gender definitions than the non-transsexual population, who, arguably, are unaware of the shaping of bodies and identities in accordance with collective definitions of gender.

Another reason for choosing transsexuals as informants is that Butler herself proposes transsexuality as the model for the general processes through which all society members become males or females. Transsexuals very patently turn their bodies into artefacts, thus exemplifying in an accentuated form the processes to which we are all subjected. Because transsexuals' report experiencing a discontinuity between their body parts and the sexual pleasures that should be associated with them, their reports make apparent the constructed character of the body. Hence, inquiring into transsexuals' sense of discontinuity exposes the conventions ruling the ways in which we conceive certain body parts and desires as "naturally" belonging to the category of female or male "sex".

The empirical research is cross-cultural and bridges a gap left by recent works. The methodology focuses on qualitative interviews with selected individuals of the transsexual community in Scotland and Catalonia about their life experiences. The sample aimed for equal representation of pre-operative and post-operative informants, as well as of male-to-females and female-to-males. The selected interviews are a total of twelve in-depth conversations resulting from open-ended questions. The empirical research also explores legal aspects of sex-change, since analysis of these issues brings cultural assumptions to the surface. All aspects of the choice of methodology and informants are presented and developed in Chapter 5: The Methodology and the Informants.

The empirical findings, presented in Chapter 6: A Critical Evaluation of my Reconstruction of Butler in the light of the Empirical Study, reveal the circularity and self-referentiality of the Matrix terms both in expert and in folk discourse. The case study demonstrates the existence of gender myths that are cited as standards of normative identities, as well as the complex interaction of medical and folk discourses in shaping gender identity. It also reveals the shaping of transsexuals' identities and bodies through their citation of medical discourse by shedding light on the narratives, perceptions and feelings of such subjects from the first person perspective. The findings not only show how transsexuals' identities cut across and undermine the folk correlation between sex and gender identity, it also reveals how their discourse and practices actually undermine the divorce between these terms as theorised in medical discourse.
The empirical study also identifies the ways in which sanctions against deviance protect meaning stability of the Matrix's laws and categories. Transsexuals' accounts and practices corroborate the importance of gender as surface performance and substantiate the repetitive citation of the Matrix categories as performing the body as an artificial kind. Moreover, the cross-cultural comparison demonstrates the conventionality of the Matrix by revealing differences between two particular folk beliefs from two different cultures, the Spanish and the British, at the present moment.

In sum, as argued in Chapter 7: Conclusions, the case study confirms the theoretical reconstruction of the Heterosexual Matrix as a conventional, performative, collectively defined and self-referential social institution, and supports its conceptualisation as a self-fulfilling prophecy.
PART ONE:

THEORETICAL ISSUES
CHAPTER 1:

BUTLER'S THOUGHT

In this chapter I will first lay out the context of Butler's thought by briefly introducing the sex/gender distinction and its usages mainly in feminism. Secondly I will present Butler's ideas around several topics grouped under the following headings: theory of gender, on subject and agency; on materiality and on subversion.

1.1 BACKGROUND: THE SEX/GENDER DISTINCTION

In the 1970s the sex/gender distinction was adopted by feminist scholars to draw attention to the cultural and historical variability of gender in order to argue against essentialism in the definition of gender identity and the biological determinism of roles. The two main streams in the feminist usage of the sex/gender distinction are the gender identity paradigm and the sex/gender system.¹

The gender identity paradigm relies on concepts developed within medical discourse as analytical tools for political re-formulations of gender. The nature/culture and the sex/gender distinctions were used in the argument that culture-gender exerts stronger influence than nature-sex in conditioning the social roles of males and females. The "lack of identity between sex and gender" (Oakley 1972: 164) was the theoretical basis from which liberal feminists in the US and the UK argued for education in order to reshape the patterns of socialisation of males and females and their social roles. In Britain the sex/gender distinction was extremely influential in the work of authors such as Millet (1971), Oakley (1972) and Greer (1971). In more recent times the work of Chodorow (1978, 1980), Dinnerstein (1977), and Michele Barrett (1980) have also drawn on the distinction.²

The assumption of the possibility of differentiating between the domains of the cultural and the biological in which the sex/gender distinction is based, opened a field of study for feminist scholars: the cultural and historical variability of gender. In the 1970s and the 1980s the implementation of the gender identity paradigm brought an increase in research into sex/gender differences in sociological and psychological literature. The feminist challenge shaped the disputes with the "biological determinism" of sexist science. But the feminists working within the gender

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¹ I am following the analytical framework presented by Haraway (1991).
² The source of this brief review is Gatens (1991).
identity paradigm did not question the nature/culture distinction on which it was based. Hence, the debate around biological determinism ("gender" as determined by "sex") vs. social constructions ("gender" is behind any claim about "sex") though it remained within the epistemological framework of the nature/culture distinction.

The sex/gender system is the second stream of feminist theory that also adopted a version of the nature/culture distinction but, in contrast with the gender identity system which was largely a product of US life and social sciences, this new stream was more strongly influenced by French psychoanalysis and structuralism. The sex/gender system was introduced by American anthropologist Gayle Rubin (1975) who defined it as "the set of arrangements by which a society transforms biological sexuality into products of human activity, and in which these transformed sexual needs are satisfied" (ibid., 159).

Classical Marxism's inability to provide a theory of sexual oppression led Rubin⁴ to attempt to elaborate a radical theory that could describe sexuality, identify sexual oppression and develop a critical vocabulary to challenge injustice based on the sexual division of labour. Within the sex/gender system Rubin aimed to develop Engels' intuition about the importance of the production of human beings and to explore socially organised sexuality in kinship systems. It was within the sex/gender system, that several ideas appeared which were to influence Judith Butler's work, such as the fictive unity of the category of sex, and its important role in defining identity and social role (Wittig 1976) by means of compulsory heterosexuality (Rich 1980) and the 'straight mind' (Wittig 1992).

Rubin's analysis took its starting point from Lévi-Strauss' work on the exchange of women as the basis for relationships between men and as a fundamental principle of kinship because "it places the oppression of women within social systems, rather than in biology" (ibid., 175). However Rubin took Lévi-Strauss one step further to arrive at an understanding of the origin of the sexual division of labour as a taboo created to exaggerate the biological differences between the two sexes - which "thereby creates gender" - and to "enjoin heterosexual marriage" (ibid., 178). Rubin concluded that "the social organisation of sex rests upon gender, obligatory heterosexuality, and the constraint of female sexuality" (ibid., 179). Although Rubin proposed a certain blurring of the categories of sex and gender in order to study the effects of culture in biology, in a later article Rubin (1984) modified her position and argued for the analytical separation of gender and sexuality in order "to reflect more accurately their separate social existence" (ibid., 180). This shift was intended to oppose the spread of social constructionism in feminist thought.

Rubin introduced the understanding of heterosexuality as a social institution which also concerned other feminist theorists, such as Atkinson (1974), Rich (1980) or Wittig (1976, 1992).⁴

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³ See also Rubin, 1984.
⁴ Within radical feminism heterosexuality is considered patriarchy's main foundation stone. Hence, the problematisation of heterosexuality is considered as having great significance to understand the workings of
Rich criticised feminist theory for assuming heterosexuality to be innate, and thus foreclosing its study as a political institution: *compulsory heterosexuality*. She shares Rubin’s views on kinship and the concomitant sex/gender system and *compulsory heterosexuality* in which it is based. Other influential arguments written within the sex/gender paradigm are those of French author Wittig (1976, 1992) who engaged in a critique of *sex* as a strategy for opposing the prevalent sex/gender system – which she labels the *straight mind* – and its norm of obligatory heterosexuality. The *straight mind* is the group of concepts concerning ‘woman’, ‘man’, ‘sex’, ‘difference,’ and concepts such as ‘history,’ ‘culture,’ and the ‘unconscious’, ‘desire’, current in all kinds of disciplines, theories and ideas. According to Wittig, these concepts function like a primitive way of thinking,\(^5\) in other words, as a universalising sex/gender system. This sex/gender system produces a symbolic order which constitutes the necessary meaning to produce the internal coherence of society through the category of *sex* and the incest taboo.

To Wittig, *sex* is a political category of the *straight mind* that imposes heterosexuality and the obligation to reproduce the species on women. Wittig believes that through the marriage contract men appropriate women’s work, their physical beings and their reproductive powers in the same way as the ruling class appropriates the work of the working class. The category of *sex* is the inescapable mark of women as sexual beings. Wittig argues that *sex* is nothing but a myth, a social construction that produces the fiction of “*sex*” in order to misrepresent economic, political and ideological differences between men and women as “natural” facts. Moreover, “*sex*” is a classification that imposes an artificial unity onto a discontinuous set of attributes. Through the appearance of coherence, *fictive sex* is presented as a “natural” given by the “straight mind”. Since “*sex*” and male/female relationships are presented as existing *a priori* to social relationships, its compulsory character is hidden.

As early as 1978, authors Kessler and McKenna dismissed the sex/gender problem as being a purely technical distinction. Their study of common-sense views of gender exposed the influence of folk understanding of psychological dimorphism of the sexes in science. Kessler and Mackenna put forward an understanding of gender as an "accomplishment" which constructs the body as an artifice in accordance with socially sanctioned norms. But despite expanding the meaning of the term gender considerably, Kessler and Mackenna failed to blur the sex/gender distinction because their initial premises were still part of the gender identity paradigm: the notion of the body as a given, and the need for some type of gender dimorphism for reproduction.

Further criticism of the sex/gender distinction came from authors working within a psychoanalytic framework. Since the notion of the unconscious is placed in the intersection between body and mind, Freudians repudiate the binary distinctions body/mind, nature/culture that shape the

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\(^5\)The notion of the *straight mind* was inspired by Lévi-Strauss’ notion of *The Savage Mind* (1966), and implies a cognitive approach both informing and informed by a particular worldview.
analytic framework of the sex/gender distinction. From the point of view of the assumption that the body is a biological given and reproduction is the necessary basis for sexual differentiation appears unfounded. Rather, the two binary genders are thought as relative and gender is conceptualised as a process. Writing from non-Freudian standpoints, authors such as Connell (1985), Delphy (1993), Hoodwill (1996) and Nicholson (1994) refuse to take the category of "sex" as the natural base for a theory of sexual difference.

The influence of postructuralist ideas, specially those of Michel Foucault, has prompted a number of writers to re-examine the questions of the physical body and the influence of discourse in the construction of sex (Butler, 1990; 1993), and of the body/culture duality (Haraway, 1991). There is a general reaction which calls for a re-thinking of these questions and its accompanying binarism, and for historicising its terms and meanings in the context of technology and science. In her historicisation of the sex and gender distinction, the feminist philosopher of science Donna Haraway (1991) cites the following sources of the conceptualisation of gender in the post-war period: nineteenth century sexology; the findings of biochemical and psychological endocrinology since the 1920s; studies on the psychobiology of sex differences; hypotheses of hormonal, genetic and neural sexual dimorphism; and the first sex-change operations (Christine Jorgensen in 1952 and Roberta Cowell in 1954).

Other historicisations of the sex and gender distinction, such as Hausman’s, contextualise it in its original medical discourse as a tool to articulate patients' gender discomfort. Hausman's starting point is the analysis of technology as producer of gender and discourse and the historicisation of the categories sex/gender. According to Hausman, "'gender' as a term was part of a new discourse on sex made possible by technological advances in medicine" (Hausman 1995: 184). As a consequence of the technological development that allows the surgical treatment of intersexuals and transsexuals the meaning of "sex" was transformed; "sex" now encompassed both biological and social aspects. The possibility of changing the physical signifiers of sex, made it necessary to introduce the term "gender" to refer to "social sex", that is, role. Hausman shows that "physicians dealing with cases of intersexuality believe in and subscribe to binary gender as a necessary social code" (ibid.: 77), and that the heterosexual imperative was a criterion for deciding the "best sex" for an intersexed person, because the "tendency (is) to think and represent sex organs as primarily reproductive" (ibid.: 100).

The feminist usage of the distinction displaced the meaning of 'gender' because it turned what was originally a psychological category in medical discourse into a sociological one.6 In medical discourse gender was mainly articulated through Stoller's notion of 'core gender identity', that is "one's self image as regards belonging to a specific sex" (Stoller quoted in Hausman 1995: 102). Hence, in the medical discourse on transsexualism gender is the inner conviction that the assignment of one's sex is (in)correct. Gender is here fixed and unchangeable, but autonomous from biological 'sex'. In contrast, in feminist theory 'gender' is conceived as malleable and biological sex as fixed and certain

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6 I am indebted to Dr. J. Forrester for clarifying this point to me.
(although not determining of collective definitions of femininity and masculinity) - thus departing from the original purpose of the distinction, namely to characterise gender identity as fixed and certain, and the body as malleable.\footnote{The sex/gender distinction made possible the development of the indirect and the social learning models of sexual orientation. Currently, there are three models for explaining sexual orientation. The first is biological causation; the second is the indirect model which suggests that biological factors predispose individuals toward certain personality traits that influence the relationships and experiences that ultimately shape sexuality; the third is the social learning model which suggests that biology provides only a blank slate of neural circuitry on which experience inscribes orientation.}

In this context the work of Judith Butler emerges as an attempt to rethink the sex/gender distinction. Butler's work is strongly influenced by Wittig's notions of the category of 'sex' and fictive sex, as well as by Rubin's notion of heterosexuality as a social institution and the concept of the straight mind as a particular worldview.

1.2 Butler's Thought

Butler's research previous to 1990 gravitates towards the themes that will later become the subjects of her two main books: Gender Trouble (henceforth GT) and Bodies That Matter (henceforth BTM). Although Butler's views evolved and eventually differed from those laid out for instance in 1994b, her early articles already feature some of the themes that will occupy much of her later thought, including desire, censorship, power and sexuality, gender performativity, the question of personal agency in the reproduction of gender, anti-essentialism, and the place of the materiality of the body in the sex/gender distinction.

However, in this section I present Butler's thought with special attention to those publications where her performative theory of gender is presented (GT and BTM). I do not engage in any critique or assessment in the present chapter; that task is undertaken in Chapter 3 on Butler's critics where I present a selective review of criticisms, and an assessment of them from my own critical standpoint.

1.2.1 Theory of Gender

"Consider gender (...) as a corporeal style, an 'act' " (GT: 139)

Butler sees in Simone de Beauvoir's thought an alternative to the understanding of gender as determined by a personified system of patriarchy or a phallogocentric\footnote{With the term phallogocentrism Derrida aims to criticize Lacan's reification of the phallus as the primary signifier. Derrida rejects Lacan for creating a myth of origin of meaning, a single moment that explains further signification: the phallus.} language that preceeds the subject. Butler is attracted to Beauvoir's analysis of the process of socialization because it emphasises the moment of appropriation and it therefore has "emancipatory potential". Beauvoir's notion of oppression as a dialectical force that requires the participation of individuals to maintain itself does away with the passivity of the subject and therefore leaves room "for the transformative possibilites of
human agency" (1986: 40). However, in Butler's view, Beauvoir's account of becoming a gender as both a construct and a project is ambiguous because whereas the former presents gender as the fruit of a process of acculturation that involves no choice, the latter presupposes agency.

1.2.1.1 Gender and 'sex'

Butler takes Beauvoir's account of gender one step forward, exploring hitherto unstated consequences. In Butler's interpretation, Beauvoir's notion of the body as 'situation' not only implies the distinction between sex and gender, it also implies that gender is a completely cultural affair unlimited by anatomy. Butler argues that if it is not possible to establish a 'natural' body before culture because both the observer and the body itself are embedded in a cultural language, then the category of 'sex' is inapprehensible. Since we cannot know our bodies before their genderisation, the category of sex is a fiction necessary to understand the inception of gender as a non-natural and culturally contingent activity. This line of reasoning sees physiology not as the base for cultural values but, on the contrary, as the recipient of the imprint of cultural values through which it is interpreted. The body then becomes "an occasion for meaning" (1988: 46), in other words, a "field of interpretive possibilities" that acts as "the nexus of culture and choice" (1988: 45).

In order to reveal the power structures that create gender, Butler wants to critically confuse the categories sex and gender which are presented as foundational of our identity and to deconstruct the notion of gender as substance/natural. She undertakes this endeavour by further elaborating the idea of sex as inapprehensible, and by developing the performative theory of gender. In order to argue that sex is inapprehensible Butler maintains that the sex/gender distinction taken to its "logical limit" implies "a radical discontinuity between sexed bodies and culturally constructed genders" (GT: 6). If gender is "the cultural meanings that the sexed body assumes" (GT: 6), then, Butler argues, gender is not caused by sex. If the "natural" facts of sex are productions of the various scientific discourses, then sex is as culturally constructed as gender. Maybe, continues Butler, sex has always been gender "with the consequence that the distinction between sex and gender turns out to be no distinction at all" (GT: 7). If sex is a gendered category, it does not make sense to define gender as the cultural interpretation of sex. By rhetorically "confusing" sex and gender, Butler attempts to render the category of sex irrelevant for the consideration of gender.

9 Butler shares with Rubin the notion of gender as based on kinship requirements rather than on anatomy.
10 This idea was first introduced in 1986 and 1987b. In 1986 Butler constructed her argument by taking Simone de Beauvoir's thought one step further. In GT she modifies her position with respect to Beauvoir. Although she is still sympathetic to the notion of woman as a process because it opens it to resignification and intervention, Butler distances herself from Beauvoir's theory of embodiment for she believes it maintains the mind/body dualism, despite proposing a synthesis of the terms. Butler disagrees with Beauvoir's notion of nature as materiality and comes closer to Wittig's, who regards nature as a reification. Butler also distances herself from Beauvoir's notion of gender as constructed because her formulation implies a cogent agent who can choose (GT: 8).
Butler supports her argument with anthropological evidence of non-binary gender arrangements and by theorising the notion of the Heterosexual Matrix (henceforth HM) as a culturally specific regulatory framework for gender identity. Butler defines the HM as "that grid of cultural intelligibility through which bodies, genders, and desires are naturalized" (GT: 151, n. 6). She draws primarily from Wittig's notion of the "heterosexual contract" and also from Rich's notion of "compulsory heterosexuality" to theorise the notion of the HM as a sort of sex/gender system. Butler characterises the HM as a "hegemonic discursive/epistemic model of gender intelligibility that assumes that for bodies to cohere and make sense there must be a stable sex expressed through a stable gender (masculine expresses male, feminine expresses female) that is oppositionally and hierarchically defined through the compulsory practice of heterosexuality" (GT: 151, n. 6). Both Butler and Wittig see the category of sex as that which imposes an artificial unity on a discontinuous set of attributes. This appearance of unity, or "fictive sex", serves the purposes of fragmentation of the body into parts which are classified as sexual and non-sexual, and restricts the erogenous body in order to impose a naturalized sex. In sum, the notion of the HM condenses Butler's ideas on the necessity of integrating the socially constructed understandings of gender in order to achieve an acceptable identity (or "cultural intelligibility"), and her interpretation of gender categories as products of the reification of binary sex for the purposes of reproduction.

From the "theory of gender invention" (1987b) - that is, gender as repetition of cultural meanings that become sedimented - to the performative theory of gender (1988, 1990a, GT), Butler's understanding of gender as performance became increasingly sophisticated. In GT, she defines gender as "the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts" (GT: 33) that are collectively taken to be the expressions of a core gender identity. This core identity is not an essence caused by the natural facts of sex but only a succession of repetitions of norms that become sedimented and "naturalized", that is, taken to be of a natural origin. Butler does not conceive gender identity as a substance, but as

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11 Insofar as Rubin understands the "sex/gender system" as the cultural mechanism that transforms the biological males and females into hierarchized genders, Butler agrees with her. What Butler rejects is Rubin's commitment to the distinction between sex and gender for on the grounds that it is based on the ontological reality of a "sex" that gets transformed in "gender" by the law. Butler points out that this narrative of gender acquisition requires a narrator that can position her/himself before and after the law. But since the narration takes place within a language that has already been shaped by the law, this is not possible, since the narrator cannot know "before" because language enables cognition.

12 In BTM Butler tends to use the term heterosexual hegemony instead of HM. Butler presents two reasons for this change: to avoid the reification of the HM, and to connote the possibility of subversion. She believes that there is a need to rethink the understanding of the HM as the personification of the social in order to avoid the reification of the HM. In her interview "Gender as Performance..." (1994b) (henceforth 12) Butler declared that "the HM became a kind of totalising symbolic, and that's why I changed the term..." (1994b: 36). Since Gramsci thought that hegemony operates by rearticulation, the term hegemony is closer to Butlerian politics for it presents the Matrix a a more malleable, more "open to rearticulation" (1994b: 36). Nevertheless, given the widespread use of the term HM and the inessential nature of its change into 'heterosexual hegemony', I will continue referring to the notion of HM.

13 In Butler's view, the understanding of gender as a substance is reinforced by the constant use of personal pronouns that suggests the existence of a subject that precedes the body.
an appearance of substance constructed through certain kinds of acts similar to performative acts in theatre. These performative acts create the popular notion of a substantial core of psychological and spiritual characteristics which are assumed to correlate with biological sex. But, in Butler's view, gender identity is nothing but a "regulatory fiction" (1988: 528) constituted by performative acts. Therefore, gender is nothing but a culturally sanctioned "stylized repetition of acts" (1988: 519) and sex is the sedimentation and reification of these corporeal styles which appear as the natural binary configuration of sexes. 14

By means of her theory Butler wants to do away with the idea of a gender core identity by presenting gender as an act that only exists as a performance. Hence, Butler considers gender identity to be an intentional and performative act, a "style of the flesh" whose meaning is a contingent construction. For Butler, the gendered body is performative in that it has no ontological status apart from the various acts which constitute it. According to Butler, the traditional understanding of 'gender core' as an interior essence of the 'self' that 'causes' desire, gestures and acts involves an essentialism that precludes an analysis of the social constitution of the gendered subject and, hence, it forecloses political action.

In sum, Butler conceives gender as a power construct, an artificially imposed coherence that does not comprehend every subject. As a product of power, gender is not only inseparable from the cultural, historical and political context which produces and maintains it, it also intersects with other categories in the classifications of identity, such as race, class, ethnicity and sexuality. However, Butler defends the use of the term 'gender' to refer to the ways in which psychic life and sexuality contest or fail to fit into norms (Butler 1992b: 144), while warning against its use to refer to a culturally contingent identity into which a pre-cultural sex is socialised (ibid.: 143).

1.2.1.2 Gender acquisition

Given that Butler conceives gender as an effect of the constant repetition of a series of gestures, she does not attempt to build an ontology of gender. Instead, she develops a genealogy of gender ontology that focuses on Lacanian psychoanalysis and its feminist followers. Butler questions the psychoanalytic mechanisms of gender acquisition: internalisation and identification. She believes gender identification is multiple and self-contradictory because identification is not to real people but to idealisations or fantasies of them. Instead of an original identification as the cause of gender identity, Butler proposes "a personal/cultural history of received meanings subject to a set of imitative practices which refer laterally to other imitations, and which, jointly, construct the illusion of a primary and interior gendered self or which parody the mechanism of that construction" (1990a: 338).

Hence, Butler rejects the idea of inner psychic space and believes gender images are absorbed in the body's surface. Thus, Stoller's notion of core gender identity is supplanted by its opposite:

14 For this reason, Butler agrees with Foucault that there is no such thing as the "true" gender of a person.
gender as a performance which produces the illusion of an inner gendered identity. Through imitation of an idealization we learn how to act as if we were man or woman and to model our gestures, dress, talk, and so on, according to the stereotypes and fantasies of masculinity or femininity. The external signs that our body exhibits are interpreted as the expression of our inner selves when in fact, there is no true self.  

However, Butler argues that the stylisation of the body is not the only mechanism for the formation of gender identity; the production of sexual desire through identification is another important mechanism. The production of sexual desire is researched in Butler's genealogy of gender through the examination of Freudian and Lacanian accounts of gender identification, for she considers "the incest taboo and the prior taboo against homosexuality as the generative moments of gender identity" (GT: 135).

As a Foucauldian, Butler does not regard the agency of repression and the object of repression as ontologically distinct. Butler's strict application of the Foucauldian critique to the incest taboo leads her to reject the notion of a primary sexuality and polymorphousness repressed by the law for she believes it is not possible to know what there is before the law. Butler believes it is impossible to determine whether there is a "physical" body prior to the perceptually perceived body (GT: 114). For this reason, the sexual "dispositions" postulated by Freud are not, in Butler's view, psychological facts but products of the taboo on homosexuality. She criticises the Freudian account of the incest taboo for being based in an heterosexual understanding of desire and on a notion of the libido as masculine, despite the Freudian postulation of a primary bisexuality.

Butler applies the Foucauldian critique to the incest taboo and concludes that it can be historicised (in opposition to Lacan), and that it is inefficacious (another point of disagreement with Lacan who assumes the efficacy of the paternal Law). Butler conceives the taboo as the origin and the sustaining force of the desire for the mother/father as well as the compulsory displacement of that desire. Butler criticises Lacan's notion of the law for reifying identification which she sees as an unstable process of reiteration, a constant re-enactment that supports patriarchy. According to Butler, Lacan presents as a stable Real what is only the self-naturalisation of cultural gender norms.

Butler turns the Foucauldian critique of the repressive hypothesis to Foucault himself and criticises him for contradicting himself by envisaging a sexuality before the law. In her view, Foucault fails to recognise the relations of power that construct and condemn Herculine Barbin's sexuality and

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15 Butler makes hers the Foucauldian proposition that denies the existence of a true self that leads our behaviour.

16 This idea is borrowed from Jacques Derrida.

17 According to Butler, this leads Freud to understand bisexuality as "the coincidence of two heterosexual desires within a single psyche" (GT: 61, emphasis of the author), each one departing from two different identifications of the subject: masculine and feminine. Similarly, Butler criticizes Freud for interpreting the female's desire for the father as evidence of a feminine disposition.

18 On this occasion, Butler uses Lacan's notion of the real to refer to materiality. On other occasions, she uses it to denote the popular understanding of gender as natural and material.
contradicts his own notion of sexuality as coextensive with power. Butler accuses him of romanticising Herculine's pleasures for he conceives them as exceeding the categories of sex and identity when in fact, Butler, argues, they are embedded in the law that generated them. This romanticisation allows Foucault to maintain an unacknowledged emancipatory ideal that Butler discards. 19

Butler's account of gender identification starts from a different premise: the taboo on homosexuality proposed by Rubin. 20 Butler argues that because the taboo on homosexuality not only prohibits the object of desire, but also the desire itself, homosexual desire cannot be redirected to other objects, as heterosexual desire is after the prohibition of the incest taboo. The disavowed homosexual desire becomes part of the unconscious, and identification with the prohibited sex follows. But identification is not stable because the notions of masculinity and femininity are rooted in an unresolved homosexual cathexis. 21 Butler believes that the denial of homosexuality in fact preserves it as culturally instituted heterosexual melancholy, that is, in the form of unconscious grief for the forbidden desire.

Since it is impossible to embody the normative sexual positions that the HM offers us, gender identification fails for no one is able to conform entirely to the normative gender ideal. This failure reveals heterosexuality as a compulsory system and "as an intrinsic comedy, a constant parody of itself" (GT: 122). Because the internalisation of gender norms is not stable, the unconscious is the repository of the disavowed identifications and the origin of the forces that bring about unexpected permutations of the law. 22

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19 To hypothesize a sexuality prior to the law involves the possibility of assuming a subject prior to subjectification. Butler wants to do away with the fiction of a subject prior to subjectification for she believes it is a remnant of the liberal hypothesis of the state of nature and a strategy of power to hide its mechanisms of production, for power achieves legitimacy by articulating the idea of the subject as a pre-social being who can, and does, freely consent to the social contract.

20 Butler shares Rubin's belief in the existence of a taboo on homosexuality that preceeds the incest taboo, and claims that the rites of passage that govern sexuality presuppose heterosexuality.

21 Investment of mental or emotional energy in a person, object or idea. From the Greek *kathexis*, holding, to hold fast, occupy (plural: *kathexes*).

22 Because Butler regards the internalization of gender norms as unstable, she qualifies her approach to sexualization as being closer to psychoanalysis than to sociological accounts of gender, such as Chodorow's (GT: 156, n. 51). Butler argues that, since the concept of person is not universal, as historical and anthropological evidence suggests, there is no point of departure for a social theory of gender. To Butler the terms "female" and "woman" are not stable notions because they gain their signification as relational terms. As a consequence, Butler approaches gender as "a relation among socially constituted subjects in specifiable contexts" (GT: 10).
1.2.2 ON SUBJECT AND AGENCY

As it will become clear in the following, the question of subject and agency are inextricably linked in Butler's work. However, for the purposes of clarity I have tried to present them in separate accounts.

1.2.2.1 The subject

"Sex is an analytic attribute of the human; there is no human who is not sexed; sex qualifies as a necessary attribute" (GT: 111)

Butler aims to argue against essentialism in the definition of identity by deconstructing the Matrix's notion of "sex" as a substance essential to a person's identity, that is, as part of a person's psychological core. Departing from a Foucauldian notion of the subject, she presents the notion of gender as act as an alternative to the psychoanalytical narrative of the acquisition of gender identity. Butler conceives the subject as socially constituted in discourse. Hence, she does not differentiate between the agency of repression and that which is repressed for she understands that the object of repression is constituted by repression. This rules out the possibility of conceiving a pre-social subject because that would involve having access to the subject before it comes into being through the processes of "subjectification". On this basis Butler criticises psychoanalysis for conceiving of gender acquisition as a process of identification through internalisation.

In her analysis, the inner psychic space assumed by the psychoanalytical narrative is a fiction, an illusion that hides the political interests that have created it. Butler, like Foucault, understands that the subject is constituted in a social discourse that ascribes to it an interiority which is, in fact, a fabricated essence publically regulated and sanctioned.23 Having rejected the subject's interiority for being a fabricated essence, Butler proposes to consider the psyche as a compulsive repetition of gender acts that create the illusion of inner space.

Departing from Freud's notion of the ego, Butler presents an alternative theory for the assumption of bodily norms and the creation of the ego that erases the distinction between morphe and psyche through the notion of schema. In Freud, the ego is a derivation from the bodily sensations that arise from the surface of the body, for the body boundaries are the first symbolic contours of the subject and the surface on which social meanings are inscribed.24 In Butler's alternative explanation, we symbolise our own limits through the body boundaries, for we conceive our identity as the "inner," whereas the "outer" of the body becomes the other. Body boundaries are crafted through the

23 Butler explicitly opposes this view of the subject to Erving Goffman's which assumes a core self that takes on different roles.

24 Freud's theory of the 'bodily ego' argues that we come to have an idea of our body through pain, and that these sensations provide the input for the formation of the ego. The Freudian ego is then "a mental projection of the surface of the body" (Freud quoted in BTM: 258, fn. 4).
somatization of sexual taboos. The pain inflicted by the taboos craft an imaginary body schema which is the form in which we conceive our body and onto which we "map" our libido.

In other words, Butler conceives the boundaries of the body as crafted through the sexual taboos which create an imaginary bodily schema through which we access anatomy. The productive power of taboos "suffuse" the body with a pain that leads to the projection of a surface. This surface is an imaginary morphology shaped in agreement with the normative sex of the HM. The morphological development and the assumption of sex are somatisations of the norms of the HM, for the body's "sexed morphology" is the incorporation of the lost/prohibited homosexual desire. Thus, this theory of the assumption of bodily norms and the creation of the ego erases the distinction between the *morphe* and *psyche*, that is, between the form of our bodies and our psychological outlook.25

Therefore, in Butler's theory, the normative gender images absorbed in the body's surface and the fixity, contours and materiality of the body are discursive products imposed through the somatisation of normative sex. It follows that no such thing as core gender identity exists, since gender is an act the performance of which produces the illusion of inner identity, an identity which is always gendered. In sum, there is no true self but only a series of gendered acts, of external body signs that become the expression of the inner self. Hence, personal identity is not fixed in an essential core; rather it is permanently changing since it is culturally constructed.

Butler (1989) questioned the Foucauldian distinction between the body as surface and site of resistance on the one hand, and the acts of inscription on the other. As an alternative, she proposed investigating the body's cultural meanings as products of the social. Butler aims to "further radicalize Foucault's theory" (GT: 133) by developing her thought on the establishment of the body boundaries in order to articulate the mechanisms by which "the contours of the body (are) clearly marked as the ground or surface upon which gender significations are inscribed" (GT: 139). Butler borrows from anthropologist Douglas' (1970) thought on the symbolic role of body boundaries, and from the ideas of psychoanalyst Kristeva on the social mechanisms for the establishment of identity.

Butler appropriates Douglas' notion of the body skin as a metaphoric surface on which the cultural inscribes taboos, but rejects the binary structure of the nature/culture distinction assumed by Douglas as the basis of her analysis. Butler wants to move away from Douglas' notion of culture as "untidy" and instead points towards "an alternative configuration of culture in which such distinctions (nature/culture) become malleable or proliferate beyond the binary frame" (GT: 131). For this reason, Butler prefers not to consider the boundaries of the body as the limits of the social *per se*, as Douglas does, but rather as the limits of the socially *hegemonic*.26 (GT: 131).

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25 In Butler's words: "The productive power of prohibition in morphogenesis renders the very distinction between *morphe* and *psyche* unsustainable" (BTM 55).

26 Butler also opposes the feminist appropriation of Levi-Strauss' nature/culture distinction to support the sex/gender distinction. In her view, the nature/culture distinction implies the domination of culture over nature which correlates with the concept of "sex-as-matter" which Butler aims to expose as a discursive formation.
Butler also uses Kristeva's notion of the "abject" to reflect on the social mechanisms for the establishment of identity through the boundaries of the body. The body boundaries constitute the first symbolic contours of the subject by offering a limit to the "inner" and the "outer". This limit serves to establish coherence and stability. The subject's identity is established by marking that which is alien through expulsion, repulsion and exclusion. That which has been expelled from the body is the abject, the otherness of the subject, which includes those others which present different sexual or racial characteristics than the hegemonic "subject". All those others become the abject and, hence, the non-human.

To Butler "the mark of gender appears to 'qualify' bodies as human bodies... Those bodily figures who do not fit into either gender fall outside the human, indeed, constitute the domain of the dehumanised and the abject against which the human itself is constituted" (GT: 111). In other words, gender is that which "qualifies" bodies as human bodies. For this reason, those bodies that do not fit neatly into either gender are regarded as non-human or the abject in opposition to which the human is defined.

To summarise, Butler believes that "[gender] identity is performatively constituted by the very 'expressions' that are said to be its results" (GT: 25), and she emphasises the importance of gender identity in defining normative identity. Given that gender is a condition and strategy for the cultural survival of the person, Butler argues that "it makes little sense to treat 'the individual' as an intelligible term if individuals are said to acquire their intelligibility by becoming subjects" (PL: 11).

1.2.2.2 Agency

"Agency is always and only a political prerogative"

(Butler 1994a: 46-7, emphasis of the author)

Butler inquires: if individuals are made intelligible only after their subjectification in language, how can the process of subjection be expressed without presupposing the subject it seeks to explain and reinventing its subjectification? The problem of circularity in the question of subject and agency is, in Butler's view, unavoidable: the subject itself is ambivalent, since it is both the effect of power, conceived as prior to the subject, and the condition for an agency itself formed by the power conditions that constitute the subject. Since the subject is "neither fully determined by power nor fully determining of power (but significantly and partially both), the subject exceeds the logic of non-contradiction, is an excrescence of logic" (Butler 1997b: 17). Therefore, Butler argues, when attempting to analyse subjection the first-person perspective - the "I" - must be suspended, but it must be recovered for thinking about the question of agency. By means of this strategy, Butler aims to distance herself from both the conception of the subject as obsolete - a view that holds that the subject...
is extinct due to it being implied in its own subordination - and from the liberal notion of the subject whose agency is opposed to power. In her view, these positions entail political fatalism and naive optimism respectively. In her opinion, complicity with power and ambivalence in forms of resistance are unavoidable.

Butler adopts the perspective of the "I" when thinking about the subject as political agent in our "postliberatory times". From this perspective, it becomes obvious that, in order for power to persist, it needs the subject in which it is reiterated. The possibility of agency arises because there is a discontinuity between the power that initiates the subject and the power that the subject assumes. To put it in Butler's words: "agency exceeds the power by which it is enabled" (Butler 1997b: 15). The excess that offers the possibility of resignification arises from the subject's desire, since desire "aims at the dissolution of the subject" (Butler 1997b: 9) which has been formed through prohibition, by repeating that which has been excluded (and relegated into the unconscious or incorporated through melancholy). In other words, desire threatens the ego for it repeats those exclusions that form the limits of the ego itself. Thus, as part of her critique of foundationalism, Butler recasts agency as "a contingent and fragile possibility" (1994a: 137) "within matrices of power" (1994a: 133). Butler believes that "subjects are constituted in language, but that language is also the site of their destabilisation" (1992d: 113) since she conceives of the foundations of the subject as both "contingent and indispensable" (1994a: 133). Hence agency is not conceived of as a transcendental category but as the possibility of reworking the conventions that enable our gender identity.

The notion of gender as repetition together with the understanding of the subject as an effect of power allows Butler to "free" gender from sex-nature and account for gender as mutable. This strategy permits Butler to avoid the controversy around construction27 and leaves a door open for the possibility of change while, at the same time, avoiding the liberal view of the individual as a source of agency. Because Butler conceives the subject as both dependent on and enabled by the discourses that produce it, she does not oppose constructionism to agency. She puts forward a view of gender constructionism that implies that gender is contingent and that allows for new configurations of local politics.

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27 Butler believes this controversy is founded on the philosophical convention that opposes free will to determinism.
1.2.3 ON MATERIALITY

"The discursive practice by which matter is rendered irreducible simultaneously ontologizes and fixes that gendered matrix in its place"

(BTM: 29)

As she made clear in I2, Butler is all too aware that the popularisation of GT brought a general misinterpretation of performativity as performance that resulted in confusing the performative theory with a voluntaristic construction of identity. To clarify her position in BTM she shifted back towards the problem of materiality and the place of constraint in the production of "sex" in order "to work out how a norm actually materialises a body, how we might understand the materiality of the body to be not only invested with a norm, but in some sense animated by a norm, or contoured by a norm" (I2: 32).

Hence, BTM is a further theorisation of matter and an inquiry into the possibilities of disruption of the performative theory of gender undertaken as a response to criticisms of the constructivist accounts of gender. In Butler's view, these criticisms are based on the metaphysical oppositions between materialism and idealism embedded in grammar. She attempts to avoid these oppositions by redefining them in terms of the postructuralist rewriting of the discursive performativity of sex. Hence, BTM presented genealogies of the discursive production of "sex" and its "materiality", and made suggestions for the possible displacement of sex through the resignification of performatives. In order to defend herself from the accusations of ignoring the "materiality" of the body (accusations expressed in the recurring question: "what about the body, Judy?"), Butler articulates her views in two points:

a. To claim "the materiality of sex is constructed through a ritualised repetition of norms" (1993a: x) as she did in GT, does not entail that that which is constructed does not exist and that it is dispensable. In her view, the criticisms directed against her arise from the misunderstanding of the word "construction", for she does not use it to refer to an artificiality understood as dispensable and non-existent, but as "constitutive constraint". Butler aims to take the feminist understanding of "construction" beyond the rejection of a pre-discursive sex into an inquiry of "how the materiality of sex is forcibly produced" (1993a: xi).

b. There is no causal connection between discourse and sexual difference since to claim that "sexual differences are indissociable from discursive demarcations is not the same as claiming that discourse causes sexual difference" (1993a: 1).

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28 See bibliography for book abbreviations.

29 In GT Butler sometimes employs "performance" and "performative" indistinctly, the only difference being syntactical (as a noun and as an adjective respectively). An instance of the use of "performative" as an adjective: "gender proves to be performative - that is, constituting the identity it is purported to be" (GT: 25). See also footnote 40.
Butler conceives "sex" as a norm that materialises bodies, therefore "sex" is not regarded as a given but as a process, "an ideal construct which is forcibly materialized through time" (1993a: 1). Butler aims to establish a link between the performativity of gender and the materiality of the body, for if this link is established, the category of "sex" would need to be rethought. For this reason, she urges us to rethink materiality as a product of power and to regard the fixity, contours and movements of the body not as material but as discursive products. In this way, gender ceases to be understood as a cultural construct imposed upon the surface of matter (conceived as the material body and its given sex), and "sex" becomes the set of norms by which bodies become intelligible in cultural terms. According to Butler, if "sex", instead of being understood as a description of what one is in static terms, is understood as the norms by which one qualifies as a culturally intelligible "body for life" (1993a: 2), then, it will no longer be possible to think about the materiality of the body as disconnected from the materialising effects of the norm. The materiality of the body will have to be considered as the product of the norm. It will then become obvious that sex is not a static condition of a body but an ideal construct that becomes materialized in a process of forced reiteration of norms.

The metaphysical opposition between materialism and idealism that Butler rejects is present in the relation nature/culture assumed by some models of gender construction. Those models oppose the body, as a passive surface, to discourse, as masculine agency. Insofar as the sex/gender distinction relies on this model, gender stands for the social significance that sex assumes, and sex is left without meaning. In order to clarify the relation between sex and gender, Butler argues that, if gender is the social meanings that sex assumes, then sex is not the sum of these meanings, but rather sex "is replaced by the social meanings it takes on" (1993a: 5). In Butler's view the problems presented by the sex/gender distinction are not solved by adopting the notion of radical linguistic constructivism because then sex is placed in a pre-linguistic state to which there is no direct access and it becomes something like a fiction or a fantasy. As a way of avoiding this problem Butler proposes rethinking the opposition fiction/reality for perhaps sex is "a phantasmatic field that constitutes the very terrain of cultural intelligibility" (1993a: 6), in which case we would need to rethink the meaning of constructivism.30

Butler wants to move on from the debate between constructivism and essentialism to examine to what extent the constraint on our bodies' symbolic limits can be modified. Although she acknowledges these constraints, she is not interested in finding a biological ground for them.31 Instead

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30 Butler refers to sex as "phantasmatic" for the term evokes the idea that the subject's identifications are unstable; she keeps the term "fantasy" to refer to the active imagination of a subject who occupies a position in the regulatory schemes.

31 Although Butler is inclined to concede to the objectors of the radical constructivist position the existence of certain sexual differences, she refuses to do so for she believes it will entail the acceptance of a certain version of "sex" because "the constative claim is always to some degree performative" (1993a: 11). To the interviewers' question "Shouldn't you be talking about the constraints on discourse as well as the discursive limits of 'sex'" (1994b: 33), Butler responds that enough has been written on the constraints on discourse and that there is a tactical reason for not talking about them in order to provoke. She later adds: "I do not deny certain kinds of
she proposes to examine the norms that regulate the materialisation of sex, to discard the notion of matter as surface, and to look at matter as "a process of materialisation that stabilizes over time to produce the effect of boundary, fixity, and surface we call matter" (1993a: 9, emphasis of the author). With this strategy she aims to displace the terms that ground feminist epistemologies and ethics. Her strategy for reconceptualising the body is to show that there is a gendered matrix at work in the constitution of materiality. In order to achieve this, Butler moves in two directions: the theorisation of the "matter" of sex so as to avoid theorising sex as a given (as found in the sex/gender distinction); and the deconstruction of the mechanisms for the construction of the subject: exclusion, erasure and abjection.

Butler proceeds to deconstruct "matter" by tracing its etymology. Through the etymological deconstruction of "matter" Butler spells out her own theoretical principles. The term "matter" is etymologically associated to mater (mother) and matrix (womb) and, therefore, with reproduction, though it also has a more general meaning as principle of origination and causality. In Greek, the term hyle conveys a threefold meaning: matter, origin and significance. Therefore, the term suggests that the notions of materiality and signification are inextricably linked. In both Greek (hyle) and Latin (materia) the term "matter" does not connote a blank surface that passively receives a meaning from an external source. Hyle is already artifactual, it is a basic matter such as wood, that has already undergone a process of transformation through cutting, and so on. Because matter is understood as a principle of transformation, it entails an element of time, since the process of transforming the object from one state to another develops in time. Therefore, in Classical antiquity, the materiality of the object is not conceived as a static given but as a transformative activity, for matter is conceived as having the power of creating something for which it also provides its principles.

As we know, the modern notion of matter does not include this aspect of creation and rationality. Butler promotes a different understanding of matter, one which redeployed the Aristotelian terminology to suggest a different way of conceiving the materialisation of the bodies. Thus, the Butlerian understanding of matter falls within the Classical frame, hence the title of this book: Bodies that Matter. Since to be material is to have the power to materialise under some principles, to be biological differences. But I always ask under what conditions, under what discursive and institutional conditions, do certain biological differences -and they're not the necessary ones, given the anomalous state of bodies in the world- become the salient characteristics of sex." (1993a: 34-5)

32 In this text, Butler tends to use the term heterosexual hegemony instead of HM. Butler presents two reasons for this change: to avoid the reification of the HM, and to connote the possibility of subversion. She believes that there is a need to rethink the understanding of the HM as the personification of the social in order to avoid the reification of the HM. In 12 (1994b) Butler declared that "the HM became a kind of totalising symbolic, and that's why I changed the term..." (1994b: 36). Since Gramsci thought that hegemony operates by rearticulation, the term hegemony is closer to Butlerian politics for it presents the matrix a more malleable, more "open to rearticulation" (1994b: 36).

33 Incidentally, Butler points out that this was also Marx's understanding of matter, since he conceived it as an activity, a human practice (praxis). For this reason, he saw praxis as constitutive of materiality.
material is to materialise bodies that matter. What are those Bodies that Matter? The bodies that incarnate the norm of sex are the bodies that count (matter) socially because they are the ones that incarnate the norm. They get repeated and become naturalised, that is, their repetition sediments into a domain that is taken to be the "natural". Therefore, those bodies which fit the norms of sex are those which are materialized and repeated/reproduced because they are important: "the bodies which, in materializing the norm, qualify as bodies that matter" (BTM: 16). Those which do not fit the norm do not qualify as human and produce the domain of the abjected.

The intention of Butler's deconstructive analysis is not to do away with the term "matter", but to expose the metaphysical assumptions underlying the notion of matter and to understand the political interests that it supports. In her view, the Western philosophical notion of matter is the product of a history of gendered concepts. This history originates in Aristotle's distinction between matter and form, and it is also present in other, parallel, distinctions such as sex/gender and nature/culture. The Greek understanding of matter, as for example in Aristotle, conceives matter (dynameos) as potentiality, and form as actuality. In Aristotle matter does not appear without a certain schema (form, shape, grammatical form), therefore it is inextricable from the rational principle that constitutes it. In Aristotle, matter is unlimited potentiality and the schema is what actualises matter, what gives it its form. Matter is conceived as a passive receptacle that receives forms.

Butler redeployes the Aristotelian terminology to suggest a different way of conceiving the materialisation of bodies and suggests a critical miming that would read Plato's form/matter distinction as a rejection of lesbianism. However, from her deconstruction of Aristotle's and Plato's notion of

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34 Clearly "matter" is a term loaded with meaning in Butler's work. In order to make her position as clear as possible I have spelled out seven different meanings of the term "matter" used in BTM:

1. To mean.
2. To materialize (number 1 and 2 are the same in Classical thought).
3. That which is important because it conforms to the norm.
4. That which is created as a physical thing through sedimentation.
5. That which is naturalized, for matter is the naturalization of a norm.
6. A subject, a topic.
7. A material, a substance in the Aristotelian/Foucauldian sense. Matter as we-know-not-what. The matter which is known through our practices (significatory and others) and cannot, therefore, be reached in a state previous to our interpretation.

35 As we saw earlier, the abjected fortifies the regulatory norms since it constitutes a position outside the oppositional pair intelligeable/unintelligeable bodies.

36 IN BTM Butler engages in a critique of Irigaray's deconstruction of materiality in Plato's Timaeus. Irigaray shows that the Platonic binary distinctions form/matter, body/soul, matter/meaning and so on, are formulated in a space that excludes the feminine by positing it as a receptable that has no ontological status. Although Butler agrees with Irigaray in believing that the history of the term "matter" is linked to the question of receptivity, she disagrees with Irigaray for presenting the feminine as the only rejection that constitutes the Western metaphysical tradition, for this overlooks the fact that Plato also rejects slaves (or the ethnically/culturally different), children and animals, and posits the feminine as another universal. Nevertheless, Butler values Irigaray's work positively for she believes it calls into question Plato's thought.
matter, Butler concludes that such a notion cannot ground feminist practice because its history is imbued with notions of sexual difference, such as receptivity. For this reason, she discourages feminists from positing notions of materiality as irreducible, for that would reaffirm the violation of the feminine that constitutes the notion of "matter", since "there may not be a materiality of sex that is not already burdened by the sex of materiality" (BTM: 54).

Butler turns to psychoanalysis to theorise the process by which the body is materialized according to the criteria for "sex" of the HM. Butler resorts to identification as the process for the acquisition of the bodily ego and combines the Aristotelian understanding of "matter" with Foucault's notion of the soul to hypothesise the process of the acquisition of bodily norms. As mentioned in Section 1.2.1.2 on Gender acquisition, Butler departs from Freud's notion of the ego as a derivation from the bodily sensations that arise from the surface of the body. Butler adds that the body surface is an imaginary morphology that we assume through identification in accordance with the taboo on homosexuality.

However, the process of materialisation/construction of the body is not produced by a subject, it operates through the reiteration of norms that both produce and destabilise sex: performative citationality. In GT Butler argued that the process of identifying with the norms is the process of citing the norms. Sex as a norm derives its power from being cited as a norm but also from the citations it compels. But the notion of gender as performative37 presented in GT was widely misinterpreted as putting forward an idea of gender as a performance that the subject could change at will.38 In BTM Butler makes clear that performativity is not to be understood as "the act by which a subject brings into being what she/he names", and defines it as "the reiterative power of discourse to produce the phenomena that it regulates and constrains" (1993a: 2). Butler claims that she does not regard agency as the same as voluntarism, and that, although her notion of agency is implicated in dominant relations of power, it is not reducible to them.

In order to spell out her position, she introduces the Derridean notion of iterability, borrowed from Derrida's rewriting of speech act theory. Derrida's concept is useful to Butler for it accounts for the repetition of acts that sediment into "sex" and thus allows her to distance herself from the

citation that, in miming the original, effects an insubordination (for her notion of miming as displacement see Butler 1990a, and 1991). Since in Plato, matter is only a receptable - that is, it can not penetrate or form other matter - Butler interprets Plato's "feminine" as a heterosexual entity produced by fear of homosexuality.

37 In Speech Act Theory, a performative utterance is an illocutionary act (a statement that expresses a belief) which includes a verb that names the act that is being performed. For instance, "I hereby apologize". The utterance itself is the performance of the act.

38 Concerning this Butler declares: "the bad reading goes like this: I can get up in the morning, look in my closet, and decide which gender I want to be today... so that what you get is something like the commodification of gender, and the understanding of taking on a gender as a kind of consumerism" (II: 83).
voluntarism involved in the performative as conceived in speech act theory. Hence, the Derridean reading of the performative is more akin to Butler for it locates agency as a reiterative practice immanent to power, and therefore avoids positing a choosing subject that exists apart from the norms (voluntarism).

The introduction of Derrida's notion of iterability allows Butler to differentiate more clearly between performativity and performance as two different ways of understanding constructivism in sexuality (constraint vs. construction). Constructivism as performance is free play or theatrical self-presentation; it involves "the freedom of a subject to form her/his sexuality as s/he pleases" (1993a: 94); it is individualistic and voluntarist and considers sexuality as a construction. This view entails an understanding of construction as artifice. Constructivism as performativity, that is the forced reiteration of norms, takes account of constraints which impel and sustain performativity. In this manner, Butler aims to do away with the opposition constructed-free/determined-fixed. She stresses once more that the process of iteration that enables performativity implies that "performance is not a singular 'act' or event, but a ritualised production...reiterated under constraint" (B'TM: 95).

1.2.4 ON SUBVERSION

"Subversion is precisely an incalculable effect
That's what makes it subversive" (I2: 38)

1.2.4.1 Theoretical premises

Butler believes agency resides in complex cultural exchanges among bodies in which identity is ever-shifting. Therefore, in the Butlerian framework, there is certain scope for local political action thanks to the understanding of gender as a repetitive chain of acts, for it opens up the possibility of subversion by unfaithful repetition. But variation in the chain of repetitions only occurs within the repetitive practice, for "power relations can be understood... as constraining and constituting the very possibilities of volition" (GT: 124). For this reason, and in accordance with Foucault's repressive hypothesis, Butler believes the possibility of subversion does not lie in that which is constructed as the "outside" of culture, such as bisexuality or homosexuality, for this "outside" is not really beyond

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39 Derrida redefined "the power of a subject or its will" (1993a: 13) as deriving from a citation of a "coded" model, although he did preserve a place for intention.

40 To Butler the notion of "artifice" has connotations of dispensable and inexisten.

41 It becomes obvious from this quotation that although Butler opposes performance to performativity, the former being a voluntarist interpretation of performativity, she continues to use the term performance in two not clearly differentiated senses. Butler herself distinguishes these two meanings through a graphic device, that is, by marking them with inverted commas: "performance" and performance.
culture, but a cultural possibility which is excluded.\textsuperscript{42} It is the marginalised, the abjected, that which does not have socially recognised identity that offers the possibility of subversion.\textsuperscript{43}

Butler aims to call our attention towards a transcendent inscriptive space in which she believes the distinction between material and ideal takes place. This space is an excluded space that cannot be contained by the dialectic between the intelligible and the unintelligible, the excluded and the included - hence, it is the supplement beyond the binary dialectic. Derrida conceives an empty "neutral space" (Derrida quoted in BTM: 254, n. 28) that he refers to as the third gender of genre. This is the empty Derridean 'space' that Butler identifies with the abject and that, in her view, opens up the possibility of subversion since it exists outside the HM's regime of intelligibility.\textsuperscript{44} Hence, to Butler, abjected figures can de-centre and subvert the construction of identity.

Butler understands social structure as temporal; in other words, its characteristics are "that the structure must be reiterated again and again, and that it has a kind of ritual dimension and that its very temporal dimension is the condition of its subversion" (I4: 168). Starting from the idea of the psyche as a compulsive repetition,\textsuperscript{45} she argues that the interval between repetitions is the site for the appearance of the "risk and excess" (IM: 28) that arises from the unconscious. This excess is not the same as the transgressive pleasures supplied by the HM, for these are only a "domesticated alternative", but is the expropriation of the acts by which heterosexuality presents itself as original. Hence, resignification can occur in the 'intervals' in the chain of citations.

1.2.4.2 Feminist critique

As introduced earlier, Butler's understanding of gender is part of her political critique of the subject. Thus, Butler is against the reification of sexual difference as the origin of culture because it maintains the binary understanding of sex and assumes heterosexuality as a premise for the analysis of gender identity and sexuality. Since the construction of gender and the category of women as coherent and stable subjects functions as a regulation and reification of gender relations within the framework of the HM, a stable notion of gender is not a satisfactory basis for feminist politics. Instead Butler

\textsuperscript{42} For this reason, Butler does not believe that homosexual practices should seek the full-scale transcendence of the HM. Since power can only be redeployed, not transcended, Butler attacks all-transcending proposals such as Wittig's lesbianism or Rubin's "revolution in kinship". Butler believes that a political program for overcoming binary restrictions must be concerned with "cultural innovation rather than myths of transcendence" (1987b: 137).

\textsuperscript{43} Although Butler uses Kristeva's notion of the abject to articulate the social creation of identity through marking the body boundaries, she disagrees with Kristeva for presuming a state "before" culture as the source of subversion.

\textsuperscript{44} As mentioned earlier, to Butler the abject is not restricted to sex and heteronormativity, but it also includes "all kinds of bodies whose lives are not considered to be "lies" and whose materiality is understood not to "matter"" (13: 281), such as non-Western lives, the impoverished, or the psychiatric "cases".

\textsuperscript{45} Though Butler used the term iterability in GT, she introduced Derrida's thought in BTM for the first time.
proposes to consider "subjectivating norms to be temporalized and open rather than fixed and determinate" (14: 168).

Butler conceives gender neither as a radical choice nor as an imposition, that is, it is neither determined nor passively inscribed in the body. Thus, in order to escape essentialism and account for some agency in taking up gender, she urges feminism to develop the notion of phenomenological act. In order to do so, Butler borrows from performance theory, particularly studies of ritual social drama by anthropologist Victor Turner, to articulate the idea that acts have a social and a public dimension. This supports her claim that gender acts function like pedagogical tools to render gender explicit and maintain its binary structure. To counteract the hegemonic gender definitions, she proposes a "politics of performative gender acts" aiming to expose the strategies of the reification of gender and to empty gender acts of their meaning, while at the same time acknowledging the complexity of gender.

The possibility of overthrowing the HM derives from Butler's notion of sex and gender. Her argument goes like this: if gender is not "a noun or a substantial thing or a static cultural marker, but rather... an incessant and repeated action of some sort" (GT: 112), then "gender is a kind of action that can potentially proliferate beyond the binary limits imposed by the apparent binary of sex" (GT: 112). Butler continues: if gender is "a kind of action", then, gender can become a "kind of cultural/corporeal action that requires new vocabulary" (GT: 112) that resists binary restrictions on gender. Hence, transformation derives from gender being "both intentional and performative" (GT: 139).

The gender "act" is performative in so far as it is "a dramatic and contingent construction of meaning" (GT: 139). However, meaning is constrained by logocentrism and the metaphysics of substance. Butler attacks logocentrism for constructing gender within the mind/body distinction and thus supporting relations of hierarchy and subordination amongst the sexes. The metaphysics of substance also come under attack for making sex appear as a substance (a self-identical being) through a "performative twist of language and/or discourse" (GT: 19); and for presenting the psychological persona as a substantive thing when, in fact, it is only a linguistic reality.

Butler considers feminism as a juridical system of power in the Foucauldian fashion: its normative definition produces the subject that it comes to represent through the exclusion of those that

46 Performance theory is a way of looking at human behaviour (individual and social) as a genre of performance. Performance theory is fruit of a convergence between theatre and anthropology. According to Schechner (1985), it is part of a wider movement which aims to understand human behaviour not in terms of cause and effect, but through deconstructing and rehearsing it. Mainly developed by anthropologist Victor Turner, it studies rituals as performances and enacts them in "performing ethnography". Turner's "performing ethnography" aims to improve the understanding and cognitive representation of social rituals through the production of the actors' "inside view" in performance.

47 The metaphysics of substance or presence is a characterization of the Western metaphysical tradition as emphasising the linear understanding of time at the expense of others; that is, prioritising the temporal modality of presence over process. In other words, it refers to the tendency toward a static picture or reality by suppressing change and overemphasising presence. The suppression of process is accompanied by an excessive belief in the possibility of control (for if one believes that presence can be hold and arrested, then one believes one can control) and in the belief in the transparence to reason (human reason can be transparent to itself with the consequence that history can be fully understood and controlled).
do not fit - the abjected. To Butler "the feminist subject turns out to be discursively constituted by the very political system that is supposed to facilitate its emancipation" (GT: 2). Since to Butler the subject of feminism is actually constituted by feminist discourse, she thinks it is not necessary for feminism to foster a normative definition of women in order to achieve political visibility. In Butler's view, the question of "what a woman is" should be left open for "to embrace a 'biological' or 'natural' definition... leads to a reduction of women to their reproductive function" - a position with...homophobic consequences" (1992c: 85).48 The representational gaps, that is, those excluded by the definition of "women", can be avoided if feminist politics concerns itself with the productive and the juridical functions of power and undertakes a critical genealogy of sex, gender and desire.

Butler suggests feminism should no longer search for its universal basis in a feminine identity assumed to be cross-cultural. Instead, it should explore the new political possibilities that might arise from a genealogical critique. This critical genealogy would investigate gender categories as "effects of institutions, practices, discourses with multiple and diffuse points of origin" (GT: ix, emphasis of the author) to reveal the political strategies that created them and presented them as "origin" and "cause" of a natural order with the intention of hiding their true origins 49

Hence, a critical genealogy of the category of woman would counteract the essentialist definition of women as oppressed, expose the discourses that institute it, and disclose the replication of gender in binary categories man/woman as the origin of oppression. If the category of woman is a reification, to loosen it has two positive consequences for feminism: the disposal of gender binarism, and a more complex conception of subject positions that does not presuppose or fix the subject of politics. This "postfeminist" (GT: 5) proposal aims to unmask the "historical specificity and contingency" (Butler 1992b: 143) of the Matrix, and to shake women's studies off from its academical "domestication" and challenge the domination of the disciplines of medicine, psychiatry, and psychology in the study of sex.

1.2.4.3 Performing subversion

Since Butler understands gender as "a way of situating oneself with respect to (cultural) norms" (1988: 40) that does not exclude the possibility of reworking these norms, her political agenda is to confuse the binary polarization of gender through the "purposeful" embodiment of ambiguity. As

48 To the extent that gender is a kind of psychic norm and cultural practice, it will always elude a fixed definition. For this reason, it is problematic to regard desire as determining identity and to base politics in this notion. Butler thinks Foucault refused to come out because he refused to accept this equation. She believes that he would have wanted to keep desire and sexuality separable from the question of identity, and to question its domestication and normalization through the discourse of identity.

49 Concerning how the metaphor of interiority is manifested in the body surface Butler suggests research into how the body signals the interior identity - "how does a body figure on its surface the very invisibility of its hidden depth" (GT: 134) through "acts, gestures and desires" (GT: 136)? Thus, Butler recommends inquiring into: the language of inner space, what body parts signify inner space, how the metaphor of interiority is manifested in the body surface, and the reasons for constructing the metaphor of interiority.
possible sources of subversion of taboos and resistance to the Matrix's order Butler mentions the performances of queer activism, such as die-ins, kiss-ins, butch/femme balls and so on. Her position towards the subversive potential of performances, such as those of queer activism and drag, is inspired in the work of play writer, theorist, and theatre director Bertolt Brecht. The Brechtian dialectical principle underlies the Butlerian understanding of the subversive potentialities of drag, femme/butch identities, and the performances of queer activism. They are all examples of repetition, of a conventional category that creates new contexts.

Both drag and femme/butch identities are parodies of gender that uncover it as a fiction, an unattainable ideal. In butch/femme relations the object of desire is the destabilisation of masculinity and femininity that occurs in erotic interplay. So, although butch and femme identities recall the heterosexual relation, at the same time they displace it by giving the masculine and feminine identities a new meaning and by embodying the challenge to natural identity. This unfaithful application involves a challenge to the idea of sexual identity being determined by a "natural" anatomy and effectively gives a new meaning to the category. In Brechtian terms, the category has been defamiliarised, then negated, and then it has returned with a transformed meaning.

In their turn, drag performances present an exaggerated image of gender achieved through the display of the conventional signs of gender. Through this mechanism drag exposes gender as an impersonation, an artificial form and role that can be successfully adopted with disregard to anatomy. Butler interprets drag as an allegory of the gender melancholy resultant from compulsory heterosexuality. As we saw earlier, gender melancholy is the ungrieved loss caused by the renunciation of the forbidden object of desire. This grief results in the augmentation and intensification of the symbolic positions man/women. These heightened positions are those that drag impersonates. Both drag and femme/butch identities expropriate the acts by which heterosexuality presents itself as original - that is, they repeat the acts that constitute the alleged origin of gender (those that sediment into the category of "sex") in a context that effectively exposes its artificiality and contingency. To Butler, drag's imitation of gender reveals gender as a contingent imitation and exposes the "original" as a myth.

In GT Butler suggests transsexualism as a trope to think about gender. To Butler the décalage reported by transsexuals affects all subjects to a certain extent since it results from the "differentiation of bodily pleasures and parts on the basis of gendered meanings" effected by the Matrix (GT: 70). To

50 In his theory of theatre Brecht theorized the notion of Verfremdung (translated as 'estrangement', 'distanciation' and 'defamiliarisation'). Verfremdung is a theatrical technique that aims to render strange and unfamiliar that which is taken for granted by the public, to the point where it becomes incomprehensible. Verfremdung sets in motion a dialectical process by which the negation of what was previously considered 'natural' or 'obvious' is itself negated. This results in the return of the negated transformed into a new intelligible category. Verfremdung was designed to fulfill the drama's pedagogic function by challenging the audience's unexamined assumptions about art and society. This would lead to heightened critical attitude that would have as a consequence a rise of political consciousness in the public.

51 See pages 21 and 17.
Butler our libidinal corporeal schema is constructed according to a normative model that makes us conceive of certain parts of our body and not others as sources of pleasure. She believes this operation is visible in transsexual people for, in her view, they experience a discontinuity between body parts and the sexual pleasures that should be associated with them.

Butler expects transformations to arise from the challenge posed by the transgender community, although she is aware that some gays and feminists oppose the discourse of transgender for being reactionary,52 as she herself does in some respect. As we saw earlier, since Butler considers gender as identification with an unrealisable set of norms, there is always a certain ambivalence in gender (see II: 88). Butler argues (BTM) that cross-identification is "a presupposition of all sexed identity, not only in its ostensibly aberrant instances" (I1: 88). She advances the argument by saying that if cross-gendered identification were to be "understood on a continuum with transsexuality, ... that would make transsexuality into something less aberrant and other" (1992c: 88).

Nevertheless, she distances herself from the philosophical justification for sex-change surgery because she believes it "often rest[s] upon an understanding of essential core gender identities...and I have some trouble with the very conservative gender norms that get reproduced uncritically in some medical discourses and practices governing transsexuality" (1992c: 88). She believes the lack of awareness in feminist theory of the possibility of cross-gender identification, or what she calls the "mundane sense of transsexuality" (1992c: 88),53 is remarkable. She sees this as being especially the case in feminist film theory, for its notion of "the male gaze" disregards this possibility and assumes the heterosexuality of the female spectator.

However, in GT Butler does not discuss transsexualism and instead presents drag as the paradigm of gender displacement through subversive repetition. Butler thinks drag is subversive when it exposes the imitative structure of gender.54 The most discussed example is Jennie Livingstone's "Paris is Burning" (1987), a documentary on the drag fashion shows organised by a community of gay and transsexual males of latino and black origin. In these fashion shows a parallel is made between the passing devices of gay individuals and the conscious stylisation of fashion models' appearance and demeanour. The show is organised in categories that vary from the glamour of "High Fashion Evening Wear" or "Town and Country", to the realness of "Working Man", "Sister Going to Pick up Little Brother at School" or "Luscious Body". The contestants are judged on their ability to mime that "great white way of looking, living, gesturing, speaking, dressing", as one participant puts it. For instance,

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52 Feminist Janice Raymond, author of The Transsexual Phenomenon, comes under criticism for conflating drag, cross-dressing and transsexualism, and for reading them as misogynist.

53 For instance, Butler considers the second chapter of BTM her most "transsexual" piece. She is using the term "transsexual" in what she calls a "mundane" sense.

54 Butler believes that drag is theatrical in the sense that "it mimes and renders hyperbolic the discursive convention that it also reverses" (BTM: 232).
one of the categories in the competition is "Voguing" which consists of striking a chain of poses similar to those found in high fashion magazines, such as *Vogue*.\(^{55}\)

However, Butler's position with respect to drag is modified from GT to BTM. Butler notes that drag performances are not always subversive. Drag is ambivalent for it can both reveal gender as an imitation of a false ideal, and can thus be subversive by revealing gender as a performance taking place at the body surface, but it can also reinforce gender norms by staging a citation of the ideal personification (BTM: 125). In the latter possibility drag becomes a conventional repetition that does not challenge the category. In this case it reconstitutes the Matrix's terms by providing an outlet for heterosexual melancholy by providing it with a "ritualistic release" (BTM: 126).\(^{56}\) Butler concluded that drag at its best is an allegory of heterosexuality and the melancholia that accompanies it.

In general, Butler is aware of the limitations of subversive actions: "any attempt at subversion is potentially recuperable... you can't plan or calculate subversion" (12: 38). Moreover, Butler declares: "the Foucauldian in me says that there is no one site from which to struggle effectively. There have to be many, and they don't need to be reconciled with one another" (12: 38). Nevertheless, Butler herself performs subversive repetition such as talk about the lesbian phallus as an example of subversive parody. Here Butler subversively appropriates Lacan's notion of having the Phallus as controlling meaning, a position traditionally restricted to males. Since the Matrix operates through meaning, to have authority over meaning is equivalent to being in a dominant position. Hence, Butler's lesbian phallus is an attempt to signify the possibility of a woman having control over the phallus, hence, over meaning. In this sense the notion of the lesbian phallus is an instance of subversive repetition, though, as Butler herself is aware, it is not possible to exert a real control over meaning since it is collectively defined. That is why Butler considers her notion of *lesbian phallus* as a parody.

Another of Butler's subversive strategies is to avoid "endow[ing] ontology" (13: 280) by rearticulating and re-signifying notions that naturalise gender (13: 279). By "performing a performative contradiction, *on purpose*" (13: 280, emphasis of the author), Butler aims to counteract the "whole domain of ontology that the good, the conceptually pure, philosopher takes for granted" (13: 280). In this sense, all of Butler's work and her theory of gender can be considered as a subversive strategy itself since she tries to "de-ontologise" the category of sex by rethorically collapsing the

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55 First conceived as a form of "shade" or covert insult towards the white, rich, straight world that rejects the gay and transgendered community, "Voguing" was later introduced by singer Madonna into mainstream popular culture as a mere dance.

56 After GT, Butler does not regard Livingstone's "dragumentary" as subversive, for she believes its gender miming reinvests gender ideals. There is one aspect though which she still considers subversive: the "House" structure in which the subjects of the film organize themselves. The participants of the shows are grouped in "Houses" such as those of French *haute couture*. The "House" organization actually *mimes* that of kinship: the bosses are "mothers", the members are "children". These relationships are similar to those in which Indian *hijras* organize themselves since they both aim to substitute the families and social structures that have rejected them.

Butler mentions several mainstream Hollywood films, such as *Tootsie* or *Victor/Victoria*, as examples of the latter effect.
sex/gender distinction. Indeed concerning her project she writes "if the political task is to show that theory is never merely *theoria*, in the sense of disengaged contemplation, and to insist that it is fully political (*phronesis* or even *praxis*), then why not simply call this operation *politics*, or some necessary permutation of it?" (IM: 14-15).

In sum, subversion can take place in bodily surfaces when they become the site of a "denaturalized performance that reveals the performative status of the natural itself" (GT: 146). The parodies of gender accomplished by drag performances, butch/femme identities, are those practices that disrupt the binary understanding of gender and expose it as an imitation of the idea of a natural and original sex. Butler's politics envisage a future in which, after the repeal of gender norms, gender configurations will proliferate, the notion of identity as essence will be destabilised. As a consequence, compulsory heterosexuality will be deprived of the notion of "sex" to legitimise itself.
CHAPTER 2:
A SOCIOLOGICAL RECONSTRUCTION
OF JUDITH BUTLER’S THOUGHT

2.1 THE INTERPRETATIVE FRAMEWORK

In this section I will present the theories that constitute the interpretative framework for the rational reconstruction of Butler's thought that will be developed in Section 2.2. These theories are: the Performative Theory of social institutions as developed by Barry Barnes and David Bloor (Section 2.1.1.); and the theory of artificial kinds and folk psychology as developed by Martin Kusch (Section 2.1.2.). In the following sections I aim to introduce the main theoretical concepts of these theories with special emphasis on those notions relevant to the reconstruction of Butler's thought.

2.1.1 THE PERFORMATIVE THEORY OF SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS

2.1.1.1 Background

The Performative Theory is mainly concerned with the nature of social institutions and how they sustain and reproduce themselves. In the performative model the focus is in the role of cognition and knowledge for the maintenance of social order. This concern evolved from the discussion of philosophical issues related to the sociology of scientific knowledge such as the self-referentiality of knowledge.

Self-referentiality as a characteristic in certain kinds of social phenomena was first identified by Robert K. Merton (Merton 1957) in his study of self-fulfilling prophecies. Merton defined a self-fulfilling prophecy as "a false definition of the situation evoking a new behaviour which makes the originally false conception come true" (ibid. 1957: 423, emphasis of the author). In studying the formation of in and out groups, for instance, Merton identified beliefs as the basis for a self-fulfilling prophecy. In the case of group differentiation, the beliefs of group A towards group B will condition the behaviour of the members of group A towards B members in such a way that will limit the behaviour and scope of action of group B. In this fashion, the beliefs of group A leave little alternative to group B than to behave according to A's prejudices about them and, thus, the beliefs of group A
become self-fulfilling. To put it differently, the sustaining prejudices, such as ethnic prejudices, between an in and an out group are the product of a self-fulfilling prophecy that would make itself true. Hence, Merton recognised the role of beliefs in constituting some aspects of social reality and identified them as self-referential. Merton generally considered self-referentiality as a form of social pathology based on a false definition of a particular situation. He contrasted this “false” knowledge with scientific knowledge which he considered a model for “objective” knowledge unaffected by self-referentiality (Merton 1957).

Merton's understanding of self-referentiality as pathological was criticised by other writers who argued that self-referentiality and its self-fulfilling character is an attribute of all social institutions, regardless of the truth or falsity of knowledge or the definition of a situation. In a comment on Merton's book, Krishna (Krishna 1971) defended the view of beliefs as constitutive of social institutions irrespective of their truth or falsity. Krishna's critique implied that self-fulfilling prophecies are not just the product of false belief, as Merton argued, but a mechanism prevalent in the social order regardless of the truth or falsity of the beliefs that sustains it. Krishna's emphasis on the significant role of all beliefs in constituting social reality introduced self-referentiality as a prominent characteristic of all social institutions and knowledge about society. Peter Winch and Elizabeth Anscombe also pointed to self-referentiality in language and knowledge and to its role in constituting the reality they purport to describe, but they did not develop these points further (See Bloor 1996: 854, n. 3).

The importance of self-referentiality in social life was further elaborated by Barnes in his article "Social Life as Bootstrapped Induction" (Barnes 1983) and expanded by Barnes (1988) and Bloor (Bloor 1996). In the following section I will present the characteristics of social institutions as established by Barnes and Bloor.1

2.1.1.2 Social Institutions

Barnes took up the notion of self-referentiality of knowledge and language and explored in greater detail the role of knowledge and language in the constitution and maintenance of social institutions. In Barnes's view society as a whole is "a sublime, monumental, self-fulfilling prophecy" (Barnes 1988: 52) "which comes into existence as it comes to be known" (ibid.: 155). Barnes considers that society as a whole functions as a self-fulfilling prophecy because it is based on self-referential and self-validating knowledge. In other words, to Barnes beliefs about society are ultimately beliefs about beliefs. Beliefs about society inform the behaviour of society members who validate them through their actions. Hence, knowledge of society is self-referential and self-validating.

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1 In his book The Construction of Social Reality (1995), John R. Searle approaches the study of social institutions in a similar way to that of Barnes and Bloor. I do not include Searle's work in my study because Barnes and Bloor's theories are sufficient for the task at hand. For a discussion of the differences and similarities between these two models see Bloor 1996.
for it becomes validated through the actions of the members of society. Hence, self-referential knowledge about society, that is beliefs, constitutes society. Thus, society is the product of a self-fulfilling prophecy.

In order to spell out this idea I will look at an example of a social institution such as authority. First I will introduce the notion of joint beliefs. Joint beliefs are beliefs that we hold about others' beliefs. For instance: "I believe that Cristina believes that buying property is a good investment". Thus, joint beliefs are what everyone collectively believes everyone is believing. The authority of a group leader is based on the group members' collective belief in his/her authority because, if the members believe that A is the group's authority and obey A, then A's authority is constituted by their joint beliefs. Therefore, the leader's authority is constituted by the joint beliefs of the members of the group and its continuation depends on the stability of these beliefs. This exemplifies the claim that, when taken collectively, the beliefs and actions that sustain a social institution are self-referring. They are also self-validating insofar as they perform the reality they purport to describe, such as a leader's authority. In so far as joint beliefs self-validate themselves they effect a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Barnes defines society as "a specific distribution of knowledge" (ibid.: 55). This knowledge is the way in which a particular society makes sense of the world. Barnes (Barnes 1983) firstly introduced the idea that social life creates itself by "pulling itself up by its bootstraps". By this he means that social objects are constituted by our beliefs, that is, by the "hollow ring of belief and action" that is sufficient to constitute social objects because "collective activity creates reference" (ibid.: 531). This is so because collective activity gets taken by the members of a group as appropriate knowledge of a particular society about society. Accordingly, the members of a group refer to collective activity as information about the workings of a particular society. Hence, collective activity becomes a referent about how to act. As a consequence, "the basic condition for the existence of a society is that its existence is known and taken into account by its members" (Barnes 1988: 155). In other words, society is "a distribution of self-referring knowledge, and it is a property of such an entity that it is constituted and reconstituted as it is learned of" (ibid.: 154). Therefore, in the performative model all social beliefs and knowledge are self-referring and constitutive of society.

In the performative model language is equivalent to the possession of knowledge because language carries in itself a theory of reality, that is, a particular way of classification. Since our cognitive processes are not independent of language, they are in part determined by our theory of social reality, that is, by social knowledge. By providing us with a simplified schema of a complex reality, social knowledge predisposes us to filter information in agreement with the classificatory categories through which we learnt to recognise and identify reality. For instance, if we are taught to associate dark-skinned people with lechery, every time we meet a dark-skinned person we will tend to automatically attribute lechery to him/her and behave accordingly. Hence, a particular theory of social reality provides a certain cognitive economy that predisposes us to act in accordance with its
platitudes. To put it in Barnes's own words: "a theory is not the explanation of restricted cognition in a culture; it simply is that restricted cognition" (Barnes 1984: 201).

The restricted communal cognitions of a certain society are coded in language. It follows that the transmission of language and the transmission of knowledge are one and the same process. Therefore, language is central to society because to possess language involves the possession of knowledge. Both language and knowledge are social institutions and collective goods, for they organise the main social concerns and needs of society's members. They both share some characteristics: they are necessary for communication; they facilitate shared activities by solving the problems of co-ordination that arise in any action involving a collective; they are conventional; and they are both sustained by practical activity.

It follows from the above that all knowledge is inseparable from the society that produces it, for the classificatory categories through which we transmit and gain knowledge are conventional. This is the case for both social and natural knowledge, for both types of knowledge have a self-referential component. Natural knowledge refers to an entity, namely the natural world, that exists independently of our classification. This independent entity is also called alter-referent. Nevertheless, the categories through which we classify the alter-referent are self-referential categories. Social knowledge refers to knowledge about society, hence social knowledge is not independent from its classification, since it is created by the talk and the action and, ultimately, it refers to the talk and the action itself. That is, social knowledge is self-referential. In the case of social knowledge its referent, that is, social reality, is exhausted by its self-referential component. In other words, the social entity is completely self-referential. Unlike social knowledge, natural knowledge has an alter referent, that is not exhausted by the self-referential categories through which we learn to recognise it and classify it, for it.²

To summarise, Barnes argues that the knowledge sustaining all social institutions is self-referring and that, as a consequence, all social institutions behave as self-fulfilling prophecies. Knowledge is encoded in language through which we make sense of reality. Because we filter information and guide our actions through our knowledge categories, we effectively perform a social reality that fits our knowledge categories and, thus, validates them.

2.1.1.3 Meaning finitism

As became clear in the preceding section, classification is a crucial process in the construction and maintenance of knowledge and meaning and, hence, it is a central element in the performative theory of social institutions. Meaning finitism is the doctrine that holds that one learns any given word or concept on the basis of a finite number of examples that get applied on the basis of judgement of similarity. In other words, classification does not proceed de novo each time it is confronted with a new item but rather it proceeds by fitting new objects into pre-existing

² I will expand on this distinction in Section 2.1.2.2 on Theory of Kinds.
conceptual/theoretical frameworks that have been collectively defined. Hence, in the finitist account of meaning, classification is social in so far as classification is achieved by resorting to inherited self-referential concepts and categories.

Classification is a creative activity because, since each act of classification proceeds on the basis of analogy in appearance, every act of classification is a contingent collective judgement, the fruit of a negotiation between individual perceptions. Since acts of classification are contingent, all acts of classification are provisional and revisable. Hence, when an act or a pattern of classification may be deemed mistaken retrospectively, existing knowledge is revised. Because earlier usage of a term pre-structures subsequent usage by circumscribing the occasions on which the term will be deemed pertinent, the application of a given term is constrained by early applications. Decisions concerning classification proceed by what is collectively taken to be the best analogy with the relevant terms. Classification must be understood holistically, for every use of a kind term might change the kind in question and it also might change the associated kind terms. Hence, any system of classification forms a whole in which terms are defined by what they are and what they are not.

Another important characteristic of the finitist understanding of meaning is that it claims that the way in which we classify new events or things is not predetermined. Because we classify new instances by developing an analogy with the previous instances of classification, there is always a step in the application of categories that is not determined by the categories themselves. The step in the application of the conventions of classification is not purely mechanical, it involves a decision necessarily performed in each instance. To put it in Barnes' words: "future use of our conventions of classification is underdetermined and indeterminate" (Barnes et al 1996: 54) because "The use of our terms is open-ended; there is no definite class of things to which they already apply, no closed domain of application the boundary of which can presently be discerned" (ibid.: 55). Since the meaning of a term is never fully specified in the present, a term's meaning can never fix all the cases in which the term will be applied. Hence, the finitist theory of meaning stands in contrast with meaning determinism. Meaning determinism holds that the future usage of a term is pre-determined, that is, all the entities to which it can be applied are determined in advance of each act of classification. In contrast, the finitist theory claims that a term's meaning refers to only a finite number of previously accepted and learned instances of terms, so the future usage of a term is indeterminate.

From all of the above we can discern the important role convention plays in the finitist understanding of classification. Judgements on the validity of a particular analogy or similarity are checked against those of other people, hence the suitability of category application is checked against the judgements of others. In other words, the meaning of a word is nothing else but the pattern of its use and its definition is a continuous process. It follows that decisions about classification are social, for they are the outcome of a negotiation concerning collective usage rather than the result of individual cognitive processes. Hence, meaning is a collective achievement and knowledge of a term's meaning refers to a collective agreement concerning its usage. This brings us back to Barnes' notion of
society as a distribution of self-referential collective knowledge. As we saw in the previous section, Barnes argues that, by guiding the actions of the members of the collective, knowledge categories perform the social reality they purport to symbolise, thus validating themselves in a self-fulfilling manner.

In this section I have presented the idea that the maintenance and reproduction of society is sustained by making collective decisions about how to fit novel objects and events into pre-existing frameworks and that classification systems have a self-referential component. Having now established that finitism is the correct view concerning classificatory terms, we can infer that competence in using knowledge is also self-referential, since knowledge is constituted and reconstituted through its transmission and reproduction. In other words, by collectively believing certain social categories we create them. For instance, money is money because we collectively believe it to be money; we behave according to our belief and others do so too. It follows that both knowledge and its transmission have a performative significance because to acquire or to forget knowledge directly affects what is taken to be "proper" knowledge within a given society. Given the role of knowledge in sustaining social institutions, knowledge and its transmission through language are monitored by mutual sanctioning and social control. The next section will expand on the set of mechanisms that regulate concept application.

2.1.1.4 Normativity and collective action

As we have just seen, the performative model of social institutions rests on meaning finitism, that is, on the understanding of knowledge as conventional and concept application as "the contingent linguistic activity of those using the concepts" (Barnes 1984: 206). The contingency of classification begs the question of the stability of meaning. To put it differently, if classification is contingent, what constrains and determines this contingent social process of classification? That is, how can there be routine given meaning finitism? Moreover, how is conceptual order maintained in the encounter with new objects that do not fit neatly in the existing categories? In this section I aim to answer these questions by elucidating the mechanisms that govern and constrain concept application as an institutionalised activity.

Normativity and the routine application of knowledge

Meaning finitism might pose the following problem: if classification is a contingent process, how come that most classification goes routinely. In order to account for the stability and persistence of the routine application of knowledge categories, Barnes borrows Garfinkel's concept of reflexivity. To Garfinkel (1967), reflexivity plays an essential role in the routine application of knowledge.

3 Some debates about meaning finitism have revolved around interpretations of Wittgenstein on following the rules (see Bloor 1997b, Kripke 1982, Wright 1984, 1986).
Garfinkel treats routine social action as a creative collective\(^4\) accomplishment that involves individuals monitoring and reflecting on others' accounts of such knowledge and on the way they apply it. Individuals learn these accounts and refer to them when accounting for their own activities themselves, thus reproducing the social/cognitive order in a reflexive process.

The notion of reflexivity is crucial in explaining the establishing of routine social action and the endurance of normative standards of concept application and calculative action. To Barnes, agents calculate their actions in accordance to their knowledge, itself deriving from observed normal practice. Since agents calculate collective actions, e.g. concept application, in conformance to normal practice or routine, by means of their routine actions agents not only reconstitute the routinised system, they also self-validate it as valid knowledge. Hence, the consensual knowledge on the basis of which agents calculate their actions is itself the product of a circular process: that of individuals' monitoring others' accounts of such knowledge as well as the way they apply it. To summarise, the routinised system is based on conventional knowledge that individuals learn and reproduce by accounting for their own actions in accordance to it in a reflexive process. Therefore, Barnes claims routine social action as the product of a socially ordered and permanently active self-fulfilling prophecy.

The consensus generated by a number of interacting rule followers produces normative standards which are necessary to sustain knowledge. These normative standards are a distribution of self-referential knowledge: "A member's knowledge of the normative order is knowledge of what members generally know" (Barnes 1988: 56). That is to say, knowledge is validated by its dissemination: to know what counts as a "proper" or "normal" action in a certain community encourages its performance. Hence, normative standards are reflexively defined and sustained by the calculative actions of the members of the collective and maintained by the collective monitoring of individual tendencies that takes place in social interaction. Hence, in meaning finitism the stability of knowledge categories is not created by meaning but through sanctioning and social interaction.

The routinised system is generally perceived to be objective and external to the individual. In spite of its apparent solidity, however, routine rests on classificatory categories whose "meaning is always indeterminate, so the collective work involved in monitoring concept application is never completed" (Bloor 1996: 852). Therefore, the intelligibility and stability of the social order depends on constant monitoring by the members of the collective. The common interest tends to preserve the linguistic and cognitive order because shared activities depend on it. Participation in the normative order rewards each individuals' conformity, since they can expect high levels of conformity in other individuals, thus increasing their predictability and safeguarding the advantages of conformist calculative action.

\(^4\) A collective action is "any action taken by a group... in pursuit of members' perceived shared interests" (Marshall 1994: 64).
Sanctioning and deviance

As an important collective good, the normative order is also protected by a sanctioning system aiming to ensure conformity and maintain order. Sanctions sustain a given society's knowledge and, hence, ensure the continuation of culture through the standardisation of action and cognition. As we saw in the previous section, language contains a particular theory of reality that organises cognition and predisposes us to classify information into pre-existing categories of thought. Since "that which aligns cognition also aligns action" (Barnes 1988: 193, n. 10), the linguistic routines and norms involved in classification play an important role in ensuring conformity via our dispositional beliefs. Dispositional beliefs are those that inform our actions albeit in an unconscious fashion. Hence, our cultural categories shape our beliefs and predispose us to act in compliance with them, thus reinforcing the routinised system. It follows that mutual sanctioning is self-referential for it implements a normative order defined on the basis of observed cultural standards.

Mutual sanctioning monitors individual's actions and their application of knowledge categories. For instance, a child will be trained to differentiate between the categories of "cat" and "dog" and instructed to make the right classification at all times. The child's application of knowledge categories will be monitored by educators and parents until the child can be trusted to make the right classification. Wrong applications will be corrected and right applications will be rewarded. Similarly, adults' actions and application of knowledge categories are under collective scrutiny and approval or disapproval, punishments and rewards will be awarded according to the degree to which they conform to the normative order.

Because humans need acceptance and recognition from other persons to achieve psychological balance, individuals need some sort of social interaction and participation in collective action. Hence, the relationship individual/society not only develops at the level of knowledge, cognition and collective action, but also through transforming that which is known into "a possible focus for attitudes and evaluations, passions and emotions" (ibid.: 155). In other words, there is an emotional bond between individual and society that, according to Barnes, has some as yet unexplored implications for our understanding of the limits of society's power and its distribution. Therefore, though Barnes considers that mutual sanctioning for the collective good is sufficient explanation for the individuals' acceptance of personal losses, such as restrictions in self-presentation, for the sake of maintaining social stability, he does not preclude alternative or supplementary explanations involving emotions. I will come back to the question of emotion as instrumental in sanctioning in Section 2.2.4.3. on Constraint and sanctioning.

Since the intelligibility of the social order is a collective achievement, its modification must also be achieved by mutual agreement. But although the normative order can be threatened to concerted deviance, routine action and interaction are very difficult to alter, for they carry the weight of a tradition and a long developmental history. Routine is maintained both by the groups interested in maintaining the status quo, and by those groups that want to disrupt it. Any attempt to disrupt an
established order of meaning must make use of categories intelligible to the users of the categories opposed, thus almost inevitably reinforcing such categories. Disruptions are like "staged performances set against a continuing backdrop of routine" (ibid.: 185-6, n. 40), for they are illustrations, showpieces of a potential change that must be represented in the "old" routine meaning categories in order to be communicated at all.

Within the framework of meaning finitism rule following is regarded as collectivist, for it understands rules as social institutions and rule following as participation in these social institutions.

2.1.1.5 Power

In the performative model of social institutions, power is a distribution of knowledge. That is, power is considered as residing in the social context and in the individuals as members of the collective. This is so because individuals act on knowledge which is partly constituted through their actions. Since individuals take part in the configuration of knowledge, individuals take part in the constitution of society. Hence, individuals exercise power through their actions, their learning and their knowledge application. However, knowledge categories constrain the agent's actions by constituting his/her understanding of reality. For instance, an agent who partakes in the knowledge of the category 'tax' as that which 'must be paid', would not think of evading taxes.5

Given that knowledge categories constrain the agent, power fixes the subject's capacity for action through the definition of knowledge categories, including that of "power" itself. For instance, an agent who has a notion of power as some mystic unattainable force exclusively owned by some elite group other than the agent, would not think of him/herself as possessing the ability to act socially in a meaningful and consequential way. Thus, power is an aspect of the distribution of knowledge that embeds our routines and organised actions, and, at the same time, it is based on these routines and actions. Power can be defined then as the capacity for action that a set of interacting individuals possess due to their carrying and constituting knowledge. In Barnes' words: "power is the added capacity for action that accrues to individuals through their constituting a distribution of knowledge and thereby a society" (Barnes 1988: 57).

Because social power is constituted as a distribution of knowledge that involves many people, power as a phenomenon is perceived by social actors as being external to themselves. Thus, in spite of the fact that individuals' actions collectively constitute the routinised power system, the

5 Within the framework of meaning finitism rule following is regarded as collectivist, for it understands rules as social institutions and rule following as participation in these social institutions. Hence, the individual is not automatically guided by an interiorised norm with a fixed meaning, but rather aligns her/his behaviour to a norm which has been collectively defined. Because the meaning of the rule is not fixed, there is step of application of the norm which involves a judgement on the part of the individual who decides on the relevance of the rule in question in a given situation. Hence, rules and meanings do not possess any agency in themselves, all agency and action associated with rules derives from the collective.
system of power can appear to individuals as having the "solidity and externality of a material psychical object" (ibid.: 42). As spelled out in the previous section, Barnes explains the apparent solidity of the social routine as an effect derived from the routinisation of the power system. When a system of power becomes routinised, the individuals lose sight of their input in the constitution of the power system. As a consequence, the members of the collective get to perceive only one of the sides of their relation with power: that of them behaving according to the social rules and norms.

As a consequence of the above, an individual observing the system's operation supposes that the normative apparatus or social structure has an existence of its own that forces its power on the members of the collective. However, social power is, in fact, sustained by individuals' actions exactly in the same way as rules are. For, although society gives us the impression that rules have an independent reality which yields them their power and which is set over against the individual rule follower, in fact, we are "only compelled by rules in so far as we, collectively, compel one another" (Bloor 1997b: 33). Therefore, the members of the collective are, in fact, actively constituting the structure they experience as external by aligning their actions to fit its laws.

The concentration of power in the hands of elites contributes to the false impression of power as a structure external to individuals. In Barnes' view, power does not lie in the possessor itself for, though there are powerful agents who can influence social action, the power they hold resides in the social context. In principle, all society members have power over their actions, for they are acting on knowledge which is partly constituted by their actions. As action becomes routinised, individuals cease to exercise this power and discretion over the direction of actions in society becomes concentrated in the hands of a few (Barnes 1988: 58). These few individuals form a powerful elite which derives its dominance from the concentration of power and the distribution of knowledge. Because power is almost totally based on routines and organised actions, to possess power is equivalent to holding discretion in the use and organisation of routines. Hence, the elite derives its social power from its capacity to direct social routines. For instance, a university professor has discretion over the diffusion of knowledge because s/he holds the power to choose the contents of a particular university course in contrast to students, who cannot implement their preferences. However, in spite of the concentration of power in the hands of any group or elite, it is never possible for this elite to hold all the discretion of the use of power, for even those individuals in the lowest layer of authority retain a measure of discretion over their routine actions. This discretion also resides in knowledge, since power is also about knowing who are the powerful. This is so because by knowing who holds power and acting in consequence we create those who are powerful.

The dispositional model of power and the structure/action debate

We are by now familiar with the concept of social institutions as systems of actions and beliefs as well as with the idea of power as social, since power is, by definition, what is known to be by the members of the collective. Since any distribution of power is limited by people's collective
capacity for grasping and representing the distribution of power, how people collectively use their capacities for knowing is what shapes the distribution of power. Because power is knowledge distributed over many power-holders that interact with one another, the importance of joint beliefs is paramount. In Barnes' model, at the core of power are joint and dispositional beliefs. Not only does any social institution, such as authority, depend on joint beliefs; its reproduction also depends on the dispositional beliefs that impels us to act in accordance with a particular distribution of knowledge, and thus to validate it.

Barnes's dispositional model of power makes an important contribution to the structure/action debate between methodological individualism and methodological holism. This debate revolves around the social agent's capability for action. Methodological individualism tries to understand the workings of a group by looking at individual actors. It conceives power as an external relation between laws, rules and the individual, and it is concerned with individual choice. Methodological individualism regards the individual as the source of power and it stresses the individual's freedom, hence it conceives the individual's actions as undetermined by the collective. On the other hand, methodological holism regards society as purposive organism and conceives the individual's actions as determined by social structure, that is, as a function of a social apparatus that has a purpose beyond that of the individual6.

Taking the debate on the structure/action in those somewhat simplified terms introduced above, one might look at Barnes's model as transcending the dichotomy structure/agency underlying these two methodologies in so far as Barnes conceives of individuals' actions as both being shaped by the power system and constituting it. Since Barnes understands society as a distribution of knowledge, he does not distinguish between culture, or social knowledge, and social structure. In Barnes's model, the members of the collective are not conceived of as being determined by social structure, as in methodological holism, nor as being in total control of their own actions. To Barnes, individuals are being shaped by social structure through their dispositional beliefs but they retain a certain discretion of power, for change in their routine actions can affect social structure. In general social actors are unaware of partaking in the constitution of power, although, they do partake in it by aligning their actions with the norms. This is so because, as a result of aligning their actions with the norms, agents confirm the structure on which they have, in the first instance, relied to calculate and decide their behaviour. Therefore, social actors behave in accordance with norms that their own actions help to constitute in the manner of a self-fulfilling prophecy. It follows that structure is the result of bootstrapped inferences made by the members of the collective.

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6 I fully realise that there is a considerable amount of literature on the structure/action debate. For the purposes of this thesis a simplified model of the distinction will suffice.
Summary

According to the performative theory, society is a distribution of knowledge that behaves like a gigantic self-fulfilling prophecy. Social knowledge is encoded and transmitted through language and sustained by joint and dispositional beliefs that shape cognition and action. By calculating their actions in accordance with consensual knowledge, the members of the collective perform social reality in agreement with this consensus, thus validating it.

The main characteristics of social institutions in the performative model are: conventionality, self-referentiality and self-validation of knowledge, meaning finitism and reflexivity. Social institutions are collective goods because the possibility of collective action depends on their existence. As collective goods, it is in the best interest of the members of the collective to participate in mutual sanctioning for their preservation. For this reason, the linguistic routines and norms involved in classification are institutions sustained by an apparatus of control.

2.1.2 THE THEORY OF FOLK PSYCHOLOGY AND ARTIFICIAL KINDS

In this section I will introduce the Theory of Artificial Kinds and Folk Psychology as developed by Martin Kusch. Folk Psychology as defined by Kusch is "the knowledge we use in everyday life to make sense of one another and ourselves, and to co-ordinate our actions with those of others" (Kusch 1997: 1). Kusch's work is a particular application of the performative theory of social institutions to certain aspects of psychology. I have divided my exposition into seven parts: the philosophical context of Kusch's arguments, folk psychology as social institution, folk psychological debate revisited, theory of kinds, theory of kinds and folk psychology, T-talk, and a summary.

2.1.2.1 Philosophical Context

In order to understand Kusch's work I need to introduce its context: the contemporary debate over folk psychology, which, in his opinion, is conducted on individualistic premises. The central question in this debate is how we ascribe beliefs, motivations, and so on, to others. The two dominant explanations are known as the theory theory and the simulation theory. In the former, our folk psychological ability is construed as due to the possession of a theory which we cite when we try to make sense of our own and of others' actions and mental states.

The starting point of the theory theory is the notion of observational and theoretical terms. Observational terms are those that refer to actions or events that can be observed. Theoretical terms are new terms introduced and defined by theories. These terms arise by specifying causal roles and only have meaning through the theory. Theoretical terms are explanations postulated to clarify the cause of certain observables, but that are not observable themselves. For instance, in psychoanalysis the observational entities would be people with mental problems, such as obsessions, manias, and so on; the theoretical entities are ego, superego, id, libido, and so on, which are unobservable themselves.
The fundamental theoretical terms of folk psychology are concepts of belief, action and desire; these concepts are linked by laws or platitudes. The concepts of belief, action and desire are very important because they are widely used, since we explain someone's actions by attributing desires and beliefs to them. For example, if we see someone running away from an angry dog we explain the subject's action by attributing to her a desire to keep away from the dog and the belief that by running she can keep away from the dog. In our example, the platitude that links the desire to escape and the belief that escape is possible is "people who are afraid of dogs run". Hence, the theory theory holds that folk psychology is a theory, that is, a set of principles that we use when trying to understand and predict our actions and those of others. Thus, in the theory theory our folk psychological abilities involve the use of a causal psychological theory with empirical-descriptive platitudes. Some theorists also consider folk psychological platitudes as normative, in so far as its application involves calculating what agents ought to do, and abstract, in so far as the notion of desires and beliefs that we employ in our attributions are theoretical entities.

Unlike the theory theory, the simulation theory does not hold that our folk psychological abilities involve invoking laws or platitudes, since, according to the simulation theory, we understand through a sort of mental replay. The simulation theory holds that we understand other's behaviour by simulating it in our imagination. According to the simulation theory, we are able to predict how we would act in a particular situation by pretending we are in such situation. We are able to do so because of practical reasoning, that is, "the product of reasoning that leads us to do something" (Kusch 1999: 300). Practical reasoning acts like a sort of bridge that allows us to predict how we would act in a particular situation by pretending we are in that situation. To understand others' behaviour we take ourselves as models, that is, we simulate the other person's context and, by resorting to our stock of earlier experiences, we are able to understand another's feelings. In other words, we run a "first-person simulation" (ibid.: 300) on ourselves, we decide what we would do, and then we assume that the other person would act in the same way. In the simulation theory, folk psychological platitudes are thought to be analytic, that is, defining the meaning of the terms used. For instance, a platitude such as 'the feeling of success brings pride' is thought to be a sentence defining the idea of 'feeling of success' and 'pride'.

According to Kusch, the theoretical positions presented above rest on individualistic intuitions regarding the privileged nature of first-person access to knowledge and the idea of radical self-creation. Kusch holds that, both the theory theory and the simulation theory, share some individualistic axioms. The whole debate revolves around two main questions: how an individual folk psychologist attributes mental states to another person, and how the individual expresses his/her own

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7 For a complete account of the different versions of the theory theory, see Kusch 1999: 282-299.
8 This is the position of Daniel Dennett (1991), (see Kusch 1999: 297).
9 Again, for an expanded account of the simulation theory and its different versions, see Kusch 1999: 299-302.
mental states in folk psychological terms. With regards to the first question, the debate is concerned with how the folk psychologist makes sense of another person's actions but it is not concerned with how the person being interpreted explains him-herself to the folk psychologist. Thus, the focus of the debate rests on the assumption that the individual possesses knowledge; it ignores the relation between the individual knower and other knowers, and their interaction. The second concern of the theorists participating in the debate over folk psychology, that is, the individual's expression of mental states in folk psychological terms, is also set in a clearly individualistic scenario.

According to Kusch, these theorists are individualists in so far as they regard folk psychology as precondition of social life and do not consider social life as constitutive of knowledge and the individual, as collectivists do. Moreover, the individualists' assumption of the individual as possessing knowledge rests on the idea that human beings share structures that fix the contents of the mind. In this sense, individualism is related to universalism, for it assumes the existence of universal structures and neglects the role of social factors in shaping the mind. This position disregards historical and cultural variation in folk psychological knowledge.

2.1.2.2 Folk psychology as social institution

Having introduced the contemporary debate over folk psychology, I shall now proceed to present Kusch's thesis. Kusch's collectivistic view of folk psychology is developed in a twofold argument: that folk psychology is a social institution; and that individualistic intuitions are products of folk psychology. In order to support the first argument, that is, the understanding of folk psychology as a social institution, Kusch takes as starting point the characterisation of social institutions in the performative model. Then, proceeds to show that folk psychology is self-referential, conventional, and that it functions as a collective good. This section is divided in three subsections each dealing with the arguments to show the characteristics of social institutions as relevant to folk psychology: its self-referential structure, its conventionality, and its nature of collective good.

**Self-referential structure**

Since social institutions are self-referring systems of beliefs and actions" (ibid.: 322), Kusch aims to show that folk psychology also involves self-referential structures. To present folk psychology's collective self-referentiality, Kusch develops his argument in four steps.

1. **Folk psychology, language, laws:** The mastery of folk psychology involves the mastery of a language. Folk Psychology is a set of attributive, explanatory and predictive practices, as well as the notions or concepts used in those practices, such as "belief", "desire" or "fear". To master folk psychology is equivalent to mastering a language, in so far as it involves the mastery of folk psychological concepts or categories into which individuals are classified, and the ability to form and understand sentences that use the folk psychological categories, such as "Rita is jealous". The ability to form sentences also involves the mastery of a "grammar", that is, the knowledge of regular
associations, or laws, between the conventional classes. Such linguistic capability presupposes an ability to classify individuals into conventional similarity classes, and to grasp the regular associations, that is laws, between the individuals that are categorised.

As with other kinds of knowledge, classification into the categories defined by folk psychology is effected through judgements of similarity which are themselves referring to earlier applications of the categories. Folk psychological knowledge is, then, finitist, and revisable. Knowledge of the folk psychological laws is necessary in order to justify the application of learnt predicates in new contexts. For instance, our friend Celia is distracted and spends a lot of time thinking of somebody. Because we know of the platitude that says: "when one is in love, one constantly thinks of the person who is the object of love", we can apply it to our friend's behaviour and conclude that "Celia is in love". We can justify our application of the predicate because we know the law and we believe we are applying it faithfully. Hence, in order to justify a predicate we refer to the shared knowledge contained in laws and platitudes. For instance, a predicate such as "Celia is in love" can be justified by referring to the platitude that says "those who are in love spend all day thinking of the loved one". Thus, I can justify my predicate by saying " Celia is in love with Miguel because she spends all day thinking of him".

2. Platitudes, rationality, normativity: Folk psychology laws and platitudes have an important normative dimension and, thus, they function as standards of rationality. We expect people 'ought' to behave according to folk psychology platitudes and any deviance is considered irrational. For example, not eating without good reason when one is hungry violates the platitude that "those who are hungry seek to eat", therefore, in the absence of a good reason, the person refusing to drink is considered "irrational". Hence, we feel that the hungry person 'ought' to act in a certain manner; we feel that the hungry person is 'obliged' to eat. Thus, folk psychological platitudes have a normative dimension that concerns our evaluations and predictions of others' behaviour, but they have another normative function that concerns our own behaviour as interpreters. So, folk psychological platitudes have a second normative aspect, since we as interpreters are also expected to act and justify our actions in accordance to folk psychological laws. There is yet a third normative aspect to folk psychological laws "in so far as it specifies that how a folk-psychological hypothesis about someone's mental states ought to be supported by various types of evidence" (ibid.: 324). Since we disclose our interpretations in front of other interpreters, our own interpretations are themselves subjected to the judgement of those interpreters. Our listeners can challenge our hypothesis by resorting to folk-psychological platitudes as evidence against us.

The last two normative dimensions of folk psychology reveal an hitherto neglected aspect of the application of the folk psychological laws. These dimensions of normativity relate the folk-psychological interpreter to other interpreters, thus revealing the folk-psychological interpreter as part of a community of interpreters that share institutions, laws and standards.
3. Normativity, rationality and social institutions: "Obligation" and "ought" belong to the realm of the social, for they presuppose the existence of social institutions and their meaning cannot be reduced to non-social i.e. biological or psychological terms. As we saw in Section 2.3.3.3 on Meaning finitism, in order for an individual to decide the application of a particular concept, there must be an independent standard against which the validity of the concept application is judged. This independent standard is established by collective consensus; the individual actions and beliefs are measured against this standard and judged to be 'right' or 'wrong', 'rational' or 'irrational', and so on. Hence, obligations are self-referential in so far as they are nothing but what we collectively agree to be obligations, that is, they are what we collectively take them to be. Thus, obligations are social institutions.

4. Drawing the conclusion: Kusch summarises the argument by pointing its four premises: 1. "mastery of folk psychology involves mastery of a language; 2. the mastery of a language involves knowledge of platitudes; 3. folk-psychological platitudes have several normative dimensions: they define how one ought to act; 4. 'oughts' [sic] are what we collectively take to be oughts; that is, 'oughts' are self-referential" (ibid.: 326). From this Kusch concludes folk psychology is a "social institution in so far as it essentially involves a self-referential and, by implication, self-validating component; because it is permeated by normative concepts (such as 'ought' or 'rational'), it too is characterised by self-referentiality" (ibid.: 326).

Collective good

Because folk psychology defines the standards of rationality it is the most important social institution and the most significant collective good that there is. In Kusch's words it is the "bedrock" social institution (ibid.: 327), for it forms the basis for all other social institutions. Since we constantly explain our own actions and those of others using folk psychological platitudes, folk psychology creates the conditions for achieving the levels of co-ordination and predictability necessary for social action. According to Kusch "folk psychology creates (moderately) predictable humans " (ibid.: 327).

The importance of folk psychology as a collective good is revealed in the collective efforts invested in protecting it. These efforts include, for example, presenting ourselves in conformance to folk psychological platitudes, or interpreting others' actions in terms of folk categories. When we come across data that does not fit the folk-psychological laws we do not doubt the accuracy of the

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10 Here I will not provide a separate argument for this point since, as Kusch points out (Kusch 1999: 325), the link between obligations and social institutions, originally made by Hume, has been defended by several authors, including Bloor 1997b.

11 The use of the concept of obligation in this argument raises the question of the relation between folk psychology and folk morality. Kusch does not establish a correspondence between folk psychology and folk morality, though he believes their workings are alike: "The moral quality of an action relates to the moral code in the same way that the rational quality of an action (or belief, or desire) relates to the platitudes of folk psychology. The moral code defines what it is to be moral, and act morally, and folk psychology defines what it is to be rational, and act rationally" (Kusch 1997: 10-11).
laws. For instance, if a thirsty individual refuses to drink, we search for further data that can explain the action, such as the water being dirty, or we dismiss the action as irrational. Kusch establishes an analogy between folk psychology and a paradigmatic theory in Kuhnian normal science in the sense that in both cases what is being tested is not the theory but the scientists' proficiency in applying it (ibid.: 328). In the case of folk psychology, what is being tested is the ability of a particular individual to explain his/her actions in terms of folk-psychological platitudes and, thus, to show, the truth of the theory and its success as an explanation.

Because of its crucial role in society, folk psychology is the most highly protected social institution. Folk psychology is protected by a strong sanctioning system that monitors individuals' conformance to folk psychology platitudes. Non-compliance invites disapproval, rejection or psychiatric treatment. As a collective good, folk psychology cannot be avoided because it is not possible to formulate our thoughts without making use of it. Since, our talk is shaped by folk psychology, we constantly re-establish its effectiveness for everyone. This circumstance does not imply that folk psychological knowledge is not finitist and revisable, although its diachronic changes are small. This is due to two reasons: because we all participate in protecting it - as the primary social institution on which all others are based, it is in everybody's interest to sustain folk psychology; and because we apply it routinely most of the time.

**Conventionality**

Kusch resorts to anthropological evidence in order to give further support to the understanding of folk psychology as a social institution. The first source of evidence cited by Kusch is the research into 'indigenous psychologies'. 'Indigenous psychologies' is defined by one of its contributors as 'the cultural views, theories, conjectures, classifications, assumptions and metaphors - together with the notions embedded in social institutions - which bear on psychological topics' (Heelas cited in Kusch 1999: 331). This research is conducted by anthropologists and social psychologists and it is mainly focussed on the notions of self, mind and the person. The data gathered in such studies reports variation in these concepts such as, for instance, the lack of conceptual distinction between 'thoughts' and 'feelings' in the Chewong, or the concept of the self as a passenger rather than the driver of the body of the Maoris (see Kusch 1999: 332).

Another source of empirical data referred by Kusch is cultural psychology. Cultural psychology is anthropological work that inquires on the influence of culture on human psychology, and on the folk models of the mind. Such research has, for instance, revealed differences concerning the notion of the person. Cultural psychologists have differentiated between the Western individualistic _egocentric_ and the non-western _sociocentric_ conceptions of the person. Whereas the

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12 It must be kept in mind that in a general theory of conventionality, 'conventions' are defined as accepted social standards established artificially. In the performative theory of social institutions the definition of conventionality is richer in the sense that it involves the self-referentiality of belief.
Western egocentric notion conceives the person as bounded whole distinct from other persons; an autonomous unit, the non-western sociocentric conceives it as being defined through their relation to others. A third source cited by Kusch is that of cross-cultural psychology. The research conducted by cross-cultural psychologists offers data on folk-psychological categorisations of emotions that illustrate variations in the number of terms to categorise emotions in different languages; as well as differences concerning the meaning of the term 'emotion', or lack of correspondence between terms used to designate emotions. There are also reported differences concerning the existence of the notion of 'belief' in certain cultures, such as the Nuer (see Kusch 1999: 344), and changes on the meaning of the Western concept of belief evident in the term's etymology.

Kusch argues that there are enough significant differences between the ways in which cultures think of emotions or personhood to conclude that: folk psychological knowledge and their notions of belief, self, the mind, the person, and so on, are not universal, for they vary culturally and historically (ibid.: 337).

2.1.2.3 The folk psychology debate revisited

Having presented Kusch arguments for considering folk psychology as a social institution, in this section I will explain in what way his position will resolve some of the questions in the debate over the nature of folk psychological platitudes. In Kusch’s view, if folk psychology is a social institution, then the different theories about folk psychology are partly right. In this section I will only focus on the issue of the nature of folk psychological platitudes because it concerns my Butlerian reconstruction. For explanations concerning other debated issues, please refer to Kusch 1999: 347.

Kusch argues that his stance allows us to overcome the perceived need to discriminate between folk psychological platitudes as true or false with respect to an independent reality, normative, analytic or descriptive-explanatory. Kusch offers as example the institution of promising. For instance, the platitude ‘promises are to be kept’ is both analytic in certain contexts and descriptive-explanatory in others, while it can also be normative. The platitude is analytic in so far as it can be used to define the meaning of ‘promise’ since it presents one of the characteristics of the term. The platitude also has a normative dimension in so far as sentences such as ‘promises are to be kept’ are uttered to remind individuals of their promises, that is, they function as reminders of norms.

The platitude is descriptive-explanatory precisely because of its normative and analytic uses. Since the platitude is collectively reinforced, members of the community comply with it. Given that the members of the community align their acts in accordance to the norm, the platitude becomes a faithful definition of the actions of the members of the community. Hence, the platitude becomes analytic, that is, it presents a definition of the social institution of promising. It also becomes descriptive-explanatory. The platitude ‘promises are to be kept’ is at once descriptive (for it describes the empirical fact that ‘they behave like that...’), and explanatory (for it gives a causal explanation to account for the behaviour of a collective: ‘...because they adhere to this rule they made’).
extent, the platitude becomes true of an external reality independent of the individual that cites the platitude. This is so because a particular individual citing a certain platitude is not responsible for the creation of the social institution of promising, since it is the result of the sum of the actions of a whole collective. Hence, the platitude 'promises are to be kept' can be said to be true to an external reality.

Thus, in Kusch's view, folk psychological platitudes can be regarded as descriptive-explanatory, analytic or normative depending on their use; there is no need to choose between any of these to qualify the platitudes. Having shown folk psychology to be self-referential and therefore self-validating; to consist of knowledge that is collectively sustained, finitist and conventional, and to function as a collective good protected by a sanctioning system, I will continue by presenting the arguments to consider folk psychology as having another of the characteristics of a social institution. Namely, that it involves the creation of artefacts. In order to present Kusch's arguments, I will first introduce the theory of kinds.

2.1.2.4 Theory of kinds

In philosophy of science, a kind is a philosophical concept used to group together things that have shared properties. A kind is a "collection or set of things... The members of each of these have features or properties in common.... that give the sets their unity and make it appropriate to call them 'kinds' " (Guttenplan 1994: 449-450). The sociological conception of kinds was introduced by Barnes and Bloor, and was further elaborated with the addition of the notion of artificial kind by Kusch. I will here deal with three types of kinds: natural, social and artificial. This three-partite distinction is only used by Kusch. Central to the theory of kinds are the concepts of 'alter-reference' and 'self-reference'. To say that a kind term has an alter-reference means that it refers to some reality external to it. To talk about a kind term as being self-referential means that there is a circularity in the definition of what counts as a member of the kind. These notions will become clearer in the process of explaining what are natural, social and artificial kinds.

Natural kinds

Natural kinds are those that refer to things in the world, such as "tiger". There is controversy on the universality of natural kinds, that is, on the relation between natural kind terms and the world. While realists argues that things fall in groups "naturally" and that we merely discover them, nominalists argue that natural kinds are invented - that is, in the world there are just objects that do not fall into groups or structures, therefore their classification is human.

The position of social constructivism and the sociology of scientific knowledge falls into the second group. To the sociologist of knowledge, all kinds (natural, social and artificial) are social institutions. To Barnes, Bloor and Kusch the things that get grouped into a natural kind have an existence independent of that act of classification because natural kind terms do not have an effect on the things that are being classified. In other words, a natural kind term has an "alter-reference" (in the
case of "tiger", the animal itself), therefore, the term is not completely self-referential. But it does have a self-referential component, namely, the criteria we follow for classifying naturally occurring individuals, such as tigers. These criteria consist of the models, paradigms, and prototypes we use to classify the individuals in the world. These models have a self-referential component insofar as nothing is a model for anything in itself; it becomes a model because it is taken collectively taken to be a model or paradigm.

**Social kinds**

The second type of kinds are social kinds. Social kinds differ from natural kinds in that they do not have an alter reference. A social kind is a product of society because the objects so classified cannot exist independent of its classification. In social kinds the reference is created by the talk and the action and, ultimately, it refers to the talk and the action itself. For instance, a social kind, such as "authority", creates the reference to which it refers (the status of a leader) and ultimately the referent is nothing but "authority talk" and "authority-action". For instance, a leader is what we take to be a leader. In social kinds the self-referential component works in a different way than in natural kinds: in social kinds there is no alter-reference, the reference is, so to say, "exhausted" (Ibid.: 352) by the self-reference. This is because social kinds are bearers of social statuses. Even though the bearers of these may have a real physical existence (e.g. a university building) that can be referred to by a natural kind, the point of social kinds is not to refer to real physical things but to their social status, which is fully self-referential. The status is ultimately self-referential in so far as the status is the shared belief that the status exists.

I will now briefly introduce a sort of social institution and social kind that will be particularly relevant for my reconstruction: actions and reasons. First of all we must keep in mind the distinction between actions and behaviours for, when taken collectively, actions, but not behaviours, are social kinds. Actions, such as saying "excuse me" or "bless you" every time one sneezes, are social kinds because they depend on our classifying activities in order to acquire sense. On the contrary, behaviours, such as sneezing, are independent of our classification. Hence, actions have a social status, they exist because they are collectively taken to exist. It follows that actions are social institutions because actions and action-explanations are self-referential, since they exist only insofar as they are talked about and referred to. Actions and reasons are constituted together because to give a reason for action is equivalent to conferring a social status on that action. That is to say, the "rationality" of an action is a social status granted to those agents that can explain their actions in terms of socially accepted motivations. Hence the process through which a reason is considered "rational" is self-referential, for it is based on what is collectively taken to be "rational". As a consequence, there is a performative dimension to understanding action explanations insofar as it involves participating in the collective constitution of a certain explanation as a valid reason.
I will now examine the last type of kind: the artificial kind. An artificial kind stands in between a social and a natural kind. An example of an artificial kind would be "typewriter". An artificial kind term such as "typewriter" is different from a social kind in that it has an alter-reference unlike, say, "authority". There exists a physical object. But it is also different from a natural kind in that its existence is not totally independent from the classifying activity. Kusch argues that the reason for this is that "...the classifying activity is part and parcel of a social process - indeed, a social institution - that essentially involves physical actions bringing the classified individuals into existence. In the case of artificial kinds, human action makes it so that the individuals referred to fit the prototypes, rather than vice versa" (Kusch 1997: 18). Therefore, an artificial kind is a model for a self-referential social process which creates a reality that has a degree of independence from the self-referential social process, and that can exist or persist independent of that self-referential process. For example, an entity such as a Roman temple was created by a social process that no longer persists, but the temple is still there.

2.1.2.5 Theory of kinds and folk psychology. Mental states as artificial kinds

Having now introduced the theory of kinds, I will here examine it in relation to folk psychology. In this section I will present Kusch's arguments for considering certain folk psychological categories as artificial kinds and, thus, showing that folk psychology involves the creation of artefacts and, hence it possesses another characteristic of social institutions.

Kusch treats mental states, as well as some brain states, as social artefacts. In order to articulate this position, Kusch treats folk psychological kinds as artificial kinds. As we saw in the preceding section, the term artificial kind refers to a reality that, to an extent, exists or persists independently of that self-referential process that has created it. Kusch argues that we develop mental states which we have in virtue of social processes, though, in order to persist, mental states do not need the social processes at every step of the way. They can persist independently of the social processes provided they are regularly monitored. Our psychological vocabulary does not merely classify mental states and events that exist independently of that vocabulary. However, our classifications constitute our mental states. To learn the vocabulary of one culture rather than another predisposes us to have certain kinds of mental states over others.

We have seen that, in Kusch's view, natural, social and artificial kinds terms have a self-referential component and, therefore, are social institutions. The members of a natural kind share some properties by nature, whereas those that belong to an artificial kind do not share properties by nature but by human intervention. In natural kinds the prototypes through which we classify are thought to fit the individuals, whereas in the case of artificial kinds action is exerted upon individuals to fit the prototypes. But, within the creation of artificial kinds, there is a difference between the creation of a typewriter and the creation of a state of mind. In the case of the typewriter, the (physical)
activity needed to create the referent is, as it were, "ontologically" separable from the activity of classification. In contrast, when a mother teaches a child the meaning of "seny" and "rauxa" (the Catalan words for two opposed but complimentary states of mind which could be translated as "proper discerning" and "sudden enthusiasm") she is shaping that child's emotional world. By training the child to use the concepts, the mother partially restructures or enriches the emotional life of the child. As Kusch puts it: "The action of creating a new emotion in the child's mental experience, and the action of enabling the child to classify the newly learnt emotion, are intertwined to the point of being indistinguishable" (ibid.: 18).

Kusch stresses however that culture and its folk psychology shapes us psychologically and physically:

we must beware not to fall into the idealistic trap of reducing institutions to being mere beliefs about beliefs: institutions essentially involve action; they involve physical intervention as much as they involve representation. To make up people's minds is not just to give them categories, it is also to exercise their bodies, to restrain, dress, nourish, starve, stimulate, hurt, train, distribute, as well as mutilate their bodies. In other words, cultures and their folk psychologies make up minds by remaking bodies (ibid.: 18-19).

Because folk psychology shapes our brains and affects our cognitive development, some states of the brain can be considered social states of sorts. They are social "because they are real artefacts produced by our culture" (ibid.: 19). We all come equipped with certain biological dispositions or instincts which are the raw material that we start off with. What folk psychology does is to re-structure, re-shape, re-construct and invent new dispositions. These dispositions are artificial things, artificial kinds. The biological is the raw material, the social processes are what actually shapes the artificial kinds; the artificial kinds, that is, our dispositions, can persist even when we are remote from the social. In the case of the creation of the artefactual aspects of human beings the concepts that we use are constitutive of our mental states: learning the emotions, or developing the dispositions, is inseparable from learning the categorisation. Hence, mental states are artificial kinds which persist apart from social processes but are not totally self-referential.

2.1.2.6 'T-talk

As mentioned in the introduction of Section 2.1.2.2, the second point to arise from Kusch's twofold argument for a collectivist interpretation of folk psychology concerns the individualistic intuitions that, in his view, inform individualism. These intuitions are: first person privileged access, as expressed in the sentence 'I can only know my own mind'; and self-creation, that is, the idea that one is what one takes oneself to be and that one can change oneself at will. Kusch aims to show that these intuitions are themselves products of folk psychology. He seeks to explain individualistic intuitions, such as privileged access and self-creation, by discussing one of its central terms: the word T. T is the ultimate indicator of individuality and the key term through which individuals ascribe
ment states to themselves. Kusch considers the term 'I' as self-referring and T-talk as a social institution. Thus, he proposes a collectivist rendering of T-talk and argues that the use of 'I' is a social institution. This position involves several consequences: that T refers to T-talk; that "'I'-talker" is a social status; and that T-talk varies in different societies (ibid.: 360). I will now proceed to introduce each of these points.

According to Kusch, T-talk is self-referential in two ways. In the first place it is self-referential as any social institution. The term T, as any other kind term, has a collectively sustained, self-referential component. Its meaning and the correct or incorrect uses of the term 'I' are collectively defined and constantly negotiated by the members of the collective. Hence, the meaning of 'I' is what we collectively agree to be. Kusch labels this the "collective self-referentiality of the 'I" (ibid.: 360, emphasis of the author). In the second place, T-talk is self-referential at the level of the individual. Individuals make use of T-talk in order to ascribe states and events to themselves. Hence, T statements convey self-ascription. Kusch advocates for considering the T in such statements as referring not "to some mythical entity like a self, or a noumenal ego; it refers to the individual who has the social status of 'I'-talker, a status constituted by the individual's T-talk - as well as confirming 'you-he-she' talk of other T-talkers" (ibid.: 360). Therefore, in T statements the 'I' refers to previous T-talk originated in the same body.

Kusch argues that T-talk is a social status and that the T-talkker has a social role that involves rights, obligations and responsibilities. To be an T-talkker involves rights in so far as the speaker must be a member of the institution. For instance, in previous times, servants were not allowed to refer to themselves using the T. Thus, membership to the institution of T-talk involves the right to consider oneself the centre of beliefs, desires and actions and, thus, as having a will. In this sense, T-talkker is a social status. Moreover, to become a competent user of T-talk also involves to be a competent sanctioner of T-talk, since it requires being able to discriminate between correct and incorrect uses of the term. Finally, T-talk also involves obligation in so far as it denotes the speaker's responsibility for statements or actions.

With respect to the variations of T-talk in different societies, although some form of T-talk is present in all cultures, there also seems to be evidence of substantial variation. Kusch refers to anthropological research that reveals differences between the T-talk of different cultures. These empirical data also shows a correlation between differences in T-talk and differences in folk-psychological concepts of the self (ibid.: 361). This empirical evidence reinforces the notion of T as a folk-psychological term.

Having established T-talk as having the characteristics of a social institution, that is, being self-referential, a social status, and culturally variable, Kusch presents a collectivist rendering of the intuitions of privileged nature of first-person access to knowledge and self-creation that support individualism. To Kusch, individualism in the philosophy of folk psychology overlooks the possibility of these intuitions being self-referential and institutional. As a consequence, individualism has not
considered the possibility of folk psychology being a social institution. Kusch maintains that if the collectivist rendering of folk psychology is right, then it becomes habitual to have individualistic intuitions.

Due to the complexity of the double self-referentiality of the T-talk, folk psychology users have a tendency to misunderstand its workings. According to Kusch the intuition of privileged first-person access ('only I know who I am and can know what goes on in my mind') is fruit of one of such misunderstandings. In 'I' statements the speaker uses a pronoun, the T, that is self-referring - since T refers to T-talk; the T used by the speaker is also and self-validating - since 'I' becomes a referent as a result of its repeated use. Hence, when spoken by the self-ascriber, 'I' statements always have a referent: the utterer. It follows that, since they cannot fail to refer to the self-ascriber, 'I' statements can give listeners the false impression that they are true of the self-ascriber.

Kusch argues that the error in such reasoning "consists in extending the self-reference and self-validation from the logical subject, the T, to the whole T-statement, that is to the logical subject and to the logical predicate" (ibid.: 362). For instance in a sentence such as 'I am happy', the 'I' is self-referential and self-validating, but not the predicate 'am happy'. Thus, the self-referentiality of the 'I' is extended to what it is being said about the T. What a speaker ascribes to him/herself is not as such self-validating unless there is a referent of the predicate that has been previously constituted and maintained by T-talk. In other words, only when there is a referent constituted by previous T-talk the state of being happy can be predicated in a self-referring and self-validating manner. The reference is constituted through collectively defined T-talk. As we saw earlier, Kusch holds that "self-ascription is a social process, and that individual self-reference presupposes collective self-reference" (ibid.: 365). Hence, according to Kusch, the intuition of privileged first-person access is a case of collective self-reference being misconstrued as individual self-reference. Thus, collective self-reference is misconceived as a mighty individual.

In Kusch's view, the intuition of radical self-creation is also fruit of the misinterpretation of T statements. The intuition of radical self-creation holds that "I am whatever I take myself to be, and that I can thus radically change who I am by changing my self-ascriptions" (ibid.: 364). Kusch argues that "the intuition of radical self-creation might be due to a conflation of individual self-referential T-talk with the collectively sustained institution of T-talk (ibid.: 364). According to Kusch, collective self-reference is absolute in the sense that it depends on the self-referring beliefs of the collectivity. In contrast, the use of T-talk by the individual is relative in so far as it depends on the social institution of T-talk; moreover, the collective also regulates the ascriptions that individuals can utter. Kusch's hypothesis is that "because collective self-reference is... misconstrued as the individual writ large it is perhaps not surprising that we feel inclined to take the further step of assimilating our individual, dependent, and relative T-talk to collective, independent, and absolute self-reference" (ibid.: 365).
Kusch's arguments against individualism in the debate over folk psychology are twofold: folk psychology as a social institution; and individualistic intuitions are products of folk psychology. Kusch has shown that folk psychology displays all the characteristics of a social institution in the performative model. The first characteristic is having a self-referring and self-validating structure. Kusch shows how folk psychology involves the mastery of a language with a system of classification, a grammar, and laws. He then shows folk psychological knowledge to be finitist and revisable and its platitudes to have a normative dimension, since they work as standards of rationality and prescribe how we ought to act. Hence, the conclusion is that folk psychology is a social institution involving a self-referential and self-validating component, and also involving obligations and duties.

Kusch also demonstrates through anthropological and historical evidence showing folk psychological knowledge and its notions of belief, self, the mind, the person, and so on to be conventional and historically variable. Folk psychology is also shown to have another of the characteristics of social institutions, namely being a collective good. In Kusch's view, folk psychology is the ultimate collective good because it forms the basis for all other social institutions, by creating the conditions necessary for the predictability of human behaviour and the co-ordination of social action. These conditions are achieved by constant monitoring and sanctioning: if we do not present ourselves in ways that are understandable in folk psychological ways, we face disapproval and penalties. Folk psychological categories are made true not only by collectively believing they are true. They also validate themselves by shaping mental states as artificial kinds. Thus, folk psychological knowledge fulfils another condition for being described as a social institution: involving the creation of artefacts. In Kusch's words, "folk psychology creates (moderately) predictable humans; indeed it creates - and continuously recreates - the very individuals whose beliefs and actions sustain forms of life" (ibid.: 327).

With regards to the second line of argument to weaken individualism, Kusch establishes T-talk as a social institution, that is, as being self-referential, a social status, and culturally variable. Then he argues for a collectivist rendering of the individualist intuitions of privileged nature of first-person access to knowledge and self-creation. Kusch weakens these intuitions by showing that, if the performative interpretation of folk psychology is true, then the intuitions can be understood as misconstructions of the double self-referentiality of T-talk. In this way, Kusch undermines the view of the T' as prior to the social, hence, the intuitions supporting the individualist rendering of folk psychological knowledge.

Having so far introduced the two theories that constitute the interpretative framework - the performative model of social institutions and the theory of folk psychology and artificial kinds - I shall now proceed to reconstruct Butler's thought.
2.2 A SOCIOLOGICAL RECONSTRUCTION OF BUTLER’S THEORIES

The aim of this section is to provide a "rational reconstruction" of Butler's thought using the interpretative framework laid out in the previous Section 2.1 on The Performative Theory of Social Institutions and the theory of Folk Psychology and Artificial Kinds. In undertaking a rational reconstruction of Butler's thought I do not aim to be faithful to her thinking but to construct a coherent theory that explains the phenomena she addresses. In my reconstruction I want to suggest that the HM is a social institution in the sense described by the Performative Theory of Social Institutions. In doing so I will assume that the HM is a folk theory.

My argument develops as follows: in order to show that HM is a social institution as defined by the performative model, I liken it to a folk theory. In order to justify this claim it must be shown that the HM behaves like a folk theory, that is, that it behaves like a language, that it has a self-referring and self-validating structure, that it is normative, that it functions as a collective good, that it is (entirely or in part) conventional, that its knowledge is finitist and revisable, and that it involves the creation of artefacts. If this turns out to be the case, then it can be concluded that the HM is a social institution. In the sections that follow this argument, I aim to account for the different elements of Butler's performative theory of gender by reconstructing them through the notions laid out in the interpretative framework. For instance, I will attempt to explicate the notion of citationality as meaning finitism and account for the notions of performativity and "performance", constraint and sanctioning within the framework of finitism; I will try to elucidate Butler's position on agency, the subject and the 1st/3rd person perspective through Kusch's ideas on T-talk; I will interpret resistance in terms of meaning indeterminism and the interactional analysis of gender; and, finally, I will reconstruct the category of "sex" using the notion of artificial kind.

There is a certain overlap between the different sections of this reconstruction. This is unavoidable to the extent that, although compartmentalised in sections for purposes of clarity, the arguments presented are interrelated and dependent on each other. I will now examine the first claim: that the HM behaves like a folk theory, hence, like a language.

2.2.1 THE HM AS FOLK THEORY AND SOCIAL INSTITUTION

In this section I want to suggest that the HM is a social institution. In doing so I will assume that the HM is a folk theory. To justify this assumption I need to show that the HM has a similar structure to language in the sense that it is self-referential. I will then proceed to consider possible objections to my arguments with regards to the question of beliefs and actions, and the relation between obligation and morality. Finally, I will present a summary and conclusions.
2.2.1.1 The HM as self-referential

In this subsection I aim to show that the HM (like Folk Psychology) fulfils the first criterion of a social institution: it has a circular and self-referential structure. The argument here follows, in a slightly modified form, Kusch's demonstration that folk psychology is self-referential, as summarised in Section 2.1.2.2 above.

1. The first step consists of the need to bear in mind that the HM, like folk psychology, involves the mastery of a language. As Kusch has shown, Folk Psychology is a set of attributive, explanatory and predictive practices, as well as the notions or concepts used in those practices. It must be kept in mind that, within the framework of the Performative model of social institutions, every society is a distribution of knowledge that contains a particular way of making sense of the world. A society's knowledge is a particular theory of reality which is inherent in language and gets transmitted through it. Therefore, to master a language is equivalent to possessing the knowledge contained in this language. It follows that language constitutes a theory, for it contains, according to Kusch, a certain way of understanding reality that shapes the cognitive process. Thus, to master a certain language is the same as to possess a restricted cognition of reality, a theory.13

I want to argue that the HM can likewise be considered a folk theory of sorts because it too functions like a language. The Matrix is a theory that shapes our cognition in accordance with the restrictions of a given society. The contents of this theory involve knowledge about sexual behaviour, biology, sexuality, gender, and so on. The HM distributes individuals into conventional similarity classes (male/female, boys, girls, adolescents, deviants, etc.) and organises knowledge according to a set of platitudes that express regular associations, that is laws, between the individuals falling into such classes. To master the language of the Matrix involves knowledge of a number of knowledge categories and laws. It also entails the ability to form sentences like "Celia is a female", "Celia is in love", "Celia feels like a woman". A central law of the HM is: "the natural direction of desire is heterosexual" or "men are by nature attracted to women and vice versa". This law constitutes the expression of HM's compulsory heterosexuality.

To summarise, the HM functions as a language that organises knowledge in categories and laws. Hence, the Matrix has the structure of a sort of "folk sexological" theory that we use in order to make sense of the world and ourselves. As a theory, it is formed by concepts (observational and theoretical terms) and by platitudes. The theoretical terms "sex" and "gender" are central categories to the Matrix and compulsory heterosexuality is its central law. "Sex" and "gender" are self-referential theoretical entities produced by the HM by arbitrarily grouping of a set physical and behavioural attributes. These particular arrangements are "gender" categories ("women", "men") which are

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13 Incidentally, Butler's views on theory are close to those of Barnes in so far as she suggests that theory is always political and denies the possibility for disengaged theory (IM 1991). Butler's position might be explicated in terms of the view that, since theory always carries a certain notion of reality, there is a performative dimension to it. I will come back to this point in Section 2.2.4.2 on Performativity and Performance, and in Section 2.2.5.3 on Underdetermination and Resistance.
subsequently presented as "natural" substances. The concealment of the arbitrariness and the circularity underlying the definition of the Matrix's categories sustains the fiction of "gender" as a natural and stable set of phenomena caused by "sex". This strategy opens up the possibility of generating binary gender categories at the service of reproduction.

2. The second step of my argument aims to show that the HM platitudes function like standards of acceptable identities. As we have seen, folk psychological platitudes function like standards of rationality. Behaviour that contravenes with the folk psychological platitudes without a good justification would be considered "irrational". This leads us to feel that people ought to behave in accordance with folk psychological platitudes and we will, ceteris paribus, judge them irrational if they do not conform to folk psychological standards. The need to conform with folk psychological platitudes is perceived as having an obligatory dimension. Similarly, the platitudes of the HM function normatively as standards of acceptable identities. We feel under the obligation to comply with these standards of identity and people who violate the HM platitudes will be marginalised and rejected, unless they are excused by special circumstances such as a medical condition.

The HM is the corpus of categories and platitudes that define what counts as an intelligible and therefore acceptable human identity. To comply with these corpus of laws and platitudes has the character of an obligation. Within the HM, identity is affirmed and stabilised through concepts such as sex, gender and sexuality; a "natural" and "normal" human identity is defined in relation to gender categories. In other words, according to Butler, individuals qualify as human subjects insofar as they adhere to an accepted category of "gender". Therefore, "gender" parameters function as norms to which individuals are expected to conform in order to achieve social acceptance. But, as we have seen in the previous section, the categories of "gender" are the reification of an artificially imposed coherence that do not encompass all existing arrangements of characteristics. It follows that the category of gender does not comprehend every subject. According to Butler, those who do not fit the HM's normative categories do not qualify as human and are classified into the realm of the abjected. The abject is an unclassifiable reality that gets situated outside the cognitive order of the HM because we do not possess the knowledge categories to understand it. All the persons that occupy this space outside the established order of meaning constitute the realm of the dehumanised and the abjected whose function is to fortify the HM's norms by constituting its outer limits.14

In sum, those individuals who do not conform to the HM's notion of "the person" become excluded from the domain of what the Matrix defines as natural, intelligible and, therefore, acceptable

14 Butler is ambivalent with regards to the exact position of the abject. On certain occasions, she claims that the abject does not correspond to the unintelligible position in the binary intelligible/unintelligible bodies and identities but that it occupies a space outside this binary oppositions. On other occasions, she seems to imply that the abject is also within the definable and intelligible. I will come back to this issue in Section 2.2.4. on Citationality as Finitism.
identity. Their exclusion marks the limits of what is an acceptable body behaviour and the definition of subject, and acts as a deterrent. Because we feel constrained by the Matrix to identify ourselves according to its standards in order to be "identifiable" as human, we feel we ought to restrict our behaviour to what the Matrix's platitudes circumscribe as the norm in order to keep ourselves within the confines of selfhood. In the same way, we also assume that others are obliged to conform with the platitudes and categories of the HM.

3. Hence, we are compelled to fit the HM's standards of identity by feeling that it is our obligation to do so. Obligations are social institutions, for it is not possible to reduce their meaning to non-social categories, such as biological, psychological or otherwise

4. Obligation are self-referential, since an obligation is what we collectively take to be an obligation. Obligations are defined by the collective and, therefore, are social in the same way as authority is.

The argument has now come to its conclusion: the HM fulfils the conditions of a folk theory: it involves the mastery of a language which consists of self-referential terms and categories; its platitudes function as standards of acceptable gender identities which we are obliged to conform in order to be socially accepted; it involves categories such as obligations that are social institutions for they are collectively defined and self-referential.

2.2.1.2 Possible Objections

The problem of belief and action

As we saw in Chapter 1, Butler stresses the performative power of language in constituting social institutions. Butler holds that to speak is to act: “speaking is itself a bodily act” (Butler 1997: 10). The obvious importance of language in Butler's thought credits the reconstruction of the HM as a language and a system of beliefs. Nevertheless, it might be objected that the HM is much more than a language and a system of beliefs, since it is also about actions, behaviours, artefacts, and so on. This is certainly the case and the Barnesian model for social institutions not only talks about beliefs but also about actions. Moreover, there is no problem in stating both that the HM functions as a language and that it is more than that. Language is central to the HM: we explain our actions and other people’s decisions and actions through language. Indeed actions - as opposed to behaviours - are themselves social institutions, which exist only insofar as they conform to the self-referential categories of motivation and rationality. In other words, actions are identified through action-intentions and action-explanations and these are linguistic and self-referring, since the validity of action-intentions and

\[15\] Certain aspects of the Matrix’s standards of identity overlap with Folk Psychology standards of rationality. I will return to this question in Section 2.2.4, point c.
action-explanations depends on socially approved beliefs of what constitutes a satisfactory intention and an explanation.

Given that we cannot identify actions outside action-intentions and action-descriptions, to talk about systems of categorisation, such as the Matrix's terms and standards of identity, is also to talk about actions. Moreover, categories of beliefs and behaviours are linked because behaviour plus intention is intentional behaviour, that we call action. We can, therefore, conclude that the objection does not stand, since to reconstruct the HM as a language and a system of beliefs in the Barnesian model, involves not just presenting it as a collection of standards of beliefs, but also as a series of standards for behaviour and action.

**Morality and the HM**

The use of the concept of obligation in the argument might require some clarification, since it begs the question on whether the HM is a form of morality. So far we have been introduced to more than one kind of obligations. We have heard about folk psychological obligations ruling the rational and the irrational, and the HM's obligations ruling the normal and the abnormal. In its turn, the moral standards distinguish between the moral and the immoral, the good and the bad. Maybe there is a requirement to clarify how these different codes of obligations are related.

In order to tackle this question, I will draw a parallel argument to that developed by Kusch with respect to folk psychology and morality. Kusch argues that, in certain aspects, folk psychology is similar to morality, though he makes clear that they are not equivalent. In his view, morality and folk psychology differ in that whereas moral codes qualify behaviour in terms of it being morally right or morally wrong, folk psychology deals with the relation between an action and its standards of rationality. Kusch takes the relation between thirst and drinking as an example. This relation is governed by a folk psychological platitude: "those who are thirsty will seek to drink", for, ceteris paribus, we will judge irrational anybody who does not seek to drink when being thirsty. Clearly, morality is not necessarily concerned with the relation between thirst and drinking. Nevertheless, a parallel can be drawn between both codes, morality and folk psychology, because both relate to actions, desires or beliefs in the same way. Both define their quality: its morality, in the case of the moral code, or its rationality, in the case of folk psychology.

Turning now to the relation between morality and the Matrix's platitudes, I argue that it is comparable to the relation between morality and folk psychology. Morality and the Matrix's platitudes are distinct insofar as their spheres of action are different: whereas a moral code defines what constitutes a moral action in terms of good or bad, right or wrong, the HM platitudes defines what is proper to its categories such as definitions of masculinity, femininity, and so on. Hence, the Matrix governs the definition of identity standards but it is not directly concerned with judging the moral quality of a certain "sex" category or the morality of actions or sexual behaviour. Nevertheless, there is a degree of interaction between the folk psychological platitudes concerning rationality and
morality on the one hand, and the HM's platitudes on the other. I will explore this interaction in the following paragraphs.

We are now familiar with Butler's argument that the HM legitimises its particular configuration of "sex" by presenting it as a natural fact. The Matrix defines what is considered acceptable and unacceptable "sex" in as much as the cluster of characteristics that form the category of "sex" fit the Matrix's definition of natural or unnatural. Hence, the Matrix's conventions are legitimised through the concept of nature. Conformity to the matrix's "natural norms" is reinforced through abjection of those individuals, desires, beliefs or actions that fall outside the boundaries of what the HM defines as "natural": the abjected. The abjected is perceived in terms such as shame and disgust, but also in terms of morality by both sanctioners and sanctioned. Hence, it can be argued that there is some overlap between morality and the Matrix's platitudes, for the obligation to conform to the HM's standards of identity is often clothed and perceived in terms of morality and rationality.

It can be concluded that, though they have different spheres of action, there are parallels between morality codes and the Matrix's standards of identity. They are different insofar as they are concerned with different qualities of actions, beliefs and desires. Nevertheless, they both relate to actions, desires and beliefs in the same way, namely by judging its morality, in the case of morality, and its intelligibility, in the case of the Matrix. On the other hand, there is an overlap between morality and the Matrix's platitudes because conformity to the Matrix is reinforced through the concept of the natural and the moral. This is obvious in the role of the abjected in constituting a shameful outside that functions as a deterrent against transgression.

2.2.1.3 The HM as a theory

As we have seen in Section 2.2.1.1, the HM functions like a language with similarity classes, platitudes and laws. Here I will argue that the Matrix has the structure of a theory. As a theory, the Matrix also has observational and theoretical terms that I will present in the following. In order to clarify the workings of the Matrix as a theory I will introduce the documentary method. Finally I will reconstruct the category of "sex" as a theoretical term central to the Matrix's theory.

The Matrix's observational and theoretical terms

As explained in Section 2.1.2.1 on Kusch's Philosophical Context, observational terms refer to observations and theoretical terms refer to postulated explanations for these observations not directly observable themselves. In the case of the HM, the observational terms of the Matrix might refer to behaviour, such as liking rough play, liking dolls, dress, sexual behaviour, liking of domestic activities, active or passive personality, tendency to care for others, interest in babies, and so on; or to other observables, such as genitals, body shape, demeanour, gestures, facial expressions, voice, look,
language, and so on. The Matrix's theoretical terms refer to entities that are not directly observable such as "sex", "gender", 'desire', "feeling", "femalehood", "infatuation", and so on.

On first approximation, the distinction between observational and theoretical terms is valid to approach Butler's thought. Though, in order to make sense of the peculiarities of folk sexology, I will need to be more reflective than the folk psychology debate on the very distinction observational/theoretical. The distinction itself is related to theory, since a theory's theoretical terms can become the observational terms of another theory. For instance, many terms such as mental states can themselves be theoretical terms in folk psychology but function observationally for the Matrix's folk sexology. As an example, heterosexual desire might be a theoretical term in folk psychology but it is an observational term for the Matrix's folk sexology, since heterosexual behaviour is considered as a taken-for-granted (indeed normative) characteristic of sexed subjects.

The following table aims to show examples of theoretical and observational terms in different theories. As mentioned above, the theoretical terms of one theory can become the observational terms in another theory. For instance, 'desire' is a theoretical term of folk psychology but an observational term in folk sexology.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PHYSICS</th>
<th>OBSERVATIONAL TERMS</th>
<th>THEORETICAL TERMS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FOLK PSYCHOLOGY</td>
<td>Movements of body</td>
<td>Beliefs, desires, actions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FOLK SEXOLOGY - MATRIX</td>
<td>Dress, genitals, sexual desire, social role</td>
<td>Sex, gender</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Documentary Method

In order to clarify the workings of the observational and theoretical terms that the HM has as a theory I shall briefly introduce Karl Mannheim's notion of documentary method as developed by Garfinkel (Garfinkel 1967). The documentary method refers to a circular process that takes place in any attempt to make sense of reality. This process is exemplified by the task of an individual who is trying to make sense of a document but only has access to fragments of it. These fragments are the observables available to the individual. The only way this individual can make sense of the whole of the document is by extrapolating the meaning of the fragments. In order to do this, the individual needs to postulate a whole and try to understand the parts on the basis of this postulated whole.

Therefore, in the documentary method the search for intelligibility is done by taking some appearance as the "document of" or evidence of an underlying pattern. Then, this underlying pattern, derived from the individual documentary appearances, is used to interpret those appearances from which it derives as that which is "known" about the pattern. In other words, the postulated theoretical entities, themselves derived from individual observables, are used to interpret those observables.
Then, in a following stage, the observables are taken as the evidence of the postulated theoretical entities. That is, the direction of the process is inverted and the observables become that which is "known" about the theoretical entities. Thus, both the evidence and the assumed underlying pattern are used to make sense of one another in a circular procedure.

"Sex" as a theoretical term

Now I will return to Butler's notion of the HM and the category of "sex" and proceed to reconstruct it by means of the documentary method. I want to suggest that the HM's categories and laws are patterns derived from certain appearances subsequently taken to be that which is known about the pattern and that which is "caused" by it. Before going into my argument, let me briefly restate Butler's position on a crucial category of the HM: "sex". As we saw in Chapter 1 on the Butlerian oeuvre, to Butler "sex" is an entity constructed by power in order to impose an heterosexual direction to desire. In her view, the category of "sex" is perceived as a coherent and stable whole when, in fact, it is no more than a constructed fiction. This Butlerian "fictive sex" is attained by classifying the body parts into sexual and non-sexual parts according to criteria fixed by the necessary condition of reproductive sexuality: heterosexuality. Hence, to Butler, the Matrix category of "sex" is constructed by imposing coherence on an otherwise discontinuous set of attributes.

I propose to consider the Matrix's categories, such as "sex", as theoretical terms developed in an attempt to make sense of certain observables, such as genitals, body hair or aggressivity. In the following I will consider "sex" as a theoretical entity assumed to underlie a set of observable appearances. In terms of my reconstruction, the category of "sex" can be considered the product of an amalgamation of observables, that is, of body parts, behaviours, and so on, arbitrarily categorised into 'sexual' and 'non-sexual'. As we know, Butler argues that the classification of the observables into 'sexual' and 'non-sexual' is decided in relation to their relevance to the imperatives of reproductive sexuality. Once their relevance is established, the observables arbitrarily defined as 'sexual' get grouped in clusters, such as 'feminine characteristics'. Hence, the selection of observables follows discretionary, collectively defined and self-referential criteria.

In terms of the documentary method, the observables (body parts, behaviours, and so on) are arbitrarily chosen fragments grouped under self-referential criteria. The resulting group of observables, thus branded as 'feminine characteristics', is then referred to as a naturally congruent group of phenomena when, in fact, the classification of observables is based on self-referential and collectively defined criteria. In an ensuing stage, a whole is postulated in order to make sense of the fragments or observables. This whole is "sex". Hence, after selecting a group of observables following arbitrary criteria, these group of observables, 'feminine characteristics', are assumed to belong to a postulated whole 'document', "female sex". Therefore, in this stage the observable phenomena become the basis for assuming theoretical entities, such as "female sex", "male sex", and so on. Thus, "sex" is
a pattern assumed to underlie a set of observable appearances grouped under self-referential criteria. Hence, "sex" is a theoretical entity of the HM.

In the following stage, the observables, 'feminine characteristics', are examined as evidence of the postulated whole, "sex", and the postulated whole is conceived as that which is known about the group of observables. Moreover, attempts are made to explain the fictive grouping of observables in terms of the postulated whole. That is, the postulated whole, "sex", is used as explanation for the arbitrary selection of observables. Hence, the theoretical entity first postulated in order to make sense of certain observables is later presented as the cause of these observables. For instance, the theoretical entity "sex" is taken as the cause for the arbitrary selection of phenomena from which it was inferred, namely 'feminine characteristics' or 'masculine characteristics'. Thus, the observed phenomena from which the explanatory theoretical entity was inferred are now being presented as evidence and consequence of this assumed underlying pattern or theoretical entity. In other words, the HM's self-created abstraction, "sex" is treated as a material thing to which causal powers are attributed.

It follows from the above that the way in which the observables and the theoretical terms are used to explain each other is circular. According to Butler, this circularity gets hidden in the HM. By concealing the circularity of its definition, the category of "sex" is made to appear as stable and natural and the contingent grouping of observables gets presented as 'naturally' occurring set of phenomena. In fact, as we have just seen, observables such as 'malehood' or 'femalehood', 'maternal feelings', and so on, refer to an arbitrary selection of observables from which the theoretical entity of "sex" is assumed. Hence, the alleged evidence of "sex" is merely a collectively defined category in which the postulation of "sex" as a theoretical entity is based. Therefore, the consequences of "sex" as an alleged biological entity, the observables, are not caused by "sex". Rather, the observables are the self-referential categories on which "sex" as theoretical entity is based.

To set up a sociological reconstruction of "sex" and "gender as theoretical terms of the Matrix by means of the documentary method spells out Butler's idea of sex as produced by gender. According to Butler, "gender" is more than what we understand it to be, since it is the term under which the social construction of "sex" is concealed. In this reconstruction, "sex" is "gender" because I conceive "sex" as a theoretical entity inferred from a self-referential selection of observables in a circular procedure. Hence, in this sociological reconstruction a social category, namely "gender", is at the basis of the definition of "sex", since the selection of observables from which "sex" is inferred is based on self-referential criteria. These criteria are "gender" in the sense that they are collectively defined social norms and laws, such as compulsory heterosexuality. The circularity of the definition of "sex" resides in the inversion that takes place when the category of "gender" gets defined as a set of observable natural characteristics caused by "sex". To put it in Butler's words, in the HM it is assumed that "masculine expresses male, feminine expresses female" (Butler 1990: 151, fn.6). That is, in the Matrix's 'gender' expresses 'sex', thus concealing the circularity of the definition of 'sex'. This circularity is what Butler aims to point out by always writing the term 'sex' in double quotes: "sex".
By conceiving collectively defined "gender" criteria at the basis of the allegedly biological 'sex', the traditional feminist division 'sex/natural gender/social ceases to be functional, since both 'sex' and 'gender' are conceived as collectively defined self-referential categories. Thus, 'gender' can no longer be considered the "natural" expression of 'sex', nor its consequence, nor the evidence of its existence. Neither can the term 'gender' be understood in a simple way as a mere social category for referring to socially constructed behaviour. To put it in Foucauldian terms, 'gender' can no longer be conceived as being externally related to 'sex'; rather, the action of 'gender' in defining 'sex' takes place internally. In its turn, 'sex' ceases to appear as a natural inmutable biological given. Therefore, to sociologically reconstruct "sex" as a theoretical entity founded in self-referential collectively defined categories helps clarifying the Butlerian notion of "sex" as myth and her attempted problematisation of the sex/gender distinction. To reconstruct "sex" as a theoretical entity reveals its contingency; it also problematises 'sex' as biological given analytically opposed to 'gender', conceived as a mere social construction built on the basis of an inmutable 'sex'.

Having shown that the HM is a folk theory of sorts with a circular and self-referential structure, in the next section I will proceed to argue that it functions as a collective good and, hence, it fulfils another characteristic of social institutions.

2.2.2 THE HM AS A COLLECTIVE GOOD

In this section I argue that the HM is a set of folk theories of gender that grows around the basic social need of reproduction. I aim to show that the Matrix constitutes an important collective good because it provides a solution for the co-ordination problems that arise in the social organisation of reproduction. It seems that all societies have some form of institution that regulates reproduction since it is crucial to the survival of any society and its existing members. For this reason, the male/female classification is present in all cultures, but it is not exhaustive since it does not comprehend all the folk knowledge associated to it that constitutes a folk theory. In other words, the male/female classification is just a part of the complex network of meanings, beliefs and actions that constitutes a folk sexological theory. Indeed, as we will see in Section 2.2.3. on the Matrix's conventionality, different cultures employ different folk theories, that is, different ways of organising knowledge about sexual behaviour, roles and desires.

According to Butler, the body's biological basis is not enough to justify its binary categorisation. Butler argues that the folk understanding of biological differences in the Matrix is not really determined by the materiality of the body but by the social institution that regulates and defines sex and gender: the social institution of reproduction. In other words, Butler is arguing that the biological characteristics that are taken as the defining characteristics of sex in the HM are not necessary but contingent. Butler argues that the Matrix classifies bodies with regards to their reproductive capacity, that is, according to their ability to produce either egg or sperm. Therefore, to
Butler, the imperative of reproduction rules the criterion for distinguishing "sex" categories into male and female, and hence, reproduction also rules the ensuing classification and regulation of bodies.

Given that, in Butler's view, the focus on the binary distinction male/female is due to social processes and it could well be otherwise, the question of why the binary classification is so frequent arises. The reason why so many different folk psychologies classify individual humans on the same male/female distinction has to do with our reproductive need, since the co-ordination of reproduction makes certain features more salient than others. Thus, societies' need to reproduce gives rise to the tendency to focus on certain features rather than others as the solution for organising reproduction. Hence, it is not the case that human biology is ruled by reproduction, but rather that human biology makes a certain solution more salient than others. This solution is, namely, to classify human individuals under the male/female distinction primarily defined on the basis of genitals. Thus, the binary differentiation between subjects is established on the basis of physical features. One might say that if individual humans were not classified under the binary classification male/female there could still be reproduction, although it would be much more difficult to organise. Hence, the HM can be considered as a collective good, since, as implied in Butler's argument, the definition of the categories of "sex" and the binary classification of individuals responds to the social imperative of regulating reproduction. 17

As just seen, Butler argues that the Matrix category of "sex" is defined by contingent criteria. Hence, in her view, individuals are classified according to a category that is not necessary but contingent. Nevertheless, the category of "sex" and, hence, reproduction, is presented and perceived as the inevitable way for thinking about gender. In other words, the Matrix defines "sex" under the dictates of compulsory heterosexuality and presents as necessary what is nothing but a contingent classificatory system. Through several mechanisms, such as the fragmentation of the body in sexual and non-sexual parts, constraint and repetition, this contingent arrangement becomes the hegemonic way for thinking about gender, and thus it becomes normative. Hence, the HM as norm performs its own reality and, eventually, it becomes a contingent necessity, for bodies are made to conform to it and individuals are constrained to fit its categories in order to be socially accepted. It becomes a theory that shapes our perception which we cannot easily escape because it validates itself and, hence, it becomes necessary.

I will now look at another aspect of compulsory heterosexuality that backs up the interpretation of the Matrix as a collective good. The classification of bodies under categories of "sex" and the heterosexual ordering of desire has the effect of increasing the predictability of individuals' behaviour. It is generally accepted that gender attribution is an ubiquitous and central feature of all

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17 I would like to make clear that I am arguing for the understanding of the HM as a collective good for those who participate and are accepted in it. I am not making here any value judgements on this institution and it is not to say that there could not exist other institutions that could be a collective good to larger proportions of society.
cultures and it is always present in everyday interactions, for co-ordination of important aspects of social life are based on gender (Garfinkel 1967). A mechanism for regulating sexuality, such as the Matrix's standards of sexual identity, constitutes a collective good because it facilitates social interaction by providing us with categories, laws, and standards of identity that allow reliable predictions of how other humans are going to behave. By increasing predictability, the IIM reduces arbitrariness in the judgements of similarity that precede any application of the other knowledge categories. For instance, we generally assume that a member of the category "woman" will feel sexually attracted to members of the category "man". In this manner, each category pre-empts certain sexual desires and eases routine interaction. Therefore, the Matrix facilitates social interaction by creating (moderately) predictable humans.

To summarise, the IIM is a collective good because it regulates reproduction. It does so mainly through two mechanisms: by classifying bodies in "sex" categories according to their reproductive abilities, and by performing desires through the fragmentation of the erogenous body in accordance with the law of compulsory heterosexuality. Hence, the Matrix provides the basis for the co-ordination of social actions based on gender, particularly reproduction. It also functions as a collective good in so far as it helps to make each other more predictable for one another by reducing the number of possibilities for sexual desire. By imposing standards of identity that abject the possibility of non-heterosexual sex and gender, the Matrix reduces the multiplicity of a potentially polymorphous sexuality and makes individuals' sexual choices, roles, and other characteristics, more predictable. The increase in predictability facilitates routine social interaction since it provides a tool for anticipating others' behaviour. Having established that the IIM provides a solution for the social necessity of reproduction and helps co-ordinating social action by increasing individual's predictability, I conclude that the IIM constitutes a collective good and, therefore, it fulfils another of the conditions for considering it a social institution.

2.2.3 IIM AS CONVENTIONAL

In the following I aim to show that the IIM is a specific arrangement of folk sexological knowledge specific to a particular culture and, therefore, conventional. By definition all social institutions are conventional, since they are based on collective agreement. This implies that social institutions may be realised differently in different societies, or they exist in some but not all societies. In order to reveal the conventional character of the IIM I will look at different folk arrangements existing in other cultures.

We know from numerous sociological and anthropological studies of different cultures that there is synchronic and diachronic variation in folk sexological theories. The pioneering work of Margaret Mead showed the variability in cultural definitions of maleness and femaleness. More recent ethnographic work has identified a variety of categories such as: berdaches, hijras, xanihs, female
husbands, *mahus*, and so on. These ethnographic data attest to the existence of folk theories of sexuality that differ from the Matrix's binary categories. All categories are part of distributions of knowledge of a particular culture and concern notions of manhood and womanhood, sexual relations and reproduction. These sets of categories and laws do not exist in isolation but are part of a net of meanings concerning kinship, division of labour, religion, concepts of the person and self, and so on. Hence, this network of meanings configures a whole arrangement of knowledge that needs to be taken into account when trying to understand other cultures' folk theories. Thus, in order to avoid ethnocentric interpretations of data, I will briefly introduce the social context of each gender category I present.

At this point I would like to draw attention to the fact that within different folk sexologies we can generally find similar categories based on a shared biology, such as woman as children bearer. Nevertheless this does not imply that categories such as "woman" can be universalised. This is so because similarity is not the same as identity. If we accept that a folk theory is a system of terms defined in relation to others, then, extreme caution is necessary when comparing different theories in order to avoid establishing correspondence where there is only resemblance. Furthermore, the fact that there are similarities between cultures also implies that there is dissimilarity, and if there is dissimilarity, there is conventionality. I will now look at some concrete examples of different gender categories within their cultural context understood in a wide sense.

In her ethnographic study of the Igbo people in the village of Nnobi, Western Nigeria, Amadiume describes a society where women were allowed to play roles traditionally associated with men without being stigmatised (Amadiume 1987). This flexibility, according to the ethnographer, is favoured by a goddess-focused religion. In Igbo society the household is generally male-headed, and the family is female-headed. But there are situations when females act as household heads and in these circumstances we encounter the categories "male daughters" and "female husbands". These institutionalised categories allow women to occupy positions of power and authority. In order to understand these categories I need to present a brief introduction of the social and economic organisation of the Nnobi.

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18 For critiques of ethnocentrism in Western anthropology in this particular area of study see Moore (1994), Nanda (1990), Kopytoff (1990), Oyewumi (1998), Whitehead (1981), Williams (1986). These authors coincide in cautioning against the tendency of Western anthropology to see their own categories in the customs researched. According to Roscoe (Roscoe 1991), this tendency leads to conceptualising native categories, such as the berdache, as "institutionalised homosexuality". Roscoe writes that, due to the fact that Western "perceptions are filtered through a dual gender ideology and arbitrary distinctions (are) based on biological sex, berdache patterns cannot be appreciated for what they really are - the appropriate and intrinsic behaviour of a third gender" (Roscoe 1991: 212, emphasis of the author). Although I agree with the need of caution when trying to understand knowledge categories of other cultures, I do not find the term "third gender" fully satisfactory. I distrust the term for being itself a Western category, since it is only within an established binary system of categories that a "third" one can be drawn. I'll deal with this question at a greater length in Chapter 5 On the Methodology and the Informants and in Chapter 6 The interviews analysed.
The Nnobi people had a title system indicating the wealth and power of an individual. In general the title system was open to men and women but there was one exception: the title Ekwe, which could only be taken by women. This title was associated with the goddess Idemili, and specifically to involuntary possession by the goddess. But Amadiume also showed that it was related to the women's economic abilities and charisma. Potential Ekwe women were those who had achieved great economic power by becoming "female husbands" to many women, for amongst the Nnobi people institutionalised polygamy was the way of becoming rich. People would work for a woman voluntarily or through institutionalised woman-to-woman marriage. A female could become the "husband" of other females and become wealthy by administrating their labour. "Female husbands" would give their wives a (male) husband and take on the role of mothers. The wives often stayed with their "female husband" and bore children in her name. These wives had the status and rights of a wife with respect to the woman that bought them or with whom they associated (their "female husband"); in turn, the "female husband" had the same rights over her wives as a man over his wives. The male husband of a "female husband" would keep his role as ritual master of the household in spite of not being the master of the household in terms of economy.

The "male daughter" was another category characteristic of the Nnobi. "Male daughters" were women who acquired the right to inherit land in the absence of male descendants. In order to avoid the redistribution of the land to relatives in accordance with Igbo custom, an ageing father without male descendants could recur to the institution of "male daughters" and make his daughter "male". In such case the daughter would have attained full male status and become the heir of the land. In order to be accepted in their role as head and be authorised to handle symbols of authority, "male daughters" had to undergo a ritual to purify them from the polluting influence of menstruation.

The Igbo language offers an insight into the way in which these categories were conceived within the gender system. The role of "female husbands" and "male daughters" was designated with the same genderless term, "di-bu-no" referring to the family head. The term's meaning is "master", and it was used to refer to the one who was in a master relationship to a family and household, and a person, man or woman. So, both "female husbands" and "male daughters" were conceived as heads of the family. Therefore, Nnobi women could act as household heads, a role normally played by men. There are other Igbo words that reveal the way in which they conceive their categories. The Igbo had two words for wife, onye be and nwunye or nwayi (which also meant female or woman). The first term, onye be, is also a genderless expression that can be applied to men and women, for it denotes a person who belongs to the home of a certain master. The second term, nwunye or nwayi, also carries the meaning of one who is in a subordinate role or service relation to a master and it is normally associated with women, though some men were addressed by the term nwunye. Therefore, in Igbo language domestic roles were associated with females, although they could be occupied by males. But the master or husband role did not necessitate male classification; the term that designates it is genderless. According to Amadiume, "male daughters" were designated by male terms and treated as
such in rituals, whereas "female husbands" were not. Therefore, we can conclude that the institutionalised categories, "female husbands" and "male daughters", are part of a system of categories configured differently from the Matrix's binary gender system.

I will now present another gender category that presents an alternative gender: the hijras of India. According to Nanda, the hijras are considered by themselves and Indian society as an alternative gender which is neither man nor woman. Hijras are not considered women though they are "like" women. Hijras are like women in two aspects: because they wear female attire, "an essential and defining characteristic of the hijra" (Nanda 1990: 17); and because they adopt a female name when they join the community of hijras as well as a place (such as "sister", "mother") in the kinship structure of hijras groups. Hijras are not women insofar as they lack menstruation and are unable to bear children, an essential defining criterion of women in Indian culture. This definition is made explicit by hijras. Though some hijras would wish to have children, they believe this desire involves danger for they should not try to be women. Hence, hijras do not see themselves as women, but as not-man. The central quality of hijras as not-man is their impotence. But, although it is necessary to be impotent in order to become a hijra, it is not sufficient. An impotent man only becomes a hijra if he has his genitals cut off. Emasculation is the symbol of the renunciation of male sexuality and it is central to the hijra's social identity. For this reason, the meaning of hijras' role is centered in their abnormal male genitals.

The existence of hijras as an institutionalised gender in Hindu society is made possible by Indian culture. Hindu mythology features a number of sexually ambiguous mythological figures (such as Shiva, Vishnu, Krishna, the Supreme Being of Tantrism, and so on) and views the combination of man/woman as meaningful and powerful. Hinduism holds that both the male and the female principles are present in every person. Hijras have the status of special beings because through their chastity they attain an ascetic ideal. As special beings, hijras get consecrated through ritual and become symbols of the divine and of generativity. After their consecration hijras play a special role as ritual performers in marriages and in the blessing of children. Nevertheless, the social status of hijras is not very high and sometimes they are objects of fear or abuse.

To become an hijra is a gradual process. Hijras-to-be exhibit cross-gender characteristics that elicit negative sanctions from others. Sanctions and gradual recognition of one's desires push the individuals into informal interactions with the hijra community which might lead to a formal commitment to become an hijra. Generally, several years pass before emasculation during which the potential hijra must resolve his ambivalence towards his own gender and to the hijra community. Nanda reports that "the decision to have the operation was not uniformly associated with a desire to become, or the feeling that one was already, a woman... the operation is connected with the cultural definition of the hijra as neither man nor woman; for some individuals, the operation transforms them
into hijras, not into women" (Nanda 1990: 118). Nevertheless, there are hijras who see themselves as woman and, though having a husband is contrary to the ascetic ideal of the figure of the hijra for involving sexual relationships, a number of hijras have husbands. Marriage is a source of prestige for women in India and it provides hijras with a better social status than prostitution (a profession that many recur to). For those hijras that see themselves as women, marital relationships with a man provides a source of self-esteem. Married hijras stress the good relations they hold with the families of their husbands in order to present themselves as what their society and themselves regard as respectable people.

The Xanith of the Islamic society of Oman is another example of a gender category regarded as having characteristics of both man and woman but being neither. Islam, like Hindu mythology, provides positive models for an alternative gender in the figure of the eunuch. Xaniths are not-men for three main reasons: because they have not demonstrated sexual potency, because they take the passive role in intercourse traditionally associated with women, and also because they do housework. But, unlike hijras, xanith do not practice emasculation. The xanith role is reversible: they can become men by choosing to marry and demonstrating their potency. On the other hand, xanith are as men insofar as they use masculine names and pronouns and enjoy the rights of a man given by Islamic law (e.g. praying in the mosque with men, right to testify in court). The fact that they support themselves and are free to roam in public spaces also makes them unlike women.

Xaniths are classed as women for some social purposes such as festivities but they are allowed some behaviour restricted to males, such as to visit women in quarters restricted to men, to walk arm in arm with a woman in the street, to eat with women, and so on. Xaniths' appearance, like women's, is deemed important and it is judged by standards of female beauty. But xaniths are not women because they lack the purity associated with woman due to their role as male homosexual prostitutes. They are not allowed to wear women's clothing. Therefore, xanith's behaviour falls in a space between man and woman. They play an intermediate gender role which gets expressed in a public presentation that mixes facial expressions, voice, and movements that imitate those of women, with clothing and haircut that mix both styles.

Native American societies also present a different category: the berdache. In Native American societies berdache was an institutionalised gender category normally applied to anatomically normal men. The berdache were thought to be intersexed persons by their own society. The common elements of the different berdache types in North American societies are: dressing in female attire and adopting female mannerisms, homosexual activity and, most importantly according

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19 Some hijras who have their operation when they are older conceive it more as "a negative turning' from one's previous life than a whole-hearted commitment to a feminine gender identity" (Nanda 1990: 119). In my own fieldwork I have observed similar feelings expressed by Western transsexuals. I will come back to this question in the second part of my thesis: the empirical investigation.

20 The berdache type is a generic name given by Westerners to a category that took different names in different Indian peoples (lhamana, Alyha and others).

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to Whitehead (1981), manifesting preferences for the occupations traditionally associated with women. Described as man-woman, or "not-man, not-woman" by their societies, the intermediate position of berdaches was reflected in their shamanic powers as matchmakers, love magicians and other abilities related to facilitating the union of the sexes. Their change of status was symbolised in a public ceremony before puberty where the boy was given female clothing. According to Nanda (Nanda 1990), the berdache would take on a female name and insist in calling his genitals by female terms (penis/clitoris, testes/labia majora, anus/vagina).

Again, as in the case of the hijra and the xanith, the folk sexologies of American Indians were framed within a coherent network of beliefs that provided the conceptual background in which to formulate a non-binary system of gender categories. It seems that some societies where the berdache role was institutionalised, such as the Mohave, believed in the existence of sexually undifferentiated people in earlier mythical times. It is also important to note two more notions framing this particular folk sexology: for American Indians, the spirit was more important than anatomy in determining a person's identity; also, it was believed that berdaches are predestined to feel the way they do, therefore, it was considered that they were unable to resist.

As we saw in the case of the Igbo people, some non-binary gender categories involve women. Amongst the North American Kaska and Ingalik Indians there existed the categories of the amazons or female hunters. The category of the amazon was instituted so that families lacking sons could select a daughter to "be like a man" and hunt for them in their old age. A female hunter-to-be would undergo a transformation ceremony during which she would receive a talisman believed to prevent menstruation, protect her from pregnancy, and give her luck with the hunt. From then on, the girl was dressed like a male and trained in male tasks. Because it was believed that their luck in hunting depended on avoiding sexual contact with males, they would have sexual relationships with women only.

So far I have presented several examples of gender categories that support the view of the Matrix's categories as conventional. There are more reported "third" gender roles such as the mahu of Tahitian societies, the "soft man" of the Chukchi in Eastern Siberia, the fafafini in Samoa and others. As I hope it has become clear in the previous pages, there is evidence of variation in the relation between "sex" and social role. There is another concept particularly relevant in the study of "sex" as the Matrix's standard of identity: the concept of personal identity. Kopytoff's ethnographical research of the Suku, an African people, reveals once again the importance of understanding the wider cultural context in order to understand folk theories of sex. Kopytoff's study required the development of a new terminology in order to be faithful to the Suku's cultural representations. Hence, in order to account for the Suku's view on personal identity, Kopytoff developed the distinction between two types of identity: existential and role-based. Existential identities indicate what people "are", that is,

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21 In the worldview of many American Indians, menstruation is a defining feature of a person as a woman.
their state of being, for instance: woman, father. Role-based identities refer to the roles people play, e.g. policeman, teacher. Hence, existential identities connote immanence whereas role-based ones do not. Amongst the Suku, men's existential identity is defined by circumcision, and women's by their child bearing (not child rearing) abilities. Therefore, Suku society does not establish a characteriological difference between men and women, for there is no "focus on what in some essentialist sense that existential identity - what we would call womanhood - was" (Kopytoff 1990: 88). Thus, although there are concepts for women's and men's identity, these are not described in terms of general internal content.

The Suku's concept of person stands in contrast with the hegemonic notions in the West where the person's characteristics are regarded as essential to the person's identity. Within Western assumptions, a person's core is conceived as the set of "objectively natural" functions that define what is "femaleness" or "maleness". Indeed, this is one of Butler's objections to the Matrix: the concept of gender identity as a cluster of immanent features residing in fixed internal cores. Kopytoff compares the small number of immanent features in Suku's notions of gender identities with the United States concept of "existential womanhood", the latter being a numerous set of roles with an immanent character. In his analysis, this difference is the product of different conceptualisations of the natural. Whereas Suku society understands as "natural" very few features of gender identities, US society conceives the core gender identity as a numerous set of "natural" attributes. In Kopytoff's view, these differences explain the higher mobility of women in African societies for, since their roles are not so fixed, the space for negotiation is wider and the level of achievement greater.

It can be concluded from all of the above that the Western view of identity as immanent and gender as permanent is not universal. Cultures, such as the ones I have just reviewed, have different folk theories of sex-related knowledge and different concepts of the person and the self. Moore (Moore 1994) holds these variations from other folk theories as evidence against the alleged neutrality of the concepts of self and person of the so-called Western folk theory. In Moore's view, the notions of self and person are not neutral but connected to models for explaining gender difference. Hence, Moore cautions against the danger of assuming a concept of the self as universal when researching other cultures as well as against assuming gender as a single and undisputed quality of the self. Moore refers to research by Meigs, Gewertz and others to dispute the notion of gender as an essence fixed at the core of a person's identity. Moore, together with Whitehead, Kopytoff and others, point out that for a number of cultures gender identity rests in the performance of those activities classified as characteristic of a certain gender rather than in possessing the appropriate genitalia. In particular, Whitehead thinks that sexual object choice is not gender-defining; rather "the 'meaning' of the gender distinction in native American society rested more heavily upon differences in productive specialisation than upon position within a system of sexual-political interaction" (Whitehead 1981: 105). Hence, Moore, Whitehead and others reveal the assumptions of the particular Western gender system I have been referring to as the HM.
To summarise, the way in which a certain culture organises knowledge of anatomy, sexually differentiated social roles, sexual behaviour, and so on, is encapsulated in its gender categories. The examination of several folk sexologies, their concepts of person and self in their cultural context, offers evidence of variation in the organisation of this knowledge. From the evidence of variation drawn from non-western cultures, it can be concluded that the HM as a particular folk theory is conventional and, therefore, historically and culturally contingent.

2.2.4 CITATIONALITY AS FINITISM

Here I will spell out Butler’s notion of citationality through the finitist account of meaning. However, just like Barnes’s finitist account of knowledge, the finitist account of "sex" sounds very peculiar on first acquaintance. This is due to its is counterintuitive character, since it renders unfamiliar what we routinely accept to be a taken-for-granted natural fact. In the present account, "sex" is being considered as a collective accomplishment. Hence, by treating "sex" as a social institution in Barnes’s terms, we render problematic what is normally a taken-for-granted element in social interaction: gender identity. As I hope to show in the following sections, the reconstruction of "sex" in terms of finitism enables a clearer articulation of the Butlerian notions of citationality and performativity, as well of the normative aspects of the HM.22

2.2.4.1 The finitist nature of 'sex' and 'gender'

As we saw in Chapter 1, Butler is trying to problematise "sex" as the fixed and substantial "hard" fact of biology from which 'gender' originates. Butler aims to do so by dispelling what we take to be "the facts of biology" as a collective cultural fallacy achieved through a chain of repetitions. This chain of repetitions produces the appearance of "sex" as a natural substance that allegedly causes gender difference. Butler opposes the alleged fixity of these so-called "facts of biology" by arguing that they are the product of "an incessant and repeated action of some sort" (Butler 1990b: 112). In Butler’s view, the citation of the normative heterosexual law has a performative power that creates discrete "sex" categories which are taken to be "real", that is, the expression of an assumed "natural" immutable core gender identity. Butler distinguishes two sets of actions that create gender identity through the citation of the category of "sex": identification and the stylisation of the body. Both identification and the stylisation of the body are achieved through repetition. Identification produces the "fact" of heterosexual desire through the citation of the Law of the Father.23 The stylisation of the body is achieved through the repetition of a set of bodily acts that perform a body in accordance with the Matrix’s norms.

22 Each point aims to deal with one aspect of Butlerian thought on citationality and performativity though there is, unavoidably, some overlap between them.

23 As we saw in Chapter 1, for Butler the law of compulsory heterosexuality is inherent in Lacan’s Law of the Father, that is, in the castration process and the prohibition of incest.
By regarding "sex" as an effect of the repeated application of the Matrix's laws, Butler problematises it as the allegedly fixed and substantial "hard" fact of biology from which 'gender' allegedly originates. In this fashion, the notion of "sex" as the foundation of 'gender' promoted by the Matrix is made to look shaky by arguing that its alleged immutability is an appearance achieved through a chain of citations whose start is untraceable. This idea can be expressed in terms of the finitist theory as follows: if "sex" is considered as a knowledge category, then, to classify an individual into a certain "sex" involves a judgement of similarity in the light of our experience with a finite number of earlier occasions and earlier judgements in which the category was applied. Hence, the category of "sex" is not replicated in an automatic and invariable fashion. The process of replication thus depends on the judgements that take place at each instance of application of the category to a particular context.

This implies that the application of a certain "sex" category is negotiated and decided whenever it is applied to a new setting. For instance, when confronted with an unknown individual we ask ourselves the question: "is X a male or a female?". In order to decide what category we should apply, we might need to ponder the definition of the categories themselves, so we might need to consider the question of "what is it to be male or female?". In some instances, the decision might not be straightforward and then we might feel compelled to revise the categories themselves and think: "who is really female or male?" Hence, a decision regarding the classification of a specific individual potentially involves a re-negotiation of the definition of the category of "sex" as well as a decision concerning its application. This process might introduce a variation in the definition of the rules and norms that govern the relevant category.

It follows from the above that if "sex" is taken as a knowledge category in the finitist sense we have a clearer formulation of the Butlerian notion of "sex" as "inapprehensible", that is, as having a meaning that is never fixed. In the finitist understanding, "sex" is a self-referential categories whose meaning is not fixed and pre-determined by its originating from an immutable foundation. On the contrary, we regard "sex" as a category whose meaning is revisable because it is nothing but usage of the term. Since meaning is only determined by subsequent use, there cannot be a determinate meaning for "sex". Therefore, "sex" is inapprehensible because there is no real meaning to be grasped. Since meaning follows use, the meaning of "sex" is not fixed but always revisable and, given that we do not know in which direction the use of the term can develop, we can only grasp moments of use. Hence, when we look for the meaning of "sex" we are forced to look at the social processes of its definition, because it is the social processes in their extension into an uncertain future what gives "sex" its meaning.

In terms of meaning finitism the alleged factual solidity of "sex" is nothing but the stability of meaning achieved by controlling the linguistic application of the category of "sex". The control in the process of application of knowledge categories leads to the overlearning of the meaning of the category "sex" and to the routinisation of its application. These processes lead to the reification of
"sex" as a given "fact", that is, a category of fixed meaning. Hence, the idea of citationality can be read as the routinisation in the application of the category "sex" and its subsequent reification. The same sociological reconstruction in terms of finitism that I have applied to the category of "sex" can be applied to the notion of 'gender'. Thus, 'gender' can be considered as another of the Matrix's knowledge category whose meaning has not been laid in advance. This sociological reconstruction explains variation in the meaning of the term 'gender', as charted by Hausman (1995), and it clarifies the Butlerian attempt to subvert the sex/gender distinction.

As we will see in the following, the understanding of "sex" as a knowledge category with a finitist meaning also helps clarify the notion of the abject and Butler's apparent indecision on its position. As mentioned in Section 2.2.1.1, Butler is reluctant to specify whether the abject is the unintelligible within the binary pair of intelligible/unintelligible or it is outside this binary opposition as that which cannot be represented, known or understood within the Matrix's arrangement of knowledge. In her own words: "I want to hold out for a conceptual apparatus that allows for the operation of abjection to have a kind of relative autonomy, even emptiness, contentlessness - precisely so that it is not captured by its examples, so that its examples don't then become normative of what we mean by the abject" (Costera 1998: 281). Indeed, in GT Butler seems to exclude homosexuality from the abjected, but in BTM the abjected includes bisexuality and homosexuality.

Within the finitist framework, the abject can be regarded as a classificatory category. If the abject is considered as a knowledge category with underdetermined meaning, then we can account for the possibility of this category changing its meaning over time. Indeed, there are certain circumstances, such as a medical condition, in which the abjected can become accepted. For instance, to be classified under a medical label such as transsexuality carries undertones of inevitability that elicit compassion and lead to social acceptance. It is also the case that what has been regarded as abject in certain historical periods can become accepted after political campaigning, e.g. homosexuality. Hence, the HM is sustained by joint beliefs about what constitutes the standards of acceptable identities. These joint beliefs create a social net of interlocked beliefs which are self-validating.24

In my analysis, our knowledge of the meaning of the categories male/female is nothing but our acquaintance with a finite and limited number of earlier occasions when the categories were identified. Therefore, neither "sex" nor 'gender' are fixed categories laid down in advance and instantiated according to unchanging rules. The process of application of the HM categories is decided upon judgements of similarity that are negotiated and decided in particular settings. The control in the application of the category of "sex" leads to overlearning and routinisation. These processes fix the meaning of the category of "sex" and develop into its reification as given and immutable "fact". Nevertheless, the finitist understanding of rules and norms allows for the possibility of change in the

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24 I will return to the question of self-validation in sub-section: 2.2.7. Self Validation and Artificial Kinds.
definition of the categories and, hence, it does not pre-empt variation and, potentially, subversion. However, the process of category application is constrained by sanctions that aim to ensure the stability of the categories’ meaning. I will come back to this question in Section 2.2.4.3. on “Constraint and sanctioning”. In the next section I will deal in greater detail with the step of the application of categories and the question of performativity and performance.

2.2.4.2 Performativity and “Performance”

In this section I want to spell out the notion of performativity as the mechanism by which the category of "sex" arises from a social category - gender - and to identify the devices by which the workings of this mechanism get disguised in order to make "sex" appear as fact. With this purpose in mind I suggest that there is a parallel between the finitist notion of social institutions as performative utterances that produce a reality and the Butlerian notion of the Matrix’s gender categories as performing "sex". Hence, I propose to reconstruct the Butlerian notion of "sex" as a self-referring knowledge category that reproduces and validates itself through repetition.

We are now familiar with Butler’s notion of gender performativity and her opposition to understanding gender as an act that a subject with agency chooses to perform. As we saw on Chapter 1 on Butler's *oeuvre*, Butler rejects the notion of gender as volitional because, to her, nobody can have identity, and hence volition, before becoming a subject under the imprint of gender. Butler's position is gender performativity, that is, the understanding of gender not as a single act that a subject with volition chooses to do, but gender as a *performative* action. By gender performativity Butler means that a series of socially defined actions, gender, perform or constitute a certain reality that then gets assumed to be a natural given, that is, the category of "sex". Hence, according to Butler, "sex" is not a natural given, but an effect resulting from the repetition of a series of collectively defined acts. As explained in Section 2.2.1.3 on Sex as theoretical term, these set of acts that define and bring about "sex" are 'gender' in so far as they are social. Since 'gender' is a collective defined self-referential category on what should be defined as "feminine" and "masculine", the performative acts that bring about "sex" are defined and ruled by social norms. Hence, what we take to be a natural biological given, "sex", has in fact been partly constructed by 'gender', a self-referential normative category.

In contrast, the voluntarist understanding of gender, that is, gender as a volitional act, is what Butler identifies as the understanding of gender as performance. Although gender as volitional is explicitly not her position, Butler herself uses the term 'performance'. Nevertheless, she uses it in inverted commas - "performance" - to distinguish it graphically from 'performance', as understood in the voluntarist interpretation of gender. However, Butler is not very specific about the meaning of

\[25\] In Section: 2.2.5 on Subject and Agency I will deal with the implications of the Butlerian position in relation to questions of identity.

\[26\] See Chapter 1, footnotes 28 and 40.
"performance" and its relation to performativity. I think that both Butlerian terms, performativity and "performance", can be made more explicit in terms of the finitist theory of social institutions, as follows.

Within the framework of the finitist interpretation of performativity, Butlerian terminology can be clarified by reconstructing the notion of "performance" as the single act of reiteration of the Matrix categories. I propose to consider "performance" as the term that refers to the step in the application of knowledge categories, whereas 'performativity' denotes the structure itself. As we saw in Chapter 1, Butler thinks of gender as an impersonation or performance in order to avoid its connotation of being an unmodifiable given determined by "nature". If we think of gender as a sort of performance or impersonation, then, we could consider every particular act as an instance of "performance". For instance, an act such as T-talk is an example of gender performance since one constitutes oneself as male or female by citing the platitudes that govern the T-talk ascribed to one's "sex".27 Thus, every time we talk about ourselves according to the HM categories we add a new single "performance" to the chain of repeated gender acts that sustain the Matrix as an organisation of knowledge. Performativity denotes the structure of having to apply terms step by step.

The performative reiteration of gender acts functions in a similar way to the ritual repetition of norms, for both mechanisms aim towards the transmission of rules and the creating and reshaping of dispositions. Rituals, ceremonials and symbols present cognitive structures that carry information about social practices. Through the repetition of these cognitive structures, rituals facilitate the acquisition of knowledge and its memorisation and, hence, they support and reinforce routine. The function of rituals, then, is not only to reinforce the distribution of knowledge and power of a certain society, they are also "part of the process wherein power is constantly replicated and reconstituted" (Barnes 1988: 104) via cognition. In the same way, the repetition of gender acts fixes a certain understanding of the category of "sex" that gets replicated in each application of that category. I will spell out this idea more clearly in the following making use of J. L. Austin's terminology (Austin 1962).

As we considered earlier, the Matrix's platitudes are themselves a distribution of knowledge that classifies a series of acts, desires, body parts, and so on, into conventional 'gender' categories according to the norm of compulsory heterosexuality. Butler argues that "sex" and 'gender' are not mere constative utterances, that is, they do not merely describe an external reality. They are performatives because their application makes reality conform to them, that is, they actually produce the reality they express. Hence, the Matrix categories produce the reality they name, rather than conforming to reality. Through their repetition and enforcement the categories of "sex" and 'gender' become descriptive. In other words, the repetition of the HM norms turns a normative utterance into a descriptive one. The reason for this is that the Matrix categories are the reference for guiding routine

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27 I will come back to the question of T-talk in Section 2.2.5.1 on The Subject.
action, hence validate themselves through our actions. For instance, the platitude "women do not sit with their legs apart". If all women follow this norm, then the utterance will become a valid description of women's way of sitting. Hence, the platitude "women do not sit with their legs apart" will become descriptive as well as prescriptive. In this case, there is a jump from the normative to the descriptive. This is so because, if the performative utterance makes reality conform to itself successfully, in other words if the norms are followed, then the performative utterance becomes descriptive. The utterance is a self-validating performative utterance because it describes the reality that it has itself produced. Hence, the Matrix's platitudes are normative and descriptive-explanatory because they are performative.

Through their repeated application, the HM categories actualise themselves by bringing into being the reality they are said to represent. To put it differently, the reiterated application of the Matrix's categories makes reality conform to them, thus creating as an artificial kind the reality they allegedly represent. Thus, every act performed in accordance with the HM's categories validates its categories by creating the reality those categories are allegedly describing in a self-fulfilling prophecy. This explains why Butler thinks that participation in any aspect of the HM's notion of biological differences is equivalent to the enforcement of the law of compulsory heterosexuality.

The notion of "sex" and "gender" as being validated through the performative reiteration of "gender" acts, further clarifies the Butlerian notion of sex as something that cannot be grasped. We can then think of each citation of the category of "sex" as a layer. The constructed character of "sex" gets concealed under layers of citation that "sediment" into the seemingly "solid" fact of "biological sex". Hence, the apparent "solidity" of "sex" is the fruit of a series of routine acts partly sustained by collective unawareness of its constructed character. If we miss the fact that "sex" is the product of a chain of self-referring gender "performances", then we will be unaware of "sex" as the product of a series of reiterations of the Matrix's laws and "sex" will be perceived as a fixed immutable entity.

To summarise, performativity is the process of repetition by which the Matrix's categories create the reality they are said to express. Each act of application of the Matrix's categories is its "performance", that is, a single act of reiteration in the chain of citations that reproduces the Matrix's categories. The members of the collective bring themselves into line with the HM categories by constituting themselves as lawful members of their assigned "sex" category by talking and acting in accordance to the HM's norms. Hence, through this performative mechanism, the Matrix functions like a self-fulfilling prophecy insofar as its knowledge categories refer to a reality that they themselves

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28 I will elaborate this point further in Section 2.2.7. on Materiality and Artificial Kinds.

29 "When people ask the question 'aren't these biological differences?', they're not really asking a question about the materiality of the body. They're actually asking whether or not the social institution of reproduction is the most salient one for thinking about gender. In that sense, there is a discursive enforcement of a norm." (Butler 1994, 34-5)
constitute. We can conclude from this that the HM is a self-referring and self-validating social institution.

2.2.4.3 Constraint and sanctioning

In this section I will explore the normative aspects of the HM from the perspective of finitism. I argue that the Matrix's folk biology functions like a norm enforced through cognitive constraint and collective sanctioning.

First of all I will briefly recall Butler's position. As mentioned in Chapter 1, Butler argues that we are compelled by collective sanctioning to mime the category of "sex" through the norm of identification. Although categories such as 'man' and 'woman' are unattainable symbolic positions, compliance with the Matrix's conventions is presented as a duty and responsibility and disobedience provokes sanctions. Any behaviour in contravention of the Matrix's standards of identity is collectively rejected and punished, and can entail loss of civil rights (loss of job, imprisonment, etc.). According to Butler, the disciplines of medicine and psychoanalysis help to produce and regulate the Matrix's categories and platitudes that constitute the popular understanding of biology, and also define the standards of acceptable identities in opposition to the abject. These scientific discourses define the standards of acceptable identities in contrast to the abject. In Butler's terms, the abject stands for the non-human and it is seen as diminishing and polluting. Hence, the abject is perceived as inferior and contact with it is discouraged.

Departing from a notion of "sex" as the most central knowledge category of the HM, I aim to reconstruct sanctioning for compliance within the framework of meaning finitism. Prior to expounding my reconstruction, I will present a brief reminder of the relevant ideas of finitism. As we saw earlier, meaning finitism holds that, since the judgements of similarity are underdetermined by past instances, there is always a step in the application of any knowledge category in which the suitability of the category to the given instance is assessed. Nevertheless, although the judgements of similarity are underdetermined they are not arbitrary, for they are guided and structured by a taken-for-granted background that shapes our perception. This taken-for-granted background is constituted by beliefs about reality. These beliefs are social conventions that "engender expectation" (Barnes et al. 1996: 70). This implies that we expect our beliefs to be in agreement with our experience and we expect our experience to confirm them.

I argue that the HM platitudes are this taken-for-granted background that shapes our perception. I maintain that the Matrix is a theory that functions as a cognitive structure in so far as its knowledge categories form a network of associations that organises and guides an individual's perception. In other words, knowledge of the HM's platitudes involves a readiness to search for and assimilate incoming information in terms relevant to the HM platitudes, thus functioning as an
anticipatory structure that perpetuates itself. Hence, the Matrix provides certain a cognitive economy but involves a certain rigidity in perception and classificatory practices.

As a self-referential distribution of knowledge the Matrix functions in a way comparable to a paradigmatic theory in Kuhnian normal science: the tendency is to test the users not the theory. In the case of the Matrix, people tend to present themselves to fit its platitudes and categories. When a certain individual does not fit the Matrix’s theory, it is not the Matrix’s knowledge categories that are put into doubt, but the individual. In other words, it is the users who are tested and when there is a mismatch between individuals and the HM, it is not the Matrix which is found problematic but the individuals who do not conform to it.

The enforcement of the Matrix’s norms is not only effected through the provision of a body of beliefs that conditions our perception and tends to perpetuate the Matrix’s categories. The Matrix’s norms are also enforced through the pressure of collective sanctioning aiming to regulate the faithful citation of the Matrix’s laws and categories. This implies that the similarity or dissimilarity of the subjects to the HM’s normative standards of identity and their obedience or disobedience to the laws that rule them is constantly monitored. For instance, all persons are socially compelled to present a public appearance that leaves no room for doubt as to which category they should be classified in. There exist a whole body of conventions about dress, public appearance, talk, demeanour, sexual behaviour, and so on which we are obliged to observe in order to achieve collective sanctioning and avoid punishment. The success of our “passing” - that is to say, the appropriateness of our actions in relation to our attributed genitals - is monitored and judged by others in accordance to the norms of the HM. Hence, people are compelled to present themselves in front of others for approval in their assigned gender and justify themselves in terms of the platitudes that govern the category to which they belong.

Mutual sanctioning of the application of knowledge and mutual sanctioning to encourage appropriate actions are not separable activities. This is so because individuals’ knowledge of society arises from observation of what is approved and disapproved behaviour. Therefore, observation of mutual sanctioning provides guidelines for cognition which, in their turn, regulate action. Since “that which aligns cognition is also that which aligns action” (Barnes 1988: 193, n. 10), the continuation of a certain culture, understood as a certain arrangement of knowledge, depends on mutual sanctioning because mutual sanctioning ensures the continuity and stability of the categories in which routine social interaction is based. Hence, the Matrix’s normative standards are a corpus of self-referential categories sustained by the sanctioning of deviancy.

As I argued earlier, congruence between the categories of sex and gender is a necessary condition for the HM. Since the Matrix classifies individuals into two sexes in order to achieve a grouping defined by the individuals’ reproductive capacity, any doubts that arise about the sex-gender

30 The research of Kessler and MacKenna offer a good illustration of this phenomenon. I will expand on these authors in Chapter 4 on Earlier work on transsexuals.
congruence will threaten its stability. For this reason, any individual that might potentially threaten the Matrix's order by transgressing the limits of intelligible identities will be controlled to avoid the possibility of disruption. The deviant individual will be constrained to adjust to the Matrix's standards.

In certain instances, when a group of individuals do not fit into the Matrix' standards of identity, the scientific discourses can create a new category which can be accommodated within the established definitions. Therefore, abjected groups can become accepted under special circumstances, such as political pressure or a medical label. We could take the case of homosexuals as an example: they have been (partly) accepted only after a great deal of campaigning for political awareness. Transsexualism is another abjected identity whose social acceptance is sought through a medical label - that is, a classification devised by one of the scientific discourses that regulate the HM. Since a medical condition denotes inevitability, the transsexual cannot be made responsible for his/her behaviour. When the subject cannot be made responsible for their behaviour, there is a strong case for advertising her/his social acceptance on the grounds of compassion. This negotiation of social status shows that the developing interactions between terms correlate with the developing interactions between the people that use them.

The compulsion to conform and to sanction is generated through fear of rejection associated with the abject. The abject is the socially unacceptable and it is presented as that which cannot be conceived within the Matrix knowledge categories. The abject represents an undesirable state that functions as a threat against deviancy and, thus, helps maintaining the stability necessary to sustain routine. The abject is not only sustained through disciplinary actions such as violence, job dismissal, and so on, but also through small mechanisms that regulate conformity by acting on our emotional dispositions. The work of Scheff on shame and pride (Scheff 1990) shows that there is a myriad of minute mechanisms, such as glance, that promote conformity to the culturally acceptable. Scheff researches into the emotions of shame and pride as instruments for the social monitoring of the self, to argue that, at the microsocial level, social pressure to conform acts through the negative evaluations by self or others, perceived as shame, and the awarding of deference, perceived as pride. Thus, there is a wide scope of sanctioning mechanisms that work towards social conformism through small responses that push our self-perception and our social status along the scale of emotions of shame and pride. I want to suggest that abjection as instrument for managing deviancy acts as a deterrent because the abjected holds no social status and it is placed in the extreme of shame in the scale shame/pride.

The Matrix discourages contact with the abject by associating it with feelings of pollution and degradation. The higher the negative emotional charge surrounding the abjected, the stronger the deterrent to violate the Matrix's standards of identity becomes. Thus, shame and fear of pollution from the abjected are emotions through which the Matrix regulates transgression. Sanctioning for the reinforcement and maintenance of the category of "sex" carries an emotional charge located both on the side of the abjected and on the side of those that sanction the transgressors.
To summarise, scientific discourses define the Matrix’s standards of acceptable identities in contrast to the abject. These standards are enforced through constraint in the application of the Matrix’s categories and mutual sanctioning of behaviour. The Matrix’s categories behave as a particular cognitive structure which embeds the way in which we organise our sensual and social reality. Since gender is ubiquitous in social activities (see Garfinkel 1967), most of our everyday social interactions rely in some way or other in the platitudes contained in this cognitive structure. We mime the Matrix’s category of “sex” to elude abjection, we account for our behaviour in terms of its platitudes and we disapprove of those who cannot come up with accounts of themselves in accordance with it. Therefore, there are normative aspects to the HM that compel people to conform in order to avoid punishment, shameful abjection and potential loss of civil rights.

2.2.4.4 Reflexivity

Here I will consider the role of reflexivity in sustaining the Matrix’s normative standards of identity. As we saw earlier, Barnes regards routine as a collective accomplishment achieved through the regulation of accounts and actions involving shared knowledge. These accounts are themselves used as reference for action as well as reference for further accounts. This reflexive process ensures that individuals calculate their actions in accordance to socially regulated self-referential categories. Hence, in the performative model, both the consensus underlying normative standards and the collective monitoring of individual tendencies are considered to be reflexive.

The HM is a distribution of shared knowledge whose categories function as a normative standard. Reflexivity is essential in the definition and maintenance of the Matrix’s normative standards. This is so because, just as with any other social institution, the Matrix’s norms are defined on the basis of an agreement as to what are the norms, which are themselves based on accounts of the application of the categories. The normative category of “sex” is crucial in routine social interaction, for a great deal of taken-for-granted knowledge relies on it. If we take “sex” as a self-referential knowledge category and a collective creative accomplishment, then we can see that its stability partly depends on individuals’ readiness to reflect on themselves and others’ actions and accounts of knowledge.

In social interaction, individuals’ conformity to “sex” involves physical presentation and accounts of the self - ‘I’-talk - that involve the use of shared knowledge associated with this category. What we can ascribe to ourselves in our ‘I’-talk is collectively defined and constrained, hence ‘I’-talk together with behaviour, appearance, and so on, are “actively monitored, reflected upon and made the objects or referents of further accounts, as part of the routine business of everyday life” (Barnes, Bloor, Henry 1996: 117). Hence, the individual’s appearance, actions and accounts of knowledge are constantly monitored and reflected upon by her or himself and others. Moreover, not only our own ‘I’-talk and actions are constrained and sanctioned by ourselves and others. As we become competent
users of 'I'-talk we become authorised as competent sanctioners of others' 'I'-talk and acquire the right to exercise constraint on others.

The classification of a certain individual in any of the Matrix categories affects every other category and might change one's self-assessment. This is so because kinds are interdependent since the way in which we classify a particular instance affects the classification of other kinds. Since every instance of classification might potentially affect the whole system and one's position in it, it is in the interest of the collective and the individual to reflect on and monitor the applications of knowledge. Hence, subjects are ready to contribute to sustaining the stability of meaning necessary for routine activities, and to conform to them themselves so as to prevent one's own abjection. Given that the stability of meaning of the Matrix's categories is a collective good, we can explain the readiness of the Matrix's users to participate in reflective and sanctioning activities. In sum, "sex" as a norm is a collective accomplishment achieved through reflecting on individuals' accounts.

2.2.5 THE SUBJECT, AGENCY AND RESISTANCE

In this section I reconstruct the Butlerian notion of the subject as well as her understanding of agency and subversion. First I expound a reconstruction of the Butlerian notion of subject and agency in terms of the ideas of 'I'-talk. I hope to spell out and resolve the apparent contradiction in Butler's position by offering a collectivistic account of the subject and its sense of self, while also acknowledging the processes of subjectification as a collective accomplishment that both occasions and constrains agency. I will continue by reconstructing the Butlerian understanding of resistance as meaning underdetermination. In doing so I will examine gender category as interactional, as well as the possibility of subversive strategies and the constraint they encounter. Finally, I will consider the contribution of the Butlerian subject to the debate methodological individualism vs. methodological holism.

2.2.5.1 The subject

I will start by sketching Butler's ideas on the subject. As we saw in Chapter 1, Butler considers the psychological persona as an effect of language. It is important to keep in mind that to Butler, in particular in her more recent work PL, the subject is not the same as the individual. In her view, individuals become subjects through language, for only through language does the person acquire his/her identity. Hence, as introduced in Chapter 1, the subject's identity is social because it is brought about by reflecting and referring to oneself via language. Since language is a collective achievement it is not under the full control of the subject. Therefore, the subject, by definition,

31 It must be noted that, apart from Butler's distinction, there tends to confusion associated with the term "individual". This confusion derives from conflating two different senses of the term, namely: "individual" as a human being, a term only applied to humans; and "individual" in the sense of particular, within the framework of the old philosophical distinction between individuals or particulars as opposed to universals.
includes within itself an "otherness" (language) over which it has not control. Hence, in Butler's work, the subject is a linguistic category for there is no 'I' prior to the social processes of subjectification. Thus, she understands the subject as a space generated and sustained by collectively defined, self-referential norms. So, unlike the notion of individual, the Butlerian notion of subject includes the collective power that has generated it.

Although Butler at times seems to use the terms 'subject' and 'psyche' interchangeably, she distinguishes between these terms in the following manner. The 'subject' is used to refer to the collectively defined position the individual occupies, whereas Butler uses the term 'psyche' to refer to a larger unity that includes both the subject and the elements of the subject that do not conform to the norms. These elements that do not conform is what Butler calls the "risk and excess" (IM: 28) of the subject. According to Butler, this 'excess' is a potential source of disruption that resides in the subject's unconscious. Butler thinks that the sense of psychic interiority and the accompanying illusions of "being" and "substance" are "fostered by the belief that the grammatical formulation of subject and predicate reflects the prior ontological reality of substance and attribute" (GT: 20).

Butler conceives the subject as socially constituted in discourse, that is, as an effect of the processes of "subjectification" described by psychoanalysis, such as melancholy and guilt. These processes bring about the subject's identity by performing the illusion of inner space through the prohibition of certain desires. The proscription of desires impels the subject to reflect upon her/his 'I', thus giving rise to the psychic internal space, which is the basis for the subject's identity. For instance, the occurrence of a forbidden desire in a particular individual will be associated with the threat of abjection and marginalisation. As a result of perceiving a negative evaluation of the self by others, we are made to reflect on our desires and to feel shame and guilt. These feelings will force self-reflection and, thus, will generate the perception of an interior space. As mentioned in Section 2.2.4.3 on Constraint and Sanctioning, emotions are instrumental in the implementation of norms by reinforcing abjection and sanctioning through the creation of an inner psychic space.

Although Butler talks about the processes of "subjectification" from the point of view of psychoanalysis, I want to argue that they can be also approached from the point of view of sociology. In this reconstruction of Butler's thought, particularly in my position towards sanctioning and Scheff's research on shame and pride, I "sociologise" psychoanalytical categories responding to the need for placing these concepts in their social context in order to fully grasp their workings.

Kusch argues that the subject's intuition of the self is product of 'I'-talk, for 'I' is the term that indicates individuality and through which we refer to our mental states. Kusch treats the 'I' as a self-referential social institution. It should be kept in mind that the self-referentiality of 'I'-talk works in

32 I will come back to the question of disruption in Section 2.2.5.3. on Underdetermination and Resistance.
33 In Chapter 3 on Butler's critics, I will review criticisms against Butler for restricting herself to psychoanalytic categories. Indeed, a "transposition" to sociology is suggested by several authors and most forcefully recommended by Hood-Williams & Harrison (Hood-Williams & Harrison 1998: 91).
two directions: at the social level, for the meaning of T-talk is defined and monitored by the members
directions: 2280 of the collective, and at the level of the individual, for the term refers to previous T-talk uttered by the
individual. I propose considering the subject an artificial kind shaped by the use of T-talk and
reconstruct the illusion of psychic interiority in which, according to Butler, the subject is based, as
product of T-talk. As mentioned above, there are two ways in which T-talk self-refers: the collective
and the individual.

At the collective level T-talk is self-referring through the definition and monitoring of T-talk.
Whatever we want to ascribe ourselves in T-talk is regulated by the collective. For instance, as
members of a "sex" category such as 'female' we cannot ascribe to ourselves the possession of a penis
or a phallus, a wife, or the paternity of a child without agreement of the collective. Hence, what we
ascribe to ourselves is constrained by the collective definitions of what constitutes proper 'male' or
'female' talk. Since the use and meaning of T-talk is socially defined and regulated, its effect - that is,
the intuition of T - is a social institution. The second way in which T-talk self-refers is at individual
level. In so far as T-talk refers to previous T-talk, the subject's sense of inner space can be
reconstructed as a product of the self-validating reiteration of previous T-talk. That is, by making
people refer to themselves as T, one creates a reference which is a reference for the subject itself too.
In other words, by making one say repeatedly T, one creates something which can be subsequently
referred to as subject.

The double self-referentiality of T-talk at individual and collective level reveals that the
individual's sense of T is self-referential too. Thus, the T can be considered as a social kind partly
constituted by social terms, that is, the Matrix's norms. Nevertheless, it is also something more than
that because, by making people talk about themselves in a certain way, one also manipulates their
mental states. In other words, T-talk not only provides a way of talking, it also performs the subject
in a certain way. By using T-talk an individual refers to oneself through a collectively defined
category, the T. Thus the individual is performed as someone who has the right to refer to her/himself
as T as long as s/he fulfils the obligation of using only the T-talk prescribed to his or her "sex" and
thus, becoming a subject. Therefore, the individual is performed into a subject in two ways: first, by
creating a sense of interiority through the repetition of T that gets consolidated by making the
individual look back to her/himself and reflect on her/his own behaviour; second, by fashioning and
sanctioning T-talk to fit the Matrix's "sex" categories.

We can now see in what way the terms subject and subjection are intertwined, since by
subjecting an individual to certain sanctions, the individual is constituted as a subject that can then be
subjected to sanction. Hence, through sanctioning, that which can be sanctioned, namely the subject,
gets constituted. In other words, the reference or object of the social processes of sanctioning, namely
the subject's sense of self and interiority, is itself created by those social processes. For instance, the
ability to reflect upon one's behaviour can be manipulated along the scale of shame and pride. In order

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to feel pride and shame it is necessary to have a sense of self conceived as an interior stable centre. This centre is an artificial kind: the subject.

According to Butler, the illusion of the interiority to which T-talk refers is defined and achieved through the repetition of normative gender acts and psychic norms. Butler's insight is compatible with reconstructing the subject's sense of self through collectively defined and regulated T-talk. Psychic norms are linguistic inasmuch as they are transmitted and conveyed via language. Language is social and self-referential, therefore psychic norms are also social and self-referential social institutions. Indeed, as Butler argues, the processes of subjectification are discursive, hence social, insofar as they perform feelings and incite action through words. I will take the example of guilt again: guilt involves the capacity to feel guilty and also the ability to present oneself to others as feeling guilty. In other words, guilt is an artificial kind performed by a linguistic category, since the existence of guilt depends on being talked about and referred to through linguistic categories. Guilt is an action the validity of which depends on a self-referential action-explanation. As argued in Section 2.1.2.3., when taken collectively, actions and action-explanations are self-referential and self-validating social kinds.

2.2.5.2 Agency

So far I have presented a theoretical account of how the subject comes about from the third person perspective. However, Butler is not only interested in theoretical accounts of subjectivity. She is also concerned about the possibility of political action. In the previous section I recast constructed the subject as an artificial kind product of T-talk and, therefore, as a self-referential social institution. Nevertheless, two questions remain unanswered: whether there exists the possibility of agency (understood as the capacity for action), and what such agency might consist of. Obviously, these are questions of great political importance and we must keep in mind that Butler's concern with agency is directly related to politics (Butler 1994a: 46-7). In order to find out what Butler's position we must examine the role she ascribes to the T when considering the possibility of action. In order to elucidate this I will review Butler's notion of agency as desire and its relation with the subject.

As discussed in the preceding section, the Lacanian notion of the subject adopted by Butler conceives the subject as an effect of language based on the intuitions of first person privileged access and self-creation. Both Lacan and Butler consider the subject's own sense of agency is a miscognition created by language; motion and change in the subject is conceived as desire for desire is that which moves the subject into action. In order to understand the Butlerian notion of desire we must keep in mind that, to Butler, the subject's sense of identity "is defined as much by what one is not as by the position that one explicitly inhabits" (Butler I2: 35). That is, the Butlerian subject is defined in opposition to what is not. The subject relates to with what it is not (the lack in Lacanian terms) via desire. Desire is the subject's essential characteristic and desire is caused by lack. Desire is, then, the
Butlerian analogue to agency although with some qualifications I will present in the following sociological reconstruction.

So far I have shown how Butler's notion of the subject leads her to understand the analysis of agency as an inextricable part of the analysis of the subject. Though, Butler does not conceive desire, hence agency, as an intrinsic feature of the subject. This is because she does not think agency as independent of our mental states. As a subjective mental state, the intuition of agency can be considered as an artificial kind. If I reconstruct the Butlerian notion of desire as an intuition of motivation and sovereignty product of 'I'-talk, I can account for the subject's first person intuition of agency as an effect of the repetition of 'I'-talk. Agency can thus be reconstructed as the Matrix's theoretical term that masks the social shaping of the subject's intuition of intentionality and sovereignty. I will expand this sociological reconstruction of desire in the following paragraphs.

It was established in the preceding section that the subject's intuition of interiority, and hence its sense of self, is an artificial kind generated through self-referential 'I'-talk and sanctioning. It was also established that the subject's mental states and the intuitions of privileged first-person access and radical self-creation were artificial kinds performed by the Matrix's self-referential 'I' talk. Here I want to argue that the Butlerian notion of desire can be better understood as an intuition of intentionality performed by 'I' talk. The intuition of agency, like 'I'-talk, is self-referential in two ways: at the individual and at the collective level. At the level of the individual, desire is self-referential in so far as it relies on the existence of the subject's sense of interiority, previously performed by collectively defined self-referential 'I' talk, and in so far as the subject constrains him/herself to desire only what is socially permissible. According to Butler, desire is constituted in relation with the desires of others.

According to Butler, desire is constituted by the desires of others, since the perceived desires of other subjects constitute our own. In terms of my reconstruction, the subject's intuition of agency and its desires are constrained at the level of the collective in so far as the perceived desires of other subjects that constitute our own are also ruled by the Matrix. In other words, the intuition of agency is socially shaped and regulated, for it is the collective that rules whether certain desires are appropriate to a certain Matrix category, their appropriate time, and so on. Hence, the Butlerian/Lacanian notion of 'lack' can be sociologically reconstructed, at least to an extent, as a social institution, for subjects are pressurised by society to desire certain individuals, namely those of the 'other' "sex", in line with a fictive normative coherence of what constitutes 'sex' and heterosexual desire. Since desire is shaped by the collective, the subject's intuition of intentionality and agency can be considered a social institution collectively defined, self-referential and self-validating.

In so far as desire is self-referential at the collective level, the subject's intuition of intentionality is defined by the collective, not the individual. Therefore, both the intuition of 'I' and the intuition of motivation are structured by the Matrix platitudes and laws. As a consequence, the subject's motivational states cannot be reduced to an individual experience, for they are not interior but 'transindividual' and intersubjective. Nevertheless, in spite of being defined and regulated by social
norms, the Butlerian subject perceives him/herself as having independent intentionality, that is, sovereignty. This perception of intentionality experienced from the first person can be explained in a similar way in which Kusch elucidates individualist intuitions as misperceptions of the self-referentiality of T-talk. 34 That is, the subject's misperception can be partly attributed to misunderstanding the collective self-referentiality of T talk and desire as an independent individual self-reference. Thus, the self-ascriber misperceives an individual citation of self-referential collectively defined desires as sign of being in full command of one's desires and actions. Thus, as possessing fully independent agency as individual and being in sovereign command of his/her actions.

To be an T-talker is a social status in so far as it involves being a member of the social institution of T-talk, that is, having the right to ascribe to oneself desires and intentions, hence motivational states. To become a competent user of T-talk, involves the obligation to use it properly and it entails the ability to be a competent sanctioner able to discriminate between right and wrong uses. The T-talker is assumed to be responsible for his/hers statements or actions. Hence, T talk is a social status and the T-talker ascribing desires and agency also has a social aspect involving rights, obligations and responsibilities.

To sum up, agency can be understood as a theoretical term derived from certain observables, such as subjects' expression of intentions, desires, and so on. In this sociological reconstruction I account for the subject's first person sense of agency as the intuition of intentionality, that is, a motivational state considered as an artificial kind performed through the repetition of T-talk. Once the subject's sense of 'agency' has been constituted, it can be used politically. That is, the subject's motivational states can be mobilised for political purposes. Nevertheless, there is another question that needs elucidating here: the idea that, in spite of being shaped by the Matrix's categories and by compulsory heterosexuality, the subject never conforms neatly to the norms. In Butler's understanding, the subject's psyche is a source of disruption, since all those desires, actions, characteristics and so on, that fail to conform with the Matrix's normative identification are potentially subversive. In the following section, I will focus on agency as the possibility of subversion, namely, in the aspect under which Butler exclusively conceives it, that of "political prerogative" (Butler 1994a: 46-7) from the point of view of finitism.

2.2.5.3 Underdetermination and Resistance

As we saw in the previous sections, Butler's concern with the possibility of agency is directly related to the search for the capacities of subversive action available to the subject. In Butler's own words, her aim is to find out "how to take an oppositional relation to power" (PL: 17) in spite of the subject's implication in the power it opposes. In Butler's view, agency as subversion can only exist

34 Incidentally, Lacan detects a misperception in the subject that he terms la méconnaissance ("misunderstanding") of the subject. Méconnaissance is the basic misrecognition that lies at the core of the subject from the early stages of the formation of the ego in the mirror stage.
within the reiterative practices of power; insofar as it exists, it consists of reworking the conventions that constitute our gender identity. In other words, to Butler the possibility of resistance to the Matrix's hegemony is the (limited) possibility of variation that resides in the chain of repetitions of gender norms. So, given the importance of the constraints to action, how can there be resistance and what are its sources? As already seen, the possibility of resistance arises because the enforcement of the Matrix's laws is not always effective. This is so, argues Butler, because it is not possible to achieve a faultless embodiment of the Matrix's normative gender categories since they are an unattainable ideal. In other words, the category of "sex" fails to materialise itself successfully in all bodies and identities and this failure is the occasion for instabilities and subversion.

As we saw in Chapter 1, Butler aims to subvert the Matrix's hegemony through the resignification of its identity categories, and locates the opportunity for subversion in the interval between the repetition of the Matrix's laws. Since she believes that the law "can spawn permutations which constitute subversion" (GT: 93), "every instance of unfaithfulness to the law" (GT: 93) is resistance. Though, Butler believes that there is no possibility of "free" social political action outside other's actions, since the Matrix's hegemony is the result of a chain of citations. This implies the understanding of agency as a set of acts that stand in citational relation to each other.

I have divided the following exposition into three parts. In the first part I will present a reconstruction of Butler's understanding of resistance in terms of meaning finitism. In the second part I will examine the subversive strategies proposed by Butler and the obstacles they confront, again addressing such issues from the point of view of my reconstruction. Finally, I will position the Butlerian reconstruction within the debate between methodological individualism and methodological holism.

Interactional analysis of gender and meaning finitism

We are already familiar with Butler's notion of gender as relational, that is, as "a relation among socially constituted subjects in specifiable contexts" (1990b: 10). Gender as relational implies that the Matrix's terms, such as "female" and "woman", should not be regarded as stable notions because they gain their signification in social interaction. Hence, according to Butler, gender is a collective creative accomplishment that must be understood in interaction, for it only exists in interaction. It follows that in order to study gender we must focus on the mechanisms and interactions through which the Matrix's power is exercised. It follows that an interactional approach to the analysis of the Matrix categories will entail conceiving the meaning of gender as self-referential, collectively created and collectively sustained. As a consequence, from the point of view of meaning finitism, the possibility of altering the meaning of a given category or law is necessarily dependent on the reception and deployment of that category or law and its alterations by the collective. This explains why there is no possibility of "free" agency: since the use and definition of the Matrix's categories through which our identity is formed and defined is collectively agreed, there can be no change arising from one
single subject independently of the collectively agreed conventions. Hence, political action is necessarily the "sum of agencies" (GT), in other words collective action, for it involves the alteration of collectively defined meaning that can only be achieved through the performance of a series of actions by a number of subjects.

Butler stresses that the HM does not have in itself the power to exist and to persist. Human social action is necessary for its existence and its definition. Similarly, the performative model of social institutions conceives social power as a distribution of knowledge that involves many people's actions. Since in the finitist account of rules the meaning of a rule is not pre-determined, but generated in response to the contingencies appearing in each act of concept application, rules are not independent from their application. Rules and laws are not regarded as having power in themselves. In the performative model of social institutions the power to sustain the normative order is seen as residing in people's actions, that is, in their conformity to the normative order and in the power of the collective to constrain and sanction individuals' actions. Hence, the finitist account emphasises the role of people in creating and sustaining rules. If we reconstruct the Matrix's categories not as fixed norms, but as underdetermined applications of knowledge categories, then, we can conceive the subject's acts as being calculated in conformance to the established routine system, that is, the hegemonic HM, but not completely determined by it.

If we reconstruct "sex" as a normative knowledge category we could locate the possibility of political action in the step of the application of the Matrix's categories. Since the application of normative knowledge categories is not limited by past instances, every application of the category to a new instance can potentially modify the category itself and other categories. Therefore, the possibility of change, though constrained, resides in the undertermination of the categories' meaning. Paraphrasing Barnes on power (Barnes 1988: 92) it could be said that in its social aspects there cannot be more to "sex" than is known to be to the collective. That is, the capacity of people to grasp and represent knowledge about "sex" partly sets limits on the possible forms that such a knowledge can take; and how the capacity to know is actually used influences the actual form that "sex" takes. In other words, what people knows about "sex" shapes their actions and their recognition of other's actions, thus, to a certain extent constraining the very category of "sex" for themselves and others. Consequently, the notion of "sex" is partly limited by what people think it is. Awareness of this fact is one of Butler's objectives aimed to generate the possibility of different applications of the category of "sex" that can potentially change its meaning.

Butler believes that "no social formation can endure without becoming reinstated, and that every reinstatement puts the 'structure' in question at risk, suggesting the possibility of its own undoing is at once the condition of possibility of structure itself" (Butler 1997c: 14). The Butlerian "intervals" of the application of the law - that is, the steps of the performance of its application - is what she considers the site of potential occasions for subversion. As explained above, in the performative model the meaning of rules is determined by its use, therefore any change in the use of
the rule or the application of a category can potentially change its meaning. If the normative order is thus externally sustained, it is exposed to deviance and subversion. In my reconstruction I have argued that Butler's "intervals" can be understood in terms of the underdetermination of the meaning of folk sexological platitudes. Since the domain of application of a term is not pre-determined, every act of classification might change the meaning of a term as well as the meanings of other terms. In conclusion, every act of classification is potentially "unfaithful" to the law, for it can alter the Matrix's definitions and, hence, it might constitute resistance. In the next section I will explore the potential subversive capacities of unfaithful repetition.

Subversive strategies and constraint

As strategy to subvert the HM's standards of identity Butler proposes to problematise the category of "identity". Since subjects' identity as defined in the Matrix is inextricably bound up in its definition to "sex", Butler suggests to destabilise "sexual" identity by multiplying sexual discourses. Since Butler believes that subjects are partly constituted by language and beliefs contained in language, she conceives language as a political tool to expose and displace the configuration of bodies according to heterosexual hegemony. Butler proposes to subvert the HM by "proliferating" the binary structures of the category of "sex" that regulate identity. By this she means to bring about categories, acts, desires, and so on, that do not fit neatly with the Matrix binary terms "male/female" that define subject's identity. At this respect Butler writes: "the possibility of... resistance is derived from what is unforeseeable in proliferation" (PL: 60, emphasis of the author).

The Butlerian concept of the Matrix's hegemony as a collective accomplishment, as well as her notions of subject and resistance to regulation carry the implication that subversion cannot be planned or prevented, because the outcome of the proliferation of bodies and meanings is "unforeseeable". It must be kept in mind that, as explained in Chapter 1, Butler conceives the subject as being structured by social categories and therefore collectively defined. This conception rules out the possibility of a single subject apprehending the whole of corpus of knowledge categories, for it is collectively defined and in constant flux. This implies that it is not possible for a subject to exert control on the nature and consequences of her/his own actions, since these consequences always take place in the collective realm. Hence, the Butlerian understanding of subversion cannot have teleological necessity. Since the Butlerian subject is structured by the very same power which enables its capacity for action, Butler does not conceive the possibility of will directing subversion from outside the HM's knowledge categories. This implies that the potential disruption of the Matrix is limited since deviance and resignification can only be done from within the HM. Another characteristic of the Butlerian understanding of resistance is that, given that the subject is a product of many power relations often exerting contradictory demands, resistance to the Matrix can only be local, that is, it can only oppose one of the many power mechanisms that bring the subject into being.
In the previous section I proposed to reconstruct the Butlerian possibility of resignification in terms of meaning underdetermination produced by necessary iteration of the Matrix's categories. The question of the constraint inherent in discourse can also be adequately accounted for by meaning undeterminism. As we have just seen, meaning undeterminism conveys the possibility of change through resignification but, at the same time, it also accounts for constraint and regulation, for it does not entail free play of signs. In terms of meaning finitism, the possibility of change in the Matrix is constrained by the fact that the judgements of similarity are guided and structured by the Matrix's organisation of knowledge. As argued earlier, the Matrix functions as a cognitive order that constitutes the taken-for-granted background shaping our perception. This cognitive order is the basis for shared activities and routine action and constitutes a collective good.

Butler aims to disrupt the Matrix's hegemony as a routinised system by making individuals regain awareness of their input in its constitution. Just as in Brechtian theatre, this awareness would be achieved by rending unfamiliar what is routinely taken for granted. By challenging the subjects' unexamined assumptions, a heightening of their critical attitude will be achieved. This would lead to the subjects realising that power resides in the general and common social context, not in the hands of the elite, and that the reproduction of routine/power depends on their own joint and dispositional beliefs. For instance, Butler suggests that through the appropriation and redeployment of the Matrix's standards of identity in new contexts, their normative meanings would be blurred and a new vocabulary for gender that could potentially disrupt the category of "sex" would arise. These new classificatory categories would shift the meaning of "sex" thus, undermining its alleged authority as the origin of gender.

Nevertheless, such modification of meaning would only imply a gradual variation because meaning is collectively defined and constrained, therefore no single act can alter the meaning of a category substantially. Variation of meaning can only be achieved through the aggregation of many single instances of application of a certain category or categories. This is a sociological reconstruction of Butler's notion of political acts as "standing in citational relation to each other". Given that resignification cannot be controlled, it would be futile to design a political program aimed at the systematic subversion of the HM's knowledge categories. Such a programme would only make sense within the framework of meaning determinism, for it is not possible to exert a real control over meaning since it is collectively defined. Hence, Butler concludes, complicity with power and ambivalence in forms of resistance are unavoidable.

Given the Matrix's role as a collectively shared medium of communication, any individual who attempts to enact an occurrence that falls outside the norm is forced to couch it in the prevalent HM terms. Any political action or speech aiming to subvert the Matrix is necessarily using its terms in order to be communicable and intelligible at all. It follows that any repetition that aims to be subversive has to be phrased using the HM's platitudes, and therefore it presupposes to a substantial extent the system it aims to subvert. This is a sociological way of understanding Butler when she
writes "agency is implicated in subordination" (PL: 17). Moreover, any attempt at subversive repetition of the Matrix's terms might actually reconstitute them. Therefore, the HM provides its users with a cognitive economy but it also entails a certain rigidity in interpreting the world. This rigidity slows down the process of recognising and learning new models because any talk about alternative models or types must be couched in the Matrix's terms in order to be intelligible. It follows that the Matrix cannot easily be altered by one individual, therefore, in order to stand any chance of success, deviance must be concerted. However, it is difficult to achieve concerted variation in a certain activity or category since it requires a great deal of organisation, of calculation of potential gain, as well as a sufficient number of individuals involved in it to make it meaningful. Since it is difficult to achieve a reliable calculation of the consequences of variation, the prevailing order tends to persist.

For all these reasons, the HM platitudes are hard to avoid. Butler herself confronts the difficulty in attempting to find a new standpoint from which to subvert the HM. As we saw in Chapter 1, Butler cites as examples of potential unfaithful repetition the parodies of binary gender such as drag, butch/femme identities, and some political performances of queer activism. These activities are instances of category application that might vary the meaning of the category. For instance, the appropriation and redeployment of injurious speech, such as the term "queer", has achieved a change in its meaning from the initial insult to a group denomination without negative connotations, such as "queer studies" or "queer theory". Nevertheless, Butler herself acknowledges that these repetitions are not always subversive since any act of resistance is "potentially recuperable" (I2: 38). For instance, in the case of drag, an apparently subversive application of a gender category is in fact ambivalent. On the one hand, drag can reveal gender as an imitation of a false ideal, and thus be subversive by revealing gender as a performance that only implies superficial appearances. On the other hand, drag can also reinforce gender norms by staging a citation of the ideal personification. In the latter case drag becomes a conventional application that does not challenge the category. On the contrary, it might reconstitute the Matrix's terms by providing a controlled "safe" outlet in which the instabilities of the HM, the subject's heterosexual melancholy, can be released without posing any real threat to the normative order.

These examples illustrate that the distinction between a faithful repetition and a subversive one is made problematic both by Butler's position and by finitism, since both are based in the same kind of principles. For Butler, potential subversion is always present, since citation of meaning is a constant moment to moment process. Hence, it is not possible to stop the potential drift in order to fix meaning and make it completely stable. Similarly, in the performative theory of social institutions every institution changes inevitably in spite of sanctioning. Neither Butler nor the performative theory of social institutions forecloses the possibility of opposing the norms. As a matter of fact, there is dissent and disobedience in spite of sanctioning. Moreover, as Foucault pointed out, every convention creates the desire to resist it. This desire for transgression might lead to unfaithful repetition, but it can also lead to deceptive transgressions provided by the HM itself. Also according to Foucault's
observations, it should be considered that in any normative system there are contradictory vectors of power that pull us in different directions. The HM, can also place opposing demands that pull us in different directions. The inconsistencies deriving from these contrary demands placed on us might lead to unfaithful repetition.

To summarise, since the meaning of the Matrix's rules and categories is sustained by the actions of its adherents, these are susceptible to subversion. Therefore, the source of authority of the Matrix's "sex" as a natural category - namely, its repetitive citation - is also its potential source of disruption. This is due to the underdetermination of meaning of the Matrix's categories. In spite of the constraints exerted by the HM due to it being a protected collective good and its role in structuring the subject's 'agency', there are several sources of potential disruptive repetition. These sources, consequences of the impossibility of fully embodying the Matrix's norms, are the subject's unfaithful repetitions. Certain acts, such as maybe abjected sexual pleasures, butch/femme identities, drag and queer performances, are the potential sites for the alteration of meaning of the Matrix's knowledge categories and the development of new categories. By a series of applications of the Matrix's knowledge categories to new contexts these categories can eventually "sediment" into new meanings. The process of modification cannot be prompted by a single subject since it entails a chain of applications that takes place in the public realm. For this reason, the consequences of a single act of subversive category application cannot be calculated, hence Butler's warning on the futility of attempting political programmes whose success relies on calculation of change.

2.2.5.4 The Butlerian subject in relation to methodological individualism and methodological holism

The theorisation of subject and agency is crucial in Butler's attempt to give "constructivism" a new sense from which the dichotomies idealism/materialism, constructivism/determinism might be transcended. As we saw earlier, Butler distances herself from the postmodern view that holds that the subject is obsolete because it is implicated in its own subordination, and from the liberal notion of the subject that opposes subjective agency to power. She wants to keep the idea of agency while at the same time holding a notion of the subject as constrained. Since Butler does not think that the subject is fully determined, she does not rule out the possibility of agency. She clarifies her position by distinguishing agency from voluntarism, and holding a notion of agency as both enabled and constrained by power.

The question of the first and the third person perspective

Since to Butler the subject is both product and producer of power effects, she believes that there is a problem of circularity when dealing with the question of agency and the subject. The problem is how to account for the subject as an effect of power while at the same time retaining the possibility of agency. Butler believes that this circularity cannot be completely avoided but, as a way
round the problem, she advocates in PLP for the following strategy: to suspend the 'I' when analysing
subjection but to recover it when talking about agency. Thus, what Butler proposes is to annul the first
person perspective when describing the subject but to recover it when elucidating the possibility of
political action.

We should keep in mind that, in principle, we can approach the discussion of subject and
agency from both the first and the third person perspective. The first person perspective on
subjectivity and agency provides an insight from the point of view of the sentient being and the actor.
The third person perspective approaches these issues from the point of view of an external observer.
Hence, we can have two perspectives on agency, first and third, and the same two on the subject. In
Butler's view, we should reject the first person perspective on the subject. Although she never
mentions the term "third person perspective" in her writings, we can infer that it should be acceptable
to adopt it, since her theorisation of subject and agency is clearly a third person perspective. Hence, of
the two possible perspectives on the subject only one is rejected. Though, with respect to agency,
Butler seems to indicate that both approaches, the first and the third, are appropriate. Hence, to Butler,
the first person perspective is only permissible in politics but not in theoretical endeavours.

The distinct approach Butler adopts for the study of the subject and agency can be clarified
by describing the Butlerian distinction agency/subject as a terminological one as follows. 'Agency'
refers to what the subject feels from the first person perspective, the intuition of intentionality. The
subject is the object of study from a third person perspective, hence the subject is a theoretical term
that refers to the result of processes of subjectification, such as 'I' talk, acting on an individual. The
first person perspective on agency that Butler wants to keep refers to the subject's intuition of agency.
This intuition of agency is elicited and sustained by self-referential 'I'-talk collectively defined in
accordance to the Matrix's platitudes. Therefore, the Butlerian notion of desire and agency can be
reconstructed as an intuition of intentionality partly constituted by 'I'-talk. In other words, the subject's
intuition of agency is collectively constituted, at least in part, through collectively defined categories
and sustained through constrain and sanctioning.

In the light of the above, it could be argued that the role that Butler ascribes to the 'I' when
considering the possibility of action is performative one. Although Butler's notion of agency is
restricted and historically specific, she advocates for the belief in certain possibility of subversion.
Hence, it is not inconsistent for Butler to promote the subject's intuition of agency, or to put it
differently, to mobilise the subject's intuition of intentionality, since its iteration might have a
performative role in creating conditions for change. Hence, Butler values the first person perspective,
or the intuition of 'agency', when discussing agency because of its performative role.

The Butlerian subject, methodological individualism and methodological holism

As mentioned above, Butler tries to transcend the dichotomies constructed-free/determined-
fixed by presenting an account of the subject as developed and constrained in and by social
interaction. The Butlerian understanding of the subject and agency aims to transcend the dichotomy constructivism/determinism by ruling out the possibility of subjective intentionality present in methodological individualism, while at the same time avoiding the deterministic view of the subject, typical of methodological holism and functionalism. By emphasising the role of collectively defined categories in the process of subjectification and, hence, in the formation of the subject's intentional states, Butler tries to rule out individual voluntarism, that is, the view of the subject as capable of voluntarist action independent of social structure. Since she does not distinguish the subject from the repressive discourse that creates it, she discards the idea of a choosing subject that exists apart from norms - an idea typical of methodological individualism - and conceives agency as limited and constrained. Nevertheless, Butler does not fall into the functionalist view of action as coming from non-rational attachment to law and custom, that is, of action determined by structure.

Judging by her general framework and stated intentions, I suggest that the reason why Butler refuses the first person approach to the subject is because she identifies it with the first-person intuition of privileged access and self-creation. Thus, Butler wants to get rid of the 'I' when examining the subject because it supports the individualist notion of the self and the accompanying notions of goal directed intentionality and sovereignty. These intuitions support the individualistic notions of the self and voluntarism she aims to refute. In the Butlerian model it is only possible to refer to subjects, that is, to structures which have already a social component, but not to individuals in a state prior to the social. Hence, to Butler, "methodological individualism" would not be sustainable since she believes it is not possible to refer to subjects prior to their "subjectivation", that is, prior to their becoming intelligible through language and shaped by categories and actions in accordance to the Matrix's standards of identity.

Nevertheless, Butler is not in favour of discarding the notion of the subject, for it would imply a disregard of the importance of the collective constraints, that is, of the "linguistic requirements for entering sociality at all" (PL: 29) that form and conform the subject. To disregard the role of collective constraint and sanctioning would tend to favour the individualistic notion of the subject as sovereign and, thus, would go against the Butlerian emphasis on the subject as a structure generated and constrained by the collective. Moreover, to discard the notion of the subject would also disable the possibility of conceiving it as a potential source of change in the Matrix. For all these reasons, Butler does not reject the notion of the subject entirely.

The reconstruction of the subject's sense of self and 'agency' performed by 'I'-talk accounts for the 'I' and its intentional states as artificial kinds defined, sustained and regulated by the collective. Therefore, this reconstruction supports the Butlerian notion of the subject as both collectively enabled and constrained. The individualistic notions of self can be weakened by reconstructing the intuitions of self-creation and privileged access as a product of collectively defined and sanctioned 'T'-talk. By reconstructing the "first person perspective", or illusion of sovereignty, as an artificial kind product of self-referential and self-validating 'T'-talk, the illusion of privileged access and self-creation is
presented as a collective achievement. Thus, the notion of the subject as sovereign - basis for the individualist notion of the subject that supports methodological individualism and voluntarism - is undermined and the voluntaristic notion of agency loses its support.

As we saw earlier, although Butler discards the possibility of intrinsic agency independent of mental states and social constraints, she promotes the first person perspective on agency, the intuition of intentionality when discussing politics of resistance. However, it must be kept in mind that, in her view, the intuition of intentionality is not equivalent to the idea of subjective intentionality present in individualism, since it cannot be directed to a particular goal. For this reason, Butler conceives the subject as the site of agency but not as its source, unlike those notions of power which consider the subject as possessor of a sovereign will.

The dichotomy structure/agency

The dichotomy structure/agency that Butler wants to avoid might take a different outlook from the stance of the performative theory of social institutions. Since to Barnes society is a distribution of knowledge, he does not distinguish between culture, as a distribution of knowledge, and social structure. Given that the meaning of knowledge categories is finitist, the underdetermination of meaning of the knowledge categories effectively provides for the possibility of social change. The notion of structure in the performative theory of social institutions stands in contrast with the fixed notion of structure in Structuralism - the main difference being how these two positions conceive of meaning. The former considers social structure as a distribution of knowledge categories with underdetermined meaning, while the Structuralist conception of structure implies meaning determinism because it tends to consider meaning as fixed. Hence, the notion of structure in the performative theory of social institutions retains Butler's (and Derrida's) temporal dimension in the notion structure - given that its stability depends on a string of citations sedimenting in time.

In brief, to understand structure from the point of view of the performative theory of social institutions, that is, as a distribution of knowledge weakens the dichotomies constructed-free/determined-fixed that Butler wants to avoid. In this reconstruction, I have articulated the subject's sense of self, agency and mental states as artificial kinds performed by the HM's 'I'-talk and knowledge categories. I have reconstructed the possibility of agency, understood as the capacity for action and change, as the instability of collectively defined knowledge categories fruit of meaning undeterminism. Hence, the "socialisation" of the Butlerian notion of agency allows us to account for it as the undeterminism of meaning of the HM's knowledge categories that structure the subject's identity. In this way, the traditional dichotomies on the subject - constructed vs. determined - are weakened, for in this reconstruction society is regarded as a distribution of knowledge; that is, not as a

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35 I realise that there is an ongoing and extensive debate on the question of structure and agency. In this section I am aiming to contribute by pointing out to the parallel between Butler and Barnes, since both tend to methodological holism.
fixed configuration such as a structure, but as a set of acts in citational relation to each other. The notion of structure as result of the sum of subjects' actions, forecloses the possibility of 'free' and totally subversive actions, and hence, faithful to Butler's thought, it maintains no guarantee of successful resistance. In conclusion, the Barnesian notion of structure is parallel to the Butlerian notion of citationality.

2.2.5.5 Summary

Butler's strategy for dealing with the problem of circularity when trying to understand the subject as effect and producer of power leads into a paradox. In my reconstruction the Butlerian paradox that arises from the different consideration given to the first and the third person with respect to subject and agency is articulated in a twofold way: first, by developing a third person theory of the subject that understands the subject's inner psychic space as an artificial kind structured by self-referential and self-validating 'I'-talk defined and sanctioned by the Matrix's knowledge categories; and secondly, by considering agency as mere intuition of intentionality perceived by the subject from the first person perspective. Thus, the subject's sense of self, its identity, and its intuition of agency are reconstructed as product of collectively defined laws and categories of the HM. The subject's intuition of self is conceived as being performed by collectively defined and self-referential 'I'-talk. In its turn, the subject's intuition of agency is considered to arise from 'I'-talk. Hence, the subject's desires (and the actions they inspire) are collectively defined in so far as they are settled in relation to the perceived desires of other subjects, which are also ruled by the Matrix. The subject's intuition of 'agency' is then an effect of socially constituted and socially constrained, hence self-referential, 'I-talk. By reconstructing the intuition of 'agency' as product of collectively defined and self-referential 'I'-talk, we can account for the subject's intuition of intentionality - the first person perspective on agency - as well as the role of collective constraint and definition of the subject and its desires and actions.

This reconstruction also enriches the understanding of resistance from a theoretical third person perspective which Butler seems to avoid. Butler restricts third person theorisation on resistance to saying that change is only possible because repetition is never identical. The parallel drawn between the possibility of change in terms of the underdetermination of meaning resolves the apparent contradiction in Butler's theory between the constraints discourse places on the subject and the possibility of agency and subversion. This is so because the finitist understanding of meaning acknowledges the possibility of variation in the Matrix's categories, while also accounting for the discursive constraints placed on the subject's agency, and hence, on subversion. If we regard society as a distribution of knowledge, and structure as a set of acts in citational relation to each other, the traditional dichotomies on subject constructed vs. determined are weakened. Since the performative theory of social institutions considers structure as the result from the sum of subjects' actions, it also captures the Butlerian rejection of the possibility of 'free' and totally subversive actions with a guarantee of success. At the same time, this sociological reconstruction provides an insight into the
role of the individual subject in constructing meaning, thus, eliciting the awareness necessary for the possibility of subversion to arise.

2.2.6 MATERIALITY AND ARTIFICIAL KINDS

In this section I will use the notion of artificial kinds to reconstruct "sex" as an effect of gender. The notion of artificial kinds will clarify the performative model of gender by helping me articulate the HM as a self-validating social institution that performs bodies and desires. Although it might be objected that my reconstruction is not totally faithful to Butler's statements, my aim is to offer a cogent explanatory model that accounts for the mechanisms of naturalisation of power in bodies. This might entail theorising Butler's ideas on the materiality of sex one step further on a direction that Butler herself would not have taken but that, nevertheless, she has opened.

Butler's performative theory of gender holds that the binary category of "sex" is achieved by manipulating male and female bodies differently from one another. In the performative theory, the HM generates a reality that conforms to its own categories through the repetitive citation of a set of performative acts. This reality is not, according to Butler, made true by anything other than itself; in other words, it is self-validating. By means of the performative theory of gender, Butler is trying to avoid two positions with regards to sex and gender she disagrees with:

a. that sex is not social. This position implies that sex is a natural kind in a realist sense, and hence that there is nothing social in it. Butler attributes this position to essentialism.

b. that sex is social in the same way as gender. This position implies that sex does not have an alter reference; hence, it is completely self referential as a social kind. This is the position adopted by radical linguistic constructivists. Butler refers to it as "the cancellation of the natural by the social" (1993a: 5).

Of course, Butler has herself been accused of belonging to the latter position, for she proposes to view the body as an 'artifice'.36 Probably this misinterpretation stems from the ambiguity of the term, for 'artifice' can be taken to mean both something which is 'feigned' (or non-existent) and something which is 'humanly created' (but real). In fact, in her work sex and gender are not considered as existing completely independently of an external reality, for she does not deny that there are certain biological constraints on the construal of bodies (Butler 1994: 33). Hence, she accepts the existence of a (real) alter reference for the category of "sex" but argues that it is inapprehensible, for it cannot be known in a state prior to its shaping by the Matrix's power.

As we saw in Chapter 1, Butler's Foucauldian notion of power regards the relation between power and body as internal, in spite of the mechanisms by which power makes the body appear as

36 Butler refers to Kessler and McKenna when writing that "gender is an "accomplishment" which requires the skills of constructing the body into a socially legitimate artifice" (Butler 1988: 528).
external to itself. To Butler power is not an external force that acts on the body, but part and parcel of the body itself. To put it differently, Butler argues that power presents the body's materiality as an alter referent totally independent of the workings of power, though in fact the body's materiality is self-referring, for we can only conceive and perceive materiality through our self-referential, collectively created terms. Moreover, materiality itself is shaped by the HM. To overlook the dissimulation of power would lead to empiricist foundationalism, that is, to acceptance of an effect of power (the body) as a primary given. This position entails taking the material effects of power as the epistemological point of departure for the analysis of bodies.

As introduced in Chapter 1, Section 1.2.3 on Materiality, in order to argue against empiricist foundationalism, Butler explores the genealogy of the terms denoting matter in classical Greece, with special attention to the Aristotelian understanding of materiality. Aiming to suggest "a possible contemporary redeployment of Aristotelian terminology" (BTM: 32) in spite of its acknowledged shortcomings, Butler turns her attention to the notion of materiality as itself a transformative activity. In Butler's rendering, the classical notion of matter includes two aspects of matter that later became divorced: matter as pure potentiality, and the principle or form that actualises it. The first aspect refers to the full potential of matter before it becomes imprinted with a form. The second aspect of matter is the form or schema, a principle that defines and actualises the pure potentiality. It must be kept in mind that in classical Greek thought these two aspects cannot be separated. So, in the classical notion matter was defined both by its power of creation and by the principle that forms it. Hence, within the classical framework, objects are not static givens but transformative activities in themselves. For Aristotle, the concept of matter also had a twofold aspect: matter as full potential, and the soul or schema which indicates the initial stage of the actualisation of matter. Again, these two aspects of matter in Aristotle are inseparable. As a consequence, we can only conceive materiality through its schema.

In her genealogy, Butler reminds us how the term 'matter' has "encoded" in it the history of sexual difference and how it is "bound up with the problematic of receptivity". Butler warns against taking the body as "the uncontested ground for feminist practice", for "there may not be a materiality of sex that is not already burdened by the sex of materiality" (BTM: 54). Here Butler refers again to the difficulty of grasping matter 'before' its definition since the "bodily schema is... part of the formation of bodies" (BTM: 54). Hence, she discards the possibility of accessing bodies outside of the categories or schemas that turn matter's potentiality into actuality by marking them as feminine or masculine. But in spite of its deficiencies, Butler does not completely discard the term 'matter'; on the contrary, she questions it in the hope of opening the way for a new understanding of the processes of the materialisation of bodies and for the subversion of these processes. Some of the questions she raises are: why does the prevailing understanding of matter permeate any description of the materiality of bodies and determine that which can be conceived as a body and that which cannot? How do body
norms form the matter of bodies? How should we account for body norms as creating the reality they regulate?

I suggest that using the notion of artificial kind to reconstruct Butler's ideas on matter and the mechanisms for the materialisation of bodies will answer some of these questions. The notion of artificial kinds will allow me to reconstruct the ideas of the ungraspability of matter as pure potentiality, as well as to account for the actualisation of matter through the schemas defined by the Matrix's category of "sex". I propose to consider "sex" as an artificial kind resulting from the classification and transformation of matter into the gendered body through social discourse and practices. As we saw earlier Butler argues that there exists some physical biological support - she sometimes refers to it as "the body" in inverted commas (GT: 8), but that it cannot be grasped outside social categories performing it. These social categories are the matter's schema inherent in matter that actualise and form it. I propose to reconstruct the notion of schema as the social kind terms, hence, as completely self-referential terms that have been collectively formulated as the Matrix's category of "sex". I will now proceed to examine the steps of this reconstruction in detail.

I propose to consider matter as an ungraspable X in order to allow for the representation of some biological support whose existence Butler acknowledges, while at the same time capturing the idea of the impossibility of conceiving matter outside the social kind terms that actualise the way in which we perceive, conceive and perform it. Hence, matter is that ungraspable X that cannot be conceived outside the self-referential social kind terms through which the HM classifies (and forms) the body.

The body schema can be reconstructed as a social kind composed by the laws and platitudes of the HM. The Matrix's set of classification practices devise and regulate the schema through which bodies are shaped. According to Butler, "sex" is a classificatory category defined by the Matrix's law of compulsory heterosexuality and achieved through the imposition of a specific notion of gender coherence. This gender coherence is the product of artificially grouping and classifying a person's feelings, body parts, actions and desires in binary categories for the purposes of reproduction. These binary categories are the schemas into which the body is defined as belonging to a certain gender. Hence, the schema is a pattern of cultural meanings and sensual organisation that guides the way in which different bodies are stimulated, and it acts as a norm that constrains bodies to conform.

Butler holds that, in spite of being contingently generated, the HM presents this artificial coherence as being caused by nature. That is, the Matrix presents "sex" as a natural kind in a realist sense, its alter reference being the biological. By thus presenting its relation with the body as external, the HM creates the illusion of a 'real essence' of sex. This "essence" is allegedly a set of properties shared by all the members of the kind which exists independently of the way in which we conceive them, in the same fashion as a natural kind exists for a realist. Therefore, the Matrix as a folk theory of sexuality conceives heterosexual bodies and desires as natural givens.
Butler argues that heterosexual bodies and desires are not natural givens, in spite of being presented as such by the Matrix's folk theory of the body and the discourse of biology; rather, they are products of social processes that constrain our bodies to conform to a certain schema. In Butler's view, the body's biological basis is not enough to justify its binary categorisation. She believes that the binary categorisation of bodies that underlies the biological theory of the body is informed by folk theories of biological differences. In Butler's view, these folk theories are not really referred to the materiality of the body but to the hegemonic social institution for thinking about gender: reproduction. It follows that the biological binary classification of the sexes stems from a social convention. Hence, the discourse of biology is social and its alleged neutrality is not genuine.

It can be argued that the biological discourse is social for two reasons: because the HM underwrites biological theory and its categories, and because the Matrix has shaped the body. Therefore, there is an element of self-fulfilling prophecy, for if culture creates both the body and the talk about the body, the cultural/biological categories that describe the body self-validate themselves, since they describe the reality that they themselves generate. This circularity makes the category of "sex" appear as an essence, in other words as an immutable foundation of gender attributes. The appearance of substance that "sex" takes on can be compared to the way in which a routinised social system might appear as having the characteristics of a material object, for the institutionalised Matrix's laws and categories take on a similar "monolithic stability" (Barnes 1988: 42). In terms of my reconstruction, the body as an artificial kind is presented by the hegemonic Matrix as a natural kind.

So far I have shown that the schema is the Matrix's medium for fashioning matter into a form that the Matrix itself defines as acceptable and legitimises as natural. Therefore, the schema is a social kind since the criteria for the definition of the category of "sex" are collectively defined. Hence, in Butler's work there is an ungraspable matter whose perception is always mediated by social kind terms - its form or schema. The product of the interaction between matter and social kinds is the subject's gendered body, an artificial kind. Thus the sexed body is neither a social kind nor a natural kind, but has elements of both. The sexed body as artificial kind is a hybrid of social and natural components.

If we were to consider "sex" as a natural kind in a realist sense we would not encompass the Foucauldian/Butlerian idea of the body as a product of the law. Alternatively, if we were to consider "sex" as a social kind we would be taking the other position that Butler is trying to avoid: radical linguistic constructivism. The notion of artificial kind is effective because it articulates the Butlerian concept of bodies as products of normative heterosexuality while also acknowledging an alter reference. Since the notion of artificial kinds stands between natural and social kinds it can capture the Butlerian concept of gender as a self-referential social process that creates a reality that apparently persists independently of that self-referential process and validates itself.

In the context of inquiring into the constraints placed upon materialisation, Butler seems to believe in the possibility of the existence of different "modalities" of matter rooted in "physical" matter (BTM: 252, n. 13). As I suggested earlier, matter as X symbolises the "space" that cannot be
articulated and that cannot be known in a "pure form" prior to its materialisation by the social terms (the matter's schema). If matter is conceived as ungraspable, then the term matter can comprise those different possible "modalities" of matter that coexist in "physical" matter. It must be made clear that the fact that matter cannot be known outside our social kind terms does not imply that it does not exist. Nevertheless, it does imply that any attempt to articulate it would play into the hands of the binary oppositions that define our terms and perceptions and that Butler is trying to avoid. The reason for this is that, in order to give utterance to matter, understood as ungraspable, we would need to concur with the prevalent social kind terms available - precisely those Matrix terms that are performing the reality Butler is challenging. Consequently, such an utterance would be equivalent to participate in performing matter in terms of the Matrix. In other words, we would be speaking about an artificial kind brought about by the HM's social kind terms in the same way as the Matrix presents it, namely, as a natural kind. Hence, we would be treating an artificial kind as a (false, fictive) natural kind.

The notion of artificial kinds also elucidates the Butlerian/Foucauldian notion of desire as a state constituted by historically specific social practices. To consider desire as an artificial kind makes it possible to articulate desire as a mental state performed according to a social norm: compulsory heterosexuality. The Butlerian position on desire implies that desire is contingent, and therefore susceptible to modification by social practices. If we consider desire as an artificial kind, then we will regard a certain drive as the natural referent of desire on which social processes act. This raw material is an innate disposition, a sexual drive, which we share with animals. But, in contrast with animals, our drives are transformed by culture into a socially created artefact: desire. Hence, human sexual drives cannot be known without resorting to the social terms that perform them, for human sexual drives come in a network of meanings and beliefs, and are stimulated and constrained by social norms into heterosexuality. For instance, desire is a theoretical term and its meaning is defined in relation to other terms, such as belief, which in their turn are linked to concepts of truth, knowledge and so on. Hence, the meaning of a term is related to other terms. As far as we know, animals do not possess a network of terms. There is also another sense in which our desires differ from animals' drives: our desires are governed by socially agreed codes that prescribe our conduct with respect to them. They instruct us on what are the wrong or right desires and the right or wrong times and places to act on them. Norms presuppose the consensus of a group, and the consensus is that of an institution. Therefore, our desires are governed by social institutions.

To summarise, the notion of artificial kind offers a succinct formula for reconstructing and clarifying Butler's idea of matter, for it captures the notion of bodies' materiality as both irreducible and inextricable from the social schema that materialises it. Hence, the notion of artificial kind can account for what Butler calls "the' body", that is, an inapprehensible underlying "biological support", as well as for its social construction. To reconstruct matter as ungraspable accounts for the idea that matter only receives its meaning and becomes intelligible, hence communicable and social, after being
actualised by a Matrix's schema - that is, by a social kind. Hence, in this formula the existence of matter is acknowledged while also granting that we cannot grasp matter in a "pure" form outside of our social categories. Hence, any statement about matter is always mediated through subjects' perception, itself shaped by the self-referential social categories that also form the body: the schema. Thus, to reconstruct the body as an artificial kind articulates the idea that "sex" is not a natural kind, but some "artifice" performed by a self-referent social kind on an ungraspable X component that gets presented in the HM as a natural kind.
CHAPTER 3

BUTLER'S CRITICS

The aim of this chapter is to present a critical review of Butler's critics from the point of view of 'Butler reconstructed'. In my assessment I hope to show how my rational reconstruction solves some of the problems signalled by the critics in Butler's work. This chapter presents the objections to Butler's work divided in two sections: those that refer to Butler's theories before the publication of BTM and those that include BTM. The thirty eight critics reviewed and their charges are summarised in tabular form at the end of the chapter.

3.1 EARLIER CRITICS

In this section I will present the comments and objections expressed by nineteen critics who referred to Butler's work before the publication of BTM. The main criticisms addressed to Butler in this stage of her work revolve around her understanding of politics, the abstractness of her arguments and the lack of empirical research, the performative theory and the related questions of agency and the subject. Since all these issues are interconnected I will structure the section around the critics' arguments rather than around the critics themselves.

One of the most problematic aspects of Butler's work is the performative theory of gender. It comes under attack for being idealistic (Auslander, Bordo, Cohen, Connell and Hudson), disregarding the social contexts of power (Auslander, Benhabib, Bordo, Connell and Digeser) and not providing a satisfactory account for agency (Benhabib, Dean and Digeser). The most articulated critique of idealism comes from Bordo who charges Butler with "discursive or linguistic foundationalism" (Bordo 1992: 169). According to Bordo, Butler's anti-biologism leads her to claim that discourse is foundational and to read the body as text "whose meanings can be analysed in abstraction from experience, history, material practice, and context" (ibid. 1992: 170). A similar point is made by Digeser who accuses Butler's theory of performativity of disregarding the importance of

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1 All along the text I only mention those critics who have made an explicit link between the issues discussed. If a particular author has criticised Butler for a certain question with an argument different than the one at hand, s/he will be mentioned in another part of the section.

2 I use the term idealism as the philosophical position which holds that the world is a product of thought. It is opposed to materialism as that position which regards the world as independent of thought.
constatives for the success of performatives. As Digeser says: "Butler has yet to show that the body is nothing more than a performative" (Digeser 1994: 665), for she is unconcerned with the constative statements that support the idea of the body, such as: "beliefs regarding why seat belts work, why I cannot walk through walls and whether it makes sense to doubt if my hand is in front of me" (Digeser 1994: 665). Obviously, Digeser is referring to the body's 'materiality' and indirectly accusing Butler of idealism.

Starting from a critique of Butler's use of psychoanalysis, Dean also makes a point akin to those presented above in accusing Butler of disregarding the 'real' of sexual difference. In Dean's view, the performative theory is based in the mischaracterization of Lacan as apolitical and ahistorical as well as on several misattributions arising from the faulty rendition of Lacan on which Butler relies: that of Jacqueline Rose. The first misattribution, according to Dean, is the alleged positing of a real prior to discourse. This is allegedly due to Butler's failure in distinguishing the "réalité prédiscursive" from the "réel". In Dean's view, this leads Butler to overlook the Lacanian real (réel) as being always extra-discursive and producing the subject and the discourse as its effects. Hence, the causal relation is the opposite to that of gender performance theory which holds that the real and the gendered subject are effects of discursive performance. According to Dean, Butler's rendition of Lacan with respect to the three Lacanian orders (symbolic, imaginary, real) is also inaccurate because Butler ignores the heterogeneity of these orders and makes the real performative and gestural, thus assimilating it to the imaginary. Through this operation the limits proposed by the real disappear and discursive gendering becomes a form of voluntarism. Dean thinks that gender theory should acknowledge the irreducibility of sexual difference in order to become effective, for the Lacanian understanding of the real as a cause of discourse does not entail a deterministic notion of sexual difference. The real cannot be overcome by performance since it is the continuous base for our being, an "ineluctable limit" (Dean 1993: 23). Dean compares Butler's gender performance theory to transsexualism for refusing the real and aiming to escape castration and enjoy jouissance.

Another question for which the performative theory comes under attack is its disregard for the social contexts of power. This problem underlies the accusation of abstractness of argument (Auslander, Bordo, Connell, Fraser, Hudson, Jordan, Kaplan, Modleski, Pagliassotti) that is linked to the lack of empirical research (Benhabib, Bordo), to the lack of clarity about what would constitute resistance (Kaplan) and to the overestimation of the possibilities of resistance (Benhabib, Bordo). Butler's linguisticism brings a lack of awareness of the contexts of power (Pagliassotti) which has as a

3 In Austin's theory constatives are those utterances that state a fact, which can be deemed false or true (e.g. The door is open). Austin did not clearly distinguished between constatives and performative utterances, for both had true/false and a happy/unhappy dimensions. This implies that, in order to succeed, a performative requires certain conditions (e.g. in the case of a marriage vow, the couple taking the vow must have the intention to fulfil their promise, it must be sanctioned by the agreed authority, that is, a judge, a priest, and so on).

4 Lacanian psychoanalysis interprets transsexualism as a response to castration and to the real of sexual differentiation.
consequence a disregard for both (Bordo, Benhabib) and the meaning of bodily experience (Auslander). Benhabib's critique points in the same direction, for she argues that the theory of language does not account for changes in individual lives while emphasising the importance of empirical research of the processes of individual socialisation and psycho-sexual development. In Benhabib's view, this research would require an "interchange between philosophy and other social sciences like socio-linguistics, social interactionist psychology, socialisation theory, psychoanalysis, and cultural history, among others" (Benhabib 1995: 110) which Butler's performative theory fails to provide.

Because of the abstraction of the body from its cultural context, Butler tends to overestimate the strength of resistance to the dominant power (Bordo, Fraser). In this same line of argument, Jordan draws attention to the legal and economic conditions of speech necessary for the speech act politics proposed by Butler because parodic subversion might not have the effect that Butler hopes for (Cohen, Digeser, Jordan, Nicholson, Siebers, Weston, Pagliassotti). For example, in popular culture parody can be regarded as "inauthentic, frivolous, and irresponsible" (Jordan 1993: 259); and talk of post-gender society could be supporting existing gender relations (Pagliassotti 1993: 490).

The third issue for which performance theory comes under attack, namely agency, is inextricably linked to the question of the ontology of the subject and the body, and has important consequences for Butler's politics. Fraser and Digeser coincide in their critique of "The gendered subject as pure performative (as) ... an insufficient account of the self" (Digeser 1994: 667). The critiques converge in the charge of individualism and voluntarism (Modleski, Cohen, Weston). Modleski thinks that performativity denies gender and reduces it to the level of individual performance. Digeser considers that Butler does not ignore our situatedness but criticises her for not allowing enough room for agency and, together with Kaplan, for her lack of clarity on the possibility of freedom. In Benhabib's view, the performative theory is not a satisfactory account of human agency because it is "a remarkably deterministic view of individuation and socialisation processes which falls short of the currently available social-scientific reflections on the subject" (Benhabib 1995: 110).

Butler is not without her defendants, however. Nicholson defends her against Benhabib's criticisms by arguing that Butler is aware of the need to attend to historical contexts to explain agency. Nicholson argues that Butler distinguishes between metaphysical questions on agency and its possibility in concrete historical conditions precisely because Butler is appreciative of these historical conditions, though not directly concerned with them. Contrary to the critics that attack Butler for her voluntarism, Mathews supports her precisely for having a model of human nature as "open, protean, allowing individuals to mould their own existence" (Mathews 1993: 650). As explained in Chapter 1, Butler disagrees with the charge of voluntarism for being a misinterpretation of the notion of performativity but her self-defence is rejected by Dean whodismisses it as "a wishfully motivated performative speech act and, as such not an "aside" but as central to her critique of the Lacanian conception of the real " (Dean 1993: 24).
The theorisation of the self is crucial to the possibility of agency and, therefore, to politics and subversion, as well as to the critique of essentialism and the category of 'woman'. In relation to the possibility of subversion Butler is mainly criticised for not having clear idea of what constitutes subversion (Kaplan, Fraser, Weston), and for being vague on how to distinguish instances of performativity that generate new signification from those that are mere repetitions (Nicholson). Hence, in general, performance theory is regarded as an "ethereal" (Weston 1993: 11) foundation for political aspirations. For Fraser, the fact that in Butler's work resignification is not being based in claims to validity makes it too vague as political aim, since resignification can either be positive and negative. Digeser also questions the political value of performativity, since he thinks that neither essentialism nor performativity are helpful in understanding situations of exploitation and, therefore, neither can be linked to any set of political consequences. Digeser also criticises Butler for not inquiring into the origin of the HM, an issue taken up by Jordan as well. Jordan launches an attack on Butler's politics of subversive repetition for disregarding the evolutionary theory of the origin of heterosexuality as a necessity for the survival of the species.

In general, Butler's politics are qualified as "insufficient" (Phelan 1992: 77) for several reasons: for failing to propose any solution to the revision of coalition politics she advocates, for failing to put forward suggestions on how to devise the new configuration of politics she announces, and for not leading to substantial discussions on how to deal with issues such as race or ethnicity due to the abstractness of her argument, in spite of claiming that her non-essentialist position puts her in a better position to do so (Modleski 1991). Moreover, her proposed resignification of gender categories through repetition is charged with falling into aestheticism since repetition "cannot be directed with any kind of consistency toward either revolutionary or reactionary ends" (Siebers 1994: 760).

Both Benhabib and Fraser share the view that Butler's failure to account for practical ways of achieving better practices of subjectivation is inherent to her post-structuralist Foucauldian framework. Though, Benhabib and Fraser dissent over post-structuralist' views on selfhood and agency, Benhabib considers that these are not useful for the autonomy, agency and equality of women that feminist politics aspire to. Fraser understands that Butler conceives the subject as being both culturally constructed and having critical capacities, but she does not agree with Butler's rejection of foundationalist theories of subjectivity. Fraser defends foundationalist theories of subjectivity from Butler's attack by arguing that the historical alliance between foundationalist theories of subjectivity and cultural imperialism is not due to conceptual necessity but to historical circumstances. She cites examples of emancipatory uses of foundational identities such as the French Revolution and Haitian independence. Fraser criticises Butler for making false antitheses such as: "dereification versus normative critique, deconstruction versus reconstruction" (Fraser 1995: 71). Thus, in relation to the problem of "women" in feminist theory, Fraser argues that feminism needs "both deconstruction and reconstruction, destabilisation of meaning and projection of utopian hope" (ibid.: 71). In this sense, Fraser argues for the development of "new paradigms of feminist theorising that integrate the insights
of Critical Theory with the insights of poststructuralism" (ibid.: 72), for, in her opinion, critique can be situated and self-reflective at once.

Still in the context of essentialism versus performativity, Bordo challenges Butler's linguisticism for framing a world "in which language swallows everything up, voraciously, a theoretical pasta machine through which the categories of competing frameworks are pressed and reprocessed as 'tropes' " (Bordo 1992: 170). With respect to the loss of the category of women for politics, Digeser believes that the refusal to give the category of woman universal or specific content will not necessarily avoid fictionalisation in feminism or help creating new identities. Another defence of the category of women is advanced by a member of the audience in the conference "The Identity in Question" (Butler et al. 1992d) who argues that the category has not been organised only in relation to biology, but also around the analysis of structures of oppression and exploitation from which it derives its coherence.

Matthews is sympathetic to Butler's belief in the subversive potential of language and the possibility of subversion "through self-awareness of the problems of human categorisation..." (Mathews 1993: 650), as well as to her critique of Levi-Strauss. In Matthew's opinion, the "frankly political agenda" (ibid.: 648) of Butler's analysis stimulates negative reactions from those who believe in neutrality. According to Matthews, Butler's work rests in the rejection of the possibility of value-free language and it does not entail loss of meaning but "the need for self-conscious dialogue among competing languages freed of the traditional binary assumption that all statements are universally true or false" (ibid.: 650).

Finally, another set of criticisms to Butler's early work revolves around her style and language (Goldsmith, M. Evans). Fraser censures it for being anti-humanist, that is, removed from everyday talk about ourselves and self-distancing. Bordo and Mary Evans coincide in considering the difficulty of Butler's style as a limiting factor since, to put it in Evans words, "to say that the book was not written for general audiences is something of an understatement" (Evans 1997: 103). As a consequence, GT's audience is confined to academic audiences thus limiting its political influence. To Hudson, GT is a substitute for action that makes "the reader feel slow-witted; and you cannot avoid wondering whether this was one of the authors' intentions in writing it" (Hudson 1990: 588).

3.2 NEW CRITICISMS

This section presents twenty-one reviews written after the publication of BTM (1993). These criticisms focus on much the same issues as those examined above: the performative theory and idealism, the question of agency and the subject, the lack of empirical research, Butler's politics and her style. In this stage Butler's increasing use of psychoanalytical theories provides a new focus. As we saw earlier, in BTM Butler tried to spell out the misunderstandings of the performative theory that ensued the publication of GT by further elaborating the notions of matter and materiality. The question of materialisation in the performative theory is crucial for its consequences on the notion of the subject
and the possibility of agency, as well as for the question of politics and representation. In the following text I will present the critics' reactions to Butler's efforts.

Soper thinks that Butler's defence against the charges of voluntarism and idealism is not successful. In Soper's view, what Butler does is to present construction as constitutive constraint, that is, to conceive the formative processes that construct the subject as being both restrictive and generative. To Soper, this is neither theoretically useful nor politically effective. Soper argues that to conceive constraints as indispensable, as she interprets Butler is doing, renders the terminology of construction irrelevant and undermines the possibility of subversion. Soper's argument goes as follows: if constraints are indispensable, then, we cannot conceive the sexed body as contingent. Thus, the outcome of Butler's position would be the foreclosure of political action. In Soper's view, the paradox constraint/agency arises from Butler's confusion of language and materiality, as well as from assuming language as constitutive of materiality from the fact that the non-linguistic orders are always mediated by language. In this sense Soper writes: "we may write the sign 'blood' in blood but the blood in which we write it no more affects the meaning of the term 'blood' than does using the term 'blood' in reference to blood alter the material composition of the latter" (Soper 1995: 119). Thus, the confusion language/materiality leads Butler "to compromise on the recognition of reality (and)... to subvert the possibility of the political critique of any specific discourse upon it" (ibid.: 119). It also increases the risk of falling into cultural determinism by the inability to distinguish between what are and are not culturally constituted constraints on the body. In order to avoid these problems, Soper thinks that Butler needs an ontological argument that acknowledges the existence of biological constraints.

Speaking from a Marxist perspective, Cotter also disagrees with Butler on the question of matter's ontology as well as on the usefulness of her approach for political action. She labels Butler's position "ludic materialism" and contrasts it to historical materialism. Ludic materialism "understands the 'material' to be a process, that is an 'effect' of discursive production, open to 'intervention' at the level of (re) signification through the 'deconstruction' of contradictions located at the site of cultural representation" (Cotter 1994: 226). Cotter finds Butler's position problematic for feminist politics in that it excludes the relations under which matter is produced, that is, the relations of production. On Cotter's view, to abstract discourse from socio-economic structures reifies the relations of production and renders them static and ahistorical and consequently inevitable. Hence, Cotter concludes, the inability of Butler's performative model to theorise or explain the process of production of matter renders it useless for feminist politics.

Assiter agrees with Soper and Cotter on the need to acknowledge biological constraints. Following an examination of the premises of the sex/gender distinction in Stoller's work, Assiter defends the distinction and affirms "the importance of the minimal biological body for providing a basis for a shared identity amongst women" (Assiter 1996: 127) encapsulated in the notion of sex. Though from a different standpoint, Hood-Williams and Cealey also criticise Butler's reformulation of the sex/gender distinction. These reviewers note that Butler uses interchangeably the terms 'sex' and
'gender', and object that she is neither aware of its location within biological discourses, nor of its contingency and variability in the social context (Cealey & Hood-Williams 1997: 112). They also criticise her from failing to "remove herself completely from the sex/gender problematic" (ibid.: 106). Hood-Williams and Cealey dismiss Butler's notion of matter as presented in BTM for considering as irrelevant to her discussion of morphology since, in their view, it does not count for other ways to think about bodies, such as the libidinal body, the imaginary body and the anatomical body (Hood-Williams & Cealey 1998: 90). In its turn, the concept of gender is criticised for operating "within discursive fields to cohere a set of disparate practices which it homogenises and falsely unifies" (ibid.: 89). These reviewers also object to other propositions of the performative model: citationality and the heterosexual hegemony. They criticise the notion of citationality for not combining successfully the problematic of norms, performativity and discourse. They disapprove of the alleged universalising tendencies of the heterosexual hegemony and heterosexual imperatives, for they think they have become a reification, a sort of new version of "patriarchy". The charge of reification is a similar critique to that of Cotter who criticises Butler's model for reifying the relations of production and, thus, rendering them static.

Matisons also discusses the theorisation of matter in the performative model. She ascribes Butler's reluctance to represent matter or to speak about 'origins' or 'internal mechanisms' to the belief that, since these terms are effects of power that operate through language, to name them is to concur in the chain of citationality and, therefore, to reinforce them. Since to Butler matter is the abject, the "inevitable excess of the nature/culture binary" or, in other words, that which falls outside the nature/culture binary, Matisons interprets Butler's vagueness on the question of matter as a political strategy to avoid naming what would effectively exclude the "real (and always unsignifiable) nature"5 (Matisons 1998: 21), for that would involve citing a performative utterance that reiterates the exclusion of the abjected individuals.

Barad's main criticism also revolves around the theorisation of matter in the performative model which she believes does not succeed in going beyond the passive/active dualism and the subject/object divisions that Butler attempts to undermine. According to Barad, Butler's "analysis of materialisation" leaves out "critical components" since it "is analysed only in terms of how discourse comes to matter. It fails to analyse how matter comes to matter" (Barad 1998: 90-1). Consequences of this failure are, in Barad's view, Butler's lack of concern with material constraints and material dimensions of agency (91-3), with the boundary human / non-human, and the way she limits the analysis of gender to the surface of the body. Barad proposes a re-conceptualisation of Butler's performative theory by reading it "through" (124, n. 22) Niels Bohr's epistemology which she stresses, maintains that "theoretical concepts are defined by the circumstances required for their measurement" (Barad 1998: 94, stress of the author).

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5 Here Matisons is referring to the Lacanian notion of the real: that which is impossible to say.
I will now present the views of several authors who coincide in linking the emphasis placed on culture and discourse in the performative model with the lack of theorisation and empirical research on the processes of subjectification. In its turn, the alleged disregard for theorising the self is connected to the problem of agency and the possibility of subversion, as well as to the question of what is the impulse behind resistance. Matisons is one of the authors (such as Nussbaum) who thinks that Butler's concern with discourse leads her to disregard the need to elaborate on the self and the possibility of resistance. This disregard is seen as resulting in a reinforcement of the notion of the subject and a voluntaristic view of agency. To Matisons, due to Butler's attempt to reject essentialism in feminism while, at the same time, offering a theory that allows for the possibility of subversive agency, she creates a tension between agency and the subject's intentionality which is not satisfactorily resolved. A consequence of this unresolved tension is the assumption of "a transcendental subject who contains the abstract freedom of intentionality" (Matisons 1998: 18). Because Butler does not accept the notion of a subject who is self-conscious and capable of reflexivity, her idea of agency lacks directionality, which, again, is considered problematic for political action. Though, in spite of the lack of theorisation of the subject's need for resignification, Matisons thinks it can be inferred that Butler relies on some sort of theory of agency from her assumption that, due of the impossibility to accomplish normative ideals, there is resignification.

Evans, Cotter and Assiter agree with Matisons' charge of individualism, for they hold that, in spite of Butler's problematisation of the subject, she remains "an individualist in the liberal sense of the term" (Evans 1995: 164). Cotter considers that Butler's attempt to avoid voluntarism only manages to raise the "individual" to a higher level of abstraction thus creating a pragmatic "cybersubject" "who occupies different identity effects depending on what her local circumstances dictate... she does not act according to principles, she is always aleatory, her logic is the Foucauldian logic of chance; of contingency, not necessity; of reversibility, not commitment" (Cotter 1994: 229). This "cybersubject" without ethical principles or fixed identity cannot offer real resistance for it serves the interests of transnational capitalism by dividing the working class into different "identities".

Cotter argues that, since this "cybersubject" can only identify with its own experience, Butler's theory of construction presupposes knowledge as the effect of the subject's experience, not as an historically determined possibility. This view of knowledge as experiential brings about an static view of social reality that undermines its political transformation and that cannot explain the emergence of radically new concepts from repetition. Cotter does not believe that discursive resignification can bring transformation; in her view, Butler's conflation of resignification and change becomes a "cynical move aimed at managing the subjects of systematic exploitation and oppression and directing efforts away from the transformation of those structures that give rise to and maintain this exploitation and oppression" (Cotter 1994: 229). For these reasons, Cotter concludes that Butler's political strategy is condemned to failure.
Fraser values Butler's model for highlighting the performative dimension of signifying practices but, like Cotter and Nussbaum, criticises Butler's political strategy of dereification as lacking ethical basis. Though, unlike Cotter, Fraser considers that Butler's approach describes social reality by taking the historicity of socially constructed meanings into account in a way that stresses its contingency and, therefore, its susceptibility to change. In Fraser's view, the performative theory can successfully articulate the local and specific, but is not adequate for theorising the heterosexual hegemony or for establishing links among discursive regimes. She writes that the performative model is useful "for theorising microlevel, the intrasubjective, and the historicity of gender relations. It is not useful... for the macrolevel, the intersubjective, and the normative" (Fraser 1995: 164). Matisons' critical standpoint on this issue is rather on the same line as Fraser's, for she believes that Butler prioritises the social and historical processes of the constitution of meaning with the consequent lack of theorisation of the subjective processes involved in socialisation and individuation.

Fraser disapproves of the indifferentiation of the diverse conceptual levels that Butler uses to theorise the subject, as well as of the contradictions between intrasubjective and intersubjective claims. Fraser thinks these contradictions are due to the fact that Butler's framework is "primarily anchored in a philosophy of subjectivity, albeit in the mode of a reversal or abstract negation" (Fraser 1995: 170n10). In order to sort out these shortcomings, Fraser suggests a "neopragmatism" (Fraser 1995: 166) that would avoid "metaphysical entanglements" and would accept the existence of different models from which to understand socio-cultural phenomena. This neopragmatism would offer a synthesis between the de-reifying critique and the normative critique that, in Fraser's view, feminism needs in order to successfully combine the genealogy of discourse with the analysis of state apparatuses.

I will now turn to the lack of empirical research in Butler's work into the processes of socialisation and individuation. This is a problematic question, for it is widely regarded by her reviewers as having negative consequences for feminist politics mainly for two reasons: for loosing sight of the contexts of power, and for its unconcern with women's experience. The poor showing of the contexts of power is deemed detrimental for politics because it renders political agency "as an abstract potentiality rather than the result of specific social practices" (McNay 1999: 181), and because it undermines the effectiveness of subversion (Assiter, Bordo, J. Evans, McNay, Nussbaum, Phillips, Segal). The negative valuation of the unconcern with women's experiences is due to it being considered as promoting the disappearance of the category of woman (Hughes & Witz, Segal). These two arguments are further explored in the paragraphs below.

Butler's alleged lack of concern with the circumstances surrounding the subject is seen as having negative consequences to politics for several different reasons. For instance, reviewers (Fraser, Matisons, McNay, Wiegman) point out that Butler's appreciation of the subversive capacities of gender performances not only underestimates its "susceptibility to commodification, recuperation, and de-politicisation - especially in the absence of strong social movements struggling for social justice"
(Fraser 1995: 163), but it also makes the task of distinguishing between subversive and non-subversive actions more difficult (Holden). J. Evans and Nussbaum coincide with all of the above authors in the need for a wider political struggle in order to achieve subversive repetition of gender binaries. J. Evans defends, together with Phillips, the need to keep the category of woman in order to address "the problems of identity politics and of political representation as normally conceived" (J. Evans 1995: 137). Other authors believe that the abstractness of Butler's framework renders it unsuitable for dealing with issues that involve inter-subjectivity, such as the justice of relations among subjects (Assiter, Bordo, Fraser, Matisons, Nussbaum) and, thus, hinders it from being politically relevant.

I will now review the second main reason for which the question of the lack of empirical research comes under attack: the negative consequences for the political category of women derived from ignoring women's experiences. Segal links Butler's neglect of empirical research with her disregard for biology and her notion of matter. In Segal's view since "the biological, psychic and cultural dimensions of bodily experience fuse together", an inquiry into these different dimensions of the body would shed light into the experiences that women share by virtue of their biology. Thus, Segal's objection is similar to those of Soper's and Matisons', for she also asserts the importance of exploring the interaction biology/culture in order to construct a theoretical framework that can be politically effective. Hughes & Witz also make a point akin to the aforementioned reviewers, even though they do not make an explicit link between lack of empirical research and politics. Hughes & Witz emphasise the importance of the experiences women share by virtue of their gendered corporeality which they think gets obscured by Butler's focus on compulsory heterosexuality and the materialisation of sexed bodies. In order to value these experiences they both coincide in recommending empirical research into the "gendered modes of bodily materiality... relating for instance to issues of menstruation, conception, contraception, and the colonisation/control of the female body by new reproductive technologies" (Hughes & Witz 1997: 56). Turner (1995) deals with the issue of research as well. He objects to Butler's exclusive focus on sex as determined by the hegemonic discourse of heterosexuality because it leads to a lack of engagement with "body techniques" or particular bodily "disciplines".

Butler's use and interpretation of psychoanalytic theories is an issue around which varied criticisms arise: from general objections to the employment of psychoanalysis (Bech, Harris, Hood-Williams & Cealey, Lecercle, Osborne & Segal), to particular criticisms concerning the application of notions such as desire (Bech, Nealon), mourning (Phillips), resistance (Zizek), the Lacanian Symbolic (Soper, Zizek), the phallicism of the Law of the Father (Segal) and sexuality (Assiter, Soper). In the following exposition I will focus on those reviews who present more elaborated commentaries.

Hood-Williams and Cealey consider that Butler's understanding of psychic interiority as an effect of language and discursivity is paradoxical when confronted to her concern for the objects of psychoanalysis, such as the subject. They also detect a contradiction between the attempt to explain identification through the psychoanalytical notion of melancholy and the characterisation of gender as
a citation: “How can performativity speak about surface and depth? (Hood-Williams 1997: 90). In order to avoid these contradictions, they recommend “a transposition to the field of sociological inquiry” (Hood-Williams & Cealey 1998: 91), although they do not specify how can this endeavour be taken up. Phillips is also doubtful about Butler's use of the psychoanalytical notion of melancholy, for he thinks she is using it “to give some gravity, in both senses, to her exhilarating notion of gender as performative” (Phillips 1995: 183).

Soper thinks that, in arguing that gender precedes subjectivity Butler naturalises gender in a way that is inconsistent with her critique of the Lacanian Symbolic. As we saw earlier, Butler attacks Lacanian psychoanalysis for taking for granted the Law of the Father as the origin of the foundation of sexual difference but, Soper counter argues, the lack of clarity about what makes heterosexuality into a compulsory practice leads Butler into similarly negative outcomes, such as to present sex as a norm (Soper 1989: 103) and to conceive lesbian desire as more "spontaneous and 'authentic' " than heterosexual desire (Soper 1995: 120). Soper regards the idea of sex as norm as a dystopian move in politics and considers that the question of lesbian desire results in a paradox. The paradox resides in the fact that Butler wants to "transform the Symbolic Order in ways which would make sexual orientation a matter of complete indifference... and at the same time to retain the lesbian or gay identity as that which is assumed and given political recognition only in and through its contestation with a hegemonic heterosexual Symbolic" (ibid.: 120).

Zizek’s critique also revolves around the Butlerian notion of resistance, the unconscious and the Symbolic. He thinks that Butler’s misunderstands the unconscious as imaginary instead of symbolic. This alleged misunderstanding leads to ambiguity in Butler’s arguments on subjectivity, melancholy and identification that, according to Zizek, visible in her discussion of drag. In Zizek’s view, Butler’s definition of the forbidden desire "oscillates between two subjective positions from which one desires another man - is it that one desires another man as a man, or that one desires to be a woman desired by (and desiring) another man?" (Zizek 1999: 33). In other words, the ambivalence resides with regards to the position of the desiring subject. For instance, a men who desires another, does he do it from the symbolic position of a man or does he conceive his desire as arising from a feminine disposition? Zizek’s position is that subjectivity cannot be defined in relation to the renouncing of the homosexual desire as Butler argues in her use of the notion of melancholy. To put it in his own words "the primordial loss constitutive of subjectivity cannot be defined in the terms of the foreclosure of a homosexual attachment" (ibid.: 34).

According to Zizek, the loss in which subjectivity is based is the loss of a third asexual object, that is, "libido not yet marked by the cut of sexual difference" (ibid.: 40). Therefore, Zizek argues that sexual difference is not about two positive identities, namely ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’, defined in opposition. Common to both males and females is the loss of the third asexual object and thus, according to Zizek, ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’ are now unattainable positions that should be considered as "merely two modes of coping with this inherent obstacle/loss" (ibid.: 35). To Zizek,
sexual difference is not binary but precisely that which eludes being accounted in binary terms. Thus, Zizek considers sexual difference "as that which forever eludes the grasp of normative symbolization" (ibid.: 34), for sexual difference "points towards the enigmatic domain which lies in between, no longer biology and not yet the space of socio/symbolic construction" (ibid.: 39).

With regards to resistance, Zizek argues that Butler conflates of two different senses of 'resistance': the socio-critical use (resistance to power) and the clinical psychoanalytical use (the patient's resistance to the analyst interpretations). This entails confusion between false transgression that reinstates the status quo and truly subversive symbolic re-articulation. In Zizek's opinion, Butler's confusion on resistance constrains herself to remain constrained to a position of 'inherent transgression' from which only "marginal 'reconfigurations'" can be attained (ibid.: 25). Segal touches too upon the question of the Lacanian Symbolic and politics. She agrees with Butler's attack on Lacanian psychoanalysis for failing to recognise the cultural and political basis of the symbolism of the phallus, though, she thinks Butler's critique is insufficient. In this respect Segal writes: "we have first to recognise, but then to challenge, the structural basis of phallic law and order" (Segal 1994: 254). Assiter also attacks Butler on an issue related to sexual orientation: especially Butler's critique of Freud's conception of bisexuality. Assiter thinks that Butler misreads Freud on bisexuality and fails to show that sexuality before the law is an illusion created by the law itself. In her view, Butler fails because "she has not offered a reading of Freud which makes sense of the development of sexuality and gender in children" (Assiter 1996: 14).

As we have seen earlier, one of the problems widely associated with Butler's emphasis on discourse and her notion of the subject is the lack of clarity about the nature of the impelling force behind agency and change. In her last book (PLPP: 1998), Butler tackles the question of the psychological formation of subjectivity through an examination of psychoanalytic theory, and pursues her theorisation of resistance by further elaborating on desire as the subject's motor for subversion and resignification. Lecercle sympathetically describes Butler's endeavour as a "theory of subjection through interpellation" (Lecercle 1998:42) that unfolds from the elaboration of the linguistic forms of interpellation in ES to an inquiry into psychological interpellation through melancholy and guilt in PLP.

Some authors, such as Nealon and Matisons, are critical of the Butlerian notion of desire as motor for change. Though he does not expand on the reasons for his objections, Nealon disapproves of the Butlerian notion of desire as motor for subversion because of the "problematic Hegelian legacy" (Nealon 1994: 8, n. 6) inherent in the notion of lack or misrecognition in which it is based. Matisons notes that Butler does not relate desire to 'nature', the 'subject' and the 'body'. In Matisons' view, Butler purposefully refuses to use these "metaphysically loaded terms" (Matisons 1998: 25), but in doing so

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6 To Lacan, the subject relates to the lack of being through desire. Desire is an essential part of man and it is caused by lack. Desire is a continuous force and a social product for "it is constituted in dialectical relationship with the perceived desires of other subjects" (Evans 1996: 39).
she falls into a dualism theory/practice. Matisons rejects this dualism for its naiveté, since, in her opinion, to believe in the possibility of separate standards implies considering identity as an unavoidable practice in politics.

Moving out from issues of psychoanalysis, Oyewumi criticises Butler and feminist scholars in general for not having a clear notion of culture and universalising Western culture and the notion of gender. According to Oyewumi, gender is not a transcultural category, nor is it a natural, biologic imperative, as feminists assume in their "Westocentrism" (Oyewumi 1998: 1050). Oyewumi argues that "the cultural logic of the West is actually a 'biologic' encapsulated in an ideology of biological determinism, that is, the idea that biology provides the rationale for the organisation of the social world" (ibid.: 1053). The "biologic" of Western feminist thought is a culturally specific cognitive schema and so is the notion of gender, for genital attribution does not constitute gender attribution in all cultures. According to Oyewumi, Western feminists assume that the "natural attitude", that is, the naturalisation of sex differences that links genitals with gender, exists universally but, in fact, it is not universal but it is becoming increasingly so due to it being actively promoted by feminism world-wide. In line with her thought, Oyewumi discards the dichotomy social constructionism/biological determinism as false "because even feminist social constructionist accounts were informed by notions of inherent differences between males and females" (ibid.: 1053).

Oyewumi criticises Butler in particular for treating culture as generic and universalising "gender trouble". In her view, the Butlerian concept of gender as arising from compulsory heterosexuality is only sustainable if it is assumed that sexual desire can only be expressed within marriage, a false assumption from the point of the Igbo's institution of the "female husband", for instance. Oyewumi maintains that it is not possible to use the category of gender as a neutral analytic category and research tool because it involves invoking it as causal explanation. Hence, to assume, as does Western feminism, the historical and geographical existence of the category "women" and its subordination is to naturalise it.

The sex/gender distinction also is a focus of criticism for Hausman, for she thinks that the Butlerian disregard for its historical production has several negative consequences in her work. In Hausman's opinion, Butler's ahistorical perspective leads her to take for granted the notion of gender as identity and assume that subversion must engage with the sex/gender distinction. As a consequence, Butler primes the investigation of normativity over specific instances of body practices and has no interest in examining the ways in which the body resists the regulation of medicine, science and philosophy. Hausman criticises Butler for not giving enough consideration to the body as material structure resisting "the power of language to inscribe its functions" (Hausman 1995: 200). Though, she agrees with Butler in considering heterosexuality as hegemonic, she criticises her for not achieving a

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7 Oyewumi's critique is parallel to Brod on "bi-genderism", that is "the uncritical assumption that the human species must in all cultures divide into the two genders known to mainstream Western culture" (Brod 1987: 7).
good theorisation of the body and the constraints it places to gender performativity. According to Hausman, this is so because Butler's work is motivated by "a certain theoretical project within the discursive realm of philosophical and political inquiry, and not the category of "the body" at all" (Hausman 1995: 181). Butler's lack of historical grounding leads her to universalise gender as the category that regulates sex. To avoid the universalisation of gender and as alternative to the deconstruction of the sex/gender distinction as subversive strategy, Hausman recommends investigating and unsettling of social representations of body in order to destabilise gender.

At last, we arrive again at the question of Butler's style and language, for in this second stage of her work Butler's style is not spared from criticism. The attacks revolve around its complexity and inadequacy (Evans, Fraser, Nussbaum), and its repetitiveness (Bech).

3.3 ASSESSMENT OF THE CRITICISMS

In this section I will assess all the preceding criticisms to Butler's work, the early ones that consider her work up until BTM and those that include BTM. The reason why I have chosen to assess these reviews together is not only because the objections revolve mainly around the same themes and are very similar, but also because the main emphasis of my interpretation is centered on BTM. In spite of some changes from GT to BTM, I focus in Butler's thought as presented in BTM since I find it much more interesting from the point of view of sociology. My assessment will revolve around those issues towards which my reconstruction makes a contribution. I will not address questions of feminist politics or psychoanalysis even though I am aware that, as a result, two important themes of Butler's work will be missing from my reconstruction. However, for reasons of angle and space I cannot concern myself with these issues in the present thesis.

A number of criticisms addressed to Butler are connected to her Foucauldian framework. While some authors (Fraser, Benhabib) make an explicit link between the problems they detect in the Butlerian performative theory with the Foucauldian framework, there are other criticisms that are only implicitly related to Foucault. All these critiques revolve around the notion of power and its micro-macro aspects, agency, the subject, the question of history, the emergence of new concepts and justice. Since all these issues are crucial in Butler's thought, during the following assessment of criticisms I will be commenting on its relation to Foucault. For the purposes of clarity I have divided the following text in three sections on power and idealism, agency and subject, the question of knowledge and abstraction and the sex/gender distinction. Nevertheless, given that I am dealing with a system made of interrelated parts, the sections are not clear cut and some issues crop up in more than one section. I will deal first with the notion of power, for it is related to one of the most common charges against the performative theory of gender: linguistic idealism or linguistic foundationalism. As we saw in the preceding sections, a number of critics believe that Butler's alleged idealism entails a disregard for the materiality of the body and its treatment as purely discursive, that is, as a text abstracted of the context.
of power. The abstraction of the body is widely linked to the lack of interest in empirical research in Butler’s thought.

3.3.1 IDEALISM OR POWER THAT MATTERS?

3.3.1.1 Performativity and the body

Butler’s notion of power, like Foucault’s, comes under attack for lacking clarity and for being purely discursive. The charge of idealism underlies the objections of a number of authors (Assiter, Auslander, Bordo, Cohen, Connell, Cotter, Digeser, Dean, Hudson, Segal) who accuse Butler of discursive foundationalism and anti-biologism. Others (Hood-Williams, Matisons, Segal, Soper) believe that by thinking of sex and gender merely as effects of power Butler’s performative theory loses sight of biological constraints and misses out on the interaction biology/culture. I believe that in my reconstruction the accusations against the Butlerian/Foucauldian notion of power and the charges of anti-biologism and idealism do not hold anymore. The combination of Butler’s performatve theory with Barnes’ notion of power and meaning finitism does not result in a theory of power more vague than the other available alternatives. Likewise, the conception of the body as artificial kind presented by the Matrix as a natural kind accounts for the notion of power as producing the category of "sex" and acknowledges the interaction biology/culture reformulated as ungrasppable biology / Matrix. I will now proceed to examine in greater detail the criticisms against Butler’s notion of power in the light of my reconstruction.

Butler’s notion of gender as relational is based on Foucault’s notion of power as an internal relation of interaction. Hence, Butler understands gender as a relation of power existing in interaction that must, therefore, be understood in interaction. Within the interpretative framework of the performative theory of social institutions, power is an aspect of the distribution of knowledge that aligns the subject’s cognition and action and that constitutes the basis for routine actions. We are now familiar with the reconstruction of the HM as a language, that is, a system of categories that determines relevant similarities in the world that get perceived as natural kind. In this reconstruction, gender is a knowledge category collectively defined by the HM’s biological definitions of “the” body. As with any other knowledge category, the meaning of the category gender exists in intersubjective relations and is underdetermined.

Within this framework every instance of application of a knowledge category, such as gender or “sex”, partakes in the definition of this category and, therefore, in the constitution of the HM's power. It follows that every act of classification performed by a particular subject can potentially contribute to alter the definition of the category of gender. In other words, subjects retain certain capability of decision, since variation in their routine application of the HM knowledge categories can affect the meaning of these categories and, hence, change them. This argument looks upon the Matrix’s
appearance of stability not as a by-product of "natural facts", as the HM's biological discourse claims, but as an effect produced by the routinisation of the social system.

Concerning the charges of anti-biologism, idealism and linguistic foundationalism, I believe these are based in a narrow conception of language. Language is not only the materiality of the ink in which we write the word 'blood', as Soper suggests: language is a system of categories that shapes materiality. However, language cannot create physical bodies, although it creates a system of classifications that determines relevant similarities in the world. We then learn to see these relevant similarities as natural kinds. The classificatory arrangements of language are social institutions that have a material existence, such as charts, instruments, bodily skills and so on. Hence, there is more to language's materiality than the ink, since language is also about techniques and action. If the classificatory activities of the HM's are considered as material, then, the categories by which we classify the world are not only ideas but management of materiality. Then, gender must be understood as a mechanism of power which brings identity into existence through classification and material actions. This conceptualisation of the Matrix brings in the theoretical tools for researching into the social relations of power in the production of matter that Cotter misses from Butler's framework.

In the two preceding sections I presented the critics' admonishing Butler to further theorise her understanding of matter and to construct an ontological argument. My reconstruction in terms of kinds is an effort in this direction, since it is an attempt to theorise the naturalisation of power: how dispositional beliefs become materialised in human bodies, in other words, the materialisation of dispositional beliefs. To reconstruct "sex" as an artificial kind acknowledges the interaction biology/culture because the notion of artificial kind involves a social category that represents gender as a relation of power existing in interaction (a social kind), as well as a category that acknowledges the existence of matter that cannot be grasped. To theorise "sex" as an artificial kind also acknowledges the social construction of the category of "natural sex", that is, the hegemonic presentation of an artificial kind, "sex", as a natural kind. I hold that the reconstruction of 'sex' as an artificial kind (presented as a natural kind) blurs the distinction between sex and gender, that Butler problematises, while avoiding the charges of idealism. The reconstruction of 'sex' as artificial kind acknowledges the existence, although it cannot be grasped, of an alter referent, some sort of "material" element performed in inter-action with the Matrix's social kinds. The outcome of the inter-action between social kinds and matter (as that which cannot be grasped) is an artificial kind, not a natural kind, in spite of being presented as such by the discourse of biology.

In sum, the theorisation of the body as artificial kind (natural kind) does not entail idealism, for reconstructing 'sex' as an artificial kind captures the Butlerian argument against the hegemonic discourse of the body as natural kind while providing an alternative formulation that spells out the social construction of the body and acknowledges the existence of an alter reference. Hence, this sociological reconstruction of Butler contributes to sociological research in so far as it presents an ontological argument as well as it provides a framework that accounts for the sociological relations of
production involved in the production of the sexualization of the matter of bodies. I expect the empirical research will shed light into gendering practices by looking at questions recommended by Butler (GT) such as: the language of inner space, what body parts signify inner space, how the metaphor of interiority is manifested in the body surface, and the reasons for constructing the metaphor of interiority.

I will now look into another of the sources for the accusation of idealism: Butler's use of the Austinian notion of performativity to articulate the naturalisation of power. As she made clear in I2, Butler is all too aware that the popularisation of GT brought a general misinterpretation of performativity as performance that resulted in confusing the performative theory with a voluntaristic construction of identity. To clarify her position, in BTM she shifts back towards the problem of materiality and the place of constraint in the production of "sex" in order "to work out how a norm actually materialises a body, how me might understand the materiality of the body to be not only invested with a norm, but in some sense animated by a norm, or contoured by a norm" (I2: 32). Although it cannot be refuted that Butler's exposition of her notion of materiality in GT is unclear, the charges of idealism that it provoked rest heavily in a misunderstanding of Butler's use of the Austinian notion of performativity: the misinterpretation of performativity as performance and the ensuing allegation of neglecting 'materiality'.

Digeser's criticisms arise from the misinterpretation of performativity as performance to a considerable extent. Digeser argues that Butler disregards the importance of the existence of certain constatives, the body's materiality, to enable the effects of the performatives. In BTM, Butler's defends herself against the accusation of neglecting 'materiality' by explaining that although she is inclined to concede to the objectors of the radical constructivist position the existence of certain sexual differences, she refuses to do so, for she believes it will entail the acceptance of a certain version of "sex" because "the constative claim is always to some degree performative" (1993a: 11). It seems that Digeser's notion of constative is that of a natural kind to a realist, for he does not take into account that any natural kind is self-referential and, therefore, performative. In the sociological reconstruction of Butler the social aspect of natural kinds are revealed, so the body cannot be conceived as a "constative" free from social self-referential elements. By reconstructing the body as an artificial kind Digeser's objection does not stand, for it acknowledges both the "social" and the "natural" and, indeed, their inextricable interaction.

Moreover, to argue, as Butler does, that sex is performative does not imply that it cannot be referred in constative terms. Nevertheless, it must be kept in mind that every constative has a performative dimension, for it is not possible to talk about 'matter' outside of the social kind terms and classifications through which we defined it, perceive it and shape it as an artificial kind that gets presented as a natural kind. Since any natural kind has a self-referential component, to cite a natural kind has a certain performative power, the performative power that Butler wants to avoid reiterating. Thus, in terms of my reconstruction, what Butler recommends is not to treat matter as natural kind, that
is, to avoid citing as natural kind what is in fact an artificial kind constituted by the HM that gets presented as natural kind.

There is yet another charge against Butler, namely her disregard for the question of the origin of the power of the Matrix, that has also been directed to Foucault. Butler rejects the Lacanian idea of sexual difference as the origin of the Law of the Father and culture for providing a mythical origin to a socially constructed arrangement. Butler rejects such theory of gender identity for being essentialist since the assumed mythical origin universalises and legitimates a culturally specific definition of gender identity. In 'Butler reconstructed' finitism offers an alternative understanding to the myth of origin of law that Butler repudiates. Finitism allows for the understanding of the apparent "solidity" of the body as the Matrix presents it - namely, as a natural kind - as the sedimentation of a repeated set of performative citations of the Matrix's laws and categories. Thus, the notion of finitism "sociologises" the alleged substance of the body by reconstructing it as an artificial kind arising from the interaction of an ungraspable element with the Matrix's self-referential categories.

The question of the Matrix's origin and its relation to evolutionary theory is linked to the charge of idealism, since it relates to Butler's alleged lack of awareness of matter. The notion of artificial kind solves the question of 'matter' and evolution by providing a model that accounts for the body's collective configuration. In its turn, the idea of heterosexuality as a collective good accounts for the social necessity to impose a contingent arrangement of "sex" in order to solve the social question of reproduction. The idea of heterosexuality as a collective good explains the persistence of the HM and, hence, the creation of the conditions that allow its presentation by the medical discourse as being caused by a fixed substance: our 'biology'.

Barad's criticism of the performative theory for not being concerned with the boundary human/non-human is not on target in so far as Butler's main consideration is the policing of the boundary between 'healthy' and 'non-healthy' humans, and the defence of the abjected people. Butler is interested in how and why some individuals, albeit belonging to the category human, are not considered acceptable beings and hence do not qualify as deserving members of the category 'person'. In effect, Butler cares for the boundary human/non-human but within the human species. Moreover, the Butlerian inquiry departs from the sex/gender distinction which is primarily relevant to humans. Since, arguably, Butler's primary impulse in conceiving the performative theory is not to give an account of materialisation including entities other than 'human', but to offer a defence of the abjected, it cannot be fairly accused of "privileg[ing] the human bodies from the start" (Barad 1998: 124, n.24).

Moreover, as Barad herself points out with reference to theories about non-human reality, "what is being described by our theories is not nature itself, but our participation within nature" (ibid.: 105). Indeed, but is this not also the case for social theories? If so, then the competence of a particular

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8 I will come back to the issue of the distinction human / non-human in Chapter 7 on Interviews Analyzed and Evaluation of the sociological reconstruction of Butler in the light of empirical study.
social theory should be judged in the light of the theorist's intentions, since all theories are thus limited and all produce situated knowledge. This would be coherent with Barad's approach: "epistemo-ontology, referring to the study of the inseparability of being and knowing" (ibid.: 120, n. 1, stress of the author). I agree that "how reality is understood matters" (ibid.: 103, stress of the author). Indeed, I would add that it is necessary to take into account the question guiding the theorist in order to judge the results. Butler looks at abjection, Barad looks at the agency of the foetus. Hence, both are looking into different social problems.

Concerning Barad's criticism of Butler for limiting her analysis to the surface of the human body, I believe it ignores Butler account of the Matrix as "mapping" cultural meanings into body feelings, desires, perception, and so on, which operate at a 'deeper' level than mere body surface. Moreover, the notions of imaginary anatomy and body schema that Butler introduces to articulate the interaction between the Matrix as a social institution and the subject's self-perceptions, also acknowledge gender as more than 'skin-deep'. The body-schema refers to "the overall pattern of one's direct or sensory awareness of his own body... [it] is a pattern, an acquired structure that codetermines the body image in a given situation" (English 1958: 70). Hence, with this notion Butler aims to capture the intra-action (to use Barad's term) between the collective definition of acquired mental structures and the subject's perception of body and identity. Thus, Butler points to the performative relation existing between the individual's body and the collective.

Although pointing to Butler's use of the notion of body schema weakens the accusation of unidimensional temporality addressed to citationality, some weight must, nevertheless, be granted to Barad's point, in so far as Butler emphasises gender as a surface enactment, and does not spell out the significance of the notion of body schema, acknowledge its psychoanalytical origin,9 or clarify the interaction between the collective and the subject. Concerning the accusation that Butler does not acknowledge the limits that matter poses to discourse, I will quote Butler herself: "to claim that the body is an elusive referent is not the same as claiming that it is only and always constructed. In some ways, it is precisely to claim that there is a limit to constructedness, a place, as it were, where construction necessarily meets its limit" (1998: 278). In my empirical study the limits of construction become observable in the resistance that matter offers to its shaping by the Matrix's discursive practices.

3.3.1.2 Empirical research and the micro/macrolevels

A number of critics believe that Butler's alleged idealism not only entails a disregard for the materiality of the body, but also involves its treatment as purely discursive. According to these critics,

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9 The concept of body schema was first devised by Viennese psychiatrist Paul Schilder (1935). The concept has a long history of applications and development traced in Fisher and Cleveland (1968).
to treat the body as purely discursive presupposes an approach to the body as a text abstracted of the context of power and, consequently, a lack of interest in empirical research.

In the same line of argument as the reproaches against Butler's alleged linguistic idealism, it could be argued that Butler's promotion of the "mundane sense of transsexuality" (Butler 1992c: 88) as metaphor to think about cross-gendered identification entails treating the phenomenon of transsexualism as a trope. This would imply that Butler is only considering transsexualism in a figurative sense, as a text, with the consequent theorisation of a discontinuity between transsexuals' experiences and other humans. This would certainly be an objectable position, for to abstract the real, and often painful, experiences of transsexual persons would be a frivolous trivialisation. I must make clear that I do not believe that this is Butler's position, for, in my opinion, Butler genuinely believes we should take the real phenomenon of transsexualism as model for thinking about the HM's processes of subjectification. Nevertheless, I am aware that Butler's contradictions about what constitutes abjection, her refusal to explain what is the term's referent, together with the lack of empirical research in her work seem to make this accusation plausible. For this reason I think that the question of what constitutes abjection should by clarified by conducting sociological research into the feelings and experiences of abjection from the first person perspective of the abjected people themselves. In this manner transsexuals will be given a voice and the specificity of their experiences will not be lost, thus avoiding the trivialisation that could derive from treating transsexualism as a metaphor. This is one of the objectives of my empirical research into transsexuals.

Another of the accusations levelled to Butler directly related with her Foucauldian framework is that of Fraser's who maintains that the performative theory is useful for the microlevel, and the intrasubjective but cannot account for the macrolevel, the intersubjective, and the normative (Fraser 1995: 164). In my opinion, it seems odd to accuse Butler's performative theory of being unable to conceive inter-subjectivity when, in fact, her Foucauldian notion of power as inter-relational and her own understanding of gender as relational are precisely theories of inter-subjectivity. Actually, the distinction macro/micro is denied by Foucault and by Barnes for it presupposes a mistaken ontology of social life. To Foucault macrorelations of power are abstractions of the power networks at the microlevel, being the microlevel a set of explanations for face-to-face interaction. In the model presented in my reconstruction these levels are clearly linked. For instance, each time an individual at the microlevel makes a promise or signs a contract, they reinforce the social institution of promising or contracts and, thus, acts on the macrolevel. To put it differently, an act of promising at the microlevel of face-to-face interaction is building the credibility of a macrolevel social institution and, thus, supporting its authority.

Hood-Williams criticises Butler's notion of performativity along similar lines to Fraser. His criticism revolves around the perceived contradiction between the social and the psychological

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10 A trope is the figurative use of a word or expression.
approaches in Butler. According to Hood-Williams, Butler's critique of psychoanalysis contradicts her critique of the understanding of psyche as depth and the theorisation of internalisation as the mechanism to understand the embodiment of norms. It must be granted that Butler seems to have shifted her position with respect to the psyche. In GT she attacked the notion of inner psychic space as a fiction created by the psychoanalytic discourse to hide its workings but in her more recent book, PLPP, Butler theorises the mechanisms that give rise to the illusion of inner space. Nevertheless, Butler claims that, although she disputes the notion of the psyche as inner depth, she does not refuse it. Rather, what she does is to call for rethinking it as "a compulsive repetition... which conditions and disables the repetitive performance of identity" (Butler 1991a: 28). In other words, Butler does indeed want to discard the notion of psyche as inner depth but acknowledges that our experiences seem to confirm the existence of such inner space. I think Butler is trying to understand what makes these undeniable experiences possible by thinking about the internalisation of norms or, to put it in terms of my reconstruction, on the theorisation of matter and how matter is understood by subjects. Again, I expect the empirical research on transsexuals will provide some evidence for the latter aspect and enrich the former.

It might be argued that Butler's failure to engage with empirical research is linked to her Lacanian framework. Indeed, Moore (Moore 1994) points out that Lacanian theory provides little insight into gender as experience. In order to understand gender as experience Moore recommends "to link Lacanian ideas about the constitution of subjectivity to social discourses and discursive practices" (ibid.: 147). As I have written before, I agree with Butler's critics on the need for proper empirical research in order to break down the different gendering practices and clarify what they consist of. In my work I attempt to provide a transposition of Butler's thought to sociology that Hood-Williams & Cealey recommend (Hood-Williams & Cealey 1998: 91) that allows for the theorisation of instability of gender norms as well as for the different conceptions of identity. Since Butler suggests transsexuals as the model for thinking about the general processes of acquisition of gender identity, then, research into this group of subjects would enlighten the ways in which our sexual identity is fashioned. Therefore, empirical research into issues such as the ways in which transsexuals create their identities through narrative, how they experience their bodies, how do they see their different components and so on, will provide insights from the first person perspective to processes that affect us all. The empirical research on transsexuals exploring the interaction biology/Matrix would clarify gendering practices and help constructing a theoretical framework that can be politically effective.

11 See also I2 and PLPP for her own explanations on this issue.
3.3.2 The Question of the Subject and Agency

The general objection against the lack of theorisation of the subjective processes involved in socialisation and individuation also bears a relation with Fraser's remarks about the micro and the macrolevel of power. Matisons in particular (Matisons 1998) accuses Butler of prioritising the social and historical processes of the constitution of meaning with the consequent lack of theorisation of the subjective processes involved in socialisation and individuation. In response to Matisons I would argue that not only these distinctions are weak, as explained when dealing with Fraser's criticisms on the micro and macrolevel of power, in fact, Butler does undertake the theorisation of subjective processes in ES and PLP. In these books she further elaborates several important mechanisms of subjectification: linguistic interpellation, melancholy and guilt.

In my reconstruction, the theorisation of subjective processes is effected through the arguments on "I" talk. As explained in Section 2.2.5.1 on The Subject, I argue that the subject's sense of self, that is, the intuition of the "I", is a social institution product of the self-referential processes involved in "I" talk. This theorisation of the subject's sense of self as a product of language fixed by social mechanisms of subjectification accounts for the interaction of subjective and social processes involved in the construction of identity. For obvious reasons the theorisation of the subject is linked to the notion of agency. As we saw earlier, Butler's notion of subject has been criticised for being individualistic and for involving a voluntaristic notion of agency, consequence of disregarding the constraints placed on agency. The charges of voluntarism and individualism are customarily associated, since the critics seem to be on the defensive against the liberal notion of the subject and power. In the liberal notion of the subject the individual is central and power is regarded as emanating from the subject. In fact, Butler's notion of the subject's agency is not voluntaristic, for she thinks that agency is constrained by the Matrix's power since it is a product of it. Interpretations, such as Matthews', of Butler's subject as "protean" individual, or Cotter's rebuke on the cybersubject as voluntaristic, seem to arise from the above mentioned confusion between performance and performativity.

Matisons makes a direct link between Butler's lack of theorisation of the subject and the lack of clarity in her notion of agency. In Matisons' view, Butler's notion of agency lacks directionality due to Butler's refusal to grant the subject self-consciousness and the ability for reflection. Matisons argues that because of this, the need for resignification in the subject goes unexplained. Actually, in PLPP Butler theorises desire as the occasion for resignification in the subject, but clearly Matisons is not satisfied with this explanation. I believe that Matisons' criticism departs from a liberal notion of the subject for she assumes that self-transparency is necessary for action. In fact, Butler would argue that is precisely the subject's fragmentation that enables subversion. As we saw in Section 2.2.2 on the

Incidentally, Matisons charge seems to depart from the same premise as that of McNay's on Foucault's notion of subject and agency (see McNay 1992).
HM as a collective good, predictability is necessary for routine social action and, hence, for social stability. Thus, the subject's fragmentation, understood as the failure of embodying the HM's norms, undermines the Matrix itself by decreasing the predictability in which it is based. The more fragmented the subject is, the less predictable it will become. In my reconstruction the question of change in the HM is accounted by the notion of finitism. Within the framework of the finitist understanding of meaning the problem of the subject's consciousness and intentionality in relation to change is superseded, for resignification occurs inevitably due to the underdetermination of the meaning of the Matrix's categories.

Butler's theorisation of agency and the subject is also under attack for relying on a theory/practice dualism (Benhabib). As we saw in the preceding section, Nicholson defends Butler from Benhabib's criticisms by arguing that, because of Butler's awareness of the importance of historical contexts in order to explain agency, she distinguishes between metaphysical questions on agency and its possibility in concrete historical conditions. Matisons would find Nicholson's defence problematic for being based in the possibility of having double standards for theory and practice but, as Matisons herself points out, Butler avoids any attempt to articulate meaning, for she thinks it plays in the hands of the dialectic of binary oppositions that she is trying to avoid. As we saw in Section 2.2.1.1, n. 14, Butler refuses the possibility of disengaged theory because she believes theories always carry a certain vision of reality, and, as a consequence, theories have performative power in creating the reality they purport to express. Butler's attempt to solve the question of the 'double standards' theory/practice is the distinction and task division between the first and the third person perspectives on subject and agency.

In "Butler Reconstructed" I attempt to clarify Butler's position by offering both a first and a third person's perspective on the first person intuition of agency. Within the framework of my reconstruction, I theorised the subject as a product of the self-referentiality of "I" talk. If we understand the subject as socially created, we can account for the first person intuition of intentionality as a social product, while acknowledging its existence from the point of the subject. This sociological reconstruction does not entail voluntarism, since, precisely because of the collective shaping of the first person perspective, the subject does not posses independent will in the liberal sense. In this way, we can avoid the liberal notion of the subject as source of power and explain the subject's agency as being defined by collectively defined self-referential terms, while also accounting for Butler's notion of agency as a performative political prerogative. I expect that the empirical contextualisation of transsexuals' practices in their wider social setting will also shed light on the understanding of agency as social practice.
3.3.3 THE QUESTION OF KNOWLEDGE AND ABSTRACTION

The question of Butler's approach to knowledge reappears in the context of the critiques to her attitude to history. Marxist critics of Butler, such as Cotter, accuse her of rejecting history and disregarding knowledge as historical possibility. Cotter believes that, as consequence of Butler's focus on knowledge as experiential, her approach becomes subject-centered which, in its turn, results in a static account of social reality as well as in the inability to account for how new notions arise. I think that Cotter's critique seems to assume a contradiction between knowledge as experiential and knowledge as historical. This assumed contradiction is parallel to two others perceived contradictions: the one between the macro and microlevel of power, and the one between the psychological and the social analysis. As I understand it, the alleged contradiction between knowledge as historical and knowledge as experiential derives from a supposed inconsistency between the third person perspective accounting for the historical and the macrolevel, and the insight knowledge into the subject's experience and the microlevel that the first person perspective provides. This accusation is also related to the charge of idealism in so far as Cotter seemingly opposes "objective" knowledge about the relations of production, to "subjective" knowledge about the subject's experience.

With respect to the opposition historical versus experiential knowledge, Butler herself made clear in SD her rejection of the Hegelian idea of teleological history as the narrative of desire in search of an Absolute in which the dialectic oppositions will be transcended and the subject will arrive to a state of ideal knowledge. It is important to keep in mind that there are different positions within idealism: some claim that there is no other reality than that of the subject or consciousness, but others say that being or reality are determined by consciousness, the subject, and so on. The latter position does not reduce reality (or being) to consciousness or the subject, for it does not deny the existence of 'something' to be known previous to conscience. Though, the problem of the role of the 'subject' in knowledge exists even though the previous existence of 'something' to be known is accepted, for if we assume that the subject and its conscience do not merely mirror reality, then there is a moment of 'constitution' of reality that cannot be avoided. Therefore, in order to treat the problem of the question of the role of conscience or the 'subject' in knowledge we must take into account the idealist approach and do not assume that reality is as we define it and as it appears (Ferrater Mora 1983: 392-398).

The problem of the role of first person knowledge in the constitution of social knowledge in the dispute Butler/Cotter\textsuperscript{13} can be spelled out by considering the two different ways in which reports from the first person perspective can used: they can be used as the theory itself, or used as data for theory. In the first option, what the subject tells the observer about him/herself, that is reports from the

\textsuperscript{13} Cotter's criticism is analogous to McNay's on Foucault. McNay believes that the lack of a rounded theory of subjectivity in Foucault has negative consequences for the rediscovery and the revaluation of women's experiences, a fundamental aim of the feminist project (McNay 1992: 3). As we saw in the preceding sections, a number of Butler's critics would concur with McNay in criticising the abstractness of argument in Butler from first person experiences and the need for empirical research into women's lives from the first person perspective.
first person perspective, is taken by the observer as the "true" theory about that particular subject. In the second option, the reports of the subject from the first person perspective are taken as mere data. In the latter option, the subject's reports, for instance, on having intentions, are not taken as the correct account on the subject, but rather as a phenomenon needing an explanation. In this position, the first person accounts, that is, the phenomenology of the self, are treated as data to be addressed with questions such as "why is it that Cristina thinks she has intentions?". The first position is called auto-phenomenology, for it straightforwardly considers the information of the first person as the theory of mind or subject. The second position is called hetero-phenomenology, for it takes the first person perspective data as the basis for constructing a third person theory on the mind or the subject.

It seems that Cotter adopts the first option with regards to data from the first person perspective, since she takes first person accounts as the theory itself. In other words, Cotter seems to think that a theory of the production of the subject is about what it feels like to be a subject. This implies that, in the study of subject, priority is given to the phenomenological aspects of being one. Hence, Cotter emphasises what feels like to be a subject rather than in explaining why a particular subject feels the way s/he does. Thus, Cotter's position is that of a auto-phenomenologist. On the contrary, Butler (and Foucault) are hetero-phenomenologists in so far as they consider the information gathered from the first person perspective as data from which to construct a theory of the subject. That is, Butler's emphasis is placed in taking what others say as mere data, and then try to explain why we have these experiences by constructing a theory. In other words, Butler takes the data gathered from the first person perspective data as the base to construct a third person theory of the subject. Thus, people's experiences are examined as data to explain why they feel like that; hence, in the case of women, women's experiences are the basis to construct a theory to explain of how feelings of women are socially produced.

Butler's strategy with respect to the first/third person perspective in relation to the study of subject and agency can be explained from the point of view of the positions of auto and hetero-phenomenology. As we saw in Section 2.2.5 Subject and Agency, Butler considers that one should not keep the first person perspective when considering the subject but must keep it when considering agency. In other words, Butler holds that one's account of what it feels to be oneself and to act can be explained from a third person perspective, hence, one can exercise hetero-phenomenology. Though, when it comes to political action itself, Butler maintains that auto-phenomenology cannot be avoided. Butler considers first person accounts on agency, such as intentions, beliefs and so on, as useful theoretical fictions. In her view, having intentions, beliefs and desires is useful. Moreover, we do not know how to do without when we want to act, particularly when we want to act politically. Hence, to Butler these theoretical entities are instrumentally useful, since we need them in order to act, but, nevertheless, she cautions against taking these useful fictions as real. In Butler's position, the fact that

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1 This is the term used by philosopher of mind Dennett (1991).
It seems to you and to us when we act that we have intentions, beliefs and so on gives one the **sine qua non** without which we cannot act, but it does not give the correct theoretical account of what it is to be a social actor. In other words, agency from the first person perspective is a inhabitable illusion that we cannot help having it. Nevertheless, the fact that, when acting, we cannot help having it should not lead into taking it to be indisputable when theorising a third person account of agency. In other words, Butler cautions against taking the auto-phenomenology of agency as giving us the correct theory of what it is like to be a social actor.

It seems that a number of critics who accuse Butler of disregarding women's experiences are taking the same position as Cotter, that is auto-phenomenology, in so far as they assume that a theory of the subject would be a theory of experiences unreduced to any sort of classification or interpretation. This position might be objected on the grounds that to treat women's experiences as non-reducible is equivalent to treat such experiences as natural kinds in a realist sense and, hence, to ignore any social component in them. This entails a disregard for the influence of the HM's power in shaping people's states of mind and desires. On the contrary, the position of hetero-phenomenology allows for the articulation of the social in shaping the subjects' experiences. Thus, the sociological reconstruction of Butler's performative theory can account for the social processes of subjectification. Maybe the problem confronted here is one of contradictory goals: it might not be possible to combine a rounded theory of subjectivity with a political agenda that requires giving preference to the experiences of women. If the political objectives of feminism require giving pre-eminence to first person experiences, then a third person theory is simply inappropriate and, hence, irrelevant, in spite of having been constructed by analyst categories developed from first person experiences.

Butler's theory is obviously a third person's theory, since there is no attempt to describe what it is to be a woman or a man from the point of view of the experience of being one. As such, it can be fairly criticised for being abstract and externalist. In spite of Butler's attempt to avert the charges of abstractness of thought and reification by changing the term HM to Heterosexual hegemony, the problem of abstractness is not solved because she does not provide any empirical research and, hence, the first person perspective on the HM is still missing. It is undeniable that, in her work, Butler is always the analyst and, as Benhabib points out, she never explicitly considers herself as a subject immersed in a particular culture.

So, on the one hand, I think it is fair to criticise Butler for lack of commitment in so far as she does not expressly talk about herself as part of the culture she is studying and for providing an abstract view of the individual. On the other hand, Butler's third person's perspective, her theories, are themselves an expression of political commitment, for they attempt to articulate the political aspiration of resignification. In my fieldwork I have aimed to overcome the abstractness of Butler's argument by providing a sociological angle from transsexuals' first person perspective, while at the same time being a testing ground for the third person theory on subjectivity. Thus, in my empirical research transsexuals' decision-making will be described from both the first person perspective and the third
person perspective. By providing empirical data on transsexuals' experiences I hope to be able to enlighten the processes of subjectification and change and, thus, refine both the theory of the subject and the theorisation of resignification.\footnote{A possible critique to reconstructing the Matrix as a social institution would be its reification. I would like to argue that there is no such reification of the Matrix in so far as it is reconstructed in terms of meaning finitism and citationality, that is, it emphasises the flux of meaning. Therefore, agency is not attributed to the Matrix and its laws but to the subject who through their actions and citations sustain "sex" as a structure. Moreover, the appearance of "sex" as a given solid structure, and hence the Matrix's agency is theorised as a product of routinisation. Concerning objections to the Butlerian reconstruction for totalising the Matrix, I think this would also be incorrect. The Matrix as any social institution is conceived as encompassing many minor social institutions in it. While the relations between these minor social institutions can change, the main institution remains in place. The Matrix is formed by many subdiscourses that mix and mingle in different ways but the Matrix remains in place.}

As we saw earlier, another of the charges place against Butler by her reviewers links her lack of historical concerns to the shortcomings of her performative theory. The charges are: offering an static account of social reality and, therefore, being unable to account for how new notions come about. I think that these charges are both fair and unfair. The accusation is fair insofar as it is certain that Butler presents the HM in ahistorical fashion and does not give any historical example of change as, for example, Foucault in his History of Sexuality. Though, it is unfair in as much as the notion of citationality accounts for a chain of repetitions that develops in time. Moreover, the sociological reconstruction of citation in terms of meaning finitism can account for both the stability of the HM's status quo and the possibility of change. In its turn, the empirical research into transsexuals' experiences aims to amend the lack of historical examples in Butler by providing an historical aspect of the HM.

The empirical research in this thesis investigates the Matrix's knowledge categories and platitudes in one specific moment in time. The fieldwork also researches change by looking into the citation of HM knowledge categories in transsexuals' speech at two different levels. At one level, it researches citation in so far as it exposes the standard self-explanatory narrative of transsexuals and its cultural differences in Catalonia and Scotland. At the second level, it inquires into citationality by showing the way in which each personal story differs from the standard. Since the story of a particular transsexual might not be faithful to the standard narrative sanctioned by the Matrix, variation in the citation of narratives will expose the possibility of change. Hence, the empirical data will enlighten the finitist aspect of the HM and its possible source of subversion.

3.3.4 POLITICS AND THE SEX/GENDER DISTINCTION

3.3.4.1 Political action, utopia, the abject and morality

In the opinion of her critics, the absence of research into social relations and historical specifics makes Butler's work too theoretical. Her abstract approach to the processes of
subjectification and the body result in lack of clarity of political action (Benhabib, Digeser, Fraser, Kaplan, McNay, Nicholson, Nussbaum, Phelan, Weston, Zizek) and political passivity (Cotter). I will first deal with the first of these claims: the lack of clarity of political action.

According to her critics, Butler's alleged voluntaristic notion of agency together with lack of awareness of contexts of power (Assiter, Bordo, Fraser, Evans, Phillips, Segal, Turner) results in a purported disregard of the constraints to agency. Moreover, Butler does not suggest alternative arrangements to the HM or these are unclear. For instance, there are no suggestions on other ways to classify sexes alternative to the HM's categorisation on reproductive criteria, or she does not make clear what does her proposed "proliferation" of bodies exactly entail.

As argued above, the alleged voluntarism in Butler's notion of agency is due to a misinterpretation of performativity as performance. In Butler Reconstructed the constraints to agency are acknowledged, for gender and "sex" are understood as knowledge categories that are collectively defined and sanctioned, hence, there is no place for any sort of individualist voluntarism. In the reconstruction the contexts of power are represented by the collective consensus and constraint that defines and rules the application of the HM's categories. Certainly, the absence of empirical material in Butler's work on the intersubjective relations, practices and institutions that produce and regulate identities, makes it very difficult to point into particular subversive practices. My reconstruction does not suggest any guidelines for subversive action but it offers some theoretical understanding into the question of change in the HM. It also tries to shed light into the mechanisms of subjectification through empirical research.

In "Butler reconstructed", the problem of change and constraint in the HM is solved by the interactional analysis of gender definition and formation provided by finitism. The lack of theorisation of change in the Matrix is related to Butler's lack of clarity on what is the abject. On certain occasions, such as in GT, she seems to exclude homosexuality from the abjected, but on others, such as BTM, the abjected includes bisexuality and homosexuality. As mentioned in Chapter 2, Butler's notion of the abject is influenced by Derrida's notion of *supplement*. This might explain Butler's contradiction on the definition of the abject, for both Butler and Derrida consider any attempt to articulate new meaning as playing into the hands of the binary oppositions which it seeks to escape. Therefore, to collude in the utterance of that which is abjected would, to an extent, entail performing its reality. Possibly this is the reason why Butler avoids being specific about the identity of the abject. The understanding of the abject as a meaning category within finitism solves the problem of the lack of articulation of the abject, since the reconstruction emphasises its dependence on collective agreement, just like any other Matrix's knowledge categories. Within this framework the abject is accounted for as a descriptive and performative category amenable to change.

According to Butler's reviewers, the second consequence derived from abstracting the Matrix's from history is political passivity. Since the HM is presented as ahistorical and immutable, it is perceived as inevitable (Assiter, Benhabib, Bordo, Cotter). I would reply that Butler's approach does
not lead to political inactivity for it aims to show the contingency of the HM. In this sense, Butler's first political act is to argue that what we think is unavoidable and necessary is in fact contingent and, hence, it could be different. A second political act on Butler's part consists in showing in what ways it could be different. Though Butler aims to show the HM's contingency, she might be fairly accused of not being very eloquent about the ways in which the HM could be different. Nevertheless, unlike Soper, I do not believe that the theorisation of compulsory heterosexuality as a Matrix norm necessarily leads to a political dystopia.

Within finitist understanding of rules and rule following, norms are not taken to be inmutable or to possess any agency in themselves. All agency and action associated with rules are considered to derive from the collective. Therefore, norms are not fixed entities independent of the collective, but products of the consensus generated by interacting rule followers. Hence, in this framework, to understand "sex" as a norm does not imply to consider it as immovable. Its persistence can be altered, thus allowing for the possibility of political goals, utopian or not. The finitist interpretation of rule following not only theorises the possibility of deviation from the rules, but also acts as vaccine against the overestimation of subversive acts, another of the accusations levelled at Butler. Within the finitist framework, the strength of a single act of resistance cannot be overvalued, since change depends on a chain of acts and decisions that occur at the level of the collective.

Soper's accusation of dystopianism is similar to Taylor's critique of Foucault for his alleged refusal of liberation from power. In Taylor's view, Foucault disregards the possibility of moving from one power context to the other and ignores the fact that the intensity and type of power's pressure varies within the same context of power. According to Kusch (1991: 210-213), this is untrue of Foucault and, I would add, it is also untrue of Butler, for they are both aware of these variations and do not disregard the possibility of change. Some of the allegations against Butler's politics are wrong in so far as they rest in a misunderstanding of her position concerning the possibility of change in the HM. As we saw earlier, Butler has been widely criticised for her alleged disregard for questions of ethics and morality (Assiter, Bordo, Fraser, Matisons, Modleski, Nussbaum, Siebers). These criticisms are related to Butler's Foucauldian framework and they have also been directed to Foucault. In Kusch's view (Kusch 1991: 224-5), Foucault's lack of interest in utopias about what just societies should be like are due to two reasons. In the first place, Foucault believes that utopian visions tend to slow down the process of change. In this context, Foucault criticised Soviet society for trying to impose a notion of liberated human nature that had been shaped by bourgeois societies, thus behaving more like an obstacle than an impulse for revolution. A second reason for refusing utopias is that the notion of justice encapsulated in them is not universal, but fruit of a particular culture, philosophy and class system. We can now contextualise Butler's refusal to engage with utopias and question of ethics and justice as a strategy to avoid taking part in a certain definition of justice or utopian goal that could actually hinder the change she would like to procure.
It can be inferred from the above that both Foucault’s and Butler’s opposition to justice is not an opposition to the concept of morality itself but to the modern theoretical conceptions of morality. Thus, attacks, such as Matisons’, on the moral dilemmas that Butler’s alleged politics of non-normative sex can bring about are misguided. In fact Matisons’ attack on Butler for assuming that non-normative sex is liberatory is improper, since Butler actually does make clear that she does not think that all non-normative pleasures are subversive. In this context, it is interesting to note the contrast between Butler’s political expectations for change and the stance adopted by Leninism and Marxism, criticized by Foucault. In terms of my reconstruction, Butler thinks it is impossible to control the effects of an action with a certain political aim, for meaning finitism entails the impossibility to ensure the outcome of a given action. Due to the consensus necessary for change in the HM’s knowledge categories, there is no place for a notion of political agency as directional. On the contrary, the Marxist tradition assumes that by implementing a political project a certain outcome will be achieved. This position could be said to rest on meaning determinism for it assumes that the reception of a certain action and its perceived meaning can be determined in advance. Hence, it expects that the mere enactment of its programme will achieve the desired results. In thus far, I also disagree with Nussbaum’s critique on the uselessness of parody as a political tool. In my view, Butler’s “politics of parody” aim to reveal the instability inherent in the Matrix’s gender categories by unmasking these normative classifications as a parody of a theoretical ‘natural’ sex. Nussbaum’s critique is also unfair in so far as it disregards Butler’s efforts to challenge sex and gender as ‘deep’ characteristics of identity.

It must be noted that the understanding of agency presented in this reconstruction, that is, as an outcome of social processes, implies that the theorist’s agency is also constituted by social institutions whose subversion is almost fortuitous. For example, this rational reconstruction of Butler might offer an analysis of how agency talk is socially constructed but it does not necessarily undermine its construction. Hence, it might be objected against Butler’s "socialisation" that, in spite of having shown the conventionality of self, agency and the HM, it does not offer an alternative arrangement to this social institution. Nevertheless, it offers some theoretical understanding into the mechanisms of change and some empirical research on the mechanisms of subjectification, both key questions for political action.

3.3.4.2 The sex/gender distinction

At last, I will deal with the critiques related to Butler’s reformulation of the sex/gender distinction (Assiter, Hood-Williams & Cealey, Matisons). These reviewers dismiss Butler’s notion of matter as presented in BTM for considering it irrelevant to her discussion of morphology. According to these authors, the Butlerian notion of matter does not account for other ways to think about bodies, such as the libidinal body, the imaginary body and the anatomical body. I think this criticism misses the point of Butler’s argument altogether, since, to put it in terms of my reconstruction, its authors seem to conflate matter as ungraspable with a natural kind. Butler’s theorisation of matter is an attempt
to distinguish matter as that which cannot be grasped from matter as presented by the HM, that is, matter as natural kind. In other words, Butler's arguments in BTM are crucial for understanding her notion of the body as an artificial kind consequence of the performative interaction between matter and social kind. The critics confuse matter as that which cannot be grasped with matter as presented by the HM's, that is, matter as natural kind. Hence, they fail to grasp this distinction and miss the fact that Butler does not distinguish between these "bodies". For instance, she would not accept that there exists an anatomical body that can be studied as a natural kind in realist terms, for what Butler is arguing is that bodies are products of social kinds in interaction with an ungraspable matter.

There are other criticisms, such as Rivera's, arising from the feminism of difference that also seem to be missing the very same point. It is true, as Rivera assumes, that the Butlerian notion of "sex" is about the classification of individuals for the purposes of reproduction. Hence, "sex" is mainly defined on the basis of criteria directly related to sexuality: the Matrix's law of compulsory heterosexuality. Though, it is mistaken to infer from here that Butler aims to take sexuality as the main criteria for defining identity. Her intention is precisely the opposite, since Butler aims to subvert the HM's processes of subjectification by undermining the category that fixes the individuals' identity, that is "sex", for being exclusively based on sexuality as defining criteria. Rivera's position is similar to Irigaray's who seems to return to a pre-Butlerian view of the sex/gender distinction by considering sex as a natural kind. Irigaray takes sex as an intrinsic feature of the world defined by criteria of sexuality, namely, heterosexuality (Irigaray 1996). This also seems to be the assumption underlining the criticisms of the paragraph above.

There is a general objection to Butler's approach to gender for not being sociological enough (e.g. Hughes & Witz). Hood-Williams and Cealey make this charge very explicit and accuse the Butlerian understanding of gender of presenting a false coherence to what is, in fact, a network of disparate practices. As mentioned before, these reviewers recommend a sociological "transposition" (Hood-Williams 1997: 91) of Butler's work to sociology as antidote. Foster (Foster 1998: 29) makes a similar claim and attempts to solve this question by applying the notion of choreography. With respect to this issue, Butler herself argues in GT that, because she regards the internalisation of gender norms as unstable, her approach to sexualization is closer to psychoanalysis than to sociological accounts of gender (GT: 28). In Butler's view, since the concept of person is not universal, as historical and anthropological evidence suggests, there is no point of departure for a social theory of gender. Butler rejects what she thinks is an assumption of sociology, namely that gender norms work, in favour of the psychoanalytical stance that departs from the premise that gender identification is not stable (GT: 156, n. 51).

There seems to be different interpretations of Butler's position with respect to the universality of gender. Segal acknowledges Butler's critique of Lacanianism as a refusal of the universalisation of the phallic law, though she thinks that Butler is not challenging enough. Soper thinks that by theorising gender as preceding subjectivity, Butler naturalises, hence universalises, gender in a way that is
inconsistent with her critique of the Lacanian Symbolic. Mathews interprets Butler as calling for the rejection of universal statements but Oyewumi criticises Butler for failing to recognise the cultural specificity of the HM and accuses Butler and Western feminists, in general, of assuming the universality of gender. Hausman's critique of the sex/gender distinction and of Butler's use of the gender category is similar to Oyewumi's on Western bio-logic. Hausman also criticises Butler for universalising gender as the category that regulates "sex" and thus, universalising the sex/gender distinction and compulsory heterosexuality. I think that, though, it might be granted that Butler is not explicit about the cultural specificity of the HM, she clearly states that the Matrix is being ruled by contingent criteria, which seems to imply denial of universality.

Moreover, Butler's refusal to engage in a social theory of gender might be motivated by the wish to avoid universalisation of the category of gender that Oyewumi admonishes, for it seems to rest on the assumption that a social theory would be universal. I would like to argue that this is not necessarily the case. A social theory of gender can be formulated about a certain culture in order to explain this particular culture without assuming the universality of the culture it aims to describe. Sociological theory per se is not inevitably universal, neither Western centred, nor unavoidable!

Turner's critique also seem to revolve around the assumption that a theory of gender must be universal. Turner dismisses Butler's focus on sex as determined by hegemonic heterosexuality because, in his view, it impedes engagement with body techniques and particular disciplines. I do not think this is necessarily the case for, in order to understand how hegemonic heterosexuality is implemented, it is necessary to look at techniques and disciplines since they are the medium to achieve a certain aim. It might be that Turner perceives the HM as a grand explanation that rules out other approaches to the study of gender. In this case, Turner's critique would be close to Oyewumi's charge of universalisation of gender trouble and compulsory heterosexuality due to the sex/gender distinction.

As we saw earlier, Oyewumi problematises gender as causal explanation of women's subordination for being "biologically deterministic" (Oyewumi: 1055), since it assumes it is inevitable to link genitals with gender. According to Oyewumi, this premise leads researchers to assume that biology, that is, being a "woman", is universally linked to gender subordination with the consequent bias in their work. I would like to add that, judging from some of the criticisms directed to Butler, it seems that Western theorists tend to assume gendered corporeality as women's corporeality. For instance, when Hughes and Witz recommend empirical research into the experience of the modes of gendered materiality they only mention issues of females' corporeality, such as "menstruation, conception, contraception, and the colonisation/control of the female body by new reproductive technologies" (Hughes & Witz 1997: 56). It seems that gender is assumed to be female gender, which seems to support the idea that the term gender is not only assumed to be universal but systematically associated to women's subordination. From here it can be argued that if the use of the term gender is analogous to a reference to women's subordination and this subordination is also regularly associated to biology, then, the term entails biological determination.
The problem with the sex/gender distinction, as I understand Oyewumi’s position, is that the meaning of the category of gender is always dependent on the category of sex as biology. If we accept that sex and gender are terms inextricably linked to each other, then Butler's way of presenting the HM could be interpreted, as Soper does, as a naturalisation. This is so because to refer to gender even to argue (as Butler does) that it performs "sex" to an extent, is still to theorise within a particular and circumscribed framework. This framework, that is, the analytical terms sex/gender, implies the understanding that "biology provides the rationale for the organisation of the social world" (Oyewumi: 1053). Hence, it follows from Oyewumi's critique that even the Butlerian deconstruction of sex into "sex" is limited by the bio-logic embedded in the sex/gender distinction and thus, to an extent, it involves reiterating it and contributing to its performative power.

I think that it might be too early to judge the degree of unfaithfulness of the Butlerian reiteration and, hence, her subversive contribution. Should not it be decided on the light of the research and theoretical developments it informs and/or inspires? In any case, Butler herself is clearly aware of the performative power of analytical terms and theories that Oyewumi rightly points out. With respect to the question of the category of woman, though I agree that Butler's work would benefit from empirical research - as I have made explicit in my arguments and, indeed, in my investigation, I do not think that the charges for understanding the category of "woman" as biologically determined are applicable. On the contrary, in my view, Butler would agree with Oyewumi's attack against the category "woman" precisely because of it entailing biological determination. Indeed, Butler's problematisation of the sex/gender distinction is an effort to avoid the category of woman as a naturalised "sex". In my opinion, Butler is trying to rethink the sex/gender distinction in order to construct a third person theory that could be useful as model to understand the processes by which subjects' identity, male and female, become genderised. Hence, in my understanding, a third person theoretical model aims to encompass the processes of subjectification for both men and women and, therefore, it should not assume its exclusive presence in the creation of "women" subjects. Neither should it conflate different "sex" experiences and put on the same level two different modes of genderisation.

I think, though, Butler can be fairly accused of not having a clear notion of culture. In my reconstruction the notion of culture is taken up by notion of folk "sexology". To reconstruct the HM in terms of a folk "sexological" language offers a social model that entails the recognition of the Matrix's conventionality, for it understands the term gender as a culturally specific category. Within this framework, to define a particular society as ruled by compulsory heterosexuality does not necessarily imply universalising it. I believe it should be possible to take such a statement as description of a particular local knowledge. To be able to recognise knowledge as local is of great importance in an increasingly internationalised politics. As Oyewumi reports, the power and influence of Western culture urges people from other cultures to take the category "woman" on board to be able to establish a dialogue with an hegemonic culture that takes for granted the universality of what is only a particular
cultural definition. It is the responsibility of Western intellectuals to avoid 'theoretical colonisation' and its ensuing appropriation of other cultural realities.

3.4 TABLES

The following tables offer a quick guideline to Butler's critics and the main points of criticism. The criticisms are grouped under eight headings. Two of them: 'Abstractness of Argument' and 'Style and Language' are self-explanatory. I will give a brief resume of the rest of the headings. Under 'Agency' I have grouped those criticisms charging Butler's notion of agency for being unclear, for allowing insufficient capacity of action to the subject, for lacking directionality and for being voluntaristic. The entry 'Subject' includes criticisms for being insufficient and contradictory, for presenting a deterministic view of individuation and for being individualistic in the liberal sense of the term. Under 'Politics' the charges are: general vagueness and deficient elaboration, lack of clarity and overestimation of resistance, problematic loss of category of woman, lack of ethical basis, dystopic and condemned to failure. 'Performative Theory' refers to those objections revolving around its linguistic idealism, its disregard for social contexts of power, lack of clarity of notion of citationality and the question of matter's ontology, superficiality of notion of gender as performance and reification of the HM. The heading 'Origin of HM' deals with lack of concern about the question of the origin of HM and disregard for the evolutionary theory. The last entry, 'Use of Psychoanalysis', groups criticisms for extensive and uncritical application of psychoanalytical notions and for misinterpreting Lacan.

The following tables aim to offer a quick overview of the main areas of criticism, its frequency and its variation overtime. Although the grouping of criticisms into headings necessarily involves oversimplifying its contents, I hope that the benefits of having a general brief outlook would overcome its shortcomings.
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PART TWO:

THE EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION
"I wish a psychiatrist (...) a magic one, would say: you are normal.
I would love that but I know it's not / I know it can't happen"

(Jane 166-7)

INTRODUCTION TO THE EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION

In this part I will present my empirical investigation into transsexual subjects. This empirical investigation has a twofold aim: to compensate for the widely criticised abstractness of Butler's arguments and to generate new ideas within the Butlerian framework. The data gathered in the fieldwork research on transsexuality will provide information and historical examples of the intersubjective relations, practices and institutions that produce and regulate identities, thus avoiding both the abstractness of argument and the unconcern for historical reality in Butler's writing. I attempt to achieve this end by providing some insight into the particular folk beliefs from research into two different cultures, the Spanish and the British, at the present moment. This insight will contribute to the development of Butler's work by providing a first person perspective on the processes involved in becoming subjects. It will also avoid treating transsexuality as a mere figure of speech abstracted from the reality of transsexuals' experiences.

As we saw in the preceding sections, Butler proposes transsexuality as the model for the general processes through which all society members become males or females. The present study researches the creation of transsexuals' identities. This inquiry will clarify the processes involved in the creation of transsexuals' identities by shedding light on the narratives, perceptions and feelings of such subjects from the first person perspective. I will attempt to elucidate the processes of identity creation through the study of transsexuals' perceptions of their bodies and medical techniques, their social position and political perspective, their feelings of abjection and emotional dispositions, and the citation of HM knowledge categories in transsexual's speech at two different levels: at the level of the standard self-explanatory narrative of the transsexuals in general, and at the personal level, insofar as each personal story differs from that standard. I expect the investigation will enrich the theoretical understanding of change in the HM and its mechanisms of subjectification. To understand change would improve our knowledge of what constitutes subversive practices, such as unfaithful citation. The research into transsexuals' experiences might enlighten our understanding of the ways in which the HM is established and maintained and hence, will also improve our understanding of its potential subversion.

The chapter layout of Part 2 is as follows: in Chapter 4, Earlier Work on Transsexuals, I will introduce previous research on transsexuals with a special focus on sociological and anthropological
literature; Chapter 5, The methodology and the informants, introduces the methodological aspects of
the research and justifies the choice of informants; Chapter 6, critically assesses my reconstruction of
Butler reconstructed in the light of the empirical data; finally, Chapter 7 presents Critical Conclusions.
CHAPTER 4:

SELECTIVE REVIEW OF EARLIER WORK ON TRANSSEXUALS

The approaches to transsexualism can be roughly divided into two groups: the social and the biological perspective. Although both schools accept the existence of multifactorial causative influences in transsexualism, the biological perspective emphasises its biological causes whereas the social school plays down its biological basis and focuses on the influence of social factors. Most of the research on transsexualism in psychology, psychiatry and medicine classifies psychological data for the purposes of diagnosis and etiological theorising. In so far as transsexuals present a mismatch between their self-image and social categories they have been approached from the sociological perspective as informants of the cultural categories 'male' and 'female', the social construction of gender, the normativity of gender roles, and heterosexuality as a social institution.

This literature review will focus on sociological and anthropological literature, and will consider only very briefly some psychological and psychoanalytical works on transsexualism. It will not deal with historical, physiological, psychiatric and legal literature. Due to my approaching Butler's thought with the aim to "sociologise" it, I restrict this review of literature to works that can give some useful information in that direction and leave aside works on aetiology or biological causes of gender dysphoria. Hence, I focus on sociological and anthropological approaches, since they can shed light on folk beliefs about sex and gender, as well as on processes of identity formation in transsexuals. Nevertheless, I will also present a brief introduction to the history of the condition and deal with some psychoanalytical papers relevant to my approach. Since I aim to provide a first person perspective on the processes involved in becoming subjects, this chapter will concentrate mainly on those works based on qualitative data obtained from in-depth interviews, such as Bolin, Ekins, Garfinkel, Hausman, Kessler and MacKenna, King and Lewins, but will also review ethnographical work, such as Kulick, Nanda, Prieur, and work done from the approaches of sociology of knowledge and cultural studies. The last section will place my empirical research in relation to earlier approaches to transsexualism presented previously.

For a guide on what is now a large body of academic research on transsexualism and cross-dressing see Denny 1994. Denny's review has a special focus on medical and psychological aspects though he also includes some anthropological and sociological works.
4.1 INTRODUCTION

Generally speaking, most of the work done in the area of psychology, psychiatry and medicine follows what Ekins terms 'The Medical Model', that is, biographical and in-depth psychological data is classified for the purposes of diagnosis and etiological theorising (Ekins 1997: 27). The medical model works with biological or psychological perspectives developed in order to explain the evolution of gender identity and sex role more generally. In this model, "pathology is understood and explained in terms of a favoured biologic, psycho-analytic, social learning or cognitive developmental theory" (ibid.: 28). Besides the explanation of pathology, taxonomy is also a very important aspect of this approach which I am only going to sketch briefly in the following as a means of introduction.²

The evolution of the aetiology of transsexualism started with Hirschfeld, a German doctor who in 1910 coined the term 'transvestite' to refer to cross-dressers as different from homosexuals. The first attempts to change sex by surgical means take place in the 1930s, being the better known case Lili Elbe (formerly known as Einar Wegener) in 1933. Although the term 'psychic transsexual' was used by Hirschfeld as early as 1910 (Hausman 1995: 225, n. 39), it was not until 1949 when the term 'transsexual' was employed by Cauldwell. In the early 1950s transsexualism became differentiated from transvestism. Also in the early 1950s two cases of sex-change operation became widely publicised: Christine Jorgensen (1952) and Roberta Cowell (1954).³ In the early 1960's Cauldwell introduced the term 'transsexual' but it only became widely applied in clinical contexts after the publication of the famous work *The Transsexual Phenomenon* by endocrinologist Benjamin in 1966. Benjamin established the use of the term 'transsexual' to refer to patients requesting sex-change as distinct from transvestites. In the words of Lothstein, author of the first work dedicated exclusively to female-to-male transsexuals, the term 'transsexual' was used to refer to "those patients with a lifelong gender identity disorder who, in addition to crossdressing (which was traditionally associated with fetishism and transvestism), identified completely with the opposite sex, believed that they were trapped in the wrong body, and wanted surgery to correct that disorder" (Lothstein 1983: 56).

Benjamin's study was the first to present clinical data from a large number of patients, instead of the single case studies that preceded its publication, and paved the way for the gender identity theories that followed. To Benjamin psychotherapy might be useful in treating transvestites, but it was useless to treat transsexuals, the "most disturbed group of male transvestites" (Benjamin quoted in Hausman 1992: 280). In his own words: "psychotherapy with the aim of curing transsexualism is a useless undertaking with present available methods. The mind of the transsexual

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² For a good account on the development of the transsexual aetiology see Hausman 1995 and King 1981. For a full review of the distinction transvestite/transsexual in psychological and medical literature, see King 1981, 1993, 1996.

³ According to Billings and Urban, "the Cook County Hospital in Chicago had been performing sex/change operations as early as 1947" (Billings and Urban 1982: 269 n8).
cannot be changed in its false gender orientation... Since it is evident, therefore, that the mind of the transsexual cannot be adjusted to the body, it is logical and justifiable to attempt the opposite, to adjust the body to the mind" (Benjamin 1966: 91). Hence, Benjamin became a strong advocate for surgical intervention in contrast with Cauldwell who did not advocate surgery.

Contemporary with the work of Benjamin was the work of psychoanalyst Stoller on the criteria for the diagnosis of transsexualism and gender identity disorders. Stoller's work paved the way for the widespread usage of the term 'gender dysphoria', indicating the opposite of 'gender euphoria', that is, the sense of well being in one's gender. In other words, 'gender dysphoria' is the "sense of unease or discomfort about one's identity as male or female which is felt to be in opposition to one's physical sex" (Ekins 1993: 3). Gender was first understood as an inner feeling constituting the person's core identity. This inner conviction was theorised as developing in early infancy and was not likely to be altered. For reasons that were deemed to be biologically rooted, certain subjects would present a discordance between their 'gender' and their 'sex'. Given that the 'gender core' was unalterable, the only viable option to ease the patients' suffering was to operate anatomically, hence to intervene in the 'sexed' body, in order to achieve the desired coherence between 'sex' and 'gender'. In sum, the only 'solution' for gender dysphoria was treating sex, that is, changing the body to align it coherently with normative definitions of gender.

'Gender dysphoria' was meant to clear the conceptual problems of diagnosis that had not yet been solved after a complicated history of uses and definitions of the terms 'transvestite', 'transsexual' and others. 'Gender dysphoria' had a wider scope than 'transsexual', since it included all those with "an intense displeasure with one's own physical and sexual role" (Koranyi quoted in Ekins 1993: 3). According to Hausman, since the 1970s 'gender dysphoria' began to substitute 'transsexual' though, as diagnoses, both terms shared the idea of patient's surgery request as 'primary symptom' of the condition (Hausman 1992: 278). Hence, 'gender dysphoria' became an umbrella term which included transsexuals, transvestites and effeminate passive homosexuals.

Nowadays, transsexualism is conceived as an affection that concerns a person's core identity in opposition to transvestite's cross-dressing which is considered as an activity which solely aims to obtain sexual pleasure. As a consequence, transsexualism is medically conceived as a problem of identity, in contrast to transvestism, which is conceived as a sexual perversion. Another important difference between transsexuals and transvestites as drawn in the medical discourse is that

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4 In 1958, Stoller was involved in the study of the transsexual Agnes also studied by sociologist Garfinkel. I will present Garfinkel's theories about Agnes in Section 4.2.1. on Ethnomethodology.

5 In the first instance, the cases dealt with were intersexed individuals who felt their body was at odds with the gender or rearing. This was believed to be due to the 'wrong' socialisation, that is, socialisation in discordance with the 'gender core identity'. A well-known exception was Agnes, a transsexual treated by Stoller and studies by Garfinkel. Agnes maintained she was suffering from a 'natural' disturbance and hid the fact that she had been taking hormones since youth. Only years later, after sex-change surgery had been performed, Agnes spontaneously mentioned her hormone intake.
transsexuals are willing to interfere with their bodies at both hormonal and surgical levels whereas transvestites do not.6

4.2 PSYCHOANALYSIS

In this section I will only present some recent work on psychoanalytical interpretations of transsexualism relevant from the point of view of a Butlerian reconstruction. As mentioned above, the medical model of transsexualism rules out the possibility of psychotherapeutical treatment of the condition. The medical model is criticised by psychoanalysis for collaborating with psychosis (Billings & Urban 1982: 274).

The question of identification is primary in psychoanalytical interpretations of transsexualism. An interesting interpretation by a Lacanian psychoanalyst is that of Saphouan (1980). Through an analysis of the cases reported by Stoller, Saphouan concludes that "the transsexual is obliged to get rid of his phallus to make room for his desire or to become desiring" (Saphouan 1980: 204, stress of the author). Saphouan's interpretation of transsexualism assumes the Lacanian premise according to which "it is only by assuming castration... that the subject can take up a sexual position as a man or a woman" (Evans 1996: 23). Lacanian theory also maintains that "repudiation of symbolic castration leads to the return of castration in the real, such as... self-mutilation of the real genital organs" (ibid.: 23). Since, according to Saphouan, transsexuals repudiate symbolic castration, they feel they must castrate themselves physically in order to be able to take on a sexual position.

As we saw in Chapter One, Butler emphasises the fact that nobody assumes castration in a perfect way; hence everybody's gender identity is unstable, not only transsexuals'. In Butler's view, this instability is a potential source of subversion. Butler argues that we learn to discriminate and conceive parts of our body and the feelings they arouse in accordance with the normative ideal of a gender-specific body. Because transsexual people experience a discontinuity between body parts and the sexual pleasures culturally associated with them, they are acutely aware of these cultural meanings. Transsexuals feel a mismatch between their conception of themselves and the social category they are expected to fit. Because of this mismatch, they feel like misfits in relation to social categories and, as a solution, they aim to shift category. They try to match their physical morphology with the category that holds the definition of personal identity they feel closer to. In my fieldwork I will be looking at the meanings transsexuals' associate with "sex" categories such as "male" and "female". In doing so, I expect to be able to discover the socio-cultural construction of these folk categories. To put it in terms of my reconstruction, by researching transsexuals' "I" talk I expect to learn the platitudes and actions associated with the different "sex" categories in the HM under which people are impelled to ascribe to themselves. Hence, I hope to provide an insight into the "sexual position" Saphouan refers to as socially defined and, hence, self-referential.

6 The category of transvestite is never applied to women.
Another perspective into transsexualism also from psychoanalysis is offered by Stein's analysis of the case of "E.", a patient who fantasised about transsexualism (Stein 1995a). From her analysis, Stein concludes that "the contrast masculine/feminine, by collapsing many representations of selfhood that are unrelated to gender, can disguise, and even create, dilemmas of self as well" (Dimen's quoted in Stein 1995a: 287). Stein does not specify what qualifies as "representations of selfhood unrelated to gender". In terms of my reconstruction, the Matrix's binary distinction "masculinity" and "femininity" play a role in performing identity problems. Subsequently these identity problems get presented as products of a natural kind, such as a medical label, e.g. "gender dysphoria". That is, the social kinds' input in the origin of these gender identity problems is ignored. In other words, the disjunction between the social meanings of "masculinity" and "femininity" performs a particular person's problem that gets then presented as an individual problem of fixed "natural" essences. As a consequence, the subject tends to perceive his unease as arising from immutable sources and, hence, solvable only by surgery.

Stein's paper is criticised by Chodorow for using gendered language to describe the patient's conflict (Chodorow 1995). Chodorow argues that Stein "falls back on externally defined gender meanings" (ibid.: 295) when trying to understand the communications of her patient and when referring to the patient's psychological evolution. Chodorow also criticises Stein for being "unwilling to use her case to state definitively that generalising about gender does not seem to work when we are confronted by the evidence of individuals and personal meaning over the course of an analysis" (ibid.: 295). In response to Chodorow's criticisms, Stein recognises the necessity of using gender assumptions in analysis because they provide consensual meanings necessary for communication. Stein remarks on the "difficulty of bringing together "clinical" and "cultural" theories, which are often conflicting and contradictory" (Stein 1995b: 303). Stein also detects a "gap separating advanced cultural criticism from... psychoanalysis in the sense of a therapeutic process" (ibid.: 303). Nevertheless, Stein describes her patient as being "culturally enslaved" (ibid.: 308), that is carrying essentialist views of gender that were making it difficult for him to solve his psychological problems of identification and explains that the aim of her therapy was to help the patient to "obtain an expanded view of femininity, masculinity, gender, and self" (ibid.: 308). Indeed, Stein declares: "one of the main goals in my paper is to show that Stoller's (1968) dictum, 'there is no known treatment for transsexuals', can, under certain conditions, be contradicted" (ibid.: 309). Implied in Stein's position is the understanding of social meanings as constructed and, hence, flexible and variable, in contrast to a view of gender as fixed and determined, as assumed in Stoller's notion of fixed core gender identity.

Both Stein and Chodorow take it that "gendered subjectivity, gender identity, and gender-inflected sexuality are personally constructed and variable" (Chodorow 1995: 291). Therefore, Chodorow thinks that Stein's analysis is an example of the extent to which the category of "gender" is shifting and uncertain because of its different layers at social and individual level. I would like to argue that the uncertainty of the category "gender" is partly due to the confusion between the
descriptive, prescriptive and the performative dimensions of gender. From this perspective, one would certainly agree with Chodorow when she writes that "it is hard to specify what is gender and what is not" (ibid.: 292). The question that arises is how to mark a boundary between the social meaning of the category of "gender" and its personal modalities? Or, how to distinguish from a third person perspective between that which is personal and that which is social? Indeed, these questions reflect the present search for ways of understanding "gender" in psychoanalysis, as described by Stein: "lacking a grand, clear, compelling theory (of gender), we look at ourselves looking at theories and learn from that" (Stein 1995b: 310).

4.3 SOCIOLOGY

4.3.1 ETHNOMETHODOLOGY

The first study of transsexualism from a sociological perspective was Garfinkel's research into the management of passing practices of Agnes. This well-known study was conducted with an ethnomethodological approach (Garfinkel 1967). Agnes, a patient of American psychiatrist Robert J. Stoller, displayed secondary female characteristics, such as breasts and general feminine appearance, although she possessed male genitals. Agnes, who had been raised as a boy, claimed to be naturally intersexed and approached Stoller requiring a vaginoplasty. Before the surgery took place, Garfinkel conducted a series of interviews in the course of which he examined Agnes' "passing" practices. Garfinkel defined "passing" as "The work of achieving and making secure their rights to live in the elected sex status while providing for the possibility of detection and ruin carried out within the socially structured conditions in which this work occurred" (Garfinkel 1967: 118, emphasis of the author).

Garfinkel noted that Agnes' practices made observable the mechanism by which normal sexuality is accomplished through talk and conduct, and her preoccupation with being a competent female provided an insight into what are those features that the population of legitimately sexed persons exhibit as objective features. According to Garfinkel, Agnes treated the "natural facts of life" of socially recognised, socially managed sexuality as a managed production. Thus, these facts of life were made visible, reportable and accountable for practical purposes. For this reason Agnes' passing practices allowed Garkinkel to discuss some of the constituent phenomena that made up the normally sexed person as a contingent, practical accomplishment. Thus, the observation of Agnes' practices became Garfinkel's source for treating "normally" sexed persons as "cultural events in societies whose character as visible orders of practical activities consist of members' recognition and production practices." (ibid.: 180-1). To summarise, Agnes' passing devices revealed the artificiality of the normally sexed person as a cultural accomplishment achieved by following collectively shared and monitored rules.
The experiences of Agnes and other intersexed persons and their obstinacy in routinising their daily activities also led Garfinkel to note "the omnirelevance of sexual statuses to affairs of daily life as an invariant but unnoticed background in the texture of relevances that comprise the changing actual scenes of everyday life" (ibid.: 118). In Garfinkel's view, this omnirelevance goes unnoticed because it is embedded in a background of relevances normally taken for granted. The omnirelevance of gender testifies of its importance in social relations. Garfinkel developed the notion of attributed genitals to articulate it. The attributed genital is "The one which is assumed to exist and which, it is believed, should be there" (ibid.: 154). According to Garfinkel, the attributed genitals are constructed out of our ways of envisioning gender and always exist in everyday interactions. The attributed genital provides stability to social routine by enabling persons to recognise each other's actions, beliefs, aspirations, feelings, and so on. The investigation of his informants' passing practices led Garfinkel to postulate the existence of a "community of understandings' by and about sexed persons treating each other's sex as known in common and taken for granted by them" (ibid.: 126). I will return to the notion of "community of understandings" below.

Garfinkel concluded from his data that, from the point of view of persons who are able to take their own normally sexed status for granted, the "perceived environments of sexed persons are populated with natural males, natural females, and persons who stand in moral contrast with them, i.e. incompetent, criminal, sick, and sinful" (ibid.: 121-2, stress added). Garfinkel continues: "...for the bona fide member 'normal' means 'in accordance with the mores'. Sexuality as a natural fact of life means therefore sexuality as a natural and moral fact of life." (ibid.: 124, stress of the author). Thus, the "natural" is linked to the mores and to morality. Indeed, for Agnes "the likelihood of being accorded treatment as a natural, normal female was a moral likelihood. She reckoned her chances in terms of deservingness and blame" (ibid.: 177).

Garfinkel's observations seem to point to a link between morality and the sexual norms and platitudes through the concept of nature. He reports overtones of morality in people's perception around issues of sex and sexuality that become observable in reactions towards transsexuals and, in the case of Agnes, in her own perceptions. Indeed Garfinkel detected that the "normal" member of society "treats the sexed character of persons... as a quality that is 'decided by nature' " (ibid.: 124). This is revealed in the common sense formula used to refer to transsexual people: "freaks of nature". This expression discloses the association between the "natural" and what is considered moral, for "a measure of the extent of the member's commitment to the moral order of sexual types would consist of the reluctance to lend credence to a characterisation that departed from the 'natural facts of life' " (ibid.: 124).

The work of ethnometodologists Kessler and MacKenna builds up on Garfinkel's by researching into the mechanisms for genital attribution using data gathered from in depth interviews with 15 transsexuals. Kessler and MacKenna described transsexualism as "a category constructed to alleviate ambiguity - to avoid the kinds of combinations (e.g., male genitals-female gender identity)
that make people uncomfortable because they violate the basic rules about gender" (Kessler and MacKenna 1978: 120). Kessler and MacKenna interpreted their research into perceptions of gender in transsexuals and normally-sexed people as supporting Garfinkel's investigations and his notion of attributed genital. According to their findings, there exists what they termed the "natural attitude" toward gender: "a male has a penis and a female has a vagina" (ibid.: 122). Thus, their data confirmed Garfinkel's by showing that in the "natural attitude", genitals are the essential insignia of gender. The label "natural attitude" to refer to the identification of genitals with gender is parallel to Garfinkel's observations on the widespread belief that the sexed character of persons was decided by "nature".

But Kessler and MacKenna took Garfinkel's analysis one step further and argued that we not only create gender as a construct when we "do" gender in particular instances, but that we create the specific categories of "female" and "male." We do more than gender, we do female or male gender. (see Kessler and MacKenna 1978: 154-5). Kessler and Mackenna put forward an understanding of gender as an "accomplishment" which constructs the body as an artifice in accordance to socially sanctioned norms. Hence, Kessler and MacKenna considered that gender was not only a performance of individuals in particular instances but the fruit of a general process in which all members of society were involved. Therefore, they argued: "everyone is engaged in passing, in creating a sense of themselves as being one gender or another" (ibid.: 126). But what are the mechanisms for genital attribution? What does it entail to have a certain attributed genital? How do we "do" gender? From their empirical data, Kessler and MacKenna concluded that to be accepted as belonging to a certain gender involves a continuous process of maintaining ourselves within an established category by presenting ourselves as fulfilling those characteristics appropriate to our categorisation. The areas of self-presentation which contribute to gender attributions are: (1) general talk (what is said and how it is said), (2) public physical appearance, (3) the private body, (4) talk about the personal past. It seems that numbers 1 and 2 (general talk and public physical appearance) are the major contributors to initial gender attributions, whereas 3 and 4 (private body and talk about personal past) probably only play a role in maintenance (ibid.: 127). Therefore, this study seems to indicate that we base our initial gender attributions on general talk and public physical appearance, that is, on presentation.

The empirical research of Kessler and MacKenna reinstated that "the relationship between cultural genitals and gender attribution is reflexive" (Mehan and Wook quoted in Kessler and Mackenna 1978: 154-5). In the West, genital attribution constitutes gender attribution but, since genitals are not normally visible in social interaction, genital and, thus, gender attribution is made on the basis of "cultural genitals". Presentation is governed by social conventions as to what constitutes the "proper" appearance of a certain "sex". If the initial gender attributions in social interaction are not decided on the possession of certain set of genitalia - since these are not visible, but on presentation,

7 Butler agrees with Kessler and MacKenna in this point since she affirms that: "gender is an "accomplishment" which requires the skills of constructing the body into a socially legitimate ARTIFICE" (Butler 1988: 528).
then, social interaction depends largely on genital attributions made on the basis of social conventions about presentation, that is, on conventions about dress, appearance, body language, self-explanation, and so on. These conventions on gender are socially constructed, therefore self-referential.

When we encounter an individual we attribute him or her a genital which we assign through a process of analogy to a learned cluster of gender stereotypes. These clusters of gender platitudes are the "cultural genitals" whose definition is conventional, therefore self-referential. Thus, we attribute genitals on the basis of "cultural genitals", itself a self-referential category. We can see how we base our social interactions on the basis of genitals that have been attributed in a circular process involving collectively created meanings and definitions of gender. Hence, a gender is 'proved' by the genital which is attributed, and, at the same time, the attributed genital only has meaning through the socially shared construction of the gender attribution process" (ibid.: 154).

Kessler and Mackenna's research into the passing test of transsexuals provides further evidence into the self-referentiality of gender attribution. The authors noticed that the importance of being comfortable in one's gender, and the success in being taken to be one's chosen gender constitute gender membership (ibid.: 118). This conclusion also extends Garfinkel's insights into the reflexivity and self-referentiality in collective sanctioning from the study of Agnes. Garfinkel observed that Agnes "did not count her assessments of sensibility and fact right or wrong on the grounds of having followed impersonal, logico-empirical rules. Her rules of evidence were of much more tribal character. They could by summarised in a phrase: I am right or wrong on the grounds of who agrees with me" (Garfinkel 1967: 179).

Garfinkel's concept of the "community of understandings" and Kessler and Mackenna's idea of "cultural genitals" have certain similarities to the idea of folk-sexological knowledge. They are collectively constructed, taken-for-granted knowledge that guides our behaviour. The pervasiveness of the "community of understandings" makes it comparable to the idea laid out in point a. of section 2.2.1.1, that is, the notion of the HM as a folk theory that guides our social relations, and through which we explain other persons' actions and our own. In its turn, the attributed genital can be regarded as a category of this folk theory, since on the basis of the genitals we attribute to a particular individual we assume pre-ordained information about the classified individual and the behaviour to be expected from him/her. In this sense, the notion of attributed genital can be compared to the category of "sex" insofar as they both refer to a term for the classification of individuals that carries a whole cluster of meanings and laws, that is, a set of conventional information about the person.8

8 Incidentally, Bem's notion of gender schema offers a similar idea from a psychological approach. Bem defines schema as a "cognitive structure, a network of associations that organises and guides individual's perception. (It) functions as an anticipatory structure, a readiness to search for and assimilate incoming information in schema-relevant terms... Gender-schematic processing... thus involves spontaneously sorting person, attributes, and behaviours into masculine and feminine categories... regardless of their differences on a variety of dimensions unrelated to gender... Specifically, Gender Schema theory proposes that sex typing results in part from the assimilation of the self-concept itself to the gender schema" (Bem 1984:187). Thus, according to Bem, cultural myths become self-fulfilling prophecies and, thus, many gender differences emerge
In sum, the research into transsexuals from the ethnomethodological approach revealed that gender is omnirelevant information in social interaction that is based on an attributed genital constructed out of our ways of envisioning gender and assumed on the basis of the person's appearance. Therefore, a subject's genitals and gender is inferred from the individual's management of a successful presentation, its success being measured with respect to its compliance with collectively agreed conventions about what constitutes "proper" presentation of a certain "sex". Hence, social acceptance as a member of a certain "sex" category is based on a self-referential and circular process. Hence, there is circularity in the mechanisms of gender attribution because to be a woman, or a man, is to be taken to be a woman, or a man. As a consequence of this circularity, there is pressure on individuals to constantly monitor and reflect on themselves in order to fit into the categories of acceptable gender identity.

4.3.2 GROUNDED THEORY

More recent work on transsexualism from the point of view of sociology has two important exponents: Ekins and King. King is a renowned scholar of transsexualism working within the grounded theory approach. King (1993) rejects the essentialist position of most scholarly, medical and lay views that assumed transvestism and transsexualism is a trans-historical and trans-cultural condition. King studies these categories as cultural and historical constructions and researches the processes concerned with the organisation of identity around the labels transvestite/transsexual including the accounts of the subjects concerned. King presents an historical overview of transsexuals/transvestites' organisations in the UK, as well as a review of medical literature, a study of English doctors, and a study of understandings of transsexualism and transvestism in popular media.

Ekins, a sociologist with a background in psychoanalysis, has been researching transsexualism for almost two decades from the approach of grounded theory. In the words of one of its founders, Anselm Strauss, grounded theory is a research methodology that "emphasises building systematic interpretations in close interplay between yourself as researcher and the data that you collect, rather than being too much guided or indeed constrained by prior theories" (Strauss in Ekins 1997: xiv). The last of Ekins' studies (Ekins 1997) is based on qualitative sociological research with male cross-dressers and sex-changers in the UK, with a focus on the life history of three informants. In it, Ekins re-conceptualises the research area in terms of the basic social process of 'male femaling'. 'Male femalers' are males who wish to 'female' in various ways, in different contexts, times and with various stages and consequences. He distinguishes three modes of 'male femaling': 'body femaling',

(Bem 1984: 188). Bem's Gender Schema Theory also proposes that "the phenomenon of sex typing derives... from gender-schematic processing, from an individual's generalised readiness to process information on the basis of the sex-linked associations that constitute the gender schema" (Bem 1987: 307). Thus, "masculinity" and "femininity", as cognitive constructions produced by gender schematic processing, play a major role in creating and/or enhancing male-female differences.
'erotic femaling' and 'gender femaling' (Ekins 1993: 11). According to Ekins, these three modes are broadly comparable to facets of sex, sexuality and gender, respectively. Subjects often present multifaceted combinations of the three modes.

Body femaling refers to the desires and practices of femalers to female their bodies. They might include desired, actual, or simulated changes in both primary and secondary characteristics of 'sex' (hormonal, gonadal, morphological, and neural change, as well as change to facial hair, body hair, scalp hair, vocal chords, skeleton, musculature) (ibid.: 12-13). Erotic femaling refers to femaling which is intended, or has the effect of arousing sexual desire or excitement. Ekins distinguishes two types depending on their focus: in diffuse eroticism the eroticism might be experienced over the entire body, inside and outside; in focused eroticism the sensations of pleasure are highly focused (ibid.: 14). Gender femaling refers to the manifold ways in which femalers adopt the behaviours, emotions and cognitions that are socio-culturally associated with being female (not necessarily associated with erotic femaling). The impulse behind it is regarded by many transsexuals as liberating (ibid.: 14-15).

In his final recommendations, Ekins proposes that the psychiatric-medical disputes over the nature of transvestism (is it a sexual or a gender anomaly?) and whether transvestism and transsexualism should be considered as discrete clinical syndromes, could be illuminated if considered in the light of male femaling as a basic social process (ibid.: 24-25). On this basis, Ekins proposes several lines for further research (Ekins 1997: 164-166). The first of them involves exploring the inter-relations between psychiatric-medical conceptualisations and categorisations of cross-dressing and sex-changing, and those of the male femalers themselves. In Ekins' view, such research would provide a social angle to these disputes and would shed light on the scepticism of male femerals towards medical experts in general. The second of Ekins' recommended investigations involves taking male femaling as a case study in the sociology of secrecy, for, in his view, it would provide insights into the management of stigma and related issues. Another line of research suggested by Ekins involves the sexualization and genderisation of selves and objects that takes place in the process of male femaling, but also in more normative processes of gender identification. Finally, Ekins' final point proposes to use grounded theory approach to understand the general processes of genderisation (ibid.: 166).

4.3.3 OTHER SOCIOLOGICAL APPROACHES

One of the earliest works on transsexuals from a sociological point of view is Kando's (1973) study of seventeen postoperative male-to-female transsexuals which combines several approaches: descriptive ethnography influenced by the sociology of knowledge, symbolic interactionism and Ethnomethodology. Kando's study focuses on "transsexual's postoperative social relationships" (1973: 8) and it inquiries into transsexuals' learning of new roles, handling stigma, their concerns about passing, and the success of their social insertion. Kando does not problematise in any way the
etiological or the psychological literature on the subject of transsexualism. He creates his own typology with regards to transsexuals' postoperative social adjustment: the housewife type, the show business type, the aspiring housewife and the career woman and concludes that transsexuals' understanding of sex role norms were more stereotypical than those of non-transsexual men and women.

Tully (1992) bases his study on interviews with 204 UK transsexual subjects contacted through Charing Cross Hospital. Tully's methodology is grounded theory and the 'ethogenic' approach. According to Tully, the central axiom of this approach is that "individuals are authorities on themselves, and can be called to account for actions which have specific social meanings" (Tully 1992: 17). Thus, from his interviewees' accounts Tully developed the topics of the research: a wide variety of aspects of transsexuals' experiences such as life history, social and family life, passing, issues related to attending a gender identity clinic, post-reassignment issues, sexuality, diagnosis, crime, and many more. In this study Tully develops the category of "transhomosexuality" to refer to "an approval of, admiration and idealisation for homosexual relations of the opposite sex to the subject" (ibid.: 259).

Another study conducted with subjects attending a gender clinic, this time the Gender Dysphoria Clinic at the Monash Medical centre in Melbourne, is Lewins (1996). Lewins researches the process of transexualisation as a social process with micro and macro dimensions based on data gathered from interviews with 60 Australian transsexuals, most of them MTF, and one case study of MTF 'Miranda'. In the micro-dimension Lewins studies transsexuals' interpretation of sex, gender and the meanings they give to the body. On the macro level, he looks for "the wider social patterns and influences in individuals' 'careers' " (Lewins 1996: 5). Sociologist Lindemann (1996) also conducted extensive research with transsexual people in Germany on the basis of which she theorised production of gender distinctions and the notion of the body using phenomenology. Lindemann's approach is also historical since she traces the development of the gender distinction from what she calls its 'centric' form in the eighteenth century till its present 'acentric' form.

Hausman (1995) approaches the study of transsexualism from the point of view of the history and sociology of science. Hausman's work provides a well documented genealogy of the sex/gender distinction which contextualises its development and the crucial role of technology, and implicitly questions it as an analytical framework for feminism. Hausman also looks into transsexuals' autobiographies "to demonstrate how "gender" discursively operates to mask the material construction of transsexuals through the technologies of medical practice and to show how transsexuals compromise the official understanding of "gender" as divorced from biological sex by their insistent reiteration of the idea that physiological intersexuality is the cause of their cross-sex identification" (Hausman 1995: 141). Also within sociology of science, Hirschauer (1997), adopts a critical stance towards sex-change surgery, for he considers that medical practices have essentialised transsexualism and gender identity. In this fashion, gender mobility has been turned into an individual event, thus
locating it outside the social. According to Hirschauer, medical differentiation between transvestism and transsexualism has devalued the former and turned the latter into a more 'radical' option. The link between early medical understandings of homosexuality, more specifically the notion of the "invert", and transsexualism as well as the moral role of medical practitioners that Hirschauer ascertains is more forcefully argued by Meyer (1991).

Departing from an analysis of a transsexual strip-tease performance as metaphor for conversion therapy, Meyer makes an interesting critique of transsexualism as a medical category. In Meyer's view, the transsexual assumes a social role identical to 19th century descriptions of Gender Inverts (Meyer 1991: 38). The specific disease from which these transvestite/homosexuals were said to suffer was "gender inversion", a term developed in the second half of the nineteenth century from the writings of Carl Ulrichs. Ulrichs saw the homosexual as a "third sex" in whom the soul of a woman was trapped in the body of a man. To Meyer the present beliefs about transsexualism have their source in Ulrichs' "third sex" since the definition of transsexual remains the same as that of gender inversion of the nineteenth century writings, though it is now regarded as a rare psychic disturbance not to be confused with homosexuality.

In Meyer's view, "rather than relinquish theories of gender inversion, doctors gave transsexualism its present shape as a symbolic pathology where the performance of antiquated beliefs in a biological source of morality continue to be played out" (ibid.: 35). Thus, surgeons termed the creation of vagina "genital inversion" (the literal physical inverting of the male organs to create the female) thus betraying an understanding of women's genitals as interiorised male organs that has persisted from Galen till the eighteenth century. Meyer interprets the real life test as "an educational program in which the subject is trained to look and act like a 19th-century Gender Invert. This being accomplished, the surgeon has created his transsexual - a homosexual golem -who can now be put through conversion therapy" (ibid.: 37). 9

The last paper I review in this section compares the prevalence, incidence and sex ratio of transsexualism between Sweden and Australia (Ross et al. 1981). The study is set to test the influence of social factors, such as the rigidity with regard to sex roles, sexual equality and homosexual behaviour, in the number of transsexuals presenting as patients. The choice of countries was decided on the basis of their comparability with regards to their similarities as Western democratic societies of matching technological development, and their differences, such as sex role differentiation, legal support for equality between sexes and legal codes towards male homosexuals. Sweden has a lesser sex role differentiation than Australia, a greater legal support for equality between sexes as well as legal equality of homosexuals and heterosexuals, in contrast with Australia where all states with one exception penalise male homosexuality with up to twelve years in prison. The data gathering was

9 See also Bolin in the next section for a critique of socio-medical construction of transsexualism departing from ethnographical data.
conducted through questionnaires sent to psychiatrists asking about the number of transsexuals seen, the sex of the patients and the number of referrals to surgery, amongst other questions.

This study builds on research conducted from the social perspective towards transsexualism. The social perspective stands in contrast with the biological school. Although both schools accept the existence of multifactorial causative influences, the social school plays down the biological basis of transsexualism, whereas the biological school emphasises its biological causes. Within the social perspective it has been argued that societies with rigid sex role differentiation support transsexualism, and also that the rigidity of sex role differentiation in a particular society is related to homosexuals' display of opposite sex role behaviour. The researchers in the present study worked on the hypothesis that, if transsexualism was "a function of differentiation of sex roles, there would be a lower proportion of transsexuals in a society with a high degree of sexual equality and lower sex role differentiation than in one with low equality and high differentiation of roles... if as (the social) perspective suggests, anti-homosexual attitudes in a society do produce a higher number of transsexuals, then this would be indicated by a higher proportion of transsexuals in the anti-homosexual society together with a higher ration of males to females presenting for reassignment surgery, as a function of legal pressures in most Western societies being directed more against males than females" (ibid.: 77).

The research showed that a lower proportion of transsexuals requesting surgery in Sweden compared to Australia, hence, giving support to the researchers' working hypothesis. The findings led the authors to maintain that there is a correlation between the rigidity of sex-role differentiation and anti-homosexual attitudes in a particular society, on the one hand, and the urge to become a transsexual, on the other. The urge to become transsexual is driven by the subject's need to fit within the socially prescribed roles instead of displaying deviation in sex-role behaviour and social orientation. The findings also showed cross-cultural differences in relation to the sex ratio of transsexuals indicating that the proportions are levelled in societies with a less rigid sex-differentiation. The authors conclude that societal pressures have a certain influence on 'the number of transsexuals presenting as patients, though they recommend further research in order "to assess whether societal factors have an influence on the aetiology and development of transsexualism or simply affect the number of those presenting as patients" (ibid.: 81). Therefore, though the authors acknowledge multifactorial causative influences, they assert that societal factors must be taken into account in theoretical approaches to transsexualism.

4.4 ANTHROPOLOGY

In Section 2.2.3 on the conventionality of the HM, I have already presented the anthropological research that deals with so-called third genders in non-western cultures. This literature
is very extensive, as it became obvious in the above mentioned section, but here I will only focus on those works that deal with transsexuals or provide some insight into some particular group practices that shed light on the cross-cultural comparison I will conduct in the next chapter. Amongst this latter body of work it is worth noting Nanda's observations on transsexualism in the context of her research into the hijra category of India (Nanda 1990), Bolin's qualitative research with US transsexuals (1987, 1994), and two very interesting ethnographies conducted in South American Latin cultures, more specifically in Brazil by Kulick (1998), and Mexico by Prieur (1998).

In an interesting treatment of transsexualism included in her work on the hijras of India, Nanda explores the notion of gender identity as an essential component of the subject as a product of the Western gender system. Nanda argues that, since Western sex categories are rigidly dichotomous, they only contemplate one way of conceiving a person whose gender is ambiguous: to define her/him as being in a transitional status. In Nanda's view, this is precisely the meaning of the term "transsexual". In order to support her argument, Nanda refers to Kessler and MacKenna who suggested that the category of "transsexual" had been created to "relieve ambiguity" (Kessler and MacKenna quoted in Nanda 1990: 137) and, therefore, increase predictability. Nanda also cites Stoller's definition of transsexualism: "the conviction of a biologically normal person of being a member of the opposite sex" (Stoller quoted in Nanda 1990: 137) which, in Nanda's view, "admits no possibility of a third, alternative gender" (ibid.: 137). According to Nanda, it seems that the term "gender identity", first coined by Money and Hampson\(^\text{11}\), is specific to hegemonic Western culture. The notion of gender as an essential part of a person's identity is linked to the assumption of gender invariant. Thus, Nanda argues, since Western culture believes that gender is invariant, transsexuals are not seen as changing genders but as altering the "wrong" anatomy. According to Nanda, this strategy ensures the persistence of gender categories as dichotomous and permanent\(^\text{12}\).

An interesting empirical project conducted with transsexuals is Anne Bolin's qualitative research with transsexuals (mainly MTF) and cross-dressers in the US. Although Bolin thinks that "the social construction of these gender-variant identities reproduces the Euro-American gender paradigm" (Bolin 1994: 452), she nevertheless recognises some subversive potential of "transgenderism". "Transgenderism" is the term used by the subjects of the research to refer to "non-surgical or pre-surgical male-to-female transsexuals" and also "the self-proclaimed androgyne, the individual who wishes to express both male and female identification" (ibid.: 466). Bolin writes: "The possible permutations within transgenderism are innumerable and lay bare the point that gender is not biology but is socially produced" and also have subverted "the biocentric paradigm in which gender

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\(^{10}\) For a good review of anthropological literature on sex and gender, see Morris 1995.

\(^{11}\) As explained in Chapter 1, the notion of core gender identity was developed to conceptualise transsexualism as a medical category and it, arguably, underlies the essentialist position in feminism.

\(^{12}\) I will further examine Nanda's claim in the light of the empirical data with a focus on transsexuals' perceptions of themselves.
identity is "naturally" conjoined with heterosexuality" (ibid.: 482). In Chapter 7, I will come back to these issues for a discussion in the light of the data gathered in my empirical research.

Bolin reports a gradual acquisition of feminine identities in transsexuals at variance with the traditional view expressed in medical literature that understands transsexual transition as starting with fully crystallised feminine personal identities. According to Bolin's research, the distinction transsexual/transvestite was a qualitative one for transsexuals but one of degree for transvestites. For male-to-female transsexuals, transsexualism is a temporary condition that will be gradually outgrown to become a "whole" woman. From the transvestites' point of view, the distinction transvestite/transsexual did not correspond to two distinct and static identities.

To Bolin, the "biocentric gender schema" (ibid.: 457) favours female-to-male transsexuals over transvestites because it offers the possibility of normality and authenticity through surgical and hormonal intervention. In Bolin's observations "transsexuals did not regard permanent no-surgical status as an option. There were no voices for choices... unless one wanted to acknowledge that one was not "really" transsexual but rather transvestite. Transsexuals themselves were legitimised by the hope and desire for surgical conversion" (ibid.: 459). Thus, conformity with the prevailing gender order privileges the development of a personal identity as female rather than a cross-dressing man, for it provides the justification for undergoing the physical intervention. According to Bolin, apart from the distinction transvestite/transsexual, the empirical data is also at odds with the professional literature on the issue of heterosexuality. Although in the professional literature, "heterosexuality was frequently cited as an intrinsic attribute and defining feature of transsexualism", Bolin finds that, in fact, there is more diversity in sexual preference than what this literature acknowledges (ibid.: 460).

I will now turn to the anthropological works of Prieur and Kulick conducted in Latin American cultures. Prieur presents a study of the gender constructions in Mexican culture based on empirical research of the social, physical and bodily practices of a group of feminine, homosexual men in Mexico city. Her work discusses the origins of the informants' homosexuality, and researches the symbolic construction of their bodies. Prieur observed that these men present themselves as feminine and create a feminine body. According to Prieur, this feminised presentation of the self aims to make their homosexual desire more intelligible in a culture where an intrinsic connection between femininity and male homosexuality is established. An important outcome of this intelligibility is an increase of social acceptability. Another interesting finding in Prieur's data points out to the relevance of penetration in the Mexican characterisation of gender. According to Prieur: "primacy (is) given to sexual positions (active or passive) rather than to object choice (man or woman)" (Prieur 1998: 267). This finding is related to Kulick's research among Brazilian transgendered prostitutes, known as travestis.

Kulick describes travestis as males who feminize their body through silicone injections, dress, make-up and other cosmetic procedures, but who do not wish to undergo genital operations. In his research of travestis' speech Kulick observed an interesting term usage revealing much about their
understandings of sex, gender and sexuality. Brazilian *travestis* use the word *homen* in two different senses: to designate "male" (used in contrast to female genitals and "heads"), and to refer to "man" (as those who would never accept being penetrated but only to penetrate). Since "the core of their subjective experience of themselves is that they are attracted to men", "travesti subjectivity is thus not that of a woman nor that of a man, but that of an effeminate male - a homosexual" (Kulick 1998: 221-222). Brazilian *travestis* insist that they are radical homosexuals since they consider themselves the only truly "out" homosexuals since they proclaim it through their dress and gestures in a society where the majority of gay men and lesbians refrain from coming out. Against those considering Brazilian *travestis* as subversive postmodern icons who reject the gendered definition of identity, Kulick argues that *travestis*' bodies do not convey ambiguity but a well defined label: *viado* or effeminate homosexual.

Kulick qualifies Brazilian *travestis* as "constructive essentialists" (ibid.: 193). According to Kulick, on the one hand, *travestis* are essentialists insofar as they "consider that males are males and females are females because of the genitals they possess" (ibid.: 193) and they believe that, although God might have erred, one cannot change the sex with which one was born. On the other hand, *travestis* are constructivists insofar as they conceive gender as being defined by sexuality, more specifically by practices of penetration. According to *travestis*, males have greater flexibility because they can both penetrate and be penetrated, hence males can construct themselves as feminine. Thus, it seems that *travestis*' gender system is only fluid with respect to men.

Kulick concludes that in the Brazilian gender system "the act of being penetrated has transformative force" (ibid.: 229 emphasis of the author), since it aligns those men who enjoy being penetrated in the same classificatory category as females. Hence, in the Brazilian gender system, homosexuals and women share the same gender category since gender is defined along the binary "being penetrated/not being penetrated". To Kulick, it is this gender system which makes possible the emergence of *travestis*, for it is massively oriented towards, if not determined by, male subjectivity, male desire, and male pleasure, as those are culturally elaborated in Brazil" (ibid.: 229). Thus, Kulick's observations and interpretation in Brazil coincides with Prieur's research in Mexico, another Latin culture. Both studies reveal the importance of penetration in the definition of gender and point out to the connection of femininity with male homosexuality in these Latin cultures. This connection is effected via sexuality, for being penetrated is understood as the defining characteristic of "feminine" sexuality.

4.5 OTHER APPROACHES

There has been a lot of interest in transsexualism in recent times, as reflected in the growing number of books published on the topic from perspectives different than those mentioned above, such as transsexuals' biographies and autobiographies, photography and video works, cultural studies, and so on. There has also been an increase in media attention, and a number of films and performances are
dealing with transsexualism as a theme. In this section I will not be commenting on the artistic categories, with the exception of Jennie Livingston's 'dragumentary' *Paris is Burning* because Butler's expresses a particular interest in it, specially in GT. For a good overview of transsexuals biographies and photography works as well as a detailed account of the actions of "transgender" activists in present times, particularly in the US, see Califia (Califia 1997). An important source of information on transsexualism and transvestism in the UK that includes large documentation on media attention is the Trans-Gender Archive. The archive is based in Ulster University and is directed by Ekins, already mentioned in the previous section. For an overview of press accounts of transsexualism and cross-dressing see Ekins (1990, 1992) and King (1996a). King (1981) includes an historical account of earlier transvestite communities and a review of the portrayals of sex-changing subjects in the British press. For a guide to resources for researching transsexualism refer to Ekins & King (1996).

Within the areas of cultural studies, transsexuality is sometimes used as metaphor for the notion of human body as artefact. For instance, Halberstam and Livingston align it with their notion of the posthuman: an extreme form of technological voluntarism to the body (Halberstam & Livingston 1995); along a similar line, Barbrook writes: "the cyborg fusion of technology and human can now take its place alongside transsexuality" (Barbrook 1995: 43). Transsexualism has been interpreted as producing an "outlaw body" (Kroker & Kroker 1993) that heralds subversive "gender fucking" (Whittle 1996: 196), "gender blur" (Bornstein in Bell 1993: 117) or "gender bending" or "gender blending" (Devor 1989, Ekins & King 1996, 1997).

The term "gender blending" was first coined by Devor (1989) who defined it as a new conceptualisation of gender that "would start from the recognition that sex identity, sex attribution, gender identity, gender attribution, and gender roles can all combine in any configuration" (ibid.: 153). Devor developed this term in the context of her qualitative study of with fifteen "gender blending" females. These were females who were taken to be men and who adopted "unfeminine conduct and appearances... by way of a protest against sexism and patriarchy" (ibid.: 153). The term has now expanded its meaning and it is used to refer, together with "transgender" and others, to any sort of behaviour that entails dress and/or actions perceived as a transgression of traditional gender-roles. In their research into the "umbrella term" "gender blending", Ekins and King identified a shift of meaning from implying "that a core gender exists that can be mixed, merged and matched", to the current understanding of gender blenders as those "...who transcend, transgress and threaten', with a view to living 'beyond gender' " (Ekins and King 1997: 14).

The question of whether transsexualism is or is not subversive is a much debated issue in the present. A considerable body of literature on transsexualism is written from the point of view of feminism, because of its relation with the recent problematisation of the category "woman" and its political consequences. Most notoriously, feminist author Janice Raymond (1980) argues for an understanding of transsexualism as a social and political phenomenon, instead of an individual condition that can be treated by technical means. In Raymond's view, transsexualism is a reflection
and a product of patriarchal society. Hence, she considers transsexuals as victims of the restricting patriarchal norms of masculinity and feminity that forces and encourages them to move from one category to another. Raymond describes the use of term "gender" when paired with gender dissatisfaction, gender discomfort or gender dysphoria as performing "a classification of sex-role oppression as a therapeutic problem, amenable to therapeutic solutions" (ibid.: 9). The following passage gives the flavour or Raymond's writing on the subject: "it is significant that there is no specialised or therapeutic vocabulary of black dissatisfaction, black discomfort, or black dysphoria that have been institutionalised in black identity clinics. Likewise, it would be rather difficult and somewhat humorous to talk about sex-role oppression clinics" (ibid.: 9).

In her more recent article on the topic (1995), Raymond considers the subversive power of transgenderism. After examining several instances of gender blending, Raymond concludes that although the idea of transgender is provocative, for "on the personal level, it allows for a continuum of gender expression. On a political level, it never moves off this continuum to an existence in which gender is truly transcended... Instead, transgenderism reduces gender resistance to wardrobes, hormones, surgery and posturing - anything but real sexual equality" (ibid.: 222-3). Raymond notes that transgenders are generally men who "seek to combine aspects of traditional feminity with aspects of traditional masculinity" (ibid.: 215). In her view, males imitating women is a very old practice present in religious rituals and on the stage, but this does not alter male power supremacy. Therefore, Raymond's position with respect to the political value of transsexualism or the wider category of transgenderism is the same as in The Transsexual Empire: she does not consider it as a truly transgressive act, but as a reification of the existing gender roles.

From an historical perspective, Mak (1997) cautions against taking 'gender ambiguity' as more than a mind-opening concept for some contemporary feminist theorists. Through an historical analysis, Mak traces the evolution of 'gender' from a prescribed position within a hierarchical system in the 19th century to its naturalisation and its becoming an identity prescribing sexual desire. Mak also documents the different consequences that 'gender-bending' has for men or women. As we saw above, the concern with the history of gendered bodies and the differential consequences for gender change also occupies Lindemann (1996).

Raymond's views are echoed by Billings and Urban, and Shapiro. In their critique of the socio-medical construction of transsexualism, Billings and Urban (1982) remark on the moral function performed by doctors by creating transsexualism as an identity category that pathologises deviance and reaffirms traditional gender roles. In their view, transsexualism is a sign of the present alienation and commodification of sex and gender. In its turn, Shapiro thinks that, in spite of their self-understanding as fostering "more enlightened and liberal and scientific attitudes toward sexuality", the work of clinicians and researchers, such as Benjamin, Money, Stoller and Green, "reflects a highly traditional attitude toward gender" (Shapiro 1991: 250). Shapiro qualifies transsexualism as a form of "institutionalised gender-crossing" that maintains "a society's gender system through the detachment
of gender from the very principle that provides its apparent foundation" (ibid. 272). In Shapiro's words: "addressing gender issues through sex change surgery is a bit like turning to dermatologists to solve the race problem" (ibid.: 262).

The question of the relation between race/class/gender pointed by Raymond reappears in Jennie Livingston's documentary Paris is Burning. This documentary shows the lives of a group of black and Latino drag queens and transsexuals in New York and their competitive drag balls. The drag ball mimics a catwalk where the competitors parade performing in accordance to the different categories of the competition: "Luscious Body", "Schoolgirl", "Town and Country", "Executive Realness", "High Fashion", "High Fashion - Evening Wear", "Butch Queen", "Military", "Dynasty", and so on. The ball functions as an opportunity to rehearse the competitors' ability to be "real" in their chosen gender and, in the words of one participant in the "Executive Realness" category, to "show the straight world that you can look like one, though you have no opportunity to get there".

Assuming a feminine gender is a way of climbing the social ladder for these disenfranchised individuals. Indeed, as pre-operative transsexual Venus Xtravaganza puts it, what she aims to be is "a spoiled rich white girl: they got what they want". Or in Ninja's words, the subjects involved in the drag balls and in the "Houses" that organize them, aim for the "great white way of looking, living, gesture, speaking, dressing. If you capture it, you are a marvel". According to its participants, the drag ball is not a satire but a way to create an illusion for them to feel closer to their fantasies. All the participants interviewed by Livingstone present an obsessive admiration for supermodels as tokens of success. Indeed, the list of dreams and hopes for one participant includes: to marry a man, to live in luxury, have a car and a nice home, to be famous and rich and to be a professional model.

4.6 THE PRESENT STUDY IN RELATION TO EARLIER RESEARCH

My empirical research on transsexualism has points of contact with the ethnomethodological model first set up by Garfinkel, in so far as this study approaches transsexuals as informants for the taken-for-granted 'natural facts of life'. By inquiring into transsexuals' passing practices, I expect to reveal the 'community of understandings' on gender or, to use Kessler and Mackenna's term, the 'cultural genitals', that I partly identify with the Matrix's categories and platitudes defining "sex". Therefore, the present study aims to find out how transsexuals think they need to act and appear in order to be attributed the genitals they aspire to have and to be accepted in their chosen "sex". Thus, through the analysis of transsexuals' discourse and acts I expect to disclose the Matrix's platitudes.13 My empirical study builds on Kessler and MacKenna's (1978) work in so far as it explores their three main points: gender as a culturally relative social construct based on fixed platitudes; the process of attribution as central in gender construction; and gender as a cognitive schema, that is, a way of thinking. This study also builds up on Garfinkel's and Kessler and Mackenna's insights into the

13 I will further elaborate on my position in the next Chapter 5 on Methodology and the Informants.
reflexivity and self-referentiality in collective sanctioning from the first person perspective of transsexuals, and provides further evidence for some of Lindemann's observations on the asymmetry of the two genders concerning the generic.

There is some connection between my research and the grounded theory approach in so far as my thesis assesses a working theoretical hypothesis in the light of empirical findings about transsexuals' own categories. In its own fashion my fieldwork study pursues some of Ekins's proposed lines for research. As we saw in the section on grounded theory, Ekins recommends considering male femaling as social process and suggests further research into the inter-relations between psychiatric-medical conceptualisations and categorisations of transsexuals themselves. The data I collected from transsexuals' first-person perspective explores the processes of their transformation, provides a social angle and illustrates the tension between transsexuals' categories and medical categories. Such data also illustrates transsexuals' scepticism towards the medical profession. The second of Ekins' recommendations, namely, the exploration of male femaling as a case study in the sociology of secrecy is also, to an extent, undertaken in my study in so far as it explores transsexuals' feelings of social rejection, and it offers an insight into the nature of stigma and abjection from the point of view of transsexuals' themselves.

Another line of research suggested by Ekins involves the processes of sexualization and genderisation of selves that take place in normative processes of gender identification. To the extent that my empirical inquiry aims to provide information about the sexed meanings of body parts, pleasures, social activities, and so on, I expect it will shed some light into the distribution of meaning of the categories 'male' and 'female'. However, my study does not inquire into the processes of genderisation focussing in the psychological process of identification, in this sense, it might be considered rather as a contribution to the sociology of the body. At last, Ekins' final question is also a Butlerian question I explore empirically: to what extent can research into the practice of gender femaling, hence, transsexuals' practices, help us understand the genderising process that affects all members of society?

My reconstruction also has points of contact with the approach of sociologists of science Hausman and Hirschauer in so far as it employs as interpretative framework the analytical tools and theories developed in the context of sociology of science. But, unlike Hausman, my empirical study is focussed on transsexuals' categories. With regards to the characteristics of empirical data, my study differs from those of Lewins and Tully, since my interviewees were not approached through medical establishments and the interviews were never conducted in any premises related to the medical profession. My empirical research is not conducted to gather any sort of medical information and it does not involve pre-conceived ideas on transsexualism or transvestism; hence, the interviews were carried loosely following a list of open questions in order to find out the transsexuals' point of view. Therefore, I avoided the type of questionnaire which would involve too much direction of the interviewees. Hence, in its method for data gathering the present study is similar to anthropology,
since it concerns qualitative interviews and participant observation. Though, it is not concerned with public perceptions, media reports or historical accounts of transsexualism.

My approach has certain affiliation to anthropological studies in so far as it takes an emic approach, for it aims to know the phenomena from the informants' point of view. Hence, the inquiry into the symbolic construction of bodies, social acceptance, terminology, sexual practices of transsexuals and so on, will be researched by gathering qualitative data. Nevertheless, the present study is not an ethnography, since it is much more limited in scope. Also, because of being conducted on a small sample, this study cannot be considered as representative and, hence, it should not be taken as the basis for statistical generalisation. To the best of my knowledge, my empirical research is the only in-depth study conducted with Spanish transsexuals and the first in conducting a formal cross-cultural comparison on transsexualism in two different countries on the basis of qualitative data. In its relation to previous anthropological research, the present study contributes to Bolin's work in so far as it will provide some further information into the transvestite/transsexual categories from the point of view of subjects concerned.

The present study differs from some approaches in cultural studies, in so far as it does not consider transsexualism as metaphor, neither does it assume it to be a subversive 'third gender'. Hence, this study is not an essay on the political relevance of transsexualism or the medicalisation of sexual, gender and moral order. Therefore, I will not be making judgements or draw conclusions on political issues related to transsexualism, such as its subversive power or its effects on the category of women and its importance for feminist politics. With regards to research on the axis gender/class/race introduced in Livingston's documentary Paris is Burning, in spite of being a very interesting area, I will not consider it in the present thesis for reasons of scope.

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14 Again, I will further elaborate on the methodology followed in Chapter 5 on Methodology and the Informants.

15 I will expand on my position with regards to transsexualism as third gender in the next Chapter 5 on Methodology and Informants.

16 See Soley 1999 for a commentary on the axis gender/class/race on the basis of research with fashion models, a phenomenon of general relevance that features importantly in Livingston's documentary.
CHAPTER 5:

INFORMANTS AND METHODOLOGY

This chapter deals with the informants and the methodology used in my fieldwork research. In the first section I justify the choice of interviewees as sources of data in the context of the sociological reconstruction of Butler and I offer a working definition of the concept of transsexual as well as a table with facts about the selected interviewees. The second section of the present chapter explains the processes and techniques followed to obtain the empirical data that will be investigated in Chapter 6: "The Interviews Analysed".

5.1 INFORMANTS

5.1.1 WHAT IS A TRANSSEXUAL?

A crucial point in my thesis is the understanding of transsexualism as a knowledge category whose meaning is socially negotiated. My empirical research is to provide information about meaning and its negotiation. Nevertheless, previous to data gathering, I needed a working definition of 'transsexual' on which to base the selection of my interviewees. The question of physical intervention was decisive in narrowing the field of interviewees: I decided upon a working definition of transsexuals as those persons who interfere with their bodies at hormonal and/or surgical levels with the aim of becoming a different sex. Hence, I decided to focus solely on those people who had started some course of physical change at hormonal or surgical level. I made a further distinction between pre-operatives: subjects who were acting on their bodies at hormonal level only, and post-operatives: those who had surgical interventions.

One of the first questions I encountered when starting my research in the UK was the distinction between a transvestite and a transsexual (henceforth TV and TS) in medical taxonomy. According to medical standards, a transvestite or cross-dresser is a person who obtains sexual pleasure from dressing and acting as the opposite gender. These activities can be done in public or in the intimacy of an association or club with various degrees of regularity. A transsexual is a person who claims to have a sex that does not correspond with their gender. The mismatch between body and gender experienced by the transsexual is usually reported as an early childhood experience and it is accompanied by the strong wish to live as a member of the opposite gender not only for certain
periods of time, like transvestites, but for the rest of her/his life. In consequence of this, a transsexual is willing to interfere at both hormonal and surgical levels in order to align his/her body to the gender they feel they belong to. It is important to note that this constitutes another important definitional trait of transsexualism that separates it from transvestism.

In the UK, the National Health Service usually covers the costs for hormonal treatment and the sex-change operation dependant upon the subject passing certain required procedures. British transsexuals gain access to NHS funded sex-change operations by first approaching their GP who would often prescribe hormones even before hearing the customary psychiatrist's diagnosis. In certain areas, particularly in Scotland (for instance Tayside or the Orkneys), interviewees encountered resistance from their GP to prescribe hormonal treatment. There are several ways round it. Carol exemplifies one: "it is understaffed in my area. It is well impossible to achieve anything through the NHS, so I decide to go to a private psychiatrist Dr. Russell Reid in London" (Carol 338-9) who wrote a covering letter for the local GP and hormones were prescribed before the real life test began. Hence, in the UK the funding for treatment is public and normally transsexuals only cover its cost if they want to speed up the process by approaching a private clinic. According to my informants, private clinics tend to have no waiting lists as well as more relaxed requirements, such as shorter or no real life test.

Before undergoing surgery, generally transsexuals are asked to live a certain period of time in their 'transgender' sex: the 'real life test'. This test consist in a period that can range between 2 months and 3 years (Petersen 1995) during which transsexuals are expected to live as the 'new' sex full time. Obviously this involves making their condition known to their familiar, social and professional milieu. The real life test is highly controversial because it requires full-time passing without providing the surgical means to appear as the "new" sex. Interviewees in the UK are generally very critical of the real life test: "it's a stupid rule! [...] to ask somebody overnight to live in a role that, looking at the person is obviously way over the top! (...) what does he mean by living as a man? Because I was living as a man anyway before I even went to see him! because I don't have any skirts, I don't have any blouses, I don't have any pants, I don't have any bras, so / he, he wanted me to turn up for, for his meeting with him on a tie, shirt and a tie, which I thought it was ludicrous!" (Ronnie

1 Jane refers to the different TV/TS desires as follows: "as a transvestite to occasionally cross-dress or as a transsexual to plainly be female" (Jane 1 151).
2 Just before I began to conduct the interviews, this situation started to change. Lately British health authorities are growing reluctant to fund transsexuals operations. Transsexuals are fighting this refusal by claiming rights (see, for instance, Ward 1998, Doughty 1999).
3 According to Dr. Don Montgomery, from Charing Cross hospital in London, any person claiming to suffer from gender dysphoria to his/her GP will be prescribed hormones at the first or second appointment (unpublished presentation in Gendys' 96).
4 I will expand on the real life test and its significance in section 6.4.2.2 on Passing.
794-802. According to Ronnie, the test's arbitrariness can open the door for cheating: "every time I went to see him (psychiatrist) and he would say: how are you getting on? And it's [sigh]: how do you mean, how I'm getting on? [sigh]. So, how, how were, have you been in a male toilet yet? and I would say: yes and ... So, I mean, he was, he, he's believed in my word that I was living as a man for a year! So, I mean, that blows it all out, out in the air basically! because I could have been telling him total lies!" (Ronnie 784-9).

Sometimes transsexuals are simultaneously given hormonal treatment, but the real life test usually begins before the treatment has been able to produce tangible results. Furthermore, hormone treatment is often not as effective as it might be since it is counteracted by the hormones that the patient's intact genitals continue to produce. However, demands for the real life test are weaker in private clinics: "oh yes! I could have gone round that (real life test) if I wanted [...] Yes. I think if you convince them enough that you are capable of doing and you also have the means to pay the surgery, you can cut corners. You got a lot of people saying they've got to do two years (in the NHS). I did a year. And I could have had the surgery a lot earlier but I had to time it" (Gwen 307-12).

5.1.2 WHY TRANSSEXUALS?

The choice of transsexuals as informants of the Matrix's platitudes flows readily from Butler's thought. In GT she writes: "the strange, the incoherent, that which falls 'outside,' gives us a way of understanding the taken-for-granted world of sexual categorisation as a constructed one, indeed, as one that might well be constructed differently" (GT: 110). In Section 2.2.1.1, I argued that if we reconstruct the HM in the model of folk psychology, then we could treat sex and gender as theoretical terms. In the previous chapter we have examined how the observation of transsexuals' practices, such as Garfinkel's study of Agnes, revealed the taken-for-granted appearance of gender to be a managed production. In the same way, we can expect empirical research on transsexuals' discourse to make the HM theoretical entities observable. For instance, a male-to-female transsexual would justify his claim to a sex-change by saying that he never felt or behaved like a man. In this case, the theoretical entity of "manhood", which is normally taken unproblematically for granted, is made observable through transsexuals' introspection. Therefore, the examination of transsexuals' discourse will disclose the HM myths of the masculine and the feminine and, hence, the normative gender ideals to which we are all compelled. It will also shed light on the processes that urge us towards these ideals.

Another important reason for choosing transsexualism is because Butler herself proposes to look at it as the model for the processes through which we become men and women. According to

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5 See also Carol 362-9.

6 Theoretical terms are a pattern assumed in order to explain a set of observable appearances that subsequently becomes reified into the causal explanation of these observables.
Butler, "gender is an 'accomplishment' which requires the skills of constructing the body into a socially legitimate artifice" (Butler 1988: 528). In other words, we all learn to conceive of certain parts of our bodies as sources of pleasure insofar as they correspond to a cultural ideal of what is the body. This ideal body is constructed by discriminating between those pleasures and parts that are masculine and those that are feminine. These conventions are the norms that guide the way in which men and women learn to perceive their bodies and the sensations that arise from it.

Transsexuals very patently turn their bodies into artefacts, thus exemplifying the processes in an accentuated form to which we are all subjected. Because transsexuals' report experiencing a discontinuity between their body parts and the sexual pleasures that should be associated with them, their reports make apparent the constructed character of the body. Hence, by inquiring into transsexuals' sense of discontinuity we can expose the conventions that rule the ways in which we conceive certain body parts and desires as 'naturally' belonging to the category of female or male sex. As a by-product, this inquiry would also shed light on pleasure and desire as a cultural product.

There is a possible objection to the choice of transsexual subjects as informants of sexual difference. It could be argued that there might be certain dispositions (biological, endocrinological, and so on), that incline us to be heterosexual. If we accept this, then it could be objected that transsexuals might present some physical anomalies which do invalidate them as informants of the workings of the HM. This is not necessarily the case, since, granting that there might be some amongst transsexuals that do present hormonal or chromosomal alterations that incline them towards a different sex from that which they have been assigned, nevertheless they must observe and learn to display the set of behaviours associated with their 'new' sex. These sets of behaviours, platitudes and physical practices are the focus of my research, for they expose the theoretical entities of the HM. Indeed, people at the boundaries of acceptability, such as transsexuals, are acutely aware of conventions and thus make good informants concerning the platitudes of the HM.

As I hope has become apparent in the preceding paragraphs, I am not trying to understand transsexuals as a third gender. I believe that the use of the concept of triadic gender from a theoretical point of view in relation to transsexuals is not appropriate for the task at hand, namely, to find out the extent in which transsexuals are the product of and make sense of themselves, and sense is made of them, within the HM. I believe that to depart from a theoretical notion of transsexuals as a third gender is not conducive to a better understanding of the hegemonic binary sex, neither does simply ascribing a new term to them help in identifying a clearer alternative to it. Moving from the hegemonic dual system to identifying a triadic system does not help elucidate the dynamics and the logic of the binary system and, therefore, does not fit with the aim of this research: to understand the workings of our folk knowledge on sexual difference and to generate new ideas within Butler's
framework. In the empirical study I will nevertheless analyse transsexual's use of the 'third gender' category and related terms.

In order to gather further evidence of the conventionality in the HM's knowledge categories through a cross-cultural comparison, I conducted interviews in the UK and in Spain. My data analysis has been carried out on a total of twelve interviews of six British and six Spanish subjects. In my choice of interviewees I aimed for equal representation of female-to-male transsexuals, henceforth FTM, and male-to-female transsexuals, henceforth MTF, as well as for pre and post-operative individuals. The final choice of interviewees distributes as follows: out of a total of four FTM, two were British post-operatives and two were Spanish, one pre-operative and the other post-operative. Out of the eight MTFs interviewed there were four British (three pre and one post-operative) and four Spanish (three pre and one post-operative). This makes a total of five pre-operative (three British and two Spanish) and seven post-operative (three British and four Spanish). It should be noted that the empirical study is based a small sample to support the theoretical claims I make. This might raise doubts about how far it can be generalised because of its limited scope. However, in spite of it being a small sample, it is not an inductive study, it presents consistent views and it offers rich informative material that opens many questions for further research.

The main source of the empirical investigation is the twelve in-depth interviews I conducted with transsexual people. Nevertheless, during my research I have come across a variety of other interesting sources, such as conversations with other transsexuals (mainly Daniela and Mike), transsexuals' autobiographies, leaflets produced by transsexuals' groups, TV programs and other media reports, and so on, that I have also brought forward in the following study. I would like to clarify that, due to the limited scope of my research, I have not conducted a systematic research of these sources. Hence, a detailed survey of them should not be expected.

The following table presents the selected interviews and some basic information about the interviewees. The sexual orientation is considered in the transgendered sex. The interviewees' real names have been substituted by pseudonyms.

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7 For an interesting critique of the third gender category as presented in Herdt 1994, see Castel 1996.

8 In this cross-cultural comparison I speak of national difference in a loose sense. The British interviewees came from different parts of the UK, including Scotland. The transsexuals interviewed in Barcelona also came from different parts of Spain. According to Spanish lawyer Fernández, a considerable number of Spanish FTM transsexuals come from the South of Spain (Andalucía, Murcia, Extremadura) and moved to bigger cities such as Madrid of Barcelona searching for anonymity. Four out of six of the Spanish interviewees were sons of immigrants from the South of Spain.

9 Again there is a variation in the way in which the relation between transsexuality and surgical intervention is understood in the UK and in Spain. This issue will be dealt in Section 6.2.1.

10 All the quotes included in the text have been verified with the informants, including those from personal conversations.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INTERVIEW NUMBER</th>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>M/F</th>
<th>STATUS</th>
<th>NATIONALITY</th>
<th>SEXUAL ORIENTATION</th>
<th>AGE</th>
<th>PROFESSION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1, 1 bis</td>
<td>Jane</td>
<td>MTF</td>
<td>Pre-operative</td>
<td>British</td>
<td>Homosexual</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Salmon farming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Brenda</td>
<td>MTF</td>
<td>Pre-operative</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>Heterosexual</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>Civil servant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Justin</td>
<td>FTM</td>
<td>Post-operative</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>Heterosexual</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>Retired civil servant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Ronnie</td>
<td>FTM</td>
<td>Post-operative</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>Heterosexual</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>Unemployed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Gwendolyn</td>
<td>MTF</td>
<td>Post-operative</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>Heterosexual</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>Electronics engineer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Carol</td>
<td>MTF</td>
<td>Pre-operative</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>Asexual, homosexual</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>Bank manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Gabriel</td>
<td>FTM</td>
<td>Pre-operative</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>Heterosexual</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>Cook</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Maria</td>
<td>MTF</td>
<td>Post-operative</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>Heterosexual</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>Communications engineer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Silvia</td>
<td>MTF</td>
<td>Pre-operative</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>Heterosexual</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>Beautician, waitress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Pamela</td>
<td>MTF</td>
<td>Pre-operative</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>Heterosexual</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Health student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Elsa</td>
<td>MTF</td>
<td>Pre-operative</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>Heterosexual</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Student, prostitution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Elias</td>
<td>FTM</td>
<td>Post-operative</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>Heterosexual</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Laboratory technician</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.2 METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES

5.2.1 METHODOLOGY

The methodology which I followed in my research was dictated by the nature of the questions which guided the investigation. Since the intention of the research is to bring to light the taken-for-granted knowledge about sexual identity in which our actions are embedded, I needed qualitative data. The ability to provide an incisive and rich understanding of the issues it examines is an important characteristic of qualitative data. Because it aims at depth rather than width, qualitative research is appropriate for analysing and decoding cultural symbols. The data needed to be collected with an approach that would provide attention to context and receptiveness. These factors seemed to point to fieldwork analysis as the most appropriate methodology.

The qualitative data collected in the fieldwork will be examined by discourse analysis. Hence, I will consider language as a form of social action and I will investigate how texts and verbal accounts are constructed in order to reveal tacit and practical knowledge. I will also look for the "linguistic repertoire" of the informants, that is, for that range of terms, specific metaphors or stylistic constructions that reveal the interpretative practices embodied in their discourse.

The limited scope of this research and its qualitative approach imply that the findings presented in Chapter 6 are not a representative sample and should not be taken as the basis for statistical generalisation.

5.2.2 TECHNIQUE

The main technique employed for obtaining the qualitative data has been in-depth interviews with a small sample of informants. Since I was researching the platitudes of the HM as conceptualised by the subjects, I conducted loosely structured interviews with open-ended questions. This technique allowed freedom for the interviewee to talk about what s/he considered important and, thus, I kept guidance and direction to a minimum. The resulting interviews were more like a friendly conversation in which the informants were given a great amount of latitude in their approach to the different topics. In my data gathering, I treated the interviewees also as actors in the sense that I observed their body language, demeanour, code dress, make up and so on. I also kept notes of the comments they made off-the-record.

Although the main sources of data are the twelve selected interviews with transsexuals, I have also drawn from qualitative data gathered during one year of research that helped me familiarise

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11 The notion of "linguistic repertoire" was created by Halliday (1978) and developed by Gilber and Mulkay (1984) in their investigation into scientists' accounts (mentioned in Gilber 1993: 292).
myself and better understand the transsexual phenomenon. These data were gathered through participant observation in the fourth Gender Dysphoria Conference (Gendys' 96) which took place at Manchester University; an interview with Sra. Maria Lluisa Fernandez, a Spanish lawyer specialising in transsexuals' cases; and other materials such as press and media reports, cartoon strips, documentaries and films, newsletters produced by transsexual associations, transsexuals' mail group and so on. Previous to the main interviews, a pilot interview was conducted in order to familiarise myself with the field and gather some information that helped to refine the relevant issues. Because the initial questions of the interview were very open, topics tended to reappear during the interview. This was an advantage of the interview's structure since it allowed the interviewee to explore the same issue from a different perspective. As a result, the respondents were able to consider certain aspects that they had ignored or just hinted at in a previous question. A copy of the questionnaire can be found in the Appendix 1 and a copy of the transcription conventions can be found in the Appendix 2.

5.2.3 MAKING CONTACT

Contact with informants was established through several different channels. Initially I wrote official introductory letters to two doctors specialising in transsexualism, inquiring about the possibility of contacting some of their patients. The responses obtained through this channel were not very successful. Although I conducted two interviews in the informants' homes I could detect that they were very hesitant in their response and reluctant to disclose much about themselves. This was possibly due to suspicions about my intentions and confidentiality due to my contact with their doctor. A second channel that proved more successful was contacting the numerous transsexuals' associations. When the contact was not established through a doctor, I was able to present myself as a sympathetic researcher without psychological or medical prejudices who would keep their identities strictly confidential. Transsexuals appreciated the sort of attention and interest I was taking in them. This, together with my sympathetic and relaxed attitude, provided the right kind of atmosphere for confidentiality. The fact that I had no input whatsoever in their diagnosis was also important with regards to the interviewees' non-secretive attitude. My position allowed me to avoid the problem of data bias arising from data collected by people who are both researcher and diagnostician (Risman 1982: 320).

All the interviews I conducted had been agreed in advance and took place during the interviewees' leisure time. The length of the interviews varied from one to three hours. They were taped and transcribed verbatim. The interviews were generally conducted in a setting familiar to the informants: either the premises of the transsexuals' association and regular meeting place, or their private home. On three occasions the interviews were conducted in the interviewee's home at the subject's request given their lack of involvement with their local association (interviews 3, 4, 8). Both the associations' premises and the interviewees' homes were perceived as "neutral" or private ground.
where the transsexuals felt comfortable and secure. Only on one occasion the interview was conducted in another sort of space, my university office, for want of a better place. On this occasion, the interviewee (Gwendolyn, interview number 6) seemed slightly less at ease, maybe also due to unfamiliarity with the tape recorder. Gwendolyn seemed more relaxed and articulate when the tape recorder was switched off. Because of this, she said a number of things off the record that I asked her to repeat for the record.

5.2.4 SOME METHODOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS

In this section I would like to deal briefly with some methodological questions concerning issues of neutrality/objectivity with regard to my involvement as a researcher, as well as the effects of my presence on the informants. My reflections on the question of neutrality and objectivity take as a point of departure the following quote: "the ethnographer is either an insider or an outsider... no ethnographer can ever claim to have been one or the other in an absolute sense. The very fact of negotiating one's status in the community precludes any such possibility. Anthropologists have to learn to adapt to events in which they themselves are significant actors" (Herzfeld quoted in Atkinson 1990: 157).

In my connection with "transsexual culture" I was not a complete outsider but neither was I an insider. As I explained above, asserting myself as a researcher without prejudices concerning transsexualism gained me access to the interviewees. Thus, as Herzfeld points out, my status and acceptance depended on a sympathetic and respectful approach towards informants and this approach implicated me as an insider for reasons I will now present. A respectful attitude entailed addressing transsexuals as rightful members of their gender. Hence, it required the use of the pronouns and, in the case of Spanish, the articles and the adjectives that agreed with the claimed gender of the person I was speaking to. For this reason, throughout the interviewing process and in my analysis, I refer to the interviewed persons with the pronoun that coincides with their preferred gender. A second reason for considering me an insider is because, to a certain extent, I am personally aware of the beliefs and acts one learns to perform in order to be taken as a legitimate member of one's sex. This insight, gained during several years of professional modelling, helped me to relate to transsexuals' lack of identification with the gender acts they were expected to enact. This fact facilitated good communication for I did not feel afraid or threatened in any way, nor did I feel any shame on their behalf or mine!

The need to adapt myself to my informants also entailed addressing the interviewees without making assumptions about their personalities on the basis of their sex. I tried approaching the informants with the naïve ignorance necessary for inquiring into their categories of knowledge. Hence, I needed to drop all attempt to classify the person I was speaking to as female or male and, hence, to cease assuming any knowledge derived from the classification. The perplexity and
disorientation that ensued from this made me directly aware of the depth and ubiquity of gender in my social dealings. Since I have no objections to consider myself as product and example of my own culture, I feel inclined to take my perplexity as evidence of the importance of gender in the social exchanges of Western culture. Needless to say this was a very interesting and enlightening experience at a personal level.

To put it briefly, on the one hand, I was an insider insofar as I did not have pre-conceived ideas or prejudices towards transsexualism and my sympathy and respect was sincere. I was also an accomplice and an insider in two other senses: in as much as I shared the sense of alienation from the acts one is expected to perform because of one's sex, and also because I addressed the informants with the pronouns befitting their preferred gender. On the other hand, I was an outsider for two reasons. The first obvious reason is because I am not a transsexual person and, hence, I cannot claim to have identical experiences, thus I am not considered by the informants as a member of the transsexual community. The second reason for feeling an outsider was because transsexuals took me as representative of cultural legitimacy and expected me to share with them the dominant cultural views about masculinity and femininity. Transsexuals expected me to behave according to their platitudes concerning the category 'woman'. I found it difficult to respond positively to interviewees' expectations of my behaviour as a 'true' representative of my own alleged gender and I avoided pronouncing myself in any sense with regards to my assumed desires and behaviour or their personal appearance.

On a number of occasions I was saddened by the suffering that transsexuals felt because of their sense of "not fitting in" with the dominant cultural views about masculinity and femininity. My sadness was accompanied by a feeling of frustration that arose from what I perceived as transsexuals' ready acceptance of social categories and prescriptions on what constitutes 'a female' or 'a male' and their conformity to them. I will come back to this question and examine it in greater detail in Section 6.4 on the political perspective of transsexualism. At this point I will only refer to my personal reactions with regards to my perceptions of transsexuals' conformity. I did not feel comfortable being categorised as a 'genuine' representative of the category 'woman' because it involved being identified with a ready-defined personality that concerned interest in personal appearances, clothes, make-up, cosmetic procedures and maternity. I felt constrained by a characterisation that defined my personal identity on the basis of the platitudes governing 'my' gender category following an arguably strict orthodoxy on what are the 'essential' female treats. On later reflection, I felt this was a sort of 'price' I had to pay for treating transsexuals as legitimate representatives of their chosen gender in order to capture their understandings of the gender category. That is, I treated their views unproblematically, hence, they logically assumed that I complied with gender categories and treated me consequentially in that respect.

The question of my sense of displeasure concerning what I perceived as transsexuals' conformity might be objected as impeding neutrality in my fieldwork research. I would like to state
that if neutrality depends on one's lack of personal involvement with the issues with which one is dealing, then I cannot claim to have taken a neutral stance in my research. My involvement entailed opinions as well as negative and positive feelings towards the views of my interviewees. Nevertheless, I do not think my feelings towards the people I was interviewing had any negative effect on my research. In this respect, I agree with Wollcot's (1990) challenging of the perceived necessity of being neutral in order to be objective. Wollcot thinks that neutrality and objectivity are not inextricably linked, for a researcher might hold different opinions from those of the interviewees but s/he could still be perfectly capable of understanding them and recording their views. In my experience, in spite of my disagreement with transsexuals' understandings of gender categories, I never expressed my dissension. Only on certain occasions, I mentioned the possibility of different understandings of the knowledge categories as a prompt for the respondent to expand further on his/her views. I think it is important in fieldwork analysis to try to understand how the informants make sense of the researcher (Herzfeld 1983). Therefore, in the next chapter on the analysis of interviews I will present some aspects in which I think my presence was relevant in the interviewing process.

Having introduced my methodology and technique, the interviewees and the reasons why I chose transsexuals as informants, I will now proceed to discuss the data gathered in the interviews.
CHAPTER 6:

A CRITICAL EVALUATION
OF MY RECONSTRUCTION OF BUTLER
IN THE LIGHT OF THE EMPIRICAL STUDY

In this chapter I will be suggesting ways in which Butler as reconstructed by me conforms to empirical reality, and ways to improve that reconstruction where it is not adequate. The critical evaluation is structured around the seven main theses defended in "Butler Reconstructed" of Chapter 2. The main theses I defended in the sociological reconstruction are: that it is a folk theory of sorts and that as such it has a similar structure to language; that citation of the Matrix standards perform the body as an artificial kind; that it defines standards of identity; that the Matrix is a collective good protected by sanctions; that it is conventional; and, finally, that 'I' talk is a useful way to understand the formation of the subject and political agency. I will now proceed to examine these theses in detail and examine how the empirical data supports or challenges them. When relevant, I will suggest ways in which the sociological reconstruction of Butler can be improved and will suggest possible lines for further research.

6.1 THE HM IS A FOLK THEORY

I have argued above that the HM is a folk theory concerning and defining sexual behaviour, biology, sexuality, gender, and so on. As a theory the Matrix has a similar structure to language: its categories are self-referential, circular, and collectively defined. The Matrix is a folk theory of reality with categories and laws; it is a set of attributive, explanatory and predictive practices; it restricts cognition; it contains observational and theoretical terms, and platitudes.

6.1.1 THE MATRIX'S CATEGORIES AS SELF-REFERENTIAL

An instance of the self-referentiality of the Matrix's terms is provided by transsexuals' progress from initial confusion about medical standards to an accomplished citation. Generally transsexuals report initial ignorance with regards to gender dysphoria, for instance, "I was very

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1 Since the theses are interrelated, there will be some overlap between the sections.
confused as to whether I was gay [...] whether I was a transsexual, whether I was a transvestite, whether I was just a normal person, in inverted commas, but had other problems" (Brenda 71-3).2 Gabriel refers to the time "when he did not know what transsexualism was" (Gabriel 83-4) as a period of anxiety "when you don't know how it is called what is happening to you, you think that something is really happening to you, right? But, when you see that this has a name, a solution, no, I don't see any problem with it" (Gabriel 105-7). Thus transsexuals report that knowing about the existence, of a medical label by which they can be classified made them feel more at ease. For instance, Gabriel reports that the newly acquired knowledge felt like a "first step": "let's see, my problem, so to speak, has a solution and the solution is called transsexualism. Then, since you know that this is solvable, you feel confident" (Gabriel: 77-79).3 Acquaintance with the condition brings relief in so far as it offers "a solution" thus opening a path for action: "when one knows that one's way of being is called transsexuality, then one says: mm, look, this, this, this and this that I see in this magazine eh, on, on the TV or that such person is telling me, is what I feel. When one discovers what it is, that is called transsexuality, one discovers what are the possible ways one can take" (Elias 49-53).

As the last quote reveals, interviewees often identify themselves as transsexuals through information received from media: "at first I knew there was something in me but I didn't even know how was it called, nor where I should go, nothing about this topic, right? Then, of course, it is when one sees a television program or reads it in the press and thinks: wow, this is what is happening to me!" (Gabriel 44-7).4 Some interviewees make clear they informed themselves about their condition: "before I went to the GP, I went to the library to find out whether there was any literature about it" (Ronnie 760-1); before visiting the library "(I) knew nothing about transsexualism. All I knew was that transsexuals were born in the wrong body" (Ronnie 760-1).5 At times the information comes from fellow transsexuals: "I went to see her in the house and we had a long chat. It was wonderful. Mm, and then she advised me on how to approach my doctor. I wrote this six page letter covering lots of the things that I described to you, and he referred me to a psychiatrist" (Brenda 199-202).

Ronnie remembers how, after becoming acquainted with the category 'transsexual', he made sense of past events: "I think I heard the word or read the word in a magazine or something: 'transsexual' and I read about it and I thought: 'me'. That's, that, that was like, like a, a dawning of a

2 See also Jane 6-8.
3 See also Justin 142-6.
4 See also Pamela 344-53, Justin 59-60. The book Conundrum by famous journalist and broadcaster Jan Morris (Morris 1974) had been read by most UK interviewees. My research confirms King's finding that the majority of his interviewees "came across the terms transvestism and transsexualism in popular books or magazines on sexual matters. Second in reported frequency was the mass media and the medical literature" (King 1993: 174). It seems that transsexuals' autobiographies are increasingly being consulted.
5 Ronnie exemplifies transsexuals' acquaintance with the "origin story": "male-to-female transsexuals were individuals on whom nature had played a cruel joke - they were females trapped in male bodies" (Bolin 1994: 456). Interviewees regularly cited this platitude to describe themselves in accordance to medical standards.
light bulb, so then I started looking back on the past and then realising that all these things..."
(Ronnie 74-7). At times the reaction to hormonal treatment is reported as retrospectively authenticating
the subject's wish: "it was then (at eighteen years old) that I started noticing the changes to woman and,
as I was noticing them, the better I felt. It was then that I realised... It goes without saying that, if in
the first moment that I started noticing my breasts and acquiring a female aspect, I wouldn't have liked
it, then I wouldn't have done it. But I saw that yes, that it was like this that I felt happy and it was then
that I discover that I was really a transsexual" (Elsa 275-9, stress added). Hence, the reaction to
hormonal treatment retrospectively authenticates the subject's identification.  

The transsexual population in general are renowned for being very well informed on all
aspects of gender dysphoria either through friends or by reading the literature. Many interviewed
transsexuals keep documents, articles, biographies of successful transsexuals, and other informative
material. Hence, transsexuals are very well informed not only about treatment techniques but also
about particular doctors because they "read about it" (Carol 508). The empirical research confirms
this since transsexuals regularly cite the defining characteristics of gender dysphoria. Jane, for
instance, cites body hatred, body alienation, and the consequent strong wish for surgery: "some
mornings I think if I could get a knife and chop it off myself. I would love to! [laughter] [...] I
desperately want the surgery... The surgery will... it will be great to lose the genitals [points out to the
genitals] and I hate them I really do [...] getting the genitals removed / yeah, I would be happy at that,
you know. I could feel Jane" (Jane 1 701-2, 197-8). 

The desire for sex-change is an essential characteristic of transsexualism in the medical
taxonomy. Given that the main defining characteristic of transsexualism is a strong desire for surgery,
seeking a sex-change qualifies subjects as genuine transsexuals deserving a sex-change. In other
words, the symptoms reported by the patients are themselves the criteria of diagnosis. 

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6 Ronnie is again exemplifying a well-known effect: "the phenomenon of retrospectively 'amending' one's
subjective history" (Fisk quoted in Billings and Urban 1982: 274) in order to "tailor their views of themselves
and their personal histories to prevailing 'scientific' fashions" (Kubie and Mackie quoted in ibid.: 274).
7 See also Gabriel 101-2, Maria 568, 638, 50-1, Jane 645 and Pamela 11.
8 Hausman refers to the "O.T.F.; that is, the Obligatory Transsexual File" (Stone quoted in Hausman 1995: 143)
that all transsexuals keep with information about the condition and general information about treatments.
9 To Billings and Urban this phenomenon is a social process they call 'The Con' (Billings and Urban 1982: 273).
In their view, since psychiatrists only treated those whose self-reported stories fit perfectly with the "textbook"
cases of transsexualism, patients were forced to meet the evaluation standard thus developing appropriate
biographies. Hence, the attitude of physicians encouraged the construction of biographies by "rewarding
compliance with surgery and punishing honesty with an unfavourable evaluation" (ibid.: 273).
10 See also Jane 2: 567, 586-8.
11 In Bolin's words: "an individual is judged to be transsexual on the basis of a cross-sex identity that is
manifested by a sustained desire for surgery" (Bolin 1994: 455). Hausman shares this view: "demanding sex
change is... part of what constructs the subject as a transsexual: it is the mechanism through which transsexuals
come to identify themselves under the sign of transsexualism and construct themselves as its subjects"
(Hausman 1996: 110).
clearly establish 'transsexualism' as a self-referential category: the definition and diagnosis of transsexualism is sustained in a circular fashion, since having a strong wish for having a sex-change is the main trait to qualify as transsexual and hence deserve a sex-change. Jane goes as far as suggesting that the possibility of sex-change surgery elicits the impulse for the operation: "if I didn’t know that there was a gender reassignment [...] I wouldn’t feel right but that would be the end of it. Because I know there is gender reassignment I know I can be helped [...] I think the more, the more / gender reassignment that takes place and the more the public gets to know about it, the more and more it will happen" (Jane 1 685-90, see also 90-5).12

As a consequence of the emphasis given to the correct citation of medical standards, transsexuals experience their appointments with their psychiatrists as a sort of exam: "I was terrified in case I said the wrong thing at the interview" (Ronnie 771, stress added); "you’re scared to see this guy and pray that you don’t say something that he’s going to say: well, no the treatment is different, that’s the wrong treatment; you should have... So, you’re basically putting your life in his hands" (Ronnie 774-6). Transsexuals themselves consider the granting of treatment as an authenticity test: "to a large extent the hormone therapy is a diagnostic tool and you put somebody in hormone therapy if they are not seriously going down the route, they are going to want off that stuff fairly quickly because it's going to take, is going to take away their sex drive" (Carol 357-60). Again this idea reveals circularity in diagnosis, for, to Carol, doctors trial the authenticity of the wish by submitting the subject to treatment. Thus, the right diagnosis is proven by the patient’s commitment to the therapy itself.13

6.1.2 REALISING COGNITION

At times transsexuals not only cite platitudes from medical literature but also liken the process of transexualisation to a 'rite of passage' - a sociological interpretation first presented in Billings and Urban (1982: 278) and later elaborated by Bolin (1988). For instance, in the context of discussing her transexualisation Elsa says: "the rite of passage was from sixteen to eighteen. At eighteen it (transexualisation) was already real" (Elsa 274).14 Thus, transsexuals' conforming to pre-existing categories is conceived and acted as a ritualistic repetition. Such repetition effectively shapes their cognition. There is a particular response effect to me as an interviewer that also illustrates transsexuals' accounts as performances addressed to doctors and the Matrix as shaping cognition through ritualistic repetition. This response effect concerns an assumption that occurred quite frequently: the interviewees took for granted that I had extensive medical knowledge about

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12 This phenomenon has also been observed by Hirschauer who writes: "the public representation of genital surgery (...) stimulated a high quantitative demand for surgery (...) a lot of the strong motivation doctors encounter in their patients is mobilised by the medical treatment itself" (Hirschauer 1997: 5).

13 Lindemann concurs in describing transsexuals' commitment to medical procedures as a "vouch for the truth of their self-knowledge, which then also serves to verify that truth" (1996: 347).

14 See also Elsa 347.
transsexualism. For instance when questioned about her knowledge of anatomy, physiology, medicine, Gwen replies: "mm, I would say slightly lower than you [laughter]" (Gwen 511). This was more often an unspoken assumption that sometimes surfaced. For instance, when discussing a particular psychiatric test he underwent Gabriel said: "I suppose you would understand" (Gabriel 360). In spite of my efforts to deny this erroneous assumption, my informants insisted on granting me authority as knowledgeable of the medical issues concerning the medical definition of transsexuality. Clearly, it was as if the interviewees perceived me in a continuum with psychiatrists, probably because of my known allegiance to a university. The difference was that interviewees were speaking freely because they knew our conversation was confidential and held no consequence for their treatment.

This situation elicited a response effect, for I felt that transsexuals' accounts were aiming to fulfil psychiatrists' expectations. Particularly in the UK I had the impression that certain answers seemed to be uttered to please an imaginary psychiatrist. My impression was confirmed by a couple of British interviewees (Jane & Brenda) who intimated in private conversation after the interview that they benefited from the interview for it had functioned as a kind of rehearsal for the self-narrative due to be performed in their forthcoming initial appointments with a psychiatrist in London's Charing Cross Hospital. Therefore, since the interview presented an opportunity to respond extensively to questions about their life story, it constituted a chance to essay the correct citation of the medical standards to be performed in front of the medical authorities. The interviews as rehearsals qualify as genuine ritualistic repetitions in so far as the interviewees performed with the necessary emotion and commitment. Thus, the interviews served a similar purpose to a ritual: to provide an opportunity for display and repetition in order to reshape dispositions. Hence, adding to the evidence presented in the previous section concerning how transsexuals make sense of their own identities and bodies through the category transsexualism, the response effect reveals the importance of the Matrix as a folk theory shaping cognition through ritualistic repetition.15

6.1.3 ATTRIBUTING GENDER

Another element of circularity illustrated by transsexualism is produced by the real life test in so far as it constitutes a social invert in need of a sex-change operation. As introduced in Chapter 5 on What is a Transsexual?, the real life test usually begins before the treatment has been able to produce tangible results. Furthermore, hormone treatment is often not as effective as it might be since it is counteracted by the hormones that the patient's intact genitals continue to produce. Hence, during the real life test transsexuals make a public commitment as subjects of a particular gender before being able to achieve a successful impersonation and thus pass unproblematically. As consequence of this

15 Devor also refers to gender as a cognitive schema when she describes it as a "conceptual structure that organises social experience" (Devor 1989: 45).
situation, transsexuals feel the need to proceed hastily in the process of subjectification in order to gain social acceptance and avoid punishment.  

The Spanish juridical procedures for documental reorientation also exemplify the self-referentiality of gender attribution by showing how the decision of the judicial authorities for accepting the legal change of sex is settled on the basis of whether the person in question is taken to be a man or a woman by their social milieu. Early in my research I asked transsexuals for their real name but soon I realised it was a sensitive question. I sensed that some transsexuals profoundly disliked it - "when they call me Jack I CRINGE" (Jane 1 132) - and I refrained from asking. Their reluctance is an obvious indication of the importance of names as social signs. Transsexuals identify with their names and, as Elias puts it, a name "is not a question of liking it but of feeling it like one's own" (Elias 408). Given the personal and social importance of names it is no surprise that documental reorientation is an issue of great relevance for transsexuals: "the change of documents is very important. Even more than the operation" (Gabriel 15-6). Documental reorientation is an important part of the entire gender reorientation process (Petersen 142), particularly in Spain, where the Documento Nacional de Identidad, an identity card all Spanish citizens are obliged to possess, is ubiquitous in social life. Spanish transsexuals expect the documental reorientation will increase social acceptance: "after all the administrative procedures that we must go through in order to change identity, to get an ID that is appropriate to our appearance, I suppose that (society) will be already fine, right? (...) Because one has combined everything, right? One already has the ID card! One has to carry it in one's mouth for absolutely everything!" (Pamela 232-42).

Spanish juridical procedures for the management of gender reassignment operations offer some insight into gender as a self-referential process. In order to achieve the legal change of sex after a sex-change operation and the change of name (two different procedures), Spanish transsexuals must present a request to a court. Transsexuals' lawyers argue their case making use of an ancient doctrine of civil law called "Fumus de bon dret", also known as the theory of appearance of good justice, that protects appearance or fiction. Given that Spanish judges assume that sex is a purely biological and chromosomal category, lawyers argue for a widening of the notion of sex that includes social, psychological, and functional factors. To support this wider view and persuade the judges of the transsexual's suitability for the legal change of sex, lawyers appeal to the doctrine of appearance of

16 Meyer (1991) agrees with this view in so far as he considers the real life test as a mechanism to transform transsexuals into medical golems whose "redemption" is provided by the very same forces that have created them in the first place in a circular fashion.

17 All capitalised words in quotes signal interviewee's emphatic speech.

18 See also Jane 1 39-62.

19 I am grateful to the Spanish lawyer Sra. María Lluisa Fernández for making this information available to me in a very interesting and enlightening interview. Sra. Fernández is the only Spanish lawyer specialising in the defence of transsexuals' cases.

20 Sra. Fernández informs me that lawyers rarely use the term gender, for sex is better understood by judges.
good justice. They do so in an indirect manner by requesting a change of name at the same time as the claim for the change of sex. The purpose of the change of name request is not only to fulfil the transsexuals' wish to take a new name (to feminize their own is an easier option in the juridical system); there is also a strategic reason. The second purpose of the request is served by the mechanisms involved in the procedures for the change of name. These procedures involve investigating whether this person is known in his/her social surroundings by the name he/she wishes to adopt, by conducting interviews with colleagues, neighbours, family, friends, and so on, of the individual in question.

This evidence not only gives testimony of the familiarity of the individual's social milieu with the requested name, it also illustrates, in an indirect fashion, the level of social acceptance in his/her 'new' sex. Social acceptance confirms the transsexuals' right to a new name by showing that he/she possesses the 'right' and 'proper' appearance for the new sex and conducts herself/himself according to the prescribed behaviour for his/her sex. Since, as Kessler and MacKenna showed, social acceptance constitutes membership, the procedures for the change of name support the claim for the legal change of sex. In this manner, by making indirect use of the doctrine of appearance of good justice through the procedures that support the claim for the change of name, lawyers show that transsexuals fulfil the requirements of the 'right' appearance - that is, they fit the Matrix's standards of identity - and argue for the judges' sanction of what is a de facto situation.

Therefore, the decision of the judicial authorities for accepting the legal change of sex is settled on the basis of whether the person in question is taken to be a man or a woman by his/her social milieu. This is clearly a self-referential process, for the transsexual is socially sanctioned as being a man or a woman by the legal authorities on the basis of the social acceptance of their gender previous to the investigation. The question of documental reorientation illustrates the self-referentiality of the Matrix rules since it shows their conventionality and how rules are not laid down in advance but decided by the collective. As consequence, the definition of transsexualism and its social acceptance depends on a collective assessment represented by those who hold authority to decide: the social milieu, the medical profession and judges.

Documental reorientation is equivalent to social sanctioning of change. It enables transsexuals to pass more successfully and to establish their identity with the backup of legal authority. Moreover, according to Silvia, documental reorientation functions as a sort of incentive for the sex-change operation since it is a pre-requisite for renewal of documentation: "people tend to operate [...]"

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21 As mentioned in the previous section, normally transsexuals live in their transsexual sex for a period of time before they go ahead with the sex-change operation, therefore they are generally surrounded by a social milieu familiarised with their 'new' identity.

22 The medical and legal elite control the concentration of power that arises from routinisation of action and distribution of knowledge. This condensation of power bestows their capacity to direct social routines. However, the case of transsexualism illustrates how the social milieu also holds a parcel of power.
not searching for, for pleasure but for recognition as female, that is, to the effect of documentation, rights, judicial purposes" (Silvia 146-8). After the operation: "if you have a judicial sentence that recognises your rights [...] integration is easier because one fits better with the standards" (Silvia 289-90). After the legal change of sex is accepted, the person will become a man or a woman for most purposes.23

6.1.4 SEX AS THEORETICAL TERM24

The exploration of transsexuals' feeling of discontinuity in their perceptions of body and desire reveals the division between sexual and non-sexual parts in the Matrix. As we will see in the following quotes, the categorisation of body parts as sexual and non-sexual seems to be inextricably linked to collectively defined meanings concerning normative principles governing sexuality. For instance Mark Rees, an American female-to-male talks about "the unhappy situation of being stimulated by the same signals which would arouse a heterosexual genetic male, but having female genitalia which react in a way appropriate to a woman" when sexually stimulated (Rees 1996: 33). This quote reveals Rees' perceived décalage25 between the arousal of his own female genitals and the reaction he considers appropriate when sexually aroused by a woman. It seems that Rees believes that penile erection is the "proper" reaction to the desire for a woman. In its turn, this belief seems to rest on the assumption that vaginal penetration is required in order to fulfil a woman's desire.

The discourse of Spanish transsexuals apparently goes one step beyond their UK peers, for they challenge the definition of sex and desire as being determined by the material body. Thus, Elias, a Spanish female-to-male with female genitals, believes that "the, the thing is that... if genitals are seen in a photograph then, yes, they are male or female, aren't they? But my genitals are mine, I'm a man and my genitals are masculine" (Elias 181-182). In spite of the boldness of these statements, it seems that, just like Rees, to Elias sex is defined on the basis of the direction of desire. This is so because in both cases the perceived décalage is located between the genitals of the desiring subject and the object of desire. I think that the mismatch reported by Rees and Elias is due to having what they perceive as a non-normative 'homosexual' genital reaction to their desire.

These data supports the notion of transsexual people as experiencing a discontinuity between body parts and the sexual pleasures that should be associated with them. Transsexuals think that either they do not have the organs for the kind of pleasure they want to feel - that is: their bodies do not correspond to the desired pleasure; or they actually perceive their pleasure as belonging to other body

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23 The exceptions being marriage and adoption. Nevertheless, according to lawyer Sra. Fernández, there are some cases of legally sanctioned marriages between transsexuals in Spain. The birth certificate is not changed in either Spain or Scotland. The death certificate features the same sex as the birth certificate.

24 Theoretical terms are underlying explanatory terms for things which are not directly observable.

25 I have kept the French term for it captures the sense of disjunction between two things or two facts better than any English term.
parts which they do not possess. In the case of Rees and Elias, they do not possess the right imaginary corporeal schema to experience pleasure like a man. Therefore, it seems that the normative categorisation of body parts and desires shapes the subject's body perception. In other words, the category of sex performs the subject's corporeal schema. Since the Matrix's sex performs identity and desire in an heterosexual direction and prohibits deviation, the subject conceives homosexual desire as an important threat to his/her integrity as subject. In Pamela's words: "one thinks one is homosexual and thinks: hey! I must hide it!" (Pamela 147) since "society wants heterosexual people. Society is not interested in having homosexual people" (Gabriel 208).26

In general MTF transsexuals stress their heterosexual identity which is often taken for granted and is often a pre-requisite for obtaining the operation. Silvia gives the flavour: "I define myself as heterosexual in the sense that I am a woman. Then later... sexually in the bed, I'm equally female" (Silvia 482-6). Consequently, for heterosexual transsexuals penetration is important. For instance, to the question whether she considers herself to be a fully functioning female, Gwen replies: "I would say ninety-five per cent fully functioning. The other five per cent will occur when I've have had full penetrative sex and as yet I haven't had it. We've tried but we never quite got there. It was a disaster of an evening [sigh]. But one day, I hope, I wish, I pray" (Gwen 721-3).

The following quotes reveal how the Matrix's laws have performed both Elias and Rees' body perception by fixing the limits of normative sex as a theoretical term characterised by heterosexuality. Hence, the data confirms the reconstruction of sex as a theoretical term defined by the law of heterosexual desire and sustains the concept of sex as a performative category. The notion of sex as a theoretical term in the Matrix defined by arbitrarily grouping a set of traits is revealed not only in relation to the direction of desire but also concerning the 'character' of desire. For instance, Carol describes herself as sexually "passive" - a characteristic typically cited as feminine - and declares "to me the thought of having intercourse with them (women) and penetrating them, that was not an attractive option" (Carol 442-3). Nevertheless, Carol affirms: "I'm attracted to women. To me, males are too rough" (Carol 461). Hence, Carol feels the male organs she possesses are not apt for the 'passive feminine' desire she identifies herself with and wishes to express in intercourse.

Similarly, on the question of arousal FTM Mark Rees declares: "it was during my teens that I discovered that women sexually aroused me, but it has been only recently that I came to the view that this experience was physically dissimilar from that of a normal woman, although our equipment was identical. Women, of my acquaintance, speak of an arousal which seems to be diffuse, whereas I had

26 For more examples of citation of prescriptive heterosexuality see Pamela 358, Elias 645-7.

27 Bornstein reports that her voice teacher taught her to speak "in a very high pitched, very breathy, very sing-song voice and to tag questions onto the end of each sentence. And I was supposed to smile all the time when I was talking. I said, 'Oh, I don't want to talk like that!' The teachers assumed that you were going to be a heterosexual woman" (Bornstein 1993: 112). Bornstein's report not only reveals assumed heterosexuality but also the transmission of a very stereotypical version of heterosexual females.
what I later recognised as a clitoral erection and this was over ten years before my hormone therapy" (Rees 1996: 33). Here Rees is citing a commonplace about females' arousal that assumes that clitoral erection is not the properly "feminine" form of excitement. MTF Silvia concurs on the same view and adds some information on the character of male and female sexuality: "clitoral stimulation [...] is a pleasure a bit similar to men's pleasure [...] Of course it is a small clitoris, it is a small organ, if it was bigger it would be more or less almost similar" (Silvia 193-6); 28 "pleasure is more, more relaxed. For instance, let's see, one needs a longer period of stimulation" (Silvia 155); sexual intercourse involves "lots of foreplay, lots of caresses, lots!" (Silvia 571); 29 Silvia sums up her style of intercourse in the following manner: "in bed I'm very female and they are very male" (Silvia 576).

On masculine sexuality, Ronnie reveals a notion of masculinity as dominant and active, as it becomes clear in his self-attributions: "my relationship has always been a, a masculine [...] I've always been the dominant one // Hem, never liked, never..., I used to get a / a claustrophobic feeling when somebody would try to, or when a partner would try to instigate sex // I've always had to, I've always had to make the first move [...] Elaine is very submissive when it comes to sex, so it's, it's what you could call it the typical male/female role with regards to sex" (Ronnie 618-7). Albeit FTM Mike is bisexual in his transsexualized sex he also describes his position in sex as "the dominant role" (personal conversation). MTF Elias thinks heterosexuality is generally prescribed: "society is very sexist, it is made by men // sure, by men and for men and / and by these laws of society people's sexuality is like in the farm, right? The cow is the cow and the bull is the bull" (Elias 645-7). Elias refuses to yield to the pressure to act the "established" masculine sexual practices - that is "penetration" (Elias 585-6) - because it would make him feel bad about himself. Mike also cites penetration as the archetypal masculine sexual activity, albeit he is also attracted to men.

Hence, transsexuals' accounts confirm sex as a theoretical term and heterosexuality as the main criterion in the definition of normative sex, gender and desire. The self-referentiality and circularity of the Matrix theoretical terms, such as sex, gender or transsexualism, and their role in restricting cognition is also verified by the empirical data in so far as interviewees' accounts reveal how the reiterated citation of collective definitions performs desires, bodies and identities in accordance to normative standards.

28 It should be kept in mind that MTF Silvia is talking from her imagination since she has never experienced 'clitoral arousal' and never will. When reporting the change he felt in his body by the intake of testosterone, FTM Gabriel also compares clitoral stimulation with penis stimulation: "clitoris becomes, in the case of women, it becomes something like ten times bigger and the pleasure is ten times bigger than women, right?" (533-4).

29 Jane concurs: "a vast number of man [...] are jealous that women can show a loving emotion with fondling and caressing" (Jane 1 586-91).
6.2 CITATION AS PERFORMATIVE

The citation of the Matrix's platitudes performs bodies and identities. Transsexuals' lives are not only shaped by things and acts, but also their accounts effect a performative reiteration of gender myths by citing the Matrix's standards of identity. The Matrix's category of sex is performative, in so far as it creates a reality rather than a description of it. The reiterated citation of Matrix laws and platitudes makes the normative become descriptive in a self-fulfilling prophecy.

6.2.1. THE HM AS LANGUAGE

As argued in Chapter 2, Butler Reconstructed, I theorise the HM as a complex network of classificatory practices and symbols. This set of classificatory practices forms a corpus of knowledge encoded in platitudes of finitist meaning. Therefore, I expect to find evidence of processes of weaving of meanings and citation in transsexuals' narrative. However, within the Matrix there are at least two conflicting sexologies: the medical and the folk sexology. My informants mobilised categories from both folk and medical sexologies depending on their appropriateness to the context at hand. These different sexologies interact at several levels.

6.2.1.1 Citation Of Medical Sexology

As I will show in the following sections, all transsexuals, particularly UK interviewees, carefully and routinely cite the characteristics described in Fisk's guidelines to recognise the "true transsexual": 1) A life-long sense or feeling of being a member of the 'other sex'. 2) The early and persistent behavioristic phenomenon of cross-dressing, coupled with a strong emphasis upon a total lack of erotic feelings associated with cross-dressing. 3) A disdain or repugnance for homosexual behaviour" (Billings and Urban 1982: 270).

Identity

Transsexual people experience a discontinuity between body parts and the identities and sexual pleasures that they perceive should be associated with them. The feelings of alienation produced by this décalage between body parts and gendered meanings are often expressed with the platitude: "a woman/man trapped in the wrong body". In the words of Pamela, a Spanish male-to-female transsexual, "I'm put in a prison, aren't I? I'm in a wrapping that does not, that I do not belong to" (Pamela 50-1). Carol explains that "there is a significant number of (body) areas which are alien to an inner psyche" (Carol 134, stress added). Transsexuals feel generally separate from their bodies: "I think of it as the sort of, the sort of physical appendix that you need, you need to feed every so often to keep the real self going" (Brenda 771-3, stress added). They feel particularly estranged from certain

30 Please note in this chapter I use the term platitudes with the same technical meaning introduced in previous chapters. Therefore, it does not carry any connotation of shallowness on behalf of the interviewees.
body parts, particularly that "incongruous appendage that's there" (Carol 472). Gwen, a British postoperative MTF, expressed it as follows: "I didn't associate with some of the appendages that were there [...] the mind is female telling you that this is wrong. So because your mind is telling you that this is wrong, you associate that that shouldn't be there and you should have something else. So / yes, you do see yourself as being in the wrong body" (Gwen 56-61).

The latter quote shows that the discontinuity experienced by transsexuals is sometimes expressed in terms of the dichotomised notions of mind and body. The body is perceived as conflicting with the mind, hence as obstructing the subject's real 'personality'. As Silvia puts it, "if there is no outlet for your own personality then, obviously yes, one does have the feeling of being trapped" (Silvia 78-9). FTM Mike believes his "mind always has been male" (personal conversation). Indeed, the platitude "a female/male mind trapped in a man's/woman's body" encapsulates the medical understanding of gender identity as residing in an inner 'core' of the person, that is, gender as a 'true' immutable essence given by nature residing 'inside' the brain or the mind. This immutable essence cited by transsexuals corresponds to Stoller's notion of 'core gender identity'.

While some transsexuals like Jane hastily reply "OH YEAH" (Jane 1 94) to the question whether they believe they are in the wrong body, others, such as Gabriel, reject the platitude as "a stereotype" (Gabriel 54) but nevertheless insist on considering it a problem of identity: "No, I don't think I've ever been trapped in anybody's body. Simply now I am RE-ASSERTING what I am. But trapped in somebody's body no... I don't think anybody is trapped in the body [laughter] of somebody that it is not himself, right?" (Gabriel 57-60). Ronnie employs a particular cosmology to describe the psychic space where identity resides: "now, it's ME and only ME alone, my brain, my // seventh brain or whatever that is deciding that I'm in the wrong body" (Ronnie 209-10).

The problematic experiences of transsexuals are sometimes expressed in terms of a conflicting dual identity. For instance, Jane articulates her experiences in terms of a struggle between Jane and Jack clearly visible in the following quote: "[sigh] there is two sides / Mm. There is the inner self which is Jane, there's the lower outward half which is Jack" (Jane 1 873-4).31 Obviously, the conflictive "Jack" is apparent in the male genitals that the interviewee still possesses. The conflict between the "two sides" reveals Jane's sense of self as object and appears in a number of different contexts, for instance when discussing the process of change: "I've gone that far now, I can do it, I can become Jane, I will become Jane, you know, that's what's keeping me going" (Jane 1408-9).

When discussing their wish for sex-change transsexuals insist it is a question of identity not a quest for 'sexual' pleasure. Carol declares: "to me, the sexual side doesn't really enter into it. It's actually your public presentation, how you actually feel yourself" (Carol 112-3). Similarly, the late Anne Forester described transsexuality as "not about what is between your legs, it's about what is in

31 See also Jane 851-2, and 212-3. Another British transsexual uses a similar discourse: "I used to work for two weeks and then be at home for three. So, for three weeks it was me! For two weeks it was the other person" (Gwen 159-160).
your mind" (personal communication, 9th August 1996). "What is between your legs" refers to genitals, hence to the biological body, once again opposed to the 'mind' and the 'internal' self. Hence, Anne is emphasising that transsexualism, a condition defined by the wish to change one's sex organs, is not about sexuality but about identity. Therefore, transsexualism is defined as a problem of identity, not sexuality and again any relation between sex change and sexuality is denied: "it was not a question of / sexual- It was a question of gender, it was a personal question" (Elsa 262-3).

The sex-change operation is perceived as the only possible solution "I tried over many years to balance this somehow in my life but, again it hasn't worked [...] And the only thing is left for me to do is to make the physical part of me match the inner self" (Brenda 5-11). Ronnie's wishes reveal the same dualism: "if only technology was farther down the line I could just take my brain out and put it in a male body and life could be so much easier" (Ronnie 180-1). Brenda concurs in the need of operating in order to be more "in tune with (her) self and more real and honest, and so forth"; thus, she perceives that "the only way I can do that is, if I'm the person that, if I'm the person all the way through, that all the time I, I feel I always should have been!" (Brenda 380-4). In sum, transsexuals expect that "the op" would materialise the physical body parts they perceive as corresponding to their perceived identities and the desired pleasures. As Pamela puts it: "to see myself as / as I had always dreamt I wanted to see myself" (Pamela 13).

**Cross-dressing**

Interviewees would regularly cite episodes of cross-dressing from childhood: "I cross dressed for twenty, nearly twenty three years before finally upfacing and actually going out in the world" (Carol 7-8, 84-6). Also Brenda explains: "I always knew from a very early age that I was different from most people" (17-8); "I felt I should be in the girls playground, but, here I am a boy, you know, there is something wrong here" (43-4); "I used to wear my sisters' clothes, it made me feel better and it meant I could let out the person that I really am" (Brenda 61-2). In spite of the different relevance of cross-dressing for FIMs - "the likes of me they've always go in male clothes, always, and I've always / dressed as a guy, tennis shoes..." (Ronnie 973-4) - FTM transsexuals also refer to a life-long sense

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32 This formulation recalls the words of American endocrinologist Benjamin: "gender is located above, and sex below the belt." To Benjamin the term sex included sexuality, libido and sexual activity, whereas gender designated "the non-sexual side of sex" (Benjamin quoted in Hausman 95: 125). Here Anne is also citing a notion of gender identity as unrelated to sexuality.

33 See also Brenda 366.

34 See also Gwen 7-11, 382-88.

35 Interestingly there is no concept of female transvestism, hence, no medical stigmatisation of female cross-dressing as perverse. There are also differences concerning diagnosis. According to Petersen, "one could be more certain of diagnosis in biological females" (Petersen 1995: 140), though he does not specify why. According to Billings and Urban, there are opposite views on this issue since for some clinicians female transsexuals are harder to identify than male transsexuals and for others it is the other way round (Billings and Urban 1982: 270, n. 10). In practice, the real life test is shorter for FTMs and they are given hormonal treatment more readily.
of belonging to the other sex and stressed they always dressed as males: "I've never lived in a true female role because I, for instance, I have never worn [...] a skirt, nor high heels, nor I've worn make-up [...] I don't know how to make up [...] because it's something that never attracted me. Moreover, I've never looked at a shop window with female clothes" (Gabriel 155-63). Hence, FTMs also stressed a childhood tendency to dress in the other sex: "as a child I always liked [...] boys' clothes" (Justin 111-2). 36

Soon in my empirical research in the UK I became aware that some people who had previously done some occasional cross-dressing, and hence could be termed transvestites, later decided to take on the role of the opposite sex full time, undergo surgery and become transsexuals. These people were at pains to distinguish themselves from transvestites by making clear in their accounts that they did not obtain sexual arousal from cross-dressing and also to justify earlier episodes of excitement aroused by cross-dressing. For instance Jane makes clear that: "I used to get sexually aroused by dressing in female clothes but it doesn't do anything for me now. It is not a sexual thing AT ALL crossdressing. It is just ME. Mn, I like nice feminine clothes. I like silks, I like satins, as you, you do [Jane is referring to me, Patrícia]. You feel good and it makes you feel that / it's not a sexual turn-on crossdressing, as far as I'm concerned. It's me. I don't see that there is anything to get excited about because it's how I feel / how I feel. At one time it did, yes! But I think that maybe it was more of / maybe it was a sexual turn on because it was a secret, it was mystical, it was / and / a bit of 'daredevilment', bit of risk and I suppose there is risk at the moment" (Jane I 496-503, stress added). Spanish transsexuals also made clear that transsexualism "is not about pleasure, it is to be yourself" (Gabriel 91). Silvia agrees: "the question is, I think, more a problem of gender rather than pleasure" (Silvia 144). 37

Homosexuality

Since in medical discourse the aetiology of the category 'transsexual' is by definition different from 'homosexual', the meaning stability of the term 'transsexual' depends on establishing and maintaining a distinction between transsexuals and homosexuals. For instance, Pamela marks a difference by conceiving MTF transsexuals as being 'in between' homosexual men and women: "one is a different thing, between the two things, right?" (Pamela 36). In Gabriel's opinion the trait that distinguishes homosexuals from transsexuals is the rejection of the body: "in our case (FTMs) people associates us with lesbians, this being totally incorrect because lesbians are persons that accept their own body but they fancy women. I like women but I don't like my body. That is, I like women but I don't like my body, so... these are two different aspects, aren't they?" (Gabriel 84-7). Moreover: "what

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36 See also Justin 112-120, and Elias 319-332, 713-4.
37 See also Elsa 262-3.
really happens, what happens to one is something else, is another name, right?" (Gabriel 132-3, stress added).

As I will show in the following paragraphs, it is not uncommon to cite attraction to the same sex as one of the characteristics confirming the person's 'transsexuality'. It seems that, although in their 'original' sex transsexuals generally claim to be attracted to members of the same sex, they report feeling this attraction from the position of a member of the 'other' sex. For instance: "oneself is confused that, is that you don't know how... And it is a decision (to identify oneself as transsexual) that one takes because one realises that one is not, one is not homosexual, right? You can't behave like them because you feel like a woman. One is besides a, a woman and / and one wants to be like her" (Pamela 28-31). The following quote is also a good example of identifying 'transsexual' as a category that does not coincide with 'homosexual' in spite of same-sex attraction. Brenda, a MTF, talking about how she feels in her male body declares: "I don't enjoy the sort of penetrative side of it, I don't enjoy / [sigh] what male bodies do, when I'm inside a male body. I'm / I'm attracted to men, but I am not, I don't want homosexual relationships. I'm not interested in that at all, I've got no interest in that whatsoever. Mm // I don't know if I would be attracted to women as well!" (Brenda 471-4). Hence, although Brenda's desire is directed at males, she claims she cannot fulfil her desire from a male body, thus she does not identify with the homosexual male category but with the female one.

Spanish transsexuals are more ready to acknowledge homosexual desire and activities in their 'original' sex and seem less concerned with performing the 'right' citation. For instance Elsa, a Spanish MTF, reports "when I was adolescent I already had preferences, since I already fancied more men than women and I // well, I had sexual relations with men. As a guy I had sexual relations with men. Few, few, very few, and moreover they were not sexual relations as I later had as woman, do you understand? There were NO orgasms" (Elsa 720-4). Hence, Spanish transsexuals (Gabriel, Elsa, Elias, and Silvia) tend to acknowledge homosexual attraction before transexualisation although they tend to qualify it either by arguing that they did not achieve orgasm (Elsa), or by arguing that their desire is not 'homosexual' in so far as they identify themselves with the 'other' sex (Elias, Elsa, Gabriel). By virtue of this identification they turn an attraction regularly classified as 'homosexual' into an 'heterosexual' one. In contrast, British transsexuals are more reticent to admit sexual desire for individuals of their same biological sex. When they admit it they strongly emphasise that their identification is with the 'other' sex, thus using the same rhetorical strategy as their Spanish counterparts but more cautiously.

What is then the role of homosexual desire in transsexuals' desire to change their bodies? In general, transsexuals from both the UK and Spain cite attraction to the 'same' sex as a symptom of transsexualism. Transsexuals transform a desire that could be classified as 'homosexual' from the position of their 'original' sex into 'heterosexual' desire by transforming themselves into the 'other' sex. Since interviewees identify their 'homo' desire as a characteristic of the 'other' sex, they assume heterosexual desire as norm when they self-diagnose as 'transsexual'. Indeed, in the early history of
sex-change operations it was demanded that transsexuals be heterosexual in their 'new' sex, as for instance in Agnes' case.\textsuperscript{38} As a consequence, transsexuals in general needed to distance themselves from homosexuality in order to fulfil psychiatrists' requisites for being diagnosed as gender dysphoric. This condition still has a particular significance in the UK where the diagnosis is a pre-requisite to qualify for the NHS-funded sex-change operation. Albeit in recent years the requisite of heterosexuality in post-operative identity is not as strongly enforced, transsexuals still tend to emphasise heterosexuality in their self-narratives.

\textbf{Conclusion}

The empirical research establishes that transsexuals cite the defining characteristics of transsexualism and reflexively tailor their self-accounts and self-perception in accordance with normative medical standards, since the validity of their self-ascriptions and their auto-diagnosis depends on doctors' endorsement. As previously reported, interviewees often kept an 'Obligatory Transsexual File' with information about gender dysphoria. These documents help transsexuals acquaint themselves with the officially sanctioned aetiology in order to "present themselves in whatever manner they believe will further their chances for success. Transsexuals live within their own subculture... and share information about which strategies are most successful when dealing with medical and psychological diagnosticians, the gatekeepers to medical aid" (Risman 1982: 320).\textsuperscript{39}

Transsexuals' efforts to faithfully cite medical standards reveal circularity in their self-ascriptions as deserving patients to the extent that their self-narratives are based on previous acquaintance with medical standards governing the diagnosis of transsexualism. An example of medical discourse and practices performing the Matrix's reality and transsexualism itself is offered by transsexuals themselves who realise that the existence of sex-change surgery as a 'solution' elicits the impulse for the operation. Hence, transsexualism is a performative category shaping bodies and identities.

\subsection*{6.2.1.2 Citation Of Folk Sexology}

In this section I present the Matrix's gender myths as cited in transsexuals' narratives. I explore interviewees' understandings of femininity and masculinity by examining what they ascribe or repudiate in their first person accounts about their self-identity or 'I' talk as putative men and women. I have divided interviewees' accounts into various subheadings concerning different topics that surfaced as significant in their narratives: appearance, personality, social role, sexuality.


\textsuperscript{39} This is a well known effect since as early as 1973 as the following quote reveals: "most patients who request sex reassignment are in complete command of the literature and know the answers before the questions are asked" (Stoller quoted in Billings and Urban 1982: 273). The importance of peer information is such that "mental health and medical professionals were devalued as sources of information" (Rachlin: 10).
Appearance

General appearance and physical beauty feature importantly when discussing femininity. The shared commonplace is that "a woman will always try to, oh, well, generally, try to look her best" (Carol 598-6) because "a woman wants to look nice and attractive probably to increase her own self-esteem, she'll want to put on the best possible face that she possibly can" (Carol 603-5). Indeed, it seems an essential trait of femininity to display "a feeling that is feminine, pretty and desirable" (Karen quoted in Bolin 1994: 464). In order to express such a "feminine feeling", MTF transsexuals display a widespread concern with appearance that is cited as a typically female concern: "like anybody, any woman, there's bits I want to change DRASTICALLY" (Gwen 400).

In order to learn how to appear as "real" women and avoid doing something "out of character" (Ronnie 300), transsexual people often attend courses on dressing, make-up, walking, gestures and general demeanour, speech, and so on. This training involves performances such as "doing more with my hands [...] practice speech therapy [...] I'm trying to practice the voice and putting different intonations into it (...) walk in with a big smile", which are presented as moves to regain the subject's "natural" style: "I am going to have to get used to do it again" (Jane 1 367-74, stress added). The MTF training also involves cosmetic procedures which transsexuals take up willingly - "I ENJOY make-up" (Gwen 482) - and sometimes almost religiously: "the ritual - I call it the ritual, right? - the ritual of making up and so, doesn't bother me. It doesn't bother me to wear a series of accessories such as stockings, or bra [...] I am totally used to it. And so with make up" (Maria 661-4). Hence, cosmetic procedures perform "a liberation" (Elsa 887-8) in spite of certain disadvantages: "the make-up, OK, it's a drag, not a drag, it's time consuming: instead of just throwing on clothes and going off to work you got to take time to prepare yourself. It's all part of it! And that's what it takes, yeah! I enjoy it" (Jane 1 722-5). These quotes disclose transsexuals' recognition of the importance of reiterating social norms as in a "ritual" and their awareness of the norms' self-referentiality. However, their attitude is ambivalent for they repudiate this self-referentiality ("it's a drag") though they choose to conform to gender prescriptions for "it's all part of it! And that's what it takes".

However, a good performance not only involves technical proficiency in cosmetic procedures and general demeanour, it also involves discerning what are the "right" gender myths to cite: "I know some transsexuals who have a very kind of glamorous idea of what they would hope to look like. To me that's totally unrealistic because, apart from the fact that I'm forty one now, by the time we get to

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40 Bornstein cites some of the processes of becoming a female: learning to speak, act and appear as woman; adding questions at the end of sentences, talking in a sing-a-song tone (Bornstein 1993: 112).

41 See also Elsa 890-2 and Gwen 482-5. Cosmetic procedures not only provide satisfaction deriving from the coherence of image and identity, they also open new venues for developing additional relations outside the transsexual circle: "you wouldn't believe the confidences and friendship one can have with a hairdresser and the things one can tell to a, to a beautician who is doing one's nails" (Elsa 909-11). Jane (713-5, 781-2) also reports new friendships with beauticians and shop assistants.
the end of the waiting list I could be, you know, late forties. The best I could look would be [laugh] a woman of fifty, you know, never, I will never look like a woman of twenty, I will never, I will never have the chance to have been a slim teenager with a nice slim body and no, no wrinkles or varicose veins or whatever! Mm, I would be a middle aged woman with the body of a middle aged woman" (Brenda 533-9).

Since clothing is such a visually effective way of marking sex, choosing the 'appropriate look' is also important: "I ought to think of the situation that I'm going to be in and wear something that it's not going to actually look out of place" in order not to be "different from the general norm" (Carol 625-30). UK transsexuals are very concerned with marking differences with cross-dressers who "are wandering around in stockings, suspenders, high heels and mini-skirts" (Jane 1 426-7). Thus, certain citations should be avoided: "I'm not dressing as a forty year old tart, standing on a street corner. I just want to be accepted and mix and blend with them (normal women)" (Jane 1 430-2). Indeed, UK transsexuals often mock or reject UK transvestites for doing the 'wrong' citation of 'woman': "the 'cocktail dress trannies'. You know, sitting here in (---) with their cocktail dresses on at three o'clock in a Saturday afternoon" (Carol 727-8).

MTFs' talk not only reveals a concern with self-appearance as expression of a feminine identity, it also shows how the sex-change brings in a change of habits: "I look in the mirror a lot more than I used to" (Jane 1 640); "I'm careful in what I eat, I am a lot cleaner personally. I am not saying that I was dirty, particularly dirty before, but I am now everyday I have a shower. Normally a bloke sort of has a shower every two or three days and a bath once a week. I feel I want to be cleaner all the time" (Jane 1 628-32).

Hence, it seems that the Matrix definition of femininity involves expressing oneself through appearance and attractiveness: "I now know who I am and what I need to do to make myself the person as I am. I can now, because I have walked all that, all kinds of other feelings that I've got can be expressed and now I have a clearer idea of, of [sigh] the kind of person I, I am, the kind of dress sense I have, or what are my favourite colours, you know, what are my favourite styles of clothing, the kind of people that I am physically attracted to" (Brenda 177-182, stress added). This condition of femininity stands in contrast with masculinity: "men can't express themselves, females can" (Jane 1 612). Feminity is opposed to masculinity which allegedly involves more restraint at sartorial and

42 Also Daniela and Brenda, personal communication.
43 Jane thinks as a fat woman she "would look absolutely ridiculous" (Jane 1 66).
44 More evidence on femininity involving better personal hygiene, good diet and general care is given by Jane (636-640). Brenda also declares that before starting the process of transexualisation: "I'd no respect for my body. I didn't feel that my body could do things that I wanted it to do" (Brenda 349); "I really have kind of pushed my body to the side and sort of NOT really wanted to know what was happening with it, what my body wanted, what it was saying to me, ah // and so, yes, ignoring it" (Brenda 503-5).
45 Brenda concurs with this view: "women seem to be able to express their own diversity much better than men can" (Brenda 591), and feels femininity is "more expressive" (Brenda 268).
impersonation levels: "if a woman wants to show her masculine side of things it's easier for her to do it. She can put on a pair of jeans, a tee-shirt, have her hair cut short, wander down the street, go to the pub, buy a pint and people don't look at her. They might think: 'ah!, a bit of a tomboy but so what' [...] if you come home from work at night time and all you want to do is throw on a pair a trousers and walk around and you don't have to put on your very feminine side! You can just be. / A bloke can't do that!" (Jane 1 600-9, stress added).

Femininity is perceived as offering the possibility to evade the constricting demands of masculinity, since it entails permission to express one's feelings and one's sensuality: "to like silks" (Jane 1 536), and to be narcissistic. Jane establishes a comparison using me as model: "and you (Patrícia) don't have to put on your very feminine side! You can just be / A bloke can't do that! A male can't. In society if he is seen to be effeminate at all, then there is something far, far wrong! A bloke has got to fit into that, a male slot which is twenty four hours a day, jacket and tie or jeans or what have you. If you go out wearing a pink jersey or a silk shirt: 'it's a poof!'. Men can't express themselves, females can" (Jane 1 609-13, stress added). Moreover, "a teenager can live as a tomboy, if she wants to without being trapped or forced into the stereotype role" (Jane 1 813).46 Because of the higher tolerance for self-expression in females, transsexuality entails becoming "a happier person as a result by being able to express that female side rather than keeping it trapped inside them" (Carol 721-2, stress added).

Hence, the category woman is cited as involving license to be narcissistic and to indulge in activities for the enjoyment of one's sex identity.47 A wide range of practices, such as making-up, depilation, hair-dressing, nail polishing, beauty treatments, physical activities such as aerobics, dance or sport, dressing, cosmetic surgery, and so on, are cited as evidence of the wider range for self-expression allowed to women in society. These procedures are not only perceived as "entertaining, even fun sometimes"; moreover, they are "something that women already have and men don't" (Elsa 907-12). Therefore, the female side or feminine role not only entails being more expressive with regards to feelings, but also, and very importantly, approval for narcissism and body care, and

46 Jane develops a theory about the lower incidence of FTM than MTF based on this particular question: "I think if I, if society would allow males to express the female side of them now, I think there would be less need for gender reassignment. If people could [...] dress as they wish without people ridiculing them, which a woman can do very easily. I'm sure this is why there is a lot fewer female to male transsexuals than vice versa, because the genetic female can live in the male role to a large extent without being classed as weird or whatever. You have got it so easy!" (Jane 1 618-24, stress added).

47 In "Narcissism is not a dirty word... " (Schützer 1996), MTF psychotherapist Napewasin Schützer rejects the label 'narcissistic' to disqualify transsexuals. Instead she proposes to consider the traditional definition of narcissism as an "erotic feeling aroused by one's own body and personality" (Schützer 1996: 80) as a positive quality, given the importance of viewing oneself as the centre of events as a "survival skill" (ibid.: 80). According to Schützer, attitude is paramount in life, thus, she finished her presentation in the 1996 Gendy's conference with the words: "whatever you do, do it with style!" (ibid.,) much to the satisfaction of the audience. Obviously, Schützer herself is mobilising more than one sense of the term narcissism.
entitlement to the wish to be desired. It seems, then, that one of the reasons for MTF change is to achieve the necessary social sanctioning to enjoy one's sexual identity and express it in aesthetic terms.

**Personality**

Sensitivity is cited as a typically feminine trait that permeates "everything!" and performs the "way you approach life, the way you go through life" (Gwen 141-2). The female mind is described as "more / prompt to emotion, sensitivity into a lot of things, mm // not really technically minded but I shouldn't be saying that because I'm a [laughter] an electronics engineer [laughter] [...] by sensitivity I mean in, mm, the likes of tenderness, etc. Like young children, you know, you see a baby and it's the maternal instinct that comes out" (Gwen 132-8). FTM Mike describes females as: "caring, listening, more understanding, sensitive, less aggressive, more emotional, better at communicating, I think" (personal conversation). Indeed, women seem to be better at "sitting around, just talking about things" (Carol 210), whereas "guys don't open up to one another as women do, so (....) to say the least" (Ronnie 105). A likeness for communication informs the subject's change. For instance Jane declares: "I felt more comfortable sitting talking to the women, than sitting with the blokes who were talking about football and swearing, who they were sleeping with last night, ugh! I hate it! Sit with the women, get all the gossip, the bitchiness, you know? [laughs] I felt comfortable" (Jane 1 387-90). The transexualisation process brings the desired changes and thus Brenda declares that becoming a female has made her "more expressive, I'm more // friendly and maybe more emotional" (Brenda 268).

Other typically feminine traits are being "gentle and compassionate" (Carol 151); being soft, not a "rough and tumble" boy (Carol 55), and "never (being) one of the lads standing in the bar with a pint of beer" (Carol 62). To Schützer, women achieve purity of mind easier than men because men suffer from "Acute Testosterone Poisoning" (presentation in Gendys' 96). Indeed women are not supposed to be angry for "girls must be more elegant" (Pamela 212) - the assumption being that anger is not elegant. Therefore, it seems that "being female is a, is a gentler way of life" (Carol 138) which rules out self-assertiveness. Thus, Gwen cites as evidence of femininity: "I've never been assertive! Never!" (Gwen 578).

In contrast, men are assertive and self-confident. These qualities are cited by FTMs in relation to their perceived shortcomings as males: "I need [...] to build a lot of self confidence"

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48 Ekins refers to these phenomena when he mentions the fascination transsexual cases arouse among in the British general public: "the titillation comes from the fact that it is someone of the male sex who is so preoccupied with such things, for himself" (Ekins 1997: 16, stress of the author).

49 A book widely read and often mentioned by UK transsexuals is *Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus* (Gray 1992). This book is described by a transsexual writer as "a most useful philosophy model from an American psychiatrist who has analysed the differences between the sexes and recommends ways of improving gender relationships in all areas. His philosophy is to treat the genders as from two separate planets each with their own culture and beliefs" (Isherwood 1996: 65). This bestseller is a compilation of folk sexological knowledge that constantly opposes gender characteristics, for instance: Martians (men) want constant praise, Venuses (women) want to be caring. It works as a sort of gender etiquette guide.
(Ronnie 164). Similarly, Justin felt: "I'm sure I haven't been very helpful, I'm very, very hesitant" (Justin 629), which seems to indicate his fear of not having performed well as a man. Elias displays a similar feeling when he refers to his perceived need to enhance his assertiveness by being "radical towards people [...] to put myself in my place, right?" (Elias 11). For FTMs, the process of transexualisation performs the desired effect as a confidence booster: "I feel more self-assured," (Gabriel 101-2); or "I can take on the world, right? Before the world was beating me, but now I am beating it, right? That is: security!" (Elias 616-7). Elias also reports that after the operation he is "more self-assured and able to argue and // stand for my rights in any topic, right?" (Elias 631). Stafford describes how he passes as a man by being assertive and taking physical space around him by stretching his limbs (Drori et al 1996).

Both FTM and MTF cite negative qualities of the sex in which they were born. For instance, FTM transsexuals cited the following feminine traits with negative or ambivalent evaluations: "women are more Machiavellian and males are more, more naive" (Elias 365-6); "men know what woman talk about, they go round in circles [...] women are so open with their conversation that's easier to, to know what you can talk about: kids, clothes, guys, make-up and work" (Ronnie 100-3). Justin cites penis envy as a well established trait of femininity: "it may have been just envy of boys [...] [laugh] when I saw little boys I used to think: well I want one [laugh], as so many girls do, of course, well, I want one of those! [laugh] [...] all little girls think that, or a lot of little girls, don't they?" (Justin 44-6). In their turn MTF cite negative aspects of masculinity they wish to leave behind, such as pressure to be "macho, muscular, sporty and pint drinking, supposedly, supposedly having hundreds of woman in his life and rough and tough, not showing any emotions, and bottling things up" (Jane 1 917-9); or avoiding homosexuality: "if you hug somebody it has to be hugged in a sort of rough manner and you have to punch them afterwards to show that you are not homosexual" (Brenda 399-400). Other

50 See also 630-39.

51 I noticed that FTMs both in Spain and in the UK seem to adopt a stance of being "in command of the situation" in the context of the interview. This is observable in their language, for instance in the repeated use of sentences such as "of course"; and also in their attempt to give long explanations of what they "know" to the point that they perceive they are getting lost in their own words (particularly Elias, Justin, Ronnie). Spanish FTM Elias repeatedly showed disdain for my assumed knowledge in the form of interruptions of my speech and generally dismissive attitude. This disdain might be related to my gender and his perceived need to show superiority of knowledge.

52 Mike also reports feeling more at ease and more self-assured after hormonal treatment, and notes that the ingestion of testosterone makes him "more angry, more quickly" (personal conversation).

53 Lothstein (1983) notes that FTM transsexuals present a stereotypical portrayal of a masculine role reflected in their expectations of the Sex Reassignment Surgery (SRS) from which they expect to "become more assertive, aggressive, and 'male'" (Lothstein 1983: 247). Indeed Lothstein remarks that "the wish for SRS may be viewed as a desire for 'aggression assignment surgery'" (ibid.: 247). Gwen's observations support Lothstein: "I would think because they (FTMs) are always going to be small in society and the expected appearance of a man [...] is probably higher, so this person is six feet, six inches shorter than the expected height and it's not very much that can be done about it. And I don't know, some of them might make up by being aggressive" (Gwen 521-6).

54 Other prescriptions cited for men are: "to be arrogant, to be the ones that take the initiatives", "men must drink wine, men must talk loud, men must bang the table" (Elsa 488-9). See also Elias 733 and Ronnie 287, 292.
activities cited as typical masculine performances are: “making sexist comments and jokes” (Jane 1 255, and Pamela 171, Brenda 598), playing football (Jane 1 52, Brenda 558-60, Elsa 478 and Gwen), feeling one's body as “a machine of quality” over which one has “unfluctuating control” (Morris 1974: 78, 80, and Brenda 350-3), “social drinking” (Brenda 598, and Elsa 806-7).

Interviewees even report over-performance of gender to "push the male side" (Jane 1 260): "I tried to live as a male and I have developed certain hyper, hypermasculine activities. I ride a motorcycle [...] I also am very much into DIY, I renovate and rent out flats and I also repair motorcycles. I do hypermasculine activities. In some ways I have perhaps concentrated on these and tried to give a public perception that I was male" (Carol 14-8). Given the pressure on men and the alleged greater latitude involved in the category women - "women seem to be able to express their own diversity much better than men can" (Brenda 591), "the male box is much more constricted [...] Whereas a woman has a much wider band" (Carol 640-5) - the decision to transexualise releases the subject from the obligation to fit to the point that the shift is not so much a desire for a new role but, rather, a desire to get rid of the old role: "I didn’t fit in as one of the lads and I had this urge to actually be DIFFERENT, be female" (Carol 84-5). However, this is also the case for FTMs. For instance, Mike declares that before the transsexualising process: "I can't say I knew I was male. I can only say I knew I wasn't female" (personal conversation). Similarly, Brenda thinks: "there is a sort of spectrum of acceptable behaviour for male and a spectrum of acceptable behaviour for female [...] I feel that my position on that scale is / beyond that which is acceptable within the male hem / expression. Mm / I don't like being male [uneasy laugh]. Mm" (Brenda 421-4, stress added). Indeed, it seems that MTF transsexuals are wishing to leave behind the restrictions of the male role and be able to "to express the female side" (Jane 1 618).55

MTF transsexuals often complain of the lack of latitude offered to males to "express themselves" and feel that in their transsexualized sex they can shed the restrictive mask of masculinity and show sides of their personalities they were forced to keep hidden: "I feel gentle myself. I feel like, because I haven’t to put on this forced male that I’ve been putting on for forty years. Well, not forty years, but / I just wish I hadn’t lost so much of my natural femininity which I obviously have lost. I forced myself to be the male" (Jane 1 926-9). To Carol: "being female is a, is a gentler way of life and I’ve always been a gent-, gentle person. And males aren’t, generally speaking, supposed to be gentle. They are supposed to be sort of rocky-tumble-play-out boys" (Carol 138-40).

The problem seems to be that: "it’s difficult for a male to express any significant degree of femininity. Whereas a woman can have a / can, can project, if necessary, a more aggressive, almost masculine type personality. But just be looked on as being, having a more masculine personality.

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55 Incidentally Nanda makes this very same point in relation to the hijras in India. According to Nanda, some hijras conceive their operation more as "a negative turning' from one's previous life than a whole-hearted commitment to a feminine gender identity" (Nanda 1990: 119). Nanda's observation seems to be also accurate with regards to the interviewed transsexuals.
Whereas if a male tries to overstep his mark inevitably they are just going to be marked! So, you've either have to keep that under wraps and not express, you know, some..., or change over completely, or be prepared to be looked upon as some sort of wimp, as, as I would say" (Carol 691-7, stress added). Once the attempts to fit into the sex assigned at birth are given up and the subject takes on the transsexualisation process, the pressures to conform with the standards of identity disappear, with the consequent liberating feeling: "I want to be treated differently. I don't want to be treated as a male. If I walk down the street, it hasn't happened, but if I walk down the street someday certainly when I'm wearing a pair of tight jeans and a turquoise jumper and somebody would turn round and call me a poof or what have you, it wouldn't bother me because I would feel I'm not being seen as Jack. OK, I am not being seen as Jane, but I'm not being seen as Jack. If they pick me up as somebody other than the male, the stereotype male, if they want to call me a poof, they can" (Jane 1 906-13, stress added, see also 940-3).

As a consequence, leaving behind the male category makes a big difference: "I feel I am a completely different person, completely relaxed, yeah" (Jane 1 213-4). Therefore, treatment increases self-esteem and makes transsexuals "more self-assured, knowing more what one wants, more, more at ease" (Gabriel 540-2). Moreover, the reiterative citation of the Matrix folk sexology improves performance and brings certainty in a circular manner: "one looks at oneself in the mirror and every time one is more oneself" (Gabriel 102). As a result, transexualisation changes self-perception: "I feel I am a completely different person" (Jane 1 213-4) in a manner that brings a sense of ease: "I am so relaxed for being Jane!" (Jane 1 715).

Gender Role

Transsexuals' citations are revealing of the Matrix's prescriptions for women to take "the female submissive role" (Elsa 59), and of the tasks attributed to them, such as "reproduction, education [...] cultural transmission" (Elsa 1035), "to be in the kitchen [...] to wash clothes" (Elsa 493-4). The role that features most importantly in transsexuals' citations is maternity, "the proof of a real woman" (Gwen 632), to the point that interest in dolls as childhood games is cited as a clear sign of femininity (Jane 1 77, Silvia 252). Maternity is often cited positively: "it seems NATURAL for a woman to have children and for me in particular it would be a total fulfilment of being a female" (Gwen 623-4). FTM Gabriel ratifies this platitude since he cites maternity as "the last step I will take to really find out what I am, right?" (Gabriel 174). At times maternity is cited in ambivalent terms: "there is a lot of talk about it as being a natural function and all that" (Silvia 216), or "it is still believed that women must be reproductive" (Elsa 53).

56 See also Jane 645 and Pamela 11.

57 See Elsa 306-7, 870, Maria 568, 638, 50-1, Silvia 221-3 and Pamela 137.
It seems that female aspirations to "getting married, having children, and living happily ever after", stand in contrast with being an independent individual as males allegedly are. MTF Maria confirms this view: "they are surprised that one is an educated woman, independent / with clear ideas, and that one doesn't need to depend on a guy" (Maria 367-8). Justin cites a typical male role in the 1920s, namely to be a doctor, in the context of discussing the "male aspirations" he could not fulfil as a woman (Justin 108): "I wanted, I mean, I wanted to be a doctor, of course, one, again, one always wants to be a doctor [laugh]" (Justin 477). Because of the restrictions on women to become graduates in Justin's youth, he describes his décalage in terms of social role: "it's, basically a female body in a male mind, oh, male, male / aspirations" (Justin 105-8).

Often interviewees' citation of gender role reveals sexist attitudes: "women are assumed to be incapable, they are harshly surveyed and reviewed" (Elsa 534); "I tend to be overridden. Typical male. I'm not supposed to have an opinion on anything [...] they treat you as if I don't have a clue about this and the other. Everything in general is very stereotypical" (Gwen 291-2, 299-300). Morris provides an interesting insight into the performative effect of this platitude: "the more I was treated as a woman, the more woman I became. I adapted willy-nilly. If I was assumed to be incompetent at reversing cars, or opening bottles, oddly incompetent I found myself becoming [...] men treated me more and more as a junior [...] and so, addressed every day of my life as an inferior, involuntarily, month by month I accepted the condition" (Morris 1974: 140).

**Sexuality**

With regards to the question of sexual orientation the interviewees tend to agree that "society wants heterosexual people. Society is not interested in having homosexual people" (Gabriel 208); Pamela agrees: "society has been made for, so they say: a man must be with a woman" (Pamela 358). FTM Justin cites as an example of his not fitting in as female the fact that he lacked a boyfriend in contrast to his typist colleagues who "all had boyfriends and, I mean, I DIDN'T [...] I was being myself, I wasn't forcing myself to, to dress up in fancy clothes and / be a so-called girl" (Justin 116-120, stress added). As mentioned in Section 6.1.4 Sex as Theoretical term, cite the prescription of heterosexuality, assume active penetration as the essential sexual activity for men: "what male bodies do" (Brenda), and vaginal penetration is cited as the essential female role in sex. Thus, the Matrix's law of compulsory heterosexuality surfaces with a clear emphasis in vaginal penetration.

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58 Interestingly, Justin reports that the first "treatment" proposed by his psychiatrist was to enrol him in a medicine degree (487-515).

59 An experience shared by Ronnie: "in the past, guys have tried to // [sigh] make me feel small in their presence" (Ronnie 701-2). Also Elsa 57-8, Maria 370.

60 Elias 585-6.

61 FTM declare themselves less interested in obtaining phalloplasty due to technical difficulties and economic reasons. This should not be necessarily taken as evidence of a lesser importance given to penetration. In order
Moreover, it seems that femininity is associated with passivity, which in turn is understood as being penetrated, though only vaginally. Femininity as submissive is cited though not prescribed by a Spanish MTF transsexual: "there are persons who / who feel themselves / they think that must be sexually more submissive" (Elsa 403-4). However, being submissive as a trait for the category woman befits Jane's citation: "I suppose I could be classed as a / slightly / mm / (....) masochistic. I like to be dominated and I would be a submissive partner, yeah. And dominated by a woman. Yes, [sigh]" (Jane 1 528-30). In contrast, masculinity is cited as dominant and active. Bisexual FTM Mike describes his position in sex as "the dominant role [...] me touching them rather than them touching me" (personal conversation).62

Interestingly, a significantly high number of MTFs define themselves as asexual.63 Gwen claims to have "a very low sex drive" (Gwen 394) and Carol is not very interested in sex either: "I've never / had a partner male or female [...] I was never exactly a particularly attractive male so therefore I was, I never had any success with female partners. I feel though much more relaxed as a woman" (Carol 22-3). It seems that whereas it is a requirement for males to be sexually active - "having to be acceptably male, you know, and chasing women all the time" (Carol 212).64 There is no equivalent pressure in the definition of women's identity: "I imagine that there are some (women) who are out there looking for sex but I feel, perhaps wrongly, that females generally are more passive. They might well enjoy the sexual act but they are not out there chasing it all the time" (Carol 468-70). In general "men have more sexual drives, more urgent wish for sex" (Silvia 520-1),65 and if they do not get it, they "go to somebody else" (Gabriel 473) or indulge in "the things that men do" (Pamela 426), namely masturbation.

With regards to the meaning given to sex, Gabriel also sees differences for: "men (approach sex) to relieve themselves [...] Women are more romantic, more... I think there are two... women idolise sex and men are more / well, bang, I relieve myself and that's that. It is different when there are feelings, though, because maybe things change then" (Gabriel 476-9). In Maria's view, female and male sexuality "have nothing to do with each other" (Maria 488); "masculine sexuality is 'pim, pam, bang, fire', right? moreover: if I saw you, I don't remember [...] female's sexuality does not arise in the genitals but in the heart, in the mind, or wherever, in imagination, in desire, in the foreplay, in, I don't know, in the whole process of elaboration, isn't it?" (Maria 490-6).66 Silvia identifies herself as female to prove this point further research into FTMs' sexual practices should be necessary. There is evidence of at least three FTM interviewees (Ronnie, Elias, Mike) using artificial penises to penetrate their sexual partners.

62 See also Ronnie 618-7.
63 In a follow-up audit for MTFs who had clitoroplasty, Royle and Muirhead report 27 % identifying themselves as asexual (Royle 1996: 20)
64 See also Ronnie 641-6, Gabriel 460, 462-69, Elias 592-4.
65 Also Gabriel 471-3, Silvia 160-1.
66 See also Jane 584-93.
Insofar as "one tends more to fall in love, for instance. One likes more romantic stuff, things like this, right?" (Silvia 156-8) and one tends to "idealise and to believe about the blue prince and all those tales that one sees" (Silvia 511).

In sum, the prescription for males is to "want to go out and have sexual intercourse [...] females generally are more passive. They might well enjoy the sexual act but they are not out there chasing it all the time. The perception of the majority of males, which is knocked into them was: 'we've got to go out there and have sex'. This is the thing" (Carol 467-72, stress added). However, the citation of the Matrix's laws involves repressing certain aspects of one's personality: "a lot of males have a feminine side but they don't want it to be seen [...] a loving, caring side but they don't want it to be seen in case they are classed as being effeminate or not / They've got to fit into the male stereotype" (Jane 1594-5, 602-3).

6.2.2. CATEGORIES THAT MATTER

Due to the specificity of transsexuals as informants, their citations refer to gender myths and medical platitudes. Hence, transsexuals not only cite folk gender platitudes but also several other conflicting discourses, thus bringing in different layers of citation that relate and interact sometimes in contradictory ways. In the following I will present instances of transsexuals mobilising different and contradictory values thus showing how citations reveal several senses of the terms. I will also comment on the circular interactions between the three discourses mobilised by interviewees: the medical and the folk sexological.

6.2.2.1. Mind Versus Body

Transsexuals' "conflict between body image and self-image" (Billings and Urban 1982: 270) is often conceived in terms of a conflict between the dichotomised notions of mind and body: "one of the things that it's classic with most transsexuals it's the mind is telling you that you are a woman but your body doesn't match with what your mind is. So, you've got this image of what your body should be like yet, when you look at the mirror, it's totally wrong" (Gwen 109-112). The sex-change operation is meant to correct this décalage and bring about the authentic self: "I JUST WANT TO BE MYSELF! And the only way I can be myself is to fix the body, to make it right. It's what I always wanted, hem, and now I am doing something about it, to make myself the RIGHT person" (Brenda 15-8).67 These quotes refer to a conflict between a false identity signalled by the 'body' and the inner true

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67 See also Brenda 233-4, 252-3.
identity residing in the 'mind'. This conception takes several expressions, as is evident in the following quotes: "the mind and the soul is at one and it is the body that is out of sense of what's happening inside me" (Ronnie 687-8); "the body that I have doesn't match the person that I know myself to be INSIDE" (Brenda 4-5). 'True' identity is viewed as residing "in your mind" (Gwen 34) and the mind is located in the head: "I've distanced from my own body and just lived in my head" (Brenda 340); "get sorted out up here [points to the head] if, if this is actually 'me'... if THIS IS TRULY ME" (Ronnie 212-216).

Although 'true' identity resides in the mind or head, there is a felt need for changing the body appearance to modify "the wrong physical shape" (Brenda 338) in order to reveal "the underlying Jane" (Jane 1 125), or "the real me" (Brenda 242) so as to "recognise myself" in the mirror (Elias 53-6). There seems to be a norm being cited prescribing that the body should express the mind or self: "if I had been born with the right body, then I would have been able to [cough] express my feelings through my body the way most people who are happy with their bodies do in some way or other" (Brenda 366). Brenda is particularly forceful in arguing that the body is the necessary 'expression' of the authentic identity: "the only way that I can, that I can actually be myself, myself as I feel inside myself is for me to change the physical body to match what I feel inside myself" (Brenda 341-4). The 'true' identity is identified with certain sort of body parts: "I can't be myself unless I can have the body that belongs to it. Mm, I CAN'T be the person I am with the body that I have at the moment" (Brenda 413-5). In sum, transsexuals' decision to operate in order to achieve the prescribed coherence between gender and body is articulated in dualist terms: "if you can't adapt your mind to your body, you must adapt your body to the mind" (Gabriel 3-5). Thus, the empirical research shows how transsexuals conceive and experience their predicament in terms of the mind/body dualism.

6.2.2.2. Subject versus Object

The above metaphors reveals how the mind/body dualism is layered with associated hierarchical meanings, namely the 'inward' and the 'outward', which correspond to the 'true' identity as opposed to 'surface' identity. The use of terms such as 'inner', 'me', 'mind', 'head', 'inside', 'soul' constitute the interiority of psychic space.

Transsexuals cite a notion of the body as susceptible to being modelled, as opposed to the mind which cannot be altered: "the surgery is not going to alter anything in my mind! [...] It can't alter...

68 These findings correspond to Lothstein's reports on "the metaphor of a true versus false self in describing the core clinical features of their transsexualism" (Lothstein 1983: 241). The true self is seen as "residing inside" (Lothstein 1983: 241).

69 Sometimes the 'inner true identity' is encapsulated by the notion of 'soul': "I do believe it's got to do with my soul, hem, because the soul it's me! [sigh]" (Ronnie 265). See also Brenda 268-73.

70 See also Brenda 341-4.
that!" (Jane 2 581-4); or "I don't think one can change one's brain" (Elsa 995).\footnote{At times transsexuals' statements reveal a certain degree of playfulness: "I don't know whether that is just more of me coming out or it could be the estrogens [laugh] as well" (Brenda 268-73). This attitude discloses Brenda's awareness of the artificiality of her mental states.} It seems that the assumption underlying the alleged primacy of mind over body has as a consequence the conception of bodies in their physicality as receptive matter that can be modelled. The will to change sex is conceived as springing from the reasoning mind which takes priority in so far as it is conceived as the location of the true essence of the person's identity. Hence, the analysis of transsexuals' discourse reveals folk understandings of matter as mutable and receptive in contrast to mind as immutable. Whereas the body is conceived as undiscerning, fluid and changeable, the mind is intelligent, true, transparent and fixed. The body is thus irrational, inane, and void in contrast to the mind which is the location of rationality, identity, hence intelligibility.

Moreover, transsexuals prioritise the mind as the driving force in which their essential identity resides: "the body is the vehicle one has, it is what there is. It is important because it is important, but overall one's personality is more important" (Silvia 621-622). When asked about the extent to which she identifies with her body, Elsa, a Spanish male-to-female, declares: "yes, but rather more with my mind, you know? More than with my body. The mind dominates more than the body" (Elsa 768-9). Thus, it seems that the body is in a lower rank of importance than the mind: "the body is just a kind of flesh that carries yourself around" (Brenda 341); "the body is not really that important" (Gwen 403-6). At times the language transsexuals employ to refer to body parts shocks because of its connotations of consumerism. For instance, Matt, an American FTM, states “if I spend $400,000 I want to have the nicest dick on earth” (Drori et al 1996).

The pre-eminence of the mind over body clearly underlies the wish for technological intervention as necessary in order "to become complete" (Maria 50) and make "our image / get closer to our mind" (Elias 130-1). The mind/body dualism that accompanies the sex/gender distinction makes it possible to treat the body as an object, that is, as passive matter that can be moulded by technology acting on behalf of a 'true' essence of identity residing in the mind. Hence, the mind/body division legitimates treating the body as an artefact, thus avoiding the objections that would arise if mind/body were to be considered as a mere terminological distinction of a whole whose integrity must be respected.

The dichotomised dualism mind/matter present in transsexuals' discourse relates to the Aristotelian and Platonic categories mentioned by Butler as follows: matter as pure potentiality that can be modelled; and mind as the actualising principle, conceived as the superior dynamic principle of self-hood and identity. The mind is dynamic in so far as it is animated by a motive that can settle the body's fluidity. The body is conceived as material and passive in contrast with the mind conceived as active and immaterial. The mind symbolises the human and the cultural opposed to the body which represents the non-human, the natural. Mind, as residence of gendered subjectivity, is superior to body
and determines its shape. Therefore, the genealogy of the mind/body dualism that articulates both transsexuals' self-narration and the medical discourse on transsexualism relates to the Aristotelian/Platonic categories of potentiality and act that Butler aims to challenge. Hence, transsexuals' narratives reiterate a notion of 'matter' encoded with sexual difference, since matter is theoretically conceived as a 'passive' receptacle defined by principles arising in the mind.

6.2.2.3 Natural Versus Artificial

As I have shown above, transsexuals' discourse is often formulated in terms of a search for their 'authentic' self lying beyond a body that is perceived as 'wrong'. The search for the 'real self' is effected through the unwanted layers of social conditioning that had performed the subject into the 'wrong' sex and caused them to lose "so much of my natural femininity" (Jane 933). Thus, Jane explains: "a lot of my mannerisms which I have now are things that I have done with to try and be a male. I have grown up knowing that I feel as if I am in the wrong body but I have to put the male face on. And, so / and / I feel a lot more comfortable sitting like this [Jane is sitting with her legs very tightly crossed] and using my hands when talking and what have you... but it is something that I sort of trained myself not to do because I didn't want to classed as being effeminate. And now, of course, I have now got to retrain myself to go back to the way I feel naturally" (Jane 96-103). Also, "I had to consciously become male or, not become male but, I had to consciously adopt the male mannerisms although they don't come naturally to me, or they didn't!" (Jane 246-7). Sometimes this social performing is articulated in terms of a performance, such as in the case of this MTF Spanish transsexuals who had just come out:

PAM Because one must be controlling how one is acting in front of people.
PS Acting? What you mean?
PAM Acting because I, in my case, it was like, like acting. It is now (after coming out) that I don't act. Before I was always doing / performing /// an identity that didn't, that is, that wasn't mine. That is, a type of life that didn't, into which I didn't belong. I had to be pretending all day. (Pamela 157-62)

It is manifest in the above passages that Jane and Pamela are juxtaposing their spontaneous/natural gender with the artificial performance that was collectively demanded from them. It is also evident that Jane equates the natural with the legitimate. Indeed, I have found that in the interviewees' discourse, the surgical modification of body parts seems to involve altering that which is perceived as a 'natural' given, namely the body and desire, in sum: sex. Thus, a sex-change operation apparently infringes a symbolic order between the legitimate - associated with nature and the artificial - understood as a product of technological intervention. In this usage, the meaning of 'natural' is related to that which is as not-faked, original, essential, fundamental and, most importantly, inborn. The 'natural' is also associated with spontaneity and authenticity: "my change of roles enabled me to behave
in a way which came naturally and no longer did I feel as if I were acting a role... Psychologically, I did not 'become a man'. I became myself" (Rees 1996: 35).

Paradoxically, on the one hand transsexuals refer to their 'natural' identity as that which legitimates their sex-change, whereas on the other, they argue it is precisely 'nature' that has made a mistake in giving them the 'wrong' organs. Pamela clearly qualifies her body as "a mistake of nature" (Pamela 65). Sometimes transsexuals liken their own sense of alienation from their bodies to women's 'natural' alienation. For instance, "in our case we provoke the rite of passage from, from female child to adolescent to woman. In the case of women they already have it, it is naturally given to them, but many times it is / it is often also alien to them. Women also feel their body as alien" (Elsa 347). Thus, sometimes, transsexuals' usage of the 'natural' derives from their intending to present their self-inflicted bodily transformations as a mere reaction to a shared 'natural' experience, namely a sense of alienation from the body.

Interviewees' usage of 'natural' to describe their supposedly unproblematic and non-contradictory 'original' and authentic self supports the legitimacy of their claim to a sex-change by making their feelings akin to 'nature'. For instance, Silvia explains that her "femininity developed in a very natural way" in her childhood, before she realised she was not a female biologically (Silvia 17-8). I believe the apparent contradiction in transsexuals' discourse between the description of their gender feelings as 'natural' while also appealing to 'nature' as wrong, can be attributed to the need to argue for the legitimacy of the sex-change treatment in terms of the collective understandings of the society that governs this decision. Since transsexuals' demands are judged at the level of the collective, their arguments reflect a commonly perceived conflict between the artificial and the natural. Judging by the direction of transsexuals' discourse it seems that the preferred arguments for legitimacy veer towards considering the 'natural' as being more legitimate than the 'artificial'.

Thus, transsexuals work round the immutability of the body perceived as a natural kind by resorting to the notion of 'nature' itself as the origin of the genuine self that has been 'hiding' under unwanted layers of social performance: "to me it almost seemed more natural to actually just be female!" (Carol: 22-6). In this line of argument, the construction of body parts is legitimated as observing faithfulness to one's 'natural' identity. Thus the operation is regarded merely as "a sensible way of tidying up nature's little mistakes" (Aitkenhead 1998). The 'authentic' self is thus recovered by constructing the body parts normatively associated with the norms governing the self. The idea of authenticity as an acceptable goal and justification for sex-change surfaces in transsexuals' perceptions of body parts as 'false' - the antonym of 'authentic'. For instance: "I could feel Jane. I mean, I'm / I'm / I've got my own hair, I've got my own boobs, I don't feel false. The only thing I am going to feel false about is my own genitals. If I can get rid of them, then I can feel one hundred per cent Jane" (Jane 1 198-201); or: "I mean, this is me. There is no padding, it's not a padded bra / this is naturally me" (Jane 1 31). Since the point of departure for transsexuals' arguments is the collective understanding of the body as a natural given, it is not surprising that transsexuals aim to liken their 'inner self' to a
'natural self'. This is specially necessary given that transsexuals' surgical, stylistic and hormonal interventions demonstrate that the body is susceptible to change and thereby apparently contradict the folk platitude that the body is immutable. Hence, in order to legitimise their change, transsexuals mobilise categories from both folk and medical discourse.

The tension between the artificial and the natural as legitimate also underlies transsexuals' general reluctance to acknowledge undergoing training concerning clothing, body demeanour and appearance. In fact, transsexuals invest a considerable amount of time and money in achieving the appearance 'proper' to their 'new' sex. Although they generally admit undergoing cosmetic procedures, such as the removal of body and facial hair through electrolysis, they are reluctant to admit any other practice, ranging from informal training from friends or beauty professionals to attending special finishing schools for transsexuals. These special schools are much in the same line as finishing or modelling schools for women where one can learn how to dress, make up, to modify their body language, demeanour, voice, hair, and so on. An example of such school is La-zarus Training, a London company directed by MTF Stephenie Robinson that runs "workshops... on deportment and feminine trait acquisition" (Robinson 1996) for several transsexuals' support groups. The company presents itself as the necessary complement to post-operative life not provided by the medical profession and claims to have the full-backing of the Gender Trust and Dr. Russell Reid, a famous private psychiatrist in London specialised in transsexuality.

The reluctance to acknowledge training is instanced by Gwen who initially resents questions on whether she prepared in any way for the real life test and responds negatively with an expression of stupefaction (317-25), though she later acknowledges having undergone speech therapy (710) and receiving the help of "girls I know in Edinburgh (who) are qualified beauticians, so I used to get free lessons" (487-8). Elias also resents admitting any need to learn how to act and repudiates psychologists' attempts to teach transsexuals how to act in their chosen gender. In spite of his reluctance, later in the interview Elias explains how he likes to "look at oneself in the mirror and try doing things and enjoy oneself" (Elias 811-2). So, there is general reluctance to admit training, which is mentioned at another stage of the interview or is avowed as something not quite necessary. For instance, Ronnie acknowledges assistance from a voice therapist although "because of how I spoke I didn't have to do any work on the speech" (Ronnie 288-9). The only exception was Spanish MTF Maria who had no problem telling that drama classes taught her "survival and style" (private conversation), and that she learnt how to walk and dance like a woman by practising ballroom dancing.

Transsexuals' reluctance to admit that they have trained themselves to look the part of their trans-gender is because this would contradict their claims to return to their legitimate, 'natural', 'true' sex. This resistance obeys transsexuals' thinking that if they claim to be the gender into which they want to be transformed, then they should be 'naturally' acquainted with the behaviours, attitudes,

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72 Formerly known as La-zarus Beauty Studios.
physical bearings, and so on, collectively associated with that sex. For this reason, interviewees work round conflicting standards by mobilising different categories depending on the social context. As shown above, this is particularly apparent concerning the meaning of 'nature': on the one hand following medical discourse transsexuals qualify their bodies as "a mistake of nature", but on the other they paradoxically argue in support of the legitimacy of their wish for surgery by describing and associating their alleged 'true' sex and desire with that which is 'natural'. Thus, medical platitudes are mobilised differentially as legitimising strategies. This might be because transsexuals are more aware of the necessity to adjust their claims for the legitimacy of change to fit with current folk knowledge, given their more direct interaction with lay people demanding justification for their change. Obviously, it is not apparent to the interviewees that the genderised body they assume subjects are naturally acquainted with, might be not that 'natural'. Indeed, from the perspective of my reconstruction sex is a collectively defined theoretical term and the body is an artificial kind - but is lived and experienced as a natural kind.

6.2.2.4 Cosmetic Versus Medical Surgery

Elsa rejects the expression 'trapped in a male body', for she interprets it as implying transsexuals' social isolation - a possibility she fights against. Hence, she protests "I've NEVER shut myself in a bubble" (Elsa 877). Thus, Elsa declares: "one must follow the transsexualising process otherwise one does not feel well with oneself. I think that to be trapped is not to do it" (Elsa 300-1). Similarly Silvia declares: "when one see oneself as female and one achieves a social role, an appearance and everything, then there aren't, there aren't reasons to consider that it is the wrong body, not at all" (Silvia 70-2). The emphasis is consequently placed on the malleability of the body: "I don't see it as something strange, I simply see it as something that I must modify" (Gabriel 102-3).

In arguing for the legitimisation and normalisation of sex-change operations a number of Spanish transsexuals establish a continuum between medical and cosmetic surgery. For instance, Maria compares technological intervention for sex-change to surgery for "illness, defect, or getting false teeth" (Maria 554). Maria also makes parallels between "gymnastics or body building when what one is really doing is to exploit certain potentialities of one's body. Or when you do sport, or ballet, or, I don't know, rhythmic gymnastics, or climbing, what one does is to use the body potential and to develop it, right? And really the body has many, many potentialities" (Maria 548-52).

The de-dramatising of surgical procedures seems to be part of an argument to demystify sex-change operations and consider them as aesthetic. Elsa, a Spanish pre-operative transsexual, likens cosmetic surgery in women and transsexuals as responding to the same aim, namely, to achieve an image of their liking: "just like any woman who doesn't like herself, thus with us, those who don't like themselves change things and that's that" (Elsa 364-365). Likewise, Carol cites a favourite platitude of transsexuals: "a woman spends her lifetime trying to pass" (Carol 600). In the context of talking about the cosmetic procedures that women undergo to make themselves closer to the "feminine" ideal, Gwen
asserts: "Why not try to achieve the body that you want? OK, it might take a lot of money and a lot of surgery but there's some people who have had hundreds of operations for cosmetic surgery, so, mm, a postoperative transsexual is in all // I would say in every sense the same as other women. So, why can't we have the same as other women? And a little bit of silicon here, you name it" (Gwen 417-421).

A Spanish MTF puts it as follows: "sometimes [...] one does not achieve the image that one wants to give. But, as I said, there are many surgical procedures and many aesthetic advances for that. Things can be solved. Just as any other woman who does not like herself, same with us; those that don't like themselves, well, they change things and that's that. I am all for aesthetics, for aestheticians, I am all for surgical operations as long as the results are good and they make you look divine" (Elsa 361-7). Pamela holds the same opinion: "surgery allows us to mm, shape the body as we want and we think we want it, right? [...] I think it's very good because thanks to them (surgeons) we can, we can change and feel good with ourselves [...] I think that those who want to do all the operations that, that they deem necessary,73 they should go ahead. And if they can pay for it too" (Pamela 461-72).

I would like to argue that considering sex-change surgery as cosmetic has a de-dramatising effect not only because it likens it to widely accepted procedures of cosmetic surgery for women, but also because it places the treatment of transsexualism at the level of the body's surface. Given that, as we saw earlier, the surface is considered less important than the subject's inner identity, to conceive the treatment as a question of surfaces makes it appear as being concerned with the less significant and substantial matter. For instance, Gabriel presents the operation as a question of wrong surfaces: "what I don't like is to look at myself in the mirror, to put it somehow, right? [...] because I don't, because when one looks at oneself in the mirror it is not what one, it does not reflect what one is nor what one feels [...] because one sees a body of, for instance, of a woman but that it is not what one really is nor what one feels, right? I don't know / it is like [sigh] like if, if you wanted to be brunette and were sporting blonde" (Gabriel 145-152). It seems that Gabriel is arguing that transsexualism is not a question of essences but prefers to consider it as a problem of having the 'wrong' body surface identified with a particular gender identity and its associated personality - hence the comparison with hair colour or the shape of one's nose: "just like when someone sees his image in the mirror and doesn't like the nose, that doesn't mean this person is trapped in somebody's body" (Gabriel 60-1).

In other words, it seems that the idea of sex-change surgery as cosmetic assumes a view of the 'materiality' of the body as less 'solid' or consequential in contrast to the sex identity residing in the 'mind', conceived as being inner and essential to a person's self, thus sustaining the legitimisation of surgery as an intervention to make the body's 'matter' fit the 'mind'. In spite of its rhetorical advantages, the parallel between aesthetic and medical surgery runs the risk of associating transsexuals' demands with a practice perceived as frivolous and superficial. This is why Gabriel is quick to point out that:

73 This attitude corresponds to what Pauley termed "polysurgical attitude", that is demands for recurring cosmetic surgery (Pauley referred in Billings and Urban 1982: 273).
"yes, of course, the body is malleable as all things in this world, right? But our issue is not a question of aesthetics, it is a question of being oneself" (Gabriel 517-519). Hence, there is tension between arguing for sex-change as being in a continuum with the widely accepted practice of female's employment of cosmetic surgery for aesthetic purposes, on the one hand, and the risk of being accused of superficiality and perversion, on the other. This tension is also present in transsexuals' general reluctance to acknowledge the work involved in acquiring and improving their appearance in their 'new' sex.

6.2.2.5 Inter-Discursive Action

Thus far I have indicated conflicting mobilisation of categories between folk and medical discourses. Implicit in what I have said above are several layers of circularity in the interaction between folk and medical discourses. There is circularity operating between medical discourse and the Matrix: medical categories are informed by the HM laws but in their turn also perform folk sexological knowledge. There is another layer of circularity active between medical discourse and transsexuals: besides the circularity in transsexuals' citation of medical discourse to describe themselves noted in all the sections above, there is also circularity in so far as transsexuals' citations influence and perform medical discourse and practice. Lothstein's observations provide an example of this effect: "here was a disorder in which the patient told the doctor what her diagnosis was and how to treat it. Consequently, these patients became known as self-diagnosed transsexuals. They also insisted on being treated solely with hormones and surgery. Many clinicians who were unfamiliar with the condition of transsexualism simply accepted the patient's account of her disorder" (Lothstein 1983: 57). Hence, in a direct way medical discourse and transsexuals interact in so far as transsexuals are performed by medical discourse but also perform it through their citations and demands.

Yet another layer of circularity is active, this time between the Matrix and transsexuals' discourse, for the subjects' discourse performs and is performed by the Matrix's platitudes. However, the Matrix's platitudes are themselves influenced by medical discourse. Thus, in a more indirect manner, through the Matrix norms, medical discourse and transsexuals' discourse interact, since the latter cite folk platitudes performed by medical standards. Therefore, there is a direct interaction between transsexuals and the medical discourse, and an indirect interaction between transsexuals' and medical discourse through the Matrix.

To put it briefly, medical discourse refers to folk sexological platitudes and reinforces folk knowledge. In its turn, folk knowledge is informed by medical discourse and also reinforces it. As a consequence, transsexuals' self-ascriptions reveal a double circularity in their citation of medical standards since these are themselves influenced by the folk sexological norms.
6.3. THE BODY OF SEX AND GENDER

In my reconstruction of Butler I theorised sex and gender as theoretical terms performing bodies and identities. Sex is reconstructed as a self-referential theoretical concept presented in the Matrix as a 'natural' given, a stable substance that causes gender. Hence, sex and gender are theoretical terms denoting artificial kinds. The empirical evidence presented thus far confirms heterosexuality as the main criterion defining the Matrix category of sex. It also shows that the wish to resolve the décalage between normative bodies and identities is the driving motive behind the sex-change operation. Hence, the operation is an attempt to attain the sanctioned 'right' body schema and the normatively associated pleasures by materialising the physical body parts associated with the desired pleasure. As Carol puts it: "I feel that eventually I might reach a stage that I would actually go under the surgeon's knife. And then I'll feel that things will match up" (Carol 101-105).

Academic and technical discourses draw a distinction between sex and gender that interviewees did not mark. As explained in the introduction, the term gender has mainly two uses: a) a psychological category as used in medical discourse - in this sense gender identity is regarded as fixed and the body as malleable; b) a sociological category as used in feminist discourse, that is, gender is conceived as malleable and biological sex as fixed and certain. In spite of their different nuances, in both medical and feminist discourse sex is conceived as biology and gender as a constructed identity. At the theoretical level, medical discourse establishes a divorce between sex and gender. That is, the gender in the mind was conceived as independent from the body. Hence, a person could be brought up as belonging to a certain gender despite his/her genitals. Thus, the divorce sex/gender validates surgery as the only treatment for gender dysphoria. Indeed, research is being conducted to find the biological causes for gender, for instance by studying the size and function of the hypothalamus.

In contrast with the feminist and medical concepts of gender as constructed identity and biology as fixed, interviewees equated sex with gender and used them interchangeably. As previously shown in section on identity, transsexuals' wish for sex-change is cited as a question of identity not a quest for 'sexual' pleasure. Transsexualism is not about "pleasure" but about "differences in relation to gender" (Silvia 62) In these usage gender is restricted to identity and opposed to sexuality: "I went to my first gay bar and I realised that it wasn't my situation either. That is, it was not a question of / sexual- It was a question of gender, it was a personal question" (Elsa 262-3). Elias explicitly equates sex with gender and cites a notion of 'sexuality' not linked to gender when he makes clear that gender is unrelated to the object of one's desire: "my partner is a woman but if it was a man..., I mean, there is no relation between this and what / my feeling / of sex, of gender is" (Elias 554-6). Here Elias is clearly using sex and gender as synonyms.

74 Also Jane 876-7.
75 Milton Diamond (1982) is the most famous advocate of this particular extreme of social constructionism.
The above quotes expose productive and repressive censorship of term usage. By repressing the usage of sex as sexuality, a notion of sex devoid of any connotation of sexuality, genitality and pleasure is produced. Hence, sex is used to refer to gender identity thus precluding any other meaning such as sexuality or desire. According to the above quotes, sexuality and desire are not considered as definitive traits of gender identity, although, as shown earlier in Section 6.1, sexual orientation is often cited as an important definitive trait of identity. Moreover, as shown in the section on homosexuality, Spanish transsexuals do not refrain from identifying 'homosexual' attraction in their sex of birth as a symptom of their transsexualism, since it was interpreted as a sign of a non-normative gender identity and as cause of the décalage mind/body.\textsuperscript{76}

The empirical evidence shows how transsexuals use sex and gender interchangeably. Hence, transsexualism as practice reveals gender and sex as normative theoretical terms performing the body. In spite of the liberal divorce sex/gender in the medical discourse, transsexuals equated sex with gender, and sustained their claims for legitimation by involving biological causes determining gender, such as the hypothalamus.\textsuperscript{77} Hence, transsexualism as practice reveals a contradiction. In so far as gender is understood as a fixed force constituting the inner core of identity, a particular (constructed) understanding of gender is being reiterated as a norm. The assumption underlying transsexualism as practice is that gender cannot be changed. Particular individuals not feeling comfortable within gender as norm can be helped to fit by treating the body as an artefact. Hence, the sex/gender distinction reifies a particular gender definition into its normatively assigned body shape by "adapting the physical aspect to the social aspect through hormonal therapy [...] to accommodate gender concerning one's feelings and one's desire" (Silvia 4-5). In other words, a sex-change operation is an instance of a performance in a chain of performative citations which constitute the body as the residence, normative expression and cause of gender essences. In sum, sex and gender as theoretical categories are instrumental to the performance of the body as an artificial kind.

6.3 \textbf{THE BODY IS AN ARTIFICIAL KIND}

As shown in the previous sections, reconstructing the Matrix platitudes as performative is supported by transsexuals' reports of a perceived discontinuity between sexual identity and body, for they reveal the mapping of collectively defined meanings onto body parts and sensations. The data presented above showed how transsexuals perceive their bodies as 'wrong' and report a décalage

\textsuperscript{76} In transsexuals' discourse gender refers both to sexual orientation (a meaning only implicitly present in the medical definition of gender), and to identification. With the present trend to operate regardless of sexual orientation in the new sex, medicine is veering towards a definition of gender dysphoria as a conflict between identification and body parts. Sexual orientation is progressively set aside. However, as I will argue in the following, there remains a heterosexual norm concerning the gender of desire.

\textsuperscript{77} Another instance of conflicting discourses between transsexuals' and psychiatrists' discourse also noted by Hausman (1995).
body/mind as a symptom of gender dysphoria and transsexualism. Hence, interviewees' discourse reveals how collectively defined meanings such as gender myths and transsexualism, or notions such as natural/artificial, mind/body and false/true, sex/gender, perform acts and beliefs such as perception of body parts and self-identity, the appropriateness of certain pleasures, sex-change surgery, and biological practices. Therefore, the empirical research reveals how the Matrix's category of sex effectively performs a 'mapping' of gender onto body parts. This 'mapping' results from associating collectively defined gender meanings onto body parts, sensations, sexual activities, personality traits, and so on. Thus, I have established the performing power of interviewees' citations such as sex and gender, heterosexual desire and so on.

In this section, I will present evidence supporting the view that the body is an artificial kind performed by collectively defined gender categories, but is presented in the Matrix as a natural kind. I will also examine the double self-referentiality of biological discourse: a) in so far as its theories are informed by HM folk theories, and b) in so far its object of study has been performed by the Matrix categories.

6.3.1 MAKING SEX

Given that the Matrix's norms prescribe congruence between body and gender, transsexuals intervene at the physical level in order to make self and body coherent. Post-operative Maria describes the before and after of the operation: "before there was a distance between me and my body. Now there isn't" (Maria 507-11). As shown above, the genital operation is aimed to 'balance' the mismatch experienced by transsexuals by altering the genitals in such a way that reverses the definition of the subject's desire into a normative heterosexual desire. Intrinsic to the surgical treatment of transsexualism is the notion of matter as malleable and the body as susceptible of modification. Hence, the body is conceived as an artefact that can be modelled. The data denotes how bodies and desires are being performed by the category of sex and gender.

To all except one of the MTF subjects interviewed in the UK, sex-change surgery, or - as transsexuals' call it "the op", is their main objective: "it was really my goal / to be operated as soon as possible" (Gwen 331). To Pamela, the possibility of the genital operation makes the whole sex-change process meaningful: "one always lives with the dream of thinking: 'one day, I will have the operation and I will be a complete woman' " (Pamela 104-6). Although it seems that Spanish MTF transsexuals tend to emphasise socialisation over the operation, they do not undervalue its importance as the "culmination" (Pamela 15) of a process: "the aim of transsexuality is not to get operated, that is, as an inescapable obligation, but it is important to do it, isn't it? I think that it is what genuine transsexuals, in inverted commas, do. They tend to do it for reasons of age and stability" (Elsa 88-91). According to

78 I will expand on this difference on Section 6.7 on The Matrix as Conventional.
Elsa, because the removal of the penis and testicles cuts production of masculine hormone (Elsa 396-7) it offers stability by dissolving the negative consequences of gender ambiguity in society (Elsa 5-7).

There are a number of terms currently used to refer to the procedures surrounding transsexualism: conversion surgery or conversion therapy, sex-change, sex reassignment, gender reassignment, 'the op', and so on. Concerning the usage of these terms, Meyer (1991) notes that the vocabulary used to classify transsexuals defines them by their relationship to surgeons' activity; pre-operative and post-operative. Moreover, the term "the operation" is generally used to refer to genital construction in MTF only. This usage reflects the different prominence of genitals in FTM and MTF.

The MTF 'op' involves the removal of the penis and testicles, and the construction of a neovagina made by inverting the penis' skin. It is interesting to note that within the surgical possibilities available to a MTF, there is also a lesser version of the operation that hardly gets mentioned: orchidectomy - the surgical removal of testicles only. This operation does not remove the penis and does not provide a vagina though it eliminates the production of testosterone, hence, it makes a considerable difference to the body thus treated. Amongst the interviewed MTFs in the UK, Carol was the only interviewee who would consider "rather than going down the route full with reassignment, the possibility of an orchidectomy, the removal of the testicles. That would mean then a lower dose of female hormones as perhaps the possible long term objective [...] basically because... surgically is a minor procedure and also it means that is safer because you don't have major surgical intervention and also it rather than having to be on a heavy dose of hormones, you can go onto postoperative dose which is safer" (Carol 157-160, 160-3).

Orchidectomy does not allow vaginal intercourse, a possibility clearly associated with heterosexual femininity. Hence, Carol is accepting the impossibility of ever having sex "like a woman", that is, having vaginal penetration. Precisely this impossibility is the reason why orchidectomy is not generally desired by MTF: it does not construct a neo-vagina, therefore it does not allow intercourse 'like a woman' nor does it get rid of the penis. The refusal of orchidectomy reveals that the main stress of 'the op' is removing the phallus, which is also a necessary precondition for the construction of a neovagina. The construction of a neovagina performs the possibility for MTF to have vaginal penetration, the salient heterosexual practice for the purposes of reproduction. In sum, removal of the penis is the main objective of sex-change in MTF. This emphasis reveals the penis as the main marker of masculinity, hence the importance of getting rid of it in order to attain femininity.

79 This is primarily a distinction used in the UK.

80 Carol exemplifies the 'asexual' type of transsexuals often appearing in medical literature. The term 'asexual' is used to refer those patients who have no sex drive and do not wish to have sex. Although Carol declares being asexual, she affirms that, if she were to have some sexual activity with her transsexualised body, it would be with a woman. However, Carol declares: "I feel I could either continue to live as a male or just live as a female but with the bits and pieces as I was born with" (Carol 156-7).

81 The neovagina is made of the inverted skin of the penis.
Judging by interviewees' accounts, the lack of penis is an important characteristic of the category 'woman': "you can't be a woman with a penis between your legs" (Elsa 66-7) for "imagine... what would it represent for them (sexist men) if a feminist had a penis. Maybe, I don't know, ... this sexist man would not able to tell them: you are inferior to me because you are not like me. You know? At that moment we could challenge that, couldn't we?" (Elsa: 69-70). In spite of Spanish MTF's rejection of the equation woman/vagina - "being a woman is not a question of genitals" (Silvia 108) - the penis symbolises power and high social status. This differential in symbolic value between vagina and penis supports the view of post-Lacanian feminist critics, such as Irigaray, Kristeva, Wittig, that the male category is marked, and the female is unmarked. 'Male' is 'the marked gender', a social status, hence 'the' subject; in contrast, 'female' is unmarked in so far as it lacks its main symbol: the penis.

This ranking is hierarchical and associated with the nature/culture divide. A woman stands as a castrated person or equivalently as a castrated man, since often enough man and person are equivalent. Given that the female is a sort of castrated male, MTFs must be castrated in order to qualify as females. Thus, documental reorientation in Spain is granted to FTMs in spite of not having a penis but it is never granted to MTFs unless they have lost their penis. Hence, it is crucial that MTFs lose their penises and thus 'unmark' themselves in order to attain femininity. These differences denote the importance of the penis as the main signifier of social differences.

82 Hence, I disagree with Lindemann (1996) in this point, for I do not think that the female forms of occupational terms, such as her German example: Professorin, refer to the generic term, that is, participate in a "non-gendered defined centre" (1996: 346). A non-gender defined centre, the existence of which Lindemann asserts in her notion of acentric gender distinction, is in my view no more than a theoretical assumption, at best a political prescription. Hence, I think her assertion that female terms "participate in a non-gendered defined centre" ignores the social circumstances originating these terms' usage, for instance, lower pay and less consideration for women professionals and the attempt to overcome these disadvantages through feminisation of professional terms. As a consequence of our differing perceptions of social reality, and although our empirical researches coincide in presenting evidence of MTF change being easier than FTM one, I base my interpretation of this phenomenon in transsexuals' own explanations for it: economic, technological and social reasons.

Concerning the social reasons for the difficulty of the MTF change, I agree with Lindemann that MTF change crosses a "qualitative boundary", but, unlike her, I think so does FTM. The question is rather in what direction? I agree there is a polar contrast of opposites between male and female noticed by Lindemann but she fails to notice it is hierarchical: the male being superior to the female. Hence the MTF change is a downward social movement whereas the FTM is an upward one. Thus, although I agree that the FTM change reaches a "neutral position as regards gender" (ibid. 348), I think this is because FTM change leaves females' gender inequality behind and increases females' social status by becoming the gender defining the fundamentals of subjectivity. Hence, I believe Lindemann is oblivious to the social context in which the person is primarily defined by masculinity and, thus, she forgets that the 'neutral' is a political project aiming to change a social fact, not a social reality itself. Hence, she takes a non-achieved political prescription as explanatory of a social reality that the prescription aims to alter.

83 This interpretation fits in with Kessler and MacKenna's findings. These authors maintain that "gender attribution is, for the most part, genital attribution; and genital attribution is essentially penis attribution" (1978: 153, and 168 n. 5) and that "the only cultural genital is the penis. It belongs to males (...) Penises do not exist in isolation. They belong to, and are presumed to be attached to males. When what looks like a penis is found to be attached to a female, it is treated as a penis only in the physical (non-social) sense" (Kessler & McKenna 1978: 154, stress added).
The testimony of Justin, a 76 year old FTM and the only FTM interviewee that had a penile implant, supports the notion of the phallus as sign of social status. In spite of referring to his phalloplasty as a "purely external [...] superficial operation" (Justin 201-4), Justin declares his desire for a penis was fulfilled by it "entirely, yes, yes I'll die, die happy now! [laugh]" (Justin 452). However, although his satisfaction after the phalloplasty "seems a bit silly because after all // eh, but I mean that little thing (his artificial penis)", Justin feels fulfilled "that's the way I feel. Nothing more to, that's what I wanted all my life and I've got it, so there's nothing more to, to want" (Justin 452-9, stress added). Justin's fulfilment denotes the penis' symbolic value since it seems that what Justin was seeking in trying to achieve a penis was the respect and the social status, since he identified the possessor of the phallus with the right to be assertive, self-possessed, articulate, to hold high status jobs - that is, to have "male aspirations" (Justin 108) - such as Justin's wish to be a medical doctor in the 1930s.84

Hence, a body part, namely the penis, is contingently associated with higher social status (a social kind). Thus, the association penis/status is conventional and not inherent in the penis. However, this association is presented as a natural one in so far as social inequality between genders is deemed to be caused by biological differences. The empirical study reveals that FTM transsexuals aim to achieve the sign of the status (the penis) and the status itself (masculinity). However, the penis (natural or artificial) is not in itself a social status. As a consequence, any phalloplasty might fail to achieve the symbolic phallus: possessing the penis might not give one the social status of a male member of society. In the case of Justin, on one level, his transsexualisation is a performative citation of penis as a natural kind, that is as it is presented in the Matrix. At the same time, however, choosing a phalloplasty denotes believing that the social status of male-ness can be achieved on the basis of an artefact, the created artificial penis. Judging by his patronising attitude towards his artificial phallus, "you poor little thing!" (Justin 417) - Justin seems to be aware of the conventionality of the association penis/status. In other words he realises that the social status is neither inherent in the organ or its bearer, nor caused by it.85 Hence, it is social status that really 'matters' masculinity - to use a Butlerian term.

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84 Probably due to the symbolic importance of losing the penis to become a female, travestis are considered more destabilising than men with vaginas (most FTMs). In contrast, in order to 'mark' themselves as males, FTMs must pursue "male aspirations" (Justin 108) and claim a higher status, thus asserting themselves as deserving subjects. Therefore, FTMs' change could aim, at least partially, to achieve attribution of males' social status and all its positive consequences: higher social status, more respect, higher pay. If this interpretation is true, the penis (or the penile implant in FTMs' case) is the signifier of superior social rank.

85 Paradoxically, the décalage between Justin's "male aspirations" and the constraints on women that impelled him to desire becoming a male in the 1930s are nowadays partly 'normalised/normativised' as a medical condition.
As shown in the Section on Natural versus Artificial 6.2.2.3, the theorisation of sex as an artificial kind presented as a natural kind in the Matrix is supported by interviewees who aimed to legitimise their transexualisation by citing their 'inner' sex as natural. Indeed, the décalage felt by transsexual subjects is interpreted as a violation of the normative 'natural' coherence of sex as defined by heterosexuality and encapsulated in medical standards and gender myths.

As shown in Section 6.2.2.3, transsexuals cite a 'natural' cause to legitimise change due to the positive weight it carries in folk knowledge as a deserving cause. For instance, disturbance of the hypothalamus is often mentioned as a physiological cause for gender dysphoria: "the hypothalamus which is connected with, of course, with gender very much" (Justin 513-4, also 482-7, 494, 509-513).86 The hypothalamus, that "area of the brain responsible for gender" in early stages of foetus growth (Aitkenhead 1998:3), is being researched in order to establish a natural cause for the 'definition of gender' at bio/neurological level. Interestingly, as long as a bio/neurological cause remains hypothesised but yet unknown, the 'origin of gender' rests undefined, thus saving face for both the medical profession and transsexuals in the face of de-legitimisation (needless to say also for essentialists).

Further evidence of the Matrix presenting the body as a natural kind in a realist sense is revealed by interviewees' theories about hormones as sources of collectively defined gender characteristics: "men are seen as being strong and not showing emotions and that's a social conditioning if you like, as much as a hormone, mm, distinction" (Brenda 390-2). Another instance is provided by Elsa who cites hormones as defining the gender of certain mannerisms: "often there are guys that cross their legs in certain ways, that have gazes, poses, that are classified as feminine [...] let's say it is a bit what gays call 'camp', right? That without being homosexual or anything, it, it (the hormones) make that camp come out a bit [...] I think that men like women have their share of / of feminine and masculine hormone [...] I think that at some point that can show. But it is not / I think that is not very conspicuous but that is slightly noticeable" (Elsa 1118-27).87 Elsa concludes that the sex of the hormones "can appear at some points. But it is / not / I think it can show little but definitely it shows a bit" (Elsa 1026-7). Thus, Elsa attributes a biological origin to gender identification and performance.

Conflicting citations of the body surface in the context of technology. To all interviewees technology liberates the 'true' gender identity trapped on the natural but 'false' body. Hence, through technology the mind actively performs (or to use a Butlerian pun, 'matters') true sex on a passive body, and thus corrects 'nature's mistakes'. However, there are contrasting differences at cultural level.

86 To date, scientific research on disturbance in the hypothalamus as responsible for transsexualism is far from conclusive.

87 Elsa seems to be drawing a folk version of the "quantitative model of sex" introduced by sex endocrinologists (Oudshoorn 1994: 38).
Spanish interviewees cited the body as artefact, show pride about the possibilities offered by technology and did not refrain from treating the body as an artefact. For instance: Silvia thinks that transsexuals' vision of the body as an artefact is "somewhat of a novelty. It is true that there is an alteration of the body, even, in many cases, many alterations, some with incredible results" (Silvia 636-7). In contrast, British transsexuals' tendency was to play down the importance of the operation: "by having the surgical intervention, if you want to call it that, hopefully that conflict will go. Once that [pointing to the genital area] it's not there anymore" (Jane 1 876-7, stress added). Similarly, Elias plays down the surgical and hormonal procedures necessary for sex-change by characterising transsexuality as no more than "a personality trait, a person's characteristic" (Elias 434). By playing down the operation, interviewees adhere to a notion of sex as natural kind, in spite of it contradicting their actual transformation of the body as an artefact.

6.3.3 RESISTING MATTER

Once the subject has identified him/herself as a transsexual and the goal of conforming to the ascribed gender ideal has been abandoned, there is another ideal to be reached: to be a 'real' woman or a 'real' man. The unattainability of such goal produces distress: "I will never be able to be a real woman" (Daniela, personal communication). All transsexuals are aware of the unassailable frontiers of sex-change procedures: "I'll never be the biological man that I want to be, no matter how much I want to be, I'll never be a biological man, which [sic] I don't think of it too much because it does upset me" (Ronnie 178-80). Both MTF and FTM interviewees express sorrow at never being able to be completely achieve their transsexual sex. For instance, Ronnie's main sexual fantasy is to "have an erection having sexual intercourse and be able to come!" (Ronnie 612). Mike is aware of the bleak prospects of this fantasy: "(I) would never have the same genital sensation as a man" (personal conversation).

In spite of conceiving matter as inferior and subjugated to the mind's will and technological advances, our bodies are far from being totally malleable; therefore, in the performance of the body as artefact, matter is often perceived as an obstacle. What are the frontiers of matter's malleability for transsexuals? There are several difficulties that the interviewed informants tend to mention. Amongst these are bone structure which is often cited as an impracticable change. Female-to-males tend to complain about their broad hips or their short stature. Justin, for instance feels that "well, I wish..."

88 Jane is here referring to the conflict between her identity and her body.
89 These findings coincide with Hausman's (1995) observations.
90 This grief also surfaced during O'Keefe's speech at the Gendys' 96 Conference, when she expressed her hopes of the future technical possibility of a completely successful operation. There ensued a discussion during which some of the transsexual public fantasised about the future of a totally successful sex-change, while other transsexuals refused to accept it as a viable possibility.
91 See also Elias 650, Brenda 686-7 and 427-9, Ronnie 271-6.
wish I was taller, otherwise I'm quite, quite happy, I mean, mm, I think I'm a bit, a bit 'hippy'92 too but, but..." (Justin 620-1). Male-to-females tend to be unhappy with their belly, narrow hips, their Adam's apple, height, broad shoulders or a big back, big hands and feet, pelvis, the proportion of legs to trunk, or having a wide waist. Height is often an issue: "I'm very self-conscious of my appearance mainly because of my height. If I was four, five inches shorter nobody would ever look. But because I'm six feet, mm, as soon as I go in anywhere, it's just my height attracts people. I don't know, that's my, my only bone of contention" (Gwen 273-276). FTM.s often encounter the same "bone of contention:" "a lot of, of my fellows are only about five feet two, it's funny, I mean, Stephen is about five feet, five feet two or something, maybe five four but, as a, as a rule and, again of course, the men are often / males to females are often very tall, aren't they?, which again is very, very difficult" (Justin 601-4).93

Genes, chromosomes and the ability to reproduce are cited as 'the last frontier': "I'll always be a transsexual, my chromosomes are not going to change" (Brenda 689-690). This is also expressed in transsexuals' terminology, particularly in the UK, by generally referring to non-transsexual women as "genetic women", "genetic females" or "gennys". In Spain the terminology used is "a biological person" (Gabriel 666) or a "biological man" (Elsa 320). Transsexuals fantasise about transcending these last differentiating frontiers and becoming a 'real' genetic woman with the ability to reproduce, which is considered as "the proof of a real woman" (Gwen 632).

Concerning maternity, MTF O'Keefe proposes banning the expression "sex-change" because "it bestows expectation upon us that we can not fulfil. Those who live cosmetically as females cannot get pregnant. The transsexual who lives cosmetically as male can not physiologically father" (O'Keefe 1996: 116). In proposing this, she aims to avoid biological polarities: "to live the gender and sex of transsexualism does not disappoint the transsexuals, because we can perform that, and the expectations are within our range of achievements. However, when we are sex changed into the stereotypical, biological polarity sex roles, it is an impossible goal for us, and failure is ensured by presuppositions" (ibid. 116). Obviously O'Keefe ignores the pressure put on all individuals to fit into the assigned gender categories and assumes that all non-transsexual subjects are able to reproduce. Hence, O'Keefe defends the right of transsexuals to refuse the distress imposed on them for not fitting into the pre-operative gender, and to refuse replacing it by another unattainable category: "transsexuals should have equal rights to other sexes, sexualities and genders, because they are transsexuals and not in spite of it" (116).

At times the frontiers of the performance of the body as an artefact surface when reporting alienation from new organs and problems: "the impression of what has been done..., it was still bruised, not that badly, but you know when you look at a plucked chicken?, the breast of a plucked

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92 Justin means he has big hips.

93 See also Carol 656-8, Gwen 520-1.
chicken? That was my impression: two slices of frozen chicken breast. It's what my impression was. And, and I was quite shocked initially [laugh]. But time goes by, the swelling goes down, the bruising goes away and really (...). Ah, I do have one complaint about it. I don't know any way round it, I know [laugh] that you CAN'T get round that, well, men have hair on both, well, on parts of the penile tissue and that the penile tissue used is inverted into the vagina, so I've got hair inside which is, can be uncomfortable" (Gwen 441-9). Another instance of alienation from the new organs is given by Justin's account on his artificial phallus:94 "when I had the [...] the operation [...] they took off the dressings, and it didn't, I mean, it didn't seem part of me!" (Justin 408-15). Moreover, the new penis it is "perhaps, I think, is slightly, eh, separate and it had to, it had to be looked after" (Justin 465).95

6.3.4 BODY MATTERS

In my reconstruction I theorised gender as a self-referential theoretical concept which is presented in the Matrix as caused by sex, understood as a natural kind allegedly underlying every subject's identity. Hence, I reconstructed gender and sex as theoretical concepts that get reified as natural givens. These theoretical terms become the referent for biological studies of sex and are presented in the Matrix as descriptive of a natural kind. However, theoretical terms such as sex and gender are prescriptive, hence, they are acted upon by subjects in the Matrix. Thus, they have a performative effect on their alter referent that is concealed by presenting sex as a natural kind. Given that the object of study of biology is not a natural kind but an artificial kind performed by the Matrix, biological discourse is self-referential in two ways: a) in so far as the Matrix as a folk sexology underlies some biological practices; b) in so far as what biology describes is not a natural kind but an artificial kind already performed by social practices.

The cycling program offers an example of the Matrix's folk theory of the body underlying medical practices. The cycling program is the most widespread hormonal management regime available to MTF transsexuals. The program is a hormonal therapy in which the intake of oestrogen is cycled in order to simulate the fluctuation of oestrogen in the reproductive woman's cycle. In spite of the evidence (although controversial) of the side effects caused by the fluctuations in hormones, the cycling program is still widely used. Jane describes its effects as follows: "it is like a menstrual cycle, whatever, I get my sort of very much Jane, Jane, Jane, Jane, Jane, quite happy, quite content and then I tend to get a week of absolutely terrible depression [...] nearly enough of a monthly cycle" (Jane 1 855-859). Again, prominent in this account is the identification of self with a particular body feeling.96

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94 Justin had a penile implant on his clitoris. He still has a vagina. In a way it could be said FTMs with penile implants are an artificial hermaphrodite.

95 For a complete list of postoperative physical and psychological problems see Billings and Urban (1982).

96 For a similar report on the effects of the cycling program see Maria 585-89, 606.
As Bolin (1994) points out, the cycling program revealing that in medical discourse "normal" women are defined as reproductive, for, despite transsexuals' infertility, the regime aims to emulate "a model of biological coherence between hormones, genitals and the salience of reproduction in medical accounts of women's biology" (Bolin 1994: 456). This coherence is social since it aims to mirror a model of female biology that takes an important collective good, reproduction, as its prime defining criterion. Gwen puts this folk belief succinctly when she asserts that: "it seems NATURAL for a woman to have children and for me in particular it would be a total fulfilment of being a female. I can do just about everything else but have children. If I could have had a child // ah // I would have proved... [...] I would be a hundred per cent female but my only option is to have the chance to adopt / if I have a partner, or find a partner who has got children" (Gwen 623-628). This quote reveals how the folk notions of sex and desire, presented as a natural kinds, underlie some biological practices. By acting upon the Matrix theory of the body, the body as an artefact is performed.

The second aspect of biology's self-referentiality refers to the performance of its object of study (the body) by the Matrix categories and laws such as heterosexuality, gender myths, transsexualism and so on. Transsexuals' practices and citations presented in Section 6.1.1 on the Matrix's categories as self-referential, exemplify this circular procedure in so far as they reveal the definition of gender under the criteria of heterosexual desire as well as the mapping of gender meanings onto body parts. Thus, it established heterosexual desire as an artificial kind performed by the Matrix's platitudes, and hence contingent, in spite of it being presented as a natural kind (in a realistic sense) in the Matrix. The data on self-attribution, diagnosis and documental reorientation (presented in Section 6.1 The HM is a Folk Theory) reveal the circularity of transsexualism as an identity and the gender attribution which supports it. Moreover, the empirical data establish how the ritualistic citation of medical definitions performs transsexualism as a naturally given condition, an unchosen ailment caused by a mistake of nature. Thus, sex is presented as a natural kind in spite of it being defined, performed and stabilised through medical categorisation and surgical intervention.

In sum, interviewees' statements not only support the notion of transsexualism as "a socially constructed reality which only exists in and through medical practice" (Billings and Urban: 266); they also make apparent the self-validating nature of medical standards and practices by revealing the mechanism by which a self-referential category, such as transsexualism, actualises and validates itself through citation and repetition. Hence, transsexualism exemplifies how a particular knowledge category performs the reality it claims to represent in a circular fashion, thus behaving as a self-fulfilling prophecy.

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97 Hausman confirms these findings in what she refers to as a reproductive paradigm governing gender (1995: 187).
6.3.5 Possible Objections

The reconstruction of body and desire as artificial kinds captures the notion of bodies' materiality as both irreducible and inextricable from the social processes that materialise them. Hence, the notion of artificial kind can account for what Butler calls "the body", that is, an inapprehensible underlying "biological support", as well as for the social construction of the experienced body. To reconstruct the body as an artificial kind makes it possible to account for matter as only receiving its meaning and becoming intelligible, hence communicable and social, after being actualised by the Matrix's folk sexology - that is, by a cluster of self-referential social kinds. In the notion of artificial kinds, the existence of matter is acknowledged while also granting that we cannot grasp matter in a 'pure' form outside of our social categories. Any statement about bodily matter is always mediated through subjects' perception, itself shaped by the self-referential social categories that perform the perception of the body and frame the subject's cognition of self and others. Thus, to reconstruct the body as an artificial kind articulates the idea that sex is not a natural kind (in a realist sense), but some 'artifice' performed by a self-referent social kind on an ungraspable 'material' component, that gets subsequently presented in the HM as a natural kind.

However, the notion of artificial kind can be criticised for not fitting the mind/body distinction in transsexuals' discourse in so far as they do not use this category themselves. As established in the introduction, the present thesis is theoretically informed and it is not simply an ethnographic study of transsexualism. No study can capture all the richness of the ways in which the body can be addressed and conceived by the Matrix subjects: as a natural kind, as a social kind and as an artificial kind. As a theorist, one way of making sense of the variety of notions of body is to think of the body as an artificial kind. I am not claiming that this is the prevalent way in which the body is conceived in the Matrix - in fact, the prevalent notion is that of body as natural kind. Nor do I claim that as a theorist I think of the body solely as an artificial kind. What I hold as a theorist is that the notion of artificial kind is the one that best captures Butler's notion of sex as inapprehensible and sex as artefact, and it clarifies the three levels that the category of sex works: descriptive, prescriptive, normative.

As the informants revealed, the notion of the body as artefact is one of the existing folk theories used to think about the body. In my sociological reconstruction of Butler's work, I theorised the body through the notion of artificial kind. The folk notion of the body and my reconstruction are different because whereas the folk understanding of body as artefact is a social phenomenon, my reconstruction of body as artificial kind is a sociological theory aiming to capture several social phenomena, such as varied folk notions of the body and a complex interaction of discourses.

The empirical study revealed how while on the one hand transsexuals refer to gender as purely social identity fixed in socialisation, on the other they paradoxically summon a biological force

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98 I am indebted to Prof. Latour for this objection.
in order to defend gender's fixity and legitimise the surgical treatment of gender dysphoria. Hence, transsexuals' citations are not coherent, since they sometimes refer to notions of gender identity as both a social and a natural kind. As a consequence, though reconstructing the body as an artificial kind does not capture the complexity and contradictions in transsexuals' narratives, it is an appropriate description of their practices in so far as they transform their bodies as artefacts, since they conceive the body as a passive object lawfully subjected to a disembodied gender essence residing in the mind.

A different issue to the contradictions in transsexuals' discourse, such as its mind/body, subject/object dichotomies and its voluntarism, is the body's recalcitrance to its shaping, acknowledged by transsexuals themselves reporting on perceived frontiers of matter's malleability, their alienation from their new organs, and so on. The body's resistance to its shaping by the Matrix's categories raises the necessity of conceiving the relation between matter and the Matrix categories as a bi-directional interaction. By conceiving the relation between ungraspable matter and the social kinds of the Matrix as one of mutual influence, the reconceptualisation of body as artificial kind meets Butler's challenging of the passive/active dualism of body and mind at the theoretical level.

In my reconstruction of Butler's concept of the body as artificial kind, gender is not conceived as a separate kind from sex, but as the self-referential component of sex as artificial kind. Hence, I consider for analytical purposes the Matrix's self-referential categories are initially conceived as a different kind from matter as ungraspable. However, whereas social kinds are conceived as conceptual categories, the natural world is conceptually passive, that is, as not imposing a particular gender categorisation, but not as causally inert. Hence, gender as a social kind is theorised as a performing conceptual category, whereas matter as alter reference to the Matrix categories is not conceived as determining a particular classification, but neither as a totally malleable passive matter.

Another objection to the reconceptualising the body as artificial kind might be raised from critics of the Barnesian and Bloorian notions of natural and social kinds. The contentious issues in these notions are: a) that this understanding of natural kind only deals with nature's classification by humans and, hence, it does not consider in any way the input of the 'natural' in classification; b) that this understanding of natural kind disregards the performative dimension of human classificatory practices. These criticisms are false in so far as a) both Barnes and Bloor allow a causal input from the natural world, and b) natural kind terms have a self-referential and performative character. Therefore, natural, social and artificial kinds are all hybrids of the social and the natural.

An altogether different question from those raised by possible objections to the Bloorian and Barnesian categories would be whether the notion of artificial kind renders the categories of social and natural kind obsolete or is itself irrelevant. However, the relevance of these issues for the social

99 In her reconstruction of Butler Barad coins the neologism 'intraction' to refer to this mutual performative relationship (Barad 1998: 96).
6.4  **THE MATRIX PLATITUDES ARE NORMATIVE STANDARDS OF IDENTITIES**

The HM platitudes are normative standards of identities to which we feel obliged to conform. These standards define the boundaries of the acceptable within the Matrix. The HM standards of identities function like a language in so far as they are employed as a set of attributive, explanatory and predictive practices. Given the importance of visible surfaces in social interaction, the notion of the aesthetic has an important role in the definition and policing of gender.

Although transsexuals conceive identity as residing in an inner space and being caused by some biological force, the empirical findings establish the existence of norms demaning identity that must be expressed in the body. The study confirms the Matrix's folk model of a person as centred on the body as source and locus of identity. Interviewees display a notion of gender as a 'side' of their personality or a 'role' that must be expressed in 'surface' appearances such as clothes, demeanour and attitude and conceive it as a coded act performed under more or less constraint (more constraint in the case of males, according to several MTF interviewees). In this regard, the importance of the body is paramount, for its visibility and appearance play an important role in defining and establishing gender.

6.4.1  **GENDER AS SURFACE PERFORMANCE**

The empirical study reveals the importance interviewees give to the correct citation of the HM's platitudes concerning gender appearance. Transsexuals' search for subjective integrity exposes the division of self into inner and outer aspects, the outer aspects being the body perceived to be at odds with the 'inner' identity: "it's my body sending me the wrong messages, the wrong picture is coming back from the mirror" (Brenda 514). In their search for normative gender coherence transsexuals emphasise the body as displaying the traits defining the hidden 'inner identity'. The body is described in terms of some "external" cover. For instance, Maria, declares that before the operation she perceived her body as "if I was wearing a suit, something added" (Maria 507-9). Hence the body is an "external" (Maria 510) "wrapping" (Pamela 50) that is "alien to an inner psyche" (Carol 134). In comparing the sensation of having a body at odds with one's mind to an exterior aspect such as "liking to be dark hair and sporting blonde" (Gabriel 152), Gabriel reveals the importance of the body surface as sign of gender identity.

Post-operatively, transsexuals derive enjoyment contemplating their own image. For instance, pleasure produced by the "overall appearance of genitals" was reported by 34% per cent of British

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post-operative transsexuals responding to the question "which part of your reconstruction do you feel gives you most pleasure?" (Royle 1996). It is interesting to note that this reply was written into a box labelled "other", hence it was not prompted in any way (the highest rated part, only narrowly above visual impression, was the vagina with 36%). The great pleasure derived from contemplating the surface appearance of reconstructed genitals attests to the interpretation of gender as surface performance.

The importance of citing the prescribed standard appearances for one's gender identity springs from the importance of attributed genitals in social interaction. Some interviewees are aware of the weight carried by surface appearance: "I think that rather than being concerned with what one is or is not, society is concerned with what one appears to be, with what you show. Then, if one adapts oneself to the standards of heterosexual man, heterosexual woman and there is no indication of your past, for instance, then to all practical intents one is already a woman" (Silvia 289-91, stress added). The public scrutiny of transsexuals' gender performance is evaluated by reference to the Matrix standards of identity, thus revealing its normative categories and its collective performative reiteration. In the Matrix there are only two boxes "the blue and the pink" (Carol 257-61), hence: "one can never live with ambiguity. This is not tolerated. Just, mm, because society does not allow it, right? Then, you change role and change your life" (Gabriel 4-6). Indeed, interviewees felt they could only belong to one category: "if it is a case of choosing sides, then I'm going to choose the female side! I want to be on that side!" (Brenda 440).

The fact that transsexuals can never achieve being a 'real' male or female but are still willing to undergo the pain and the emotional and social costs of sex-change, also attests to the importance of gender as a surface performance. Transsexuals seem to obtain enough satisfaction from the social acceptance derived from getting their outward appearances "right" and hence from being socially perceived, classified and treated as their chosen gender. For instance, interviewees refer to the pleasure they derive from social recognition in the transsexual gender: "now (in the shops) they ask me: what does the Mr. want? And I say: well, nothing, well this, that... And the last thing people can imagine is what one is, right?" (Gabriel 500-1). This denotes the importance of social perception in the wish

101 As Kessler and MacKenna showed (Kessler and MacKenna 1978), we classify individuals into sex categories on the basis of "cultural genitals", that is, primarily observable appearances such clothes and demeanour. See Chapter 4, Section 4.3.1 for an expanded account of the notion of "cultural genitals".

102 As noted when discussing documental reorientation procedures in Attributing Gender, social sanctioning of transgender is insured by a civil law that protects appearance or fiction.

103 "If I don't feel like a woman then it's got to be the other way... Because I didn't feel comfortable in the first position, I'm going into the second. I'll give it a try" (FTM Robert quoted in Kessler & MacKenna: 112). See also Carol 142-5 and 257-61, Gabriel 4-6.

104 Kessler & McKenna (1978) and Rubin (1975) share the notion of gender as surface performance with Butler.

105 See also Brenda 215-8, and Pamela 17-8.
for a sex-change and, hence, of the importance of the Matrix as a performative corpus of norms cited as a language, that is, as a tool for communication and social co-ordination.

Given that the importance of others' perceptions is crucial in gender categorisation, there is a strong investment in surface appearance as the residence of identity. Partly for this reason, clothes can perform a modification of body perception: "although I'm dressing in a male form I know underneath that those are female jeans. To me, I'm Jane because I have, these are Jane's clothes, they are not Jack's. They are a size 16 [...] I feel inside me that I'm Jane by putting on that tight pair of stretch jeans" (Jane 1 332-334, 888-9). The importance of clothes in performing the self-perception of the body is also illustrated by the perception of FTM Ronnie when he had to wear skirts: "I felt like, like an out-of-body feeling" (Ronnie 50).106

Public surveillance in the streets is important given the ubiquity of gender in social interaction. Transsexuals' accounts attest to the importance of clothes and visual appearance in establishing gender: "you prepare them (colleagues) over time, and so on, but until the day arrives that they see you appearing with a skirt the drama does not start, that is, till that moment they can see you as they please, but from that moment on they cannot see you as they want, they see you as, as you are" (Maria 284-7). Clothes clearly establish gender, and gender relations change accordingly: "when I wear one of those jerseys and a pair of size 16 jeans, I can feel Jane is there. It helps me a lot! Stupid that clothes make so much difference! [...] It's how people perceive you, isn't it. Yeah" (Jane 1 893-7). Thus, the gaze of others is important not only because it decides social acceptance but also because it affects self-perception: "as I was telling you, before I used to look at myself at the mirror and it didn't... NO. Moreover, it was not only that you looked at yourself, it was that people surrounding you did not look at you as you felt. Now people, unless I show my ID card (still showing Gabriel as female), the last thing people can imagine is that I have been a woman. The last they can imagine, right?" (Gabriel 489-92, stress added).

In sum, the emphasis on appearance attests to the importance of gender as surface performance for social recognition and personal self-assurance and confirms a notion of the body as a surface in which the subject's identity - conceived as interior - is displayed.107

6.4.2 THE AESTHETIC AS NORMATIVE

The normative link between gender identity and appearance is regulated through the notion of the aesthetic. The following quote makes this link quite explicit: "femininity must be expressed in a

106 The performing power of clothes to modify one's body schema is documented in Schilder 1935 and Blacking 1977.

107 The social importance of bodily appearance to the construction of personal identity is not negligible. In consumer societies the body becomes a sign of the self, displaying objects and appearances that are sold and presented as signalling our identity. This phenomenon has been well documented, see for instance Featherstone 1991.
feminine body and masculinity too. It is not because it has been made like this, right? But I think that it is much more / I don't know, aesthetic externally and internally and towards, towards humanity, towards all [...] it must be manifested in a body that really, well, that agrees with femininity or masculinity. Maybe I'm, I don't know, maybe the thing is that I am too hetero, aren't I?" (Pamela 575-8, stress added). Although Pamela rejects the link between femininity (gender) and biology (sex) on grounds of it being the 'natural' way ("it has been made like this"), she nevertheless adheres to a collectively defined notion of what makes up the appropriate container for femininity. As a result, Pamela criticises those transsexuals that operate their genitals before transforming their appearances into those of the transsexualized sex: "I am against it, it doesn't look good" (Pamela 597, stress added). 108

The position Pamela spells out so clearly actually underlies all transsexuals' desire to change their bodies, namely, the belief that there is a 'proper' image or form their body should have in order to be able to 'express' their personalities and, in sum, their identities understood as gendered: "I think that femininity must be done in a feminine body, and masculinity in a masculine body [...] Otherwise I see it a bit ridiculous: a female body as a male truck driver" (Pamela 566-7). 109 The Matrix law of compulsory heterosexuality prescribes arrangements for sensations and associated meanings that preserve coherence between genitals and identity along heterosexual lines. The heterosexual norm underlying the normative 'aesthetic' laws that Pamela defends appears in her self-doubts about being 'too hetero' (Pamela 589). 110

Confirming the importance of surface in defining gender is the fact that the role models cited by MTF transsexuals refer to visual images. 111 For instance, Silvia mentions German supermodel Claudia Schiffer: "if I could be like Claudia Schiffer well maybe... then yes, perfect. She is the prototype of ideal beauty" (Silvia 625-627). 112 It is not uncommon amongst Spanish MTF transsexuals to cite show business celebrities as role models: "I'm quite mythomaniac. I like very much

108 Although, originally the term 'aesthetic' refers to a mode for organising and making sense of sensations expressed in a certain visual form, in its modern folk usage 'aesthetic' refers to conformance to consensual beauty standards. Concerning the importance of achieving normative aesthetic appearance for transsexualisation Kessler and MacKenna report that male doctors rely on their own responses to the beauty of the patient in order to decide the suitability of surgery (1978: 118). Hence, physical attractiveness, that is, proper aesthetic appearance, in MTF transsexuals is an important element for the positive prognosis in male to female change.

109 In Spanish "truck driver" (camionero) is often used to refer to a butch woman.

110 This is an accusation generally levelled at the transsexual community by gay rights groups: "they say transsexuals are very hetero. Some of us very much, others less. It looks like I'm quite a lot (heterosexual), aren't I?" (Pamela 588-92).

111 Unlike MTFs, FTM transsexuals do not cite role models, with the only exception of Ronnie who cites two sportsmen: Craig Norman, a golf player, and Alan Shearer, a footballer (Ronnie 1092-3). It seems that the view of masculinity is not so much focussed on appearance as females.

112 Similarly, Raymond (Raymond 1995: 216) mentions a study about Transgender Nation in San Francisco in which transgendered individuals aimed to look like American supermodel Cindy Crawford.
movie and theatre actresses, singers" (Elsa 951-2). Other celebrities mentioned are: "Grace Jones (1980s black model and singer) for breaking standards about feminine looks [...] Madonna for not being conventional [...] Cher for looking great at 50" (Silvia 678-88). Albeit some celebrity transsexuals are also cited, such as Caroline Casey "because she has tried to do a lot for transsexuals" (Gwen 504), or Bibi Andersen, a well-known Spanish actress and entertainer; both figures are also remarkable for successfully impersonating a stereotyped image of the sexy woman.

The empirical research reveals how collective definitions of the ideal gender for normative identification are often incarnated by role models and establishes the star system and beauty as objects of identification for FTM transsexuals, thus revealing commodity aesthetics as an important feature of transsexuals' change as it is in drag. Media images of ideal gender feature importantly in MTFs' accounts, thus revealing the importance of the media in creating visual models for feminine gender that define the standards of acceptable social identity.

Often the success of passing is guaranteed by the ability to look like a fashion model. The main marketing tool for the courses offered by the company La-zarus Training is a couple of 'before/after' photographs in its advertising leaflet showing director, Stephenie Robinson, in the male

113 This was confirmed by lawyer Sra. Maria Lluisa Fernández, who has observed that Spanish transsexuals aim to appear as show-biz personalities and choose names which recall exotic characters or movie personalities. I have tried to keep the flavour of these names in the pseudonyms I choose for the Spanish interviewees. It might not be immediately apparent to an English speaker that names such as Elsa or Pamela are not common Spanish names but exotic names from media stars. Other names, such as Elias and Gabriel, are also unusual male names in the social milieu and generation of the interviewees.

114 FTM Elias also cites Cher as precedent for the legitimacy for treating the body as an artefact: "Cher also operates on herself, doesn't she?" (Elias 689).

115 Only exceptionally role models are cited for reasons other than their appearances. For instance, "Teresa of Calcutta or people like that who devote themselves to others which I find very admirable" (Silvia 677); or Tina Turner: "because she was able to break with her past life and make a new life for herself" (Maria 674-5).

116 Interest in appearances is collectively defined as a feminine trait which is set in opposition to masculinity which is, according to interviewees, much more restricted concerning the expression of their selves through emotions, appearance, gesture and self-care. In turn, FTMs' accounts reveal the importance of social status and self-assertiveness for the definition of masculinity. Their lack of citation of visual models discloses the lesser importance given to image in masculinity. See Morris (1995: 583) for an overview of the importance of commodity aesthetics, the gaze and gender as surface performance in drag.

117 Billings and Urban report the efforts of MTFs to imitate "a commodified image of femininity seen in television advertising. In so doing, many patients are themselves transformed into commodities, resorting to prostitution to pay their medical bills" (Billings and Urban 1982: 278). For references on "the correlation between financial dependency during reassignment and prostitution" see Billings and Urban 1982: 278, n. 23. Concerning prostitution it is worth noting a very controversial claim by Greenberg (Greenberg quoted in Raymond 1995: 216) qualifying prostitution as part of the "coming of age" for transsexuals. In spite of acknowledging that many transgendered individuals, especially pre-operatives, work as prostitutes for economic necessity, Greenberg considers prostitution as "part of the discovery process that a transgendered woman [sic] may go through... It's a sort of coming-of-age, a part of the transition, an identifying and validation process" (ibid.: 216). Greenberg's view clearly entails a notion of female's sexuality as something to buy and sell since he interprets the commercialisation of women's body in which transsexual prostitutes participate as part of the transsexual process of feminisation. Thus, Greenberg not only sanctions a notion of females' sexuality as a trading commodity, he can also be fairly accused of "idealising sexual exploitation and prostitution in the name of transgender transformation, identity and maturity" (Raymond 1995: 216).
and the female role. The company offers to teach the "expertise [...] used to move from the male to the
female role" as illustrated by the photographs (Robinson 1996). The credibility of the company is
based in Stephenie's ability to achieve a feminine image close to the standards of beauty defined in
fashion. Indeed, her biography, also presented in the leaflet, features very importantly her success as a
professional photographic model as a sign of her successful passing. The role of modelling and fashion
images in transsexuals' self-perception seems important: "I came to think that being what I am you
have to portray, for your own self-esteem, you have to portray this image of a woman that everybody
perceives as in the / the fashion magazines: you have to be made up, fully made up, hands done, nails
polished, your hair done all the time. Really, not quite dressed to kill but neat, smartly dressed" (Gwen 648-51). Some transsexuals invest a great deal in order to successfully mime media's gender
myths: "I just have this picture that I work harder at being a woman than what they do" (Gwen
670).118

Transsexuals reveal the importance of body surface and appearance in signalling a gender
identity conceived as residing in an abstract inner space. The notion of the aesthetic as defined in
commodity standards functions like a norm defining proper gender appearance. This confirms the
Matrix's enforcement of standards of identity which function as a language which importantly features
visual clues.119 Conformity to the Matrix standards of identity makes social life orderly and
predictable and thus ensure the stability of gender.

6.5 THE HM IS A COLLECTIVE GOOD

The Matrix's standards of identity, just like the folk psychological standards of rationality,
function as a collective good solving the problem of reproduction. The HM reduces arbitrariness in
judgements of similarity, thus facilitating interaction by increasing predictability. As a collective good
the HM is protected by collective constraint and sanctioning in the citation of Matrix's categories to
ensure stability of meaning. Its norms are reinforced through emotions, such as grief, shame, pride and
so on; and through constant monitoring of the self. Compliance to the HM's laws is obligatory and
failure to conform results in abjection, unless justified by a medical condition. There is an overlap
between the Matrix standards of identity, folk psychological standards of rationality, and morality.

118 Some transsexuals, such as Dr. Nicky Gardner (1996), are aware that transsexuals are not alone in struggling
to fit their own gender, but that most members of the collective are also doing it. She mentions the book Beauty
Secrets (The Women's Press) about the tyranny of proper feminine appearance.

119 The sociological and ethical relevance of the cultural meanings incarnated by media images suggests further
empirical research on media and finishing schools as a source for data on normative genderisation, and on
metaphors of cleanliness in relation to abjection as indicated in the present study.
6.5.1 CONSTRAINING AND SANCTIONING

This section presents transsexuals' reports on external and internal constraints. External forms of constraint comprise: visual surveillance of appearance, humiliation, pathologisation and moral condemnation, verbal and physical violence, legislation, and so on. Internal sanctioning mechanisms include: feelings of embarrassment, shame, debasement and abjection. All forms of constraint exemplified in the following sections attest to the Matrix standards of identity as a collective good protected by collective sanctioning.

6.5.1.1 The gaze of the other

Given that gender membership depends in the first place on appropriate self-presentation, social monitoring of gender bears great relevance in social life. This section presents instances of social and personal monitoring of the self, primarily at the visual level. Since sanctions partly work on inner space, the social monitoring of the self is continuous in adults, even in solitude. Though all members of the collective are subjected to the Matrix's norms and sanctions, this particularly affects transsexuals who are constantly monitoring themselves and others' reactions to their appearances and acts, since their social worth and self-esteem depend heavily on a proficient gender performance and heavy harassment can ensue from unsuccessful presentation.

Reports of intense surveillance appear very early in the lives of some interviewees: "when my tendency was discovered I was ten and when I was eleven I was taken to a boarding school and there was pressure to behave like a man, right? [...] nobody was as controlled and surveyed as me. I think that my family told them what was going on, right? So, I couldn't disappear out of the sight of the priests for more than three minutes" (Maria 141-155). Street harassment is common: "everybody pokes fun at you, don't they? They tell you silly things anywhere you walk..." (Maria 147-8). The operation helps relieve the necessity of constant self-monitoring, since it can give "lots of self-assurance in the sense that // that one can, one doesn't have to monitor so much [...] how one dresses [...] one's demeanour" (Elias 118-9). However, the monitoring of self does not stop after surgery: "my body now? Ah, the body is not really that important. The mind is now at rest, or I would say / ninety five per cent at rest. The rest of it is how people see you. Do they see a woman? Or do they see a transvestite? [...] my big problem is what people see. I don't know and that is always going to nag at my mind" (Gwen 403-6, 703-6).

Public passing is so important that often transsexuals carefully anticipate their give-away signs and how to control them: "when you are six foot tall and male acting as a female you only need

120 Its importance is undeniable since: "social monitoring always has an evaluative component and gives rise, therefore, to either pride or shame" (Scheff 1990: 82).

121 See also Silvia 330-1; Carol 221, 227-35; Gwen 698.

122 MTF interviewees often sought reassurance about their looks from me.
one very small thing to give you away or to start people's mind thinking and, in my case, it will be the voice. I do go shopping but what I'll do is go to a supermarket where I don't have to say anything. When I come to the check out, because I'm not confident enough and I haven't had enough speech therapy and practice, I will almost mouth the words, I won't say them out loud. I make sure that the assistant is looking at me and really the assistant will be almost lip reading me" (Jane 1 751-8).

Transsexuals prepare themselves to face social reproval. For instance, Maria followed an assertive "transpersonal therapy" to achieve her motto - "be yourself" (Maria 410) - and to develop an attitude towards society in terms of theatre. To Maria there are three important elements in the scene of her life: the protagonist i.e. herself; the chorus i.e. those close to her (though "whether one listens to them it depends"); the set i.e. the people who do not matter ("it does not move, it does not speak, one does not have to stumble with it") (private communication). Maria performs consciously: "what you are doing is theatre" (Maria, private conversation), and it is precisely the awareness of being like a performer at work that helps some transsexuals to distance themselves from other's reactions.

Spaniards feel very strongly about conforming to the prescribed aesthetic appearance: "when I hear them saying: I've already had the operation and, nevertheless / they still look like men because they've done nothing to themselves [...] I think that it does not, it does not look right. Because I say to myself: before having the operation change yourself to a female, OK? Act like her and be like them. Be yourself, right? One doesn't have to be a copy of a female, right? And then, well, act like a woman and be like them when you really physically can, OK? For the sake of society, for the sake, FOR YOUR OWN SAKE" (Pamela 593-601, stress added). Hence, Pamela is acutely aware of the social and personal importance of appearances and she dislikes the lack of proficiency in achieving a normative gender appearance among those transsexuals who prioritise genital operation over visual appearance.

Conformity to visual standards of identity is a control mechanism that also works through individuals self-esteem: "a moment arrives when one ends up decaying, that is, one ends up getting depressed, being aware of the situation that, of course, one goes to the beach, one goes to certain places and certain age and / no, one is not, one is not comfortable. One doesn't feel quite clean, you know? That is, it is a question of cleanliness, of, of, of coherence too, also personal (coherence)" (Elsa 83-7, stress added). Public spaces of great visual exposure, like the beach, poignantly indicate that either one is prepared to face disapproval for not conforming, or one feels uncomfortable: "ah, cleanliness, I am referring to how people see you too, right? a bit. The thing is, here we must play a bit

123 See also Brenda 225-6.
124 As I pointed out in the previous Section 6.4.2 on The Aesthetic as Normative, there are finishing schools for transsexuals providing training for achieving competence in performing gender. Incidentally, the film Paris is Burning showed the intense training gay cross-dressers would undergo before displaying their female impersonations on the catwalk of their ball. One of the marking categories of the ball competition is realness. The participants also mentioned the constant self-monitoring they did on the street in order to avoid being read as effeminate gays.
with what we have, unfortunately, we must live with people, right?" (Elsa 94-6). It is interesting how Elsa refers to her intended adjustment to normative gender ideals as responding to a will for 'cleanliness' and 'coherence' towards self and others.125 This metaphor reveals the extent to which social recognition affects self-perception in terms of 'clean' and 'proper', or 'dirty' and 'debased'.

The public gaze is not only present in the face-to-face perceptions of transsexual people but also through the media. Beingouted in television or the papers is a constant source of trouble for transsexuals: "we got a bloody reporter at a blessing that is VERY private. And the, I had nightmares [...] I was / just totally worried in case a reporter would find out or whatever, it would be putting it in the papers or in the television and it was like... I couldn't, I couldn't cope with something like that. So, there's always pressure there to keep hidden // in case somebody finds out and tells somebody. It's not for any reason except I just want to be part of the crowd, I don't want to be singled out in what I'm doing because my life is difficult enough without added pressures of, of the, the media" (Ronnie 118-26). Jane was outed by the newspapers (Jane 2 243) and "a freelance journalist was trying to get hold of me as well" (Gwen 260).

6.5.1.2 Experiencing Pressure

All interviewees report social pressure to fit in and it permeates their discourse. For instance, Elias refers to "being imprisoned in a [...] gender imposed by society" requiring him "to behave or talk as such (a girl)" as well "wear(ing) particular clothes, to have a certain ID card [...] speak(ing) in a particular gender" (Elias 69-70, 291, 275-6).126 There is also pressure to be heterosexual: "for instance when one is fifteen they ask you: do you already have a boyfriend? [...] They already assumed that one is already heterosexual [...] it is something imposed" (Gabriel 209-11); to deny homoerotic desire: "at the beginning one does not know what one is and wants to hide it always, right? Because one thinks one is homosexual and says: ugh! I must hide it! " (Pamela 146-7); to marry (Ronnie 376-7); and pressure to be sexually active: "nowadays if you haven't had sex you're, you are abnormal and they look upon you as strange" (Ronnie 392-6).127

As a result "one does not dare to express one's personality. This would be pressure" (Silvia 241-6). Transsexuals explain that "pressure is not often expressed. Pressure is subliminal, right?" (Maria 164-6), and even "invisible" (Carol 192) and "subtle" that "have to do with the way you hold your body, the way you speak, what kind of voice you use, how do you hold your cigarette, hmm // [sigh] // [sigh] //" (Brenda 559-63). Not conforming to such norms results in coercion: "when one is a boy, but a very feminine boy, one receives very strong social pressure and segregation" (Silvia 31-2).

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125 Morris uses the same metaphor: "I felt above all deliciously clean. The protuberances I had grown increasingly to detest have been scoured for me. I was made, by my own light, normal" (Morris 1974: 133).
126 See also Gabriel 188-90, Maria 157-8.
127 Also Justin 235, Gwen 72-6.
Since social pressure regulates acceptability it has consequences with regards to the way in which transsexual subjects perceive themselves, that is, it becomes internalised: "one even tries to pressure oneself because one think one's crazy" (Maria 144). Indeed, interviewees explain that "when [...] one meets certain rejection, the first reaction is to question oneself" (Silvia 87-8).\(^\text{128}\) Transsexuals' accounts of feelings of shame, their self-questioning, the shame markers in their speech, and their concern about their 'abnormality' are all products of social exclusion for deviating from gender norms. Since this exclusion entails a threat to the social bond, transsexuals perceive it as a reflection on themselves that results in fear of social disconnection. Reinforcement of conformity is often exerted through emotions such as shame, guilt, grief or dejection.\(^\text{129}\) Feelings of shame and guilt are relieved by the decision to transexualise.

As a consequence of feeling that they "did not fit in the social domain" (Silvia 258),\(^\text{130}\) most transsexuals become socially isolated: "I just chuntered through childhood and adolescence feeling very / misplaced, very wrong and confused and unhappy" (Brenda 58-60).\(^\text{131}\) Although transsexuals often mention they felt they had to hide their feelings, their reactions to the question whether they have felt guilty range from acknowledgement to denial of guilt and shame. I see guilt as a sign of interviewees taking social pressure upon themselves, and thinking that their difference is their own fault, not society's. At times, initial feelings of guilt and shame are turned into criticising society, particularly in the case of Spanish interviewees.\(^\text{132}\) There is often unacknowledged shame since at times guilt is admitted in response to a particular question, but denied in another, as the following quotes by British FTM Ronnie show: "I do a bit feel a bit guilty about what, the mutilation that, that I need to do to my body to be confident and to be, feel like I'm ME" (Ronnie 176-8, also 186). Later in the interview, Ronnie contradicts himself: "feel guilty? I don't know. The answer is no because / because I believe that there is a greater // I believe in reincarnation so I believe that when I die my soul is going to go on and I'll be reborn elsewhere, as someone else" (Ronnie 232-4).\(^\text{133}\) It seems that

\(^{128}\) Maria 463-8 reports a similar reaction.

\(^{129}\) Scheff distinguishes two types of shame: acknowledged and unacknowledged. Both types begin with "a perception of the negative evaluation of self" and "involve the victim in rigid and distorted reactions to reality" (Scheff 1990: 87). In order to make this text more fluid I have omitted non-verbal markers of shame and embarrassment such as speech disruption, static speech and long pauses.

\(^{130}\) See also Carol 206-0, 139, 60-4.

\(^{131}\) Also Justin 43-7 and 280-1, Carol 60.

\(^{132}\) I will deal with these critiques in Section 6.6.3. To fit or not to fit.

\(^{133}\) On occasion unacknowledged shame surfaces in non-verbal markers of shame, such as speech disruption, stammering, repetitions, 'static' speech (such as 'well', 'huh', or longs pauses), speeding up, and so on. FTMs seem more prone to display unacknowledged shame than MTFs. Except for Justin, the other FTM interviewees (Elias, Gabriel and Ronnie) are rather reluctant to admit guilt, shame or jealousy. This might be due to the perceived need to cite the Matrix's platitude that prescribes that men are less prone to emotions than women (see Section 6.2.1.2 on Citation of folk sexology). In contrast, jealousy was mostly expressed by MTFs, again with the only exception of FTM Justin who declared penis envy (Justin 44).
whereas in the first quote Ronnie reports his feelings, in the second he talks about what he should be feeling to defend his transexualisation.

Reports of acknowledged shame are focussed on the perception of the body: "I was always very embarrassed at school, in the showers, I always made excuses not to go in the showers. I didn’t like my own genitals and / and now I think it is that I have always, from a kid, I’ve always been very, very busty" (Jane 1 26-9, see also 81, 63-5, 122-3). At times the acknowledged guilt is focussed solely on the family reaction, not surprisingly, given its important role in transmitting and preserving social values: "no, I don’t feel guilty about that at all! The only guilt trip I went down was the / the effect it would have on my family" (Gwen 66-7). Gwen’s strongest point of reference with regards to the norms she is potentially challenging is obviously her family. On the other hand, providing they accept the sex-change, families can also become a safe haven for feeling protected and reassured. Thus, young Pamela declares she never felt guilty (Pamela 60). Pamela was at all times supported by her family, hence she did not experience a great deal of social pressure in comparison to other transsexuals, as she herself acknowledged.

Transsexuals consistently report attempts to fit in: "I’ve tried to / fit in society and be / one like everybody else" (Carol 64). The attempts to "push the male side" (Jane 1 260) range from doing “hypermasculine activities [...] to give a public perception that I was male” (Carol 17-9), to making "quite a lot of sexist comments and jokes" (Jane 1 254-5). The efforts can involve social conduct: "when I was / still trying to give a male presentation, I did try to live it and to have a female partner. But I’ve always saw them as being a friend. To me the thought of having intercourse with them and penetrating them, that was not an attractive option" (Carol 440-4); sexual conduct: "rather than desire, it was self-imposed, right? To be honest, when one thinks that it (the desire to be transsexual) would go away by fucking with the maximum number of women that you come across. I did this because I thought this was the way to fix my head, right?" (Maria 480-3); or even parenting children, both for males (Maria 714), and for females: "I wanted to rebel against what was happening to me, right? Then I thought, well, maybe the last step... because they say that maternity... I don’t know. It is the last step that I’m going to do that really would tell me what I am, right? And it was when, it was in the last step when I thought: really this is not your world!" (Gabriel 140, 172-5, see also 179-86). Interviewees’ efforts to fit with their original sex reveals lack of awareness of the gender ideal as unattainable myths. Hence, the findings support Butler’s notion of the Matrix hiding its workings as nature’s work.

134 For more examples of unacknowledged shame see Jane 105-116, Ronnie 110-2, Gabriel 217-9, Silvia 100-2, and Elias 103-115. For a contradiction of Elias’ ostentation of control and rationalisation of emotion see Elias 506-12. Concerning shame for being socially perceived in the unwanted role, see Pamela 148-51 and Gabriel 496-9.

135 Also Ronnie 122, 143.

136 Also Silvia 96.
In spite of their efforts to fulfil the HM requirements, transsexuals perceive they do not succeed in achieving the ascribed gender ideal: "I have tried in my life to live with the body that I was born with but that is not satisfactory. [...] And so I tried over many years to balance this somehow in my life but, again it hasn't worked" (Brenda 3-6). When these subjects realise that, in spite of their efforts, they are not succeeding in conforming themselves to the normative gender ideals, they feel grief: "when you realise on feedback that you are not succeeding as a male, I think that tends to rub it in" (Carol 66).\(^{137}\) It seems that dejection is unavoidable for it appears even when transsexuals' efforts to fit are in some sense successful: "when one is repudiating it (one's transsexualism) one tries to function with the genital and the sex that corresponds to oneself, and if you manage it's really shitty!, right? [...] It's even worse. If you manage it is even worse" (Maria 75-6), because "I don't want to be inside here! (her male body). Then what one does is, well, to embitter one's existence, right? One thinks that really, that is, that one is mad. That is, if I hadn't functioned as male (sexually), I wouldn't have had any problem. But since I functioned well, this created in me a confusion that lasted for many years" (Maria 66-70). Maria presents as evidence of the fundamental necessity of sex change a feeling of dejection that cannot be dispelled even by the perceived success in attaining the gender ideal.

At times, the impossibility of standing their embarrassment pushes these subjects into self-damaging behaviour. For instance, Jane, an alcoholic whose drinking had led to a weight problem, thinks that repressing her wish to be a woman was "what the drinking was all about" (Jane 1 223, see also 404-9) - "at twenty-three stone thinking about gender reassignment just wasn't on" (Jane 1 65). Sometimes subjects doubt whether they should initiate the transsexualising process or simply deal with the grief: "the norms: you should just, you are male, you should just carry on and just live your life. I thought about that deeply, this carrying on living your life. That's the way you were born, carry on. Doesn't matter if you are a bit unhappy, lot of people are unhappy [...] That is a bit of what I think about: whether I should just carry on unhappy in the male role or I should change over and, well, to a large extent facing the unknown" (Carol 397-403).\(^{138}\)

Transsexuals present many examples of concealment and repression of feelings: "I kept it all bottled up!" (Gwen 11).\(^{139}\) Far from releasing tension, repressing shame results in an increase of guilt: "I thought: this is something strange, I've got to keep this inside me. Put it away into a box somewhere [...] and so, I have gone through life feeling just wrong" (Brenda 31-6). Hence, as a result of pressure strong feelings of shame and feelings of inadequacy arise: Elias describes walking into the female changing room as a "via cruce" (Elias 377, 379); Maria says that before the operation she felt her life "was like Chinese torture [sigh]" (Maria 507). These quotes show how the repression of guilt and shame hinders it being grieved. Lack of acknowledgement of grief decreases the individual's self-

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\(^{137}\) For illustrations of grief ensuing from failure to conform see also Pamela 254-6, 270-1.

\(^{138}\) See also Ronnie 862, 843-4.

\(^{139}\) Also Brenda 25-31, Justin 276-7, Jane 2-3.
esteem even further and places him or her in a vulnerable position from which social pressure cannot be withstood. Hence, inability to grieve the impossibility of achieving the gender ideal reduces individuals' self-esteem thus weakening their resistance to social coercion.¹⁴⁰

Jane offers a particularly poignant example of refusal to grieve and the ensuing distress that I will explore at some length. Jane insistently cites the medical standard "hate to genitals" but contradicts herself later in the interview by declaring regret about losing her genitals without ever having heterosexual intercourse. Jane's embarrassment for not fitting as a man is patent: "I wish I had, have had a sexual relationship and still, you know? when the operation does take place, that will be many years if it need to be, and that's one thing I think I will regret is / if I hadn't had a sexual relationship by then, is not / not experiencing before it's too late [...] I, you know / would regret [sigh]. For forty years I had the equipment to be able to. OK, I haven't used it but I / you know is like you regret, I think, that I / if I hadn't had a sexual relationship by the time I have the operation, it will always be that thought at the back of my mind, you know?: [sigh] what would it have been like?" (Jane 131-142). In spite of her embarrassment about her male genitals, Jane declares she would like to penetrate a woman: "If the opportunity arose, I think yeah now, I think I would do. Yeah, definitely, ah / It's got to the stage now where I don't really care what people think about me [...] So, if I did have a sexual relationship / ah // I wouldn't be embarrassed about the size of my genitals or the size of my boobs. Not now. Yeah, I would like to have a relationship before / before it's too late. Just to know what is like. But, sadly, it wouldn't change the way I feel [...] I mean, I feel I am a lesbian. That's how I feel. And / having sex is not going to change the way that Jane feels about things. Jane would want / be wanting a lesbian relationship" (Jane 144-57).

Jane is obviously ashamed of her body as a man and disturbed by her perceived lack of conformity with the masculine gender ideal. The fact that she can only conceive of conquering her shame once she thinks of herself as a transsexual - and hence not expected to conform to the masculine myth - reveals transexualisation as a strategy to relieve oneself from pressure and embarrassment. As Jane explains, although she is prepared to have sex with a woman with her own male genitals, she does not even contemplate a possible successful outcome of this potential heterosexual sex act that could deter her from the path she has fixed for herself: to transform into a woman. Clearly, Jane's identity and self-esteem are anchored in her identification with the transsexual label.¹⁴¹ Jane's case exemplifies the fact that relief from shame and guilt comes from the realisation that not fitting in properly is one of the defining characteristics of gender dysphoria.

¹⁴⁰ According to Scheff, unacknowledged shame makes individuals more vulnerable to social pressure: "subjects who yield to the majority where those who attempted to avoid the embarrassment (shame) of appearing different from the group" (Scheff 1990: 90).

¹⁴¹ See also Justin (147-52) and Silvia (89-94) for accounts showing relief from shame provided by identifying as transsexual.
The guilt and shame that ensues from their failure to conform results in low self-esteem and higher vulnerability to pressure. Interviewees elude their shame by turning themselves into a category in which not-fitting is taken for granted. However, transexualisation is not a readily acceptable category since it involves a certain degree of unfaithfulness to the Matrix's norms. As I will show in the following sections, transsexuals face social reproval also in their new category.

6.5.1.3 Abjection

The empirical research reveals abjection as another mechanism to protect the stability of meaning of the HM categories. Transsexuals report feeling dehumanised and having an "inferiority complex because of the messages they receive from society and the sociological bombing that makes them feel, feel strange, like funny persons, different" (Silvia 56-8), or "odd and awkward" (Justin 281). As a consequence of social apprehension, transsexuals perceive themselves as abject: "my self-confidence has just hit bottom and it's only because the length of time that everything has taken and I'm neither male nor female just now, I'm an IT at this precise moment" (Ronnie 900-2, stress added). The space of the neutral "IT" is that of a dehumanised entity not conforming to the Matrix's identity standards. Those persons who are "neither one thing nor the other" (Justin 282), that is, who do not fit with the Matrix's binary gender categories, do not qualify as human. Maria provides another illustration: "one's appearance is very strange, right? One's appearance is in 'no-man's land' and then you are very noticeable, aren't you?" (Maria 234-5). The abjected is precisely this 'no-man's land', the space that defines the outer limits of the acceptable, outside which one does not qualify as 'somebody' human. In sum, lack of conformity to the Matrix's norms results in transsexuals perceiving themselves as "a little monster, a piece of meat [...] a strange animal" (Elsa 22, 368), hence as a non-human entity or dehumanised matter.

The abjected functions as coercive for the members of the collective to keep within the limits of acceptable identities. Several mechanisms are used to define abjection. An important one is to define it in opposition to the 'natural' order; in other words, all that goes 'against nature', defined as a realist category by the Matrix, is 'abject' by definition. A second mechanism to enforce conformity is presenting transsexualism as a risk group, by "relating transsexuality to prostitution to drugs to AIDS.

142 According to Scheff (1990), conforming results from the interaction of individual and situational components. This interaction may be modified by the ability of certain individuals to manage shame and hence to be able to withstand the social pressure that a non-conformist action elicits. The individuals who are able to withstand social pressure are those with a high self-esteem and sense of self-worth. It is precisely those individuals who do not acknowledge shame that are more prone to yield to pressure to conform. The degree of social control exerted on an individual depends on his/her ability to manage shame.

143 Often the distress for not conforming is transformed into a social critique of sorts by virtue of a socially acceptable medical condition.

144 The self-perception of being a dehumanised being due to lack of gender definition corresponds with social responses. Whittle quotes the sheriff involved in the case of FTM Brandon Teena as saying "you can call it 'it' as far as I'm concerned" (Whittle 1996: 91).
It is a way society has of marginalising, right? A way of putting a barrier between them and us. To say: well, this transsexual has problems with drugs and prostitution, since I am never going to be like this, I'm never going to come into it, right?" (Gabriel 54-7). There seems to be a clear distribution of symbolic domains: "you know what is going on? That since they (prostitutes) are the worst of society... for instance, rich people are associated with success, money, trips... All the good stuff goes with them, right? Then, to us (correspond) prostitution, pimps, stabbing, all that society rejects, right? (Gabriel 588-99).

The sphere of the unwanted is also marked as polluting through the use of clean/dirty metaphors: "I don't want to become well / a / an older transsexual with a masculine organ, right? What is understood as masculine. I would feel dirty, yes. I would feel dirty / with that there for so many years. Do you understand me?" (Elsa 107-9, stress added). Elsa uses the same metaphors also to refer to her motivations: "I don't feel clean, right? That is, it is a already a question of cleanliness" (Elsa 86, stress added). Normative conformity feels like 'cleanliness' whereas incoherence or discontinuity is 'dirty' and debased, and therefore abjected and marginalised. These metaphors are not only used to refer to genital incoherence but also to body surface. Maria, for instance, explains how she feels after her weekly electrolysis session: "man! I leave the place with a clean face [laugh]" (Maria 655).

A third mechanism to constitute an abjected outside is to present it as deserving correction. Transsexuals consistently report collective sanctioning: "everybody believes they can treat transgendered persons without respect" (Maria 219). Indeed, transsexuals seem to be perceived as persons to practise violence on: "some other neighbours found out and tipped off the local yobos who then throw stones and balloons filled with water at the house and all these sort of things. Because it is just somebody that you can harass" (Carol 227-8, stress added). These accounts attest for the abjection of transsexuals as that dehumanised space that marks the outer limits of acceptability since the abject is that which does not have a socially recognised identity and, hence, no social bonds. Sometimes transsexuals connect their position with other groups: "this oppression they are using day by day against women, they use it in an accentuated form with transsexuals and with, and with prostitutes in the street because, in fact, they are vulnerable" (Elsa 143-4).

Reactions to abjection are not only reported in terms of violence, there are other more subtle ways to repulse and marginalise: "there is rejection and also distance. On the one hand there is some respect but on the other [...] people take it as something alien to them. In this sense there is a void when making friends for instance, when trying to establish social relations, to meet guys" (Silvia 344-7). The 'void' or distance reported by interviewees is the other people's refusal to even reflectively engage with the transsexual category, which, as a consequence, is not even acknowledged. In contrast with this void, interviewees report that sexual availability of transsexuals is taken for granted: "they see you are transsexual and they automatically consider you a prostitute. In any disco it is / it is taken for granted that I am going to be easy prey or that I am easy and that they can make offensive remarks
without risk of frightening me, right? Ah! If you get frightened then you are funny or a strange person, right? I mean these things happen" (Elsa 151-4).

In sum, transsexuals are generally "in a TOTALLY marginalised position!" (Elsa 198). In order to fence back abjection, social repulsion and unwanted demands, transsexuals must engage in cultural work, an activity demanding a considerable investment: "it's VERY cumbersome having to always justify yourself" (Elsa 548), and at times it fuels reaction: "this (violence) also helps you to fight for your rights and the rights of those who come after you" (Gabriel 670).

6.5.1.4 Punishment

Transsexualism exemplifies the social disciplining of those individuals who deviate in any way from the Matrix's prescription of sex/gender coherence. Until very recently, British law entitled employers to immediately dismiss an employee expressing the wish to undergo a sex-change. Other legal difficulties concerning divorce procedures, marriage, and others also attest to punishment. The range of disciplining mechanisms that transsexuals endure is wide: from murder and street abuse to laughter and criticism. They receive "lots of pressure with regards to insults, for instance, with regards to humiliating conduct, humiliating situations that take place" (Silvia 261-2); insults such as "I know about your sort. You should all be locked up [...] you are child molesters, you are paedophiles, you are... [...] oh, yes, yes, you are puffs, you are this, that..." (Jane 1 170-4); and "a lot of nuisance phone calls" (Jane 1 550).

At times humiliating correction arises within the transsexual's family. Jane reports her sister's reaction when she caught her cross-dressing: "of course, she called me everything under the sun: queer, poof / She went absolutely mad, told me to get out of those clothes, which I did, she then proceeded to, a yellow summer dress, I remember it well, quite short summery dress, she got a pair of scissors and cut it up [...] tore it up, said that she could never ever wear that dress again" (Jane 1 466-72). If the reaction of Jane's sister is interpreted as taking the thing (the dress) for the deed (cross-dressing), it reveals an abjecting attitude towards Jane: the dress was so disgusting to her that she had to destroy it to make her position clear. After this Jane "was absolutely petrified that she would tell them (her parents)" (Jane 1 472-3).

Even before transexualisation, interviewees are intimidated and fear repression: "I found myself very frightened that, you know, somehow this little shelter built around will suddenly break open and I will sort of be there defenceless, like a, like a crab without the shell, kind of thing. And these vultures and everything in the oil rigs will just peck me to death" (Brenda 91-4). Once the change is underway, the fear of violence is even more real: "there's also the anxiety that somebody will be nasty to you in the street, or in the train, or something. Nobody has been" (Brenda 220-1). Brenda is lucky, Carol and others have been publicly insulted and dread it happening again: "I still feel

145 See also Jane 1 330, Carol 333-4.
nervous at times in the wrong situation [...] You are sitting in the traffic lights, there's a car with four of five lads in it. You always wonder: are they going to notice something?, and then start shouting at you. It CAN happen! " (Carol 79-83). 

Carol relates how fear of violence puts people off who would initially be sympathetic but "have nothing more to do with them (transsexuals) or if they are, you know, football hooligans will beat them up. These things happen!" (Carol 389-90). Brenda anticipates rejection from people who "might find it more hard to accept somebody who is breaking those bounds of rigidity" (Brenda 609). However, some of the criticism she awaits is definitely lighter in tone: "since I will be permanently on display, permanently being looked at for weaknesses, for slips, and I'm sure I'll get an awful lot of criticism from women themselves [laugh]: you can't wear those shoes! [laugh], you know? [laugh] [...] Mm, and: you dress pretty badly //" (Brenda 636-9).

There are several strategies transsexuals employ to avoid constraints: discretion (Pamela 417-9), moving house frequently (Elsa 579), or settling in cities because of their anonymity and "lack of control" (Elsa 580, Silvia 326-7). To Carol not only cities but also regional idiosyncrasies affect social acceptance: "(it is) easier, in inverted comas, in London or that area than it is to do it further North you go. Society might not be very accepting. I've been shouted at on the street. It does happen. To develop, to change over in a situation where you are going to have harassment on the street, it's perhaps easier to stay and don't change over. But if one feels that one has to change over, then it's obviously, has to be prepared to put up with this sort of hassles" (Carol 219-224).

Unfortunately, the "hassles" can become sheer physical violence: "I had a girlfriend for two years and a half and her family hit me twice [...] because, no, they wanted a biological person. What they did not want [laugh] was a transsexual, right?" (Gabriel 664-7). Gabriel eventually finished the relationship because "man! Only two choices: you leave it or they kill you! [laugh]. The ball was on my camp, right?" (Gabriel 669). Maria reports violence in the army: "in the military service they tried to kill me twice [...] with a bayonet! [laugh]. Yes, yes, my very same companions" (Maria 168-79). Maria was not only harassed by her companions but also discriminated against by her seniors: "I was / the only soldier [laugh] that did not have ANY permission that year" (Maria 194). 

Though in my sample only two of twelve interviewees reported physical violence, I am very aware that, as Gabriel puts it, "you will meet a lot of cases. Even cases in which the father has hit them, or is mistreating or abusing them" (Gabriel 670-2). Unfortunately, public and private attacks on

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146 Jane is also afraid of violence in traffic (1 758-64) and constantly considers potential harassment (1 160-4, 234-6.

147 It is interesting to note that Maria tells me that in his corps there was "another guy who was a feminine homosexual and he had no problem whatsoever. He spent his time sewing everybody's trousers" (Maria 207-9).
transsexuals are not uncommon. In Barcelona, there was a famous case of a transsexual being stabbed to death by several members of a neo-Nazi group and harassment is common.  

6.5.2 OVERLAPPING STANDARDS

As a psychiatric label transsexualism carries overtones of irrationality. Transsexuals report perceiving their wish to change as denoting mental insanity: "one thinks one's crazy" (Maria 144, 305). Transsexuals report constraints exerted through citation of standards of rationality: "people react with alarm a bit because of / because of the unawareness people have of transsexuality. They think that the moment you become a transsexual that / one is / I don't know, you have, one is / one is like mad or..." (Elsa 577-9). Constraint is exerted through standards of rationality; for instance Mike felt compelled "to keep it quiet for fear of being hospitalised in mental institutions" and for "fear of being labelled freak, pervert" (personal conversation). Often transsexuals themselves fear for their own sanity, thus revealing the internalisation of norms: "I thought I was mad. Then, as a man, one thinks one is mad, right? One thinks this is a mad idea one has to get rid of" (Maria 80-1, also 45, 68).

Judgements of transsexuals' rationality are also related to the social status of their "new" sex, since MTFs are considered to be engaged in downward social mobility. Therefore, in the modern West, a male who expresses the wish to become a female is often deemed to be acting against common sense and reason. Transsexuals in both countries concur in thinking that "male transsexuals (FTMs) are much more accepted than female transsexuals (MTFs)" (Elias 637). There is a general perception that there is less social tolerance for MTF change: "a man that wants to become a woman that is already more, it's worse regarded. Socially there is more guilt put upon it" (Silvia 709-10). Justin points to a biological endorsement of social mobility: "the foetus starts off female, doesn't it? Therefore [...] if a male becomes a female it's a, it's a regression [...] perhaps it's, it's a pro-, it's a progress to become a male! [laugh] whereas, I mean this, this is very anti-feminist but..." (Justin 537-42, 546-8). It is generally agreed that the MTF change is more "dishonourable" (Gabriel 624-6) because FTMs become "a man, right? a first class member of society, right? But to society, not to me, right? But if you change from male to female you become a female and, on top of that, an incomplete one" (Elias 648-50).

148 Violence is not only restricted to Spain but appears in many countries. Recently an Oscar winning American film, "Boys Don't Cry" (1999), portrayed the real story of Brandon Teena, a FTM transgender person raped and murdered in the US in 1993.

149 See also Justin 54-5.

150 According to Williams (Williams 1992: 66), the berdache's wish to become a female was not deemed to be crazy in North American Indian societies, for it did not involve lowering of social role since women enjoyed a high social status and a high level of self-esteem. Williams compares North American Indian societies with societies where women's role is considered lower than male's, such as the contemporary West (see also Shapiro 1991: 270).

151 See also Silvia 702-9. Interviewees agree with Shapiro, who explains the different levels of tolerance for cross-gender behaviour in women and men as due to the fact that FTM are considered as "engaging in an
In fact, transsexualism is often qualified as "irrational" in order to dismiss claims to child custody in divorce cases. Another unwanted consequence of being diagnosed gender dysphoric is that it implies that one cannot resist the allegedly pathological urge to become the other sex. The implication is that the individual's transexualisation is not a question of volition but an inescapable urge. Hence, transsexuals appear as individuals without self-control. Elsa defends herself: "I think that / well I was born male / biologically and I, as my option, personal, decided to make myself female. But it was MY decision! I don't want to be boxed as if it was, as if it was a question I've arrived at because of a / because of a psychic problem, for my duality or schizophrenia. NO. It was because I decided it and I realised that / that I felt right as a female" (Elsa 281-6).

This quote points to the contradiction transsexuals experience in a medical label that both stigmatises and integrates them, for on the one hand it allows sex-change with the aim of 'normalising' the patient, but on the other it can only do so by classifying them under a psychiatric label that implies they are mentally unstable. The fact that the very rationality of subjects is intimately linked to their conformity to the HM denotes a deep connection between what we accept as intelligible and rational, that is what falls within HM's logic, and sanity. The subjects' conformity to gender is ensured through pathologisation of deviance.

Both in Spain and the UK, transsexuals mention pressure to comply with the Matrix's norms in the form of a duty to a moral order. They consistently report constraint through citation of such standards of morality as, for instance, the will of God: "older people who would say, for instance, my grandmother would say: no, the thing is that those who are born like this must respect what God has given them" (Gabriel 413-4). Transsexuals' refer to morality as that which is cited to condemn their change thus revealing how the body is collectively conceived as a natural given which it is appropriate and moral to accept, whereas the artificiality of body alteration is inappropriate and immoral. For instance: "I had to tell my old, an old neighbour in North Berwick [...] And, and / she said to me: 'oh well, of course, if God had meant you to be a boy, He would have made you a boy!' And I thought, well, you see? I feel that / If He meant me to be a girl, He would have made me a girl and He made as, He made me as I am! I suppose it's basically a female body in male mind, or, male, male / aspirations" (Justin 102-108). Hence, the Matrix platitudes associate the non-natural with the immoral.

Transsexuals' positions towards the moral order vary. Given that transsexuals' treatment of the body as an artefact is patently at odds with the standards of morality, they take different positions

understandable project of upward mobility", whereas MTF seem to be voluntarily engaged in downward mobility (Shapiro 1991: 270). Therefore, MTF are perceived as more threatening than FTM because "the latter may constitute a threat to the group concerned with maintaining its privileges, but the former constitute a threat to the principles on which the hierarchy itself is based" (Shapiro 1991: 270).

152 I will come back to this question in Section 6.6.2 Agents or patients?

153 Garfinkel (1967) noted that the obligation to conform is perceived in terms of morality.

154 Justin (102-7) reports the same kind of reaction from an old person, and Jane (514-8), living in the North East of Scotland, fears the local Presbyterian Church.
towards the moral prescriptions. At times they cite God instead of nature as responsible of their predicament: "whoever up there made the mistake" (Jane 111). At other times, sex-change clashes with the subject's religious beliefs: "I also believe in reincarnation of the soul which means I'm in a bit of turmoil with what I'm doing to my body" (Ronnie 173-4). In general, interviewees did not conceive their change as an immoral or irrational disobedience to the Matrix's standards, but as a practical solution to their personal ailment. Indeed, morality does not feature in transsexuals' discourse which is rather about fitting into an established medical label, asserting their legal rights, and getting what they want out of the medical system. At times transsexuals' discourse is clearly commercial as, for instance, when qualifying themselves as a "client group" (O'Keefe 1999: 1), the doctors being the providers of care.

The history of transsexualism as a normativising label ensuring the stability of a binary sex system, reveals an overlap between the Matrix standards and the standards of rationality and morality. Before the 1960s, popular and medical concepts of transsexualism considered transsexuals' mismatch as a question of morality. In the 1950s the new notion of a gendered soul appeared in sexological discourse and opened the way for distinguishing it from the body, which now came to be regarded as possibly 'wrong' (Hirschauer 1997: 4). Thanks to the humanistic endeavour of the medical sciences, transsexuals' predicament was no longer necessarily considered as a moral issue but as a question of mental health that should be treated by correcting the body. However, the category transvestism is considered as a sexual perversion in medical literature. Transvestism is confined to males and it still carries a moral overtone of sexual perversion.

Spanish interviewees cited folk perceptions of transsexualism as a sort of an immorality, a perversion: "people confuse issues a lot and think: ah, well, she is going to remove her breast, well, look, well....! It's a sort of vice. I don't think that people do it as a vice" (Gabriel 520-1, stress added); Pamela too reports she had been insulted as "poof, of course, from poof to worse and they call you vicious, they call you everything. Since they think that transsexuality must be a vice and nothing else..." (Pamela 289-91, stress added). The high number of transsexual prostitutes is also cited as a folk argument for linking transsexualism with immorality: "female transsexual: prostitution, prostitution: evil. And this is said by those who enjoy prostitution. You are evil but, the usual: accepted at night, marginalised by day" (Elias 653-4).

On the question of prostitution, interviewees' reports on the heterosexual comedy and on free-riding the Matrix provide further support for considering the Matrix as a collective good. Elsa denounces free-riding of the Matrix when remarking on the hypocrisy of the clients of transsexual prostitution who pretend socially to be heterosexual heads of family: "the man that goes to the street (travesti prostitutes) is indifferent. He doesn't mind whether one has had the operation or not, right? even whether you are a male prostitute, you see?" (Elsa 228-9); "these are gentlemen who have a double life! [...] because you must take into account that the way they behave with oneself in the street is not the same as they behave with their families, nor with their daughters, neither with their... These
are people who get easily horrified. These are people who get horrified and fearful about anything. But when they are there (in the street) it seems that it is THEY who wear a mask" (Elsa 146, 169-172).155 Spaniards also denounced what Butler calls the heterosexual comedy: "I've seen life from a different perspective. The fact that I've seen many men who desire me and they experience it as a hidden desire which it's OK as long as it is not known, but socially they must preserve their macho status, has made me question several things [...] Well, for instance, that it is all a bit, that there is a lot of farce. A lot of farce with regards to the stories man/woman, couple relationships and all that. One wonders, well, let's see, is all this so significant? Is there so much love, so much monogamous relationship?" (Silvia 535-42).

In Spain, there seems to be a complex relation between the existence of a moral order - stronger, in so far as it is more regularly cited, than in the UK156 - and the generally lower emphasis on citation of medical standards. It might be that moral dispositions to consider transsexualism as perversion are one of the reason for lack of treatment under the public health service. In fact, transsexual surgery in Spain was a crime till 1983. Spanish popular usage of the term travesti, with its connotations of perversity, might be also rooted in the remnants of a moral order that is less influential in the UK. Spanish interviewees mentioned a prurient sexual interest in them: "it is a theme that awakens curiosity, morbidity. It is perceived as exotic and strange and it excites morbidity. Interest on one hand and rejection on the other. That is, on the one hand, eh, with regards to sexual questions with men, it awakens their desire because it is something new, something different that catches their attention. But on the other hand there is refusal because of concerns about what society thinks. Then, you see, two approaches or questions that go closely tied together" (Silvia 348-53). The success of travesti prostitution in Spain and the "morbidity" it provokes could be interpreted as "the pleasure of insurrection" (BTM).

Maria's defence of technology also reveals the existence of a particular moral order and the assumptions, that underlie it: "I think that / well, I think that technology is neither good, nor bad, it depends on how it is used. In principle it is neutral. What happens is that in all times there have been people who FEAR technology. I suppose that, in the beginning of time, there were people who were afraid of the wheel. An artefact 'of the devil', right? or whatever the concept of that moment was" (Maria 556-0, stress added). The complex relation in Spain between the moral and the scientific order is not without its ironies as the following quote shows: "science, thank God, has, has been able to evolve and has given us the facilities thanks to hormones and surgery, to change our body" (Pamela 51-3, stress added). Similarly, Elias compares the Matrix's order with the traditional moral order and

155 See also Jane 1 444-50 and Gabriel 406-9.
156 However, the UK is not uniform and nor is Spain. See Carr (1996) for a report on the strong influence of moral order in Scotland's medical profession.
hopes that, just as changing religion has become acceptable in Spain, sex-change would also become acceptable in the future (Elias 434-8).

6.5.3 SUPPORTING THE MATRIX

People's participation in constraint and sanctioning of the Matrix's standards of identity - that is, their activities as 'I' sanctioners - and their unwillingness to become associated with those classified as abjected - that is, those departing from naturalised sex - signal their commitment to the Matrix's ordering of sexual types. By exerting constraints on others, members of the collective prove to be proficient in sanctioning others' talk, thus defending meaning stability. The collective monitoring of 'I' talk and category application reflects the importance the meaning stability of gender categories since changes in meaning can result in problematisation of one's own categorisation. Hence, for non-transsexuals to accept transsexuals as unproblematic members of their 'new' gender category can destabilise that category and thus the non-transsexuals' gender identity or deservingness. The interest of members of the collective in defending meaning stability supports the theorisation of various meaning categories as interrelated. Further evidence of this surfaces in the expected over-performance of gender in transsexuals, as well as in reactions to transsexuals from the members of their new gender category.

As a measure to protect the category of sex, transsexuals are sometimes expected to perform the most orthodox gender definitions: "often people [...] ponder about things related to us that they wouldn't think about one another" (Elias 160-1). As a consequence of social pressure, over-performance of gender is a self-imposed duty for the purposes of passing: "I tend to find that I'm more overdressed than most other people are and that is because / I have to try to portray the image of a woman [...] I've got to work harder at it than a natural born woman" (Gwen 663-6).

Interviewees report that generally men tend to take the male-to-female change less easily than female-to-male change. MTF Pamela has a theory about her brother's rejection: "maybe that it is because he is a man as well, isn't it? He cannot understand that I rejected the sex that he is so proud of, right? Well I reject it and, maybe this is what he finds more difficult to accept, you see? That he always had a brother and now he has, he has a sister" (Pamela 215-9). Maria is persuaded that women are much more tolerant towards transsexuality than men (Maria 256). Other MTF interviewees confirm this view: "the other girls at work they're fine. The guys are, txt, I think they are a bit frightened of me" (Jane 1 92-3). Hence, some MTFs "just become one of the other 'wifies' at work" (Carol 322). Maria and Justin believe that the MTF change is easier because "women would accept, or do accept a male to female more, better than a man would accept a female to male" (Justin 566-6). 158 Maria offers

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157 See also Carol 40-2, Justin 596-601
158 Also Maria 256.
an explanation: "men are very unsure of their masculinity. Their masculinity depends on their erections. Then, on top of that men consider oneself as a sort of deserter. They never express it as such but they consider it as a desertion, as treason. Besides this creates lots of conflicts of the sort: well, / what if this happens to me too? Right? And this produces a very strong rejection. In contrast women don't have a problem with this. They say: ah, well! If this is how they want to be, let them be, right?"

(Maria 258-63). 159

It seems that males "feel threatened" (Jane 1 97) particularly by MTF change and resent the problematisation of their gender category. The fact is that MTFs are punished by being laughed at: "a male to female is always, can be always a figure for fun [...] a female to male is not, is not funny and can't, can't be funny I somehow feel" (Justin 570-4). Indeed, several FTMs (but by no means all) report real positive reactions from men who "welcomed me to the masculine sex" (Elias 334). 160 It seems that members of both genders dislike those individuals who gave up striving for the ascribed gender ideal and are not prepared to classify them unproblematically in their transsexual gender. 161

However, transsexuals are not solely victims of social abjection, in their policing of boundaries they also rebuke other transgender people. For instance, a number of UK transsexuals condemn transvestites for not wishing to commit themselves to the gender performance corresponding to their genitals, and hence blurring the normative distinction male/female. Transsexual as an acceptable category of identity is being successfully defended by transsexuals' associations at social level. By policing the category's definition and promoting their social integration, transsexuals achieve normalisation and thus resolve the tension provoked by their contradictory choice.

Group relations between homosexual, transvestite and transsexual associations reveal tensions between the normativisation of transsexuality and potentially dissident behaviour concerning the Matrix's sex. The pressure on UK transsexuals to distance themselves from homosexuality in order to conform to normative medical standards is also reflected in the fluctuating relations between gay and transvestite groups and transsexuals' associations. After years of distance and distrust, TS, TV and homosexual groups joined forces in the Gendys' 96 conference. However, this trend has reversed lately and the tendency is again to mark a distance between homosexuals, transvestites and transsexuals. This oscillation reflects a tension between the advantages offered by conforming to medical categories - given that medical diagnosis implies a free operation - and the shortcomings of being perceived as condemnable and subversive of male/female distinctions by associating with homosexual or

159 Jane (1 93, 97-104) offers exactly the same kind of explanation.

160 Positive reactions also reported by Justin 259-63.

161 This could be interpreted as evidence that the desire to leave the ascribed gender category not only disrupts the category itself, but it also awakens the latent grief all subjects feel for never being able to attain the gender ideal. The case study of Nayak and Kehily (1997) on homophobia in schools seems to suggest a similar explanation: "the homophobia of young males is directional [only directed to male homosexuals]. In displaying their homophobia they are able to consolidate their masculine status at the expense of the others" (Nayak and Kehily 1997: 155).
transvestite groups under the umbrella label of 'transgenderism'. Nevertheless, some UK transsexuals identify as homosexual in their new identity.

With respect to group relations the situation is also different in Spain and most particularly in Barcelona, where the local transsexual group is unproblematically linked to homosexual associations and defends freedom of sexual choice. Nevertheless, Spanish transsexuals are concerned with marking differences from homosexuals, as becomes clear in the following quote: "for instance, when we have been invited to a TV program they always ask me: 'are you homosexual?' The thing is that, as transsexual, I can be hetero, I can be gay, I can be bisexual... As a person I can have many sexual tendencies, I don't have to restrict myself to hetero" (Gabriel 399-402). Here, Gabriel seems to be reacting against a Spanish folk belief that equates transsexuals with homosexuals by maintaining that transsexualism is not about sexuality at all, hence it is not about homosexuality or any other form of sexual deviance.

6.6 SUBJECTIVITY AND AGENCY AS COLLECTIVELY DEFINED 'I'-TALK

The theoretical reconstruction offers a theory of subjectivity which gives prominence to social, historical and cultural systems of signification in shaping the subject. In my reconstruction I maintain that the subject is, in part, collectively performed through the citation of self-referential HM platitudes regulating 'I' talk both at the individual and collective level. As shown in previous section, the data confirm that transsexuals' experience self as located in an interior space - a model maintained through the mind/body dualism and a cluster of associated meanings, and reveal a subject who takes him - or herself as their own object. In the following I will present empirical data revealing a subject defined by and dependent on intersubjective relations and collectively defined categories in spite of 'I' talk presenting that subject as autonomous and self-contained. Data on transsexuals' language, body perception and acts support the view that subjective identity results from the performative action of the Matrix's gender categories.

6.6.1 TO BE OR NOT TO BE A FEMALE

The empirical research discloses a strong tension between interviewees' self-identification as transsexuals and their claims to be male or female. In so far as interviewees identified as transsexuals, they adhere to a category that starts off with more difficulties in attaining the Matrix's gender ideal. Brenda, for instance, envisages an enduring sense of distinctness: "I've always been an outsider. I'll

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162 A further difference between Madrid and Barcelona reported by Elsa, concerns the refusal of transsexuals in Madrid to associate with homosexual groups.

163 That is, what Butler refers to as the 'metaphor of interiority'.

164 This appears in a dramatic form in Jane's discourse in which she refers to two distinct selves as 'Jack' and 'Jane', as well as in attitudes to the body as malleable.
probably always have a sense of separateness. I mean, let's face it! [laugh]. However perfect the surgery is, if somebody would go like that and snap!, I will have a female body now, by magic, I would still have forty years of, of living as a man, all the experiences that made me the person as I am, and I can't deny them, I can't pretend that they didn't exist. So, I will always have that feeling of being slightly separate from the world" (Brenda 642-8). Brenda is aware of the importance of the stock of occasions in which one has previously referred to oneself as male or female to constitute one’s own sense of identity. In other words, Brenda is denoting the self-referentiality of the sense of subjectivity.

Hence, the limitations of the sex-change involve more than the body - "no cosmetic surgery of the world can get rid of the memories" (Ronnie 666-70) - with the ensuing restrictions on transsexuals' feelings as deserving subjects in the Matrix's categories: "I don't think whatever therapy, whatever lifestyle you try and live, I don't think you ever get away from the fact that you are a transsexual" (Jane 1 165-6). However, transsexuals' 'I' talk reveals their determination to reiterate a citation of the desired gender ideal by which they perform a change in self-perception: "in seeing you how you want to be / it doesn't really matter how, what you have got between the legs because / you already think you've got it" (Pamela 7-11). The sense of identity derived from performative citation and performance again exemplifies the self-referentiality of subjectivity: "it might be that the moment will arrive when I wish to change, change my organs. But I think that it is not a priority, in my case [...] the fact that I'm seeing myself as a woman, that I feel myself as a woman and to see that you are female, physically, socially, and all that. Above all, eh, adapting to what is your personality" (Silvia 109-13). These citations reveal the self-referentiality of 'I' talk at the individual level and its performative power in constituting identity.

In aiming to be a normal subject, as defined in the Matrix standards, transsexuals reiterate collectively defined categories concerning 'I' talk. The data show how transsexuals repeatedly cite the Matrix platitudes on gender identity and transsexualism to tailor their identity, for instance by retrospectively amending their subjective history in accordance with the medical 'origin story', by keeping an 'Obligatory Transsexual File' to build up a sense of being competent on how to be a transsexual, by citing autobiographies of successful transsexuals to shape their self-narratives, and so on. Another important Matrix category underlying the repeatedly cited mind/body distinction is the sex/gender distinction: "I realise that maleness is not bestowed by genitalia alone. I have not needed a penis to be accepted as male. As professor Milton Diamond says: 'the most powerful sex organ is between the ears, not the legs' "165 (Rees 1996: 33).

However, transsexual author Burns (1999) believes transsexualism contests prevalent views of sex and gender by virtue of transsexual subjects insisting in their intuitions of self: "the essentialist message of trans people in particular, conveyed through the simple expression of faith in one's own perceptions of self (...) is a form of personal essentialism" (ibid.: 1, stress of the author). Given that

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165 This quote can be found in Diamond 1982: 125.
transsexuals' performances aim to faithfully cite the Matrix standards, and hence, to adhere to collectively defined sex in order to be socially accepted, the discourse of "personal essentialism" is an illusion of radical self-creation. "Personal essentialism" is an individualist intuition since it involves disregarding the collective definition of the gender categories that trans people choose to comply with.

Bornstein (1994) provides another example of how transsexuals' 'I' talk reveals an individualist notion of self and unawareness of gender as collectively defined. Bornstein resorts to the Cartesian privileging of mind over body to argue that individuals should be able to choose their gender freely and then enact it in their bodies. This position is based on the illusion of radical self-creation and endorse the biological paradigm holding that "biology provides the rationale for the organisation of the social world" (Oyewumi: 1053). This is so, in so far as Bornstein assumes that gender identity can only be re-defined through a change in the body. This in its turn implies that, at least in its origin, gender identity is determined by the body. Bornstein's stance totally overlooks the 'I', that is gender identity, as collectively defined. Thus, although Bornstein is apparently breaking the link identity/biology in so far as she considers the 'body' as subordinate to 'mind', she does not challenge the definition of gender identity in terms of biology. On the contrary, she reiterates the understanding of personal identity as an 'essence' residing in the 'mind' which can only be fully expressed in the 'proper' body form. That is, gender must match the normative body parts.

Transsexuals' individualist notion of self is supported by voluntaristic 'I' talk. Bornstein's individualist notion of the subject reveals the illusion of radical self-creation in so far she assumes that anybody can determine their own gender. This discourse is voluntaristic in so far as it presents gender dysphoria as an exclusively personal issue, thus ignoring the role of the collective in shaping the self through the notion of gender. As a consequence, transsexual practices are based on a discourse that ignores the fact that the mind/inner psyche/interiority is a referent framed by 'I' talk and sanctioning that performs the self as an artificial kind through speech, emotions and physical acts, thus neglecting the self-referentiality of the 'I' at collective level. It also reveals a model of person in which agency and intention are attributed to separate individuals without taking into account the collective structuring of self and agency theorised in my reconstruction.

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166 As introduced previously, transsexuals cited the mind as 'free' and independent of the body, and they regarded the mind as determining the body by modelling it as an object through technology. In thus far, transsexuals are faithful to the order Butler aims to challenge which conceives "the body (...) as a passive medium or instrument awaiting the enlivening capacity of a distinctly immaterial will" (GT 8).

167 This assumption, intrinsic to the discourse on transsexualism, leads her to self-contradiction, for whereas on the one hand she endorses binary sex and changes her body accordingly, on the other hand she claims to be subversive of the system. In this respect I agree with Hausman who observes that "the contradictions that emerge from her [Bornstein's] arguments (...) demonstrate the extent to which the transgender movement bases its claims within the conventional parameters of the gender identity paradigm - rather than transgressing that paradigm, as it claims to do" (Hausman 1995: 197).

168 This is precisely the model that Butler aims to undermine, although she is sometimes misinterpreted as prescribing it, for instance, by Cotter (1994).
The overtones of voluntarism in transsexuals' discourse often resemble those of individualist self-help manuals, for instance when Maria declares that "the body is not a limitation", "your own alternative is inside yourself" (private conversation). Several FTMs attending a special seminar for FTMs organised by Press for Change at the Gendys 96 conference affirmed that transsexuals were more "in command" of their own lives than "normal" people because they were taking control of their own identity and becoming what they wanted. As Carol puts it, technological change "gives people more control over their bodies" (Carol 544). Hence, the expectation is that operation will be "bringing my body fit the, what I want from, from my life!" (Brenda 442-6). The view of the body as an artefact that can be performed as an object supports transsexual's illusion of radical self-creation. Moreover, both Bornstein and Burns seem to endorse some ethics of choice and rights by extending a consumerist notion of choice to sex identity. This view is shared by interviewees who generally thought "it's great that somebody like myself has the choice, hopefully, to be able to correct what has gone wrong in my / what's gone wrong. I think it must have been absolutely terrible in the past, the centuries and thousands of years, for people to be born like me and like other transsexuals and not to be able to do anything about it" (Jane 1 659-63).

Plus, transsexuals seem to endorse a notion of the body as "the reflexive project of the self" (Giddens 1991) and believe their future can be commanded by changing their physical form. The importance of lifestyle accompanying the body as reflexive project was emphasised by several speakers in Gendys' 96 Conference in a direct (Jaye Isherwood, Stephanie Robinson, Barbara Ross) or indirect form (Tony Zandvliet, Marjorie Schutzer, Nicky Gardner).

To summarise, the self-referentiality of T talk at the individual level is referred to by transsexuals themselves who perceive the importance of having a stock of early self-attributions in constructing one's gender identity. Interviewees' T talk cited an individualist notion of self accompanied by the illusion of radical self-creation. Hence, in so far as transsexuals ignored the collective definition of gender, they did not seem aware of the self-referentiality of T talk at the collective level. In sum, the empirical analysis confirms the double self-referentiality of T talk and sustains the theorisation of the intuition of T as socially shaped and regulated.

6.6.2 AGENTS OR PATIENTS?

As mentioned in the Section 6.5.2 on Overlapping Standards of identity, rationality, and Morality, there is a tension between the medical regulation of transsexual identity through standards of rationality and transsexuals' sense of agency. The pathologisation of transsexualism is perceived as denying agency and interviewees confront it by emphasising their sanity and their agency in their self-ascriptions.

169 Obviously Jane is not aware of any anachronism resulting from the historicity of transsexualism as a psychiatric category.
Transsexuals' 'I' talk reveals their insistence on presenting transsexualism as "a choice" (Brenda 688) and not a medical condition: "I make it clear that I am a transsexual by choice not by pathology" (Bornstein 1993: 111). In this manner, they aim to refuse a label that classifies them as irrational and abject: "I don't have any mental disorder! I am what I am! I've always liked women! This is not a mental disorder then. But, there you go, it says: BS3 this means sexual disorder, and any transsexual [...] will always have a sexual disorder [...] I am heterosexual, there are many heterosexuals in the world. They should also have a sexual disorder, shouldn't they? But well, this is way they have to put a barrier. To say: you are not well and / and I am going to give you the permission but I continue saying that you are not well. It is a way of creating a boundary" (Gabriel 297-307). Thus, Gabriel's claims to rationality refer to a normativised heterosexuality in his transgender sex. Moreover, the choices transsexuals consider are themselves collectively defined: "to continue as at the present, pretending, playing others' game pretending one is the person others say one is, as I was born, or to break with all that other people say and to live one's own life" (Elias 53-6, also 47-8). So, Elias' perception of the choices available, to yield to social pressure or not, is tantamount to accepting a given binary definition of sex.

Both the positions outlined by Gabriel and Elias regard the transsexual as an agent with intentionality confronting society's pressure, and reject gender dysphoria as a pathologised identity: "I don't care if a psychologist comes and tells me that I'm a schizophrenic when I know perfectly well that I'm not. I don't care" (Elsa 652). However, the medicalisation of gender dysphoria legitimises sex-change and thus helps it to be socially accepted on humane grounds. Hence, interviewees' rejection of transsexualism as pathology has potential negative consequences for their aims: "whilst the gender community attempts to de-pathologise the condition of sex and gender dysphoria [...] in a way that is [not] thought of as a mental disorder, that very action can disempower sex and gender identity pathology by often rendering it ineligible for funding from social health systems" (O'Keefe 1999: 1).

The "dichotomy of the client group choosing the freedom of self-determination over a perceived authoritarian, uncontrollable medical determination" (O'Keefe 1999: 1) creates strong tensions with doctors. Note the reference to transsexuals as 'clients' to emphasise their self-determination; doctors' role is merely to "provide care" (O'Keefe 1999: 1). Transsexuals clearly resent psychiatrists' power: "when I went to the first appointment with the psychiatrist, that he was the connection between me being sane and being a man, and me going insane and being a woman, or even killing myself. So, he was / he was the man that made the final decision on my life [...] that's a life threat" (Ronnie 763-70). I witnessed an example of the "acrimonious discursive debate" (O'Keefe 1999: 1) between transsexuals and psychiatrists at the Gendys' 96 conference when on two occasions two transsexual speakers (Stephanie Ford and Marjorie Napewasin Schüzer) launched attacks against

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170 Incidentally, this citation reveals once again the underlying assumption of heterosexuality as normative.

171 Also Gabriel 361.
psychiatrist Dr. D. Montgomery in his presence. These attacks were approved by the majority of the transsexual audience.

Tensions with doctors are coupled with a general resentment against any authority with power over transsexuals' lives: "I've just got the positive dictum from the judge, but well, this means nothing because it is only the thought of a judge, it is the opinion of a judge. Even if she wouldn't have granted it to me, it doesn't matter, I would continue thinking the same and feeling the same" (Elias 250-2). In spite of resenting the power of the medical elite and defending their self-determination, transsexuals are clearly aware of doctors' role as gatekeepers to social acceptance: "I wish somebody, I wish a psychiatrist (...) a magic one, would say: you are normal. I would love that but I know it's not / I know it can't happen" (Jane 1 166-7). Moreover, besides transsexuals' self-ascriptions as rational and sane, their refusal of medical labels and claims that their identities are a matter of choice, nevertheless their wish to undergo a sex-change is arguably prompted by a medical definition beyond their control. The input of medical discourse on transsexuals' intentions and acts is revealed in the following quote where Gabriel reports he felt at ease once he could identify himself as transsexual: "when you see that this has a name, that it has a solution, no, I don't see any problem with it" (Gabriel 107). Hence, interviewees' intuition of agency is socially shaped and regulated through the medical definition of transsexualism.

Transsexuals also perceive themselves as agents in so far as they disregard their own illusions of 'spontaneous' change and take action. The illusion of 'spontaneous' change is a common occurrence. For instance, Elias thought his body: "would change by itself, right? That is, when I was eight years old every morning I would wake up and touch myself and think: no, tonight it hasn't happened, right? As if during the night, well, well, it would grow / or something would tell me: look, now I've already, already made the change, right?" (Elias 84-6). So, transsexuals' intuition of agency is based on their rejecting 'magic change' and undergoing treatment to act upon their dilemmas: "you can achieve NOT to be a man if you don't want to be one, do you understand? In my case, then, I was very sure in my mind that I was a woman. But / I had to do it. No, what was very clear is that I couldn't let destiny do it, right? Like many people that perhaps till thirty-five, forty years have been waiting till that age for destiny, maybe that an angel will fall and will transform them.... I think that this is NOT, that in order to become a woman, well, to become a woman one must undergo a hormonal process and must have a coherence, and one must be very sure, and little by little, and undergo plastic surgery, and do things to oneself. Because if you don't... if you don't, you always remain as you are, right? And you mind, well,

172 Hausman puts it succinctly: "demanding sex change is ... part of what constructs the subject as a transsexual: it is the mechanism through which transsexuals come to identify themselves under the sign of transsexualism and construct themselves as its subjects. Because of this, we can trace transsexuals' agency through their doctors' discourses, as the demand for sex change was instantiated as the primary symptom (and sign) of the transsexual" (Hausman 1996: 110).

173 Justin (40-1), and Elsa (291-8) report the same expectation.
your mind can be, can be female, right?, but one must follow the transsexualising process otherwise one will not see oneself right with oneself. I think that to be trapped is not to do it" (Elsa 291-301). This quote reveals the limitations placed on one's privileged first person access, since collective sanctioning of one's gender "coherence" is necessary in order to employ gender ascriptions in 'I' talk.

Interviewees take great pride in their sense of agency: "operations give a lot of self-assurance because when one sees oneself in, in the mirror and one sees oneself as one should have really been from birth, right? With even more satisfaction because one has achieved it oneself. It hasn't been like, like everybody else who merely by birth they already / have achieved what one achieves in twenty, thirty, forty, fifty years or sixty. Right?" (Elias 173-6, stress added). As mentioned in the previous section, transsexual discourse endorses a voluntaristic view of the self expressed in the belief that control over one's body is equivalent to control over one's life. During O'Keefe's speech in the Gendys' 96 Conference, an FTM in the audience expressed the opinion that transsexuals were more together than the rest of society because they shaped their own future, whereas to others the future falls upon them. The attending public showed their agreement. The notion of FTM as a "self-made man" reveals a notion of body as project of the self with its accompanying voluntaristic notion of radical self-creation. These individualist intuitions imply a misperception of the self-referentiality of 'I' talk, and hence involve ignoring the role of the Matrix in structuring the sense of motivation.174

Transsexuals' intuition of agency is also structured and maintained through their belonging to support networks which tend to take place even before the beginning of their transformation. Meeting transsexuals in a more advanced stage of transformation provides "a model for the future! Moreover, a model for achievement: if I've achieved it (the change), you too" (Elias 102, also 98).175 Through transsexuals' associations, interviewees acquired a new net of acquaintances and thus relieved their feelings of isolation by making them feel part of a group (Brenda 317-9), helping them to assume their identity as such - at times by providing support also to their families (Jane 1 2258-61), and encouraging them to perceive themselves as deserving cultural subjects: "this is a way of living!" (Brenda 706). Such associations also function as informal channels of information on treatments, doctors, and so on.176 Moreover, transsexuals' associations organise conferences, such as Gendys', aim to normativise the category of transsexualism in order to construct the transsexual community as a social group able to defend transsexuals' rights by networking with other national and international associations.

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174 Hirschauer considers transsexuals are a trope for collective gender dysphoria presented as an individual's problem: "transsexuals are medical personifications of cultural troubles" (Hirschauer 1997: 6), and transsexualism turns "a social conflict into a personal one" (ibid.: 3).

175 Also Elsa 834, Gwen 329-33.

176 A study conducted by Rachlin (Rachlin 1999) in the US clearly shows the growing importance of peer support and information exchange particularly through networks in the internet, to the point that "contact with professionals may be only a small portion of an individual's preparation for gender transition" (ibid.: 2). It seems that contact with other transsexuals shapes surgical decisions and that "mental health and medical professionals were devalued as sources of information" (ibid.: 10).
In sum, on the one hand transsexuals claim gender dysphoria is a mistake of nature over which they have no control, but on the other they self-ascribe their sex-change to a freely enacted choice, and reject the social stigma associated with a psychiatric condition that compromises their sanity. Nevertheless, they depend on a diagnosis that justifies sex-change on the basis of the sex/gender divorce. However, transsexuals insist on a physiological cause for gender dysphoria, thus misciting the medical argument but also revealing its inner contradictions. Just like their sense of subjectivity, transsexuals' 'I' talk on agency is self-referential in so far as it is produced by a collective definition that their self-ascriptions help sustain.

6.6.3 **To Fit Or Not To Fit?**

There is yet another tension in transsexuals' narratives, namely between the claim to be subversive and the desire to fit. Interviewees present a range of different views concerning their subversive power and intentions: some transsexuals think they destabilise the Matrix's sex categories and others do not. While some believe transsexualism challenges the Matrix's norms by destabilising the meaning of the categories 'men' and 'women', no one believes it completely disrupts or abolishes them. Hence, there are varied responses to the hypothetical destabilisation of meaning by transsexualism: from resenting any problematisation of norms to affirmation and pride of transsexuals' subversive role.

Generally all the interviewees declared valuing social acceptance: "to integrate in to the society in which one lives is difficult for anybody but I think that for us is a bit more complicated, isn't it? until we have the operation and so on. But I think that to me it's very important" (Pamela 246-8). Indeed, most transsexuals "just want to fit in" (Daniela, personal communication) and "be accepted and mix and blend with them (the community)" (Jane 1 432). In order to achieve social acceptance "one tries to mould oneself a bit to what society is" (Gabriel 73) and "try to fit in" (Carol 607). Usually transsexuals aim to be "normal (as) any other woman" (Pamela 421) or to fulfil "male aspirations" (Justin 108).

Being 'normal' includes being heterosexual: "because society has been made so, so they say: a man must be with a woman. In certain sense we don't, don't change, right? We become women and then we achieve a certain normality" (Pamela 358-69). Maria agrees with Pamela in so far as she thinks gays and lesbians live a feminine sexuality in a male body and a masculine one in a female body (Maria 512-5). Gabriel does not want to be pathologised for his homosexual desire: "I am what I am!"

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177 Hausman notes: "transsexuals compromise the official understanding of gender as divorced from biological sex by their insistent reiteration of the idea that physiological intersexuality is the cause of their core-sex identification" (Hausman 1995: 141).

178 Elias 427-9, Maria 362

179 Also Pamela 423, 429, 441, 508, 510, 514, and Gabriel 323.
I've always liked women! [...] I am heterosexual" (Gabriel 297-8). Nevertheless, Pamela recognises that transsexual change is a "bit" defiant, though it seems that this is almost an unintended consequence of her 'personal' wish to change (Pamela 358-61). A number of transsexuals clearly state that they do not aim to challenge: "I wouldn't think of challenging society. I would just like society to get over the impression that that's what we are after!" (Gwen 345-6).

It seems that sometimes the desire to change the body arises from a wish to conform to normative definitions in order to be socially accepted. Silvia makes clear that in order to be acceptable it is better to be heterosexual since "well, of course, all that fits with the social categories... but it is not important for oneself, it is important for society. Heterosexuality is not marginalised" (Silvia 300-2). For instance, in the context of discussing his degree of discomfort in the body he was born in, Gabriel (657-61) declared the he "did not feel happy nor comfortable" because what failed was "the body because you fancy a woman and you go to say hi and, of course, she sees you as woman and thinks: she is a lesbian! What they would never imagine is that one (the subject appearing as a woman) is a transsexual (a man below the surface). Now, in my case, when they see me they think I'm a man, they would never figure out that I'm transsexual. They don't take it as, as much as an offence anymore, right? They simply think, well [...] a man that likes me and comes to see, comes to say hi to me" (654-61). Hence, when Gabriel appeared to others as a woman, her homosexual tendencies did not match social expectations of heterosexuality and she faced rejection. The problem of the social rejection of homosexuality is partly solved by transforming one's appearance through sex-change and performing as the other gender.

Transsexuals' associations aim to normativise the category 'transsexual' in order integrate: "until we know who we are, there is no way we can change what 'they' think about 'us' in a cohesive manner" ("Re: communities fwd"). As result of these efforts transsexuality "is getting more and more normal" (Justin 324), and transsexuals are becoming a very organised community spanning several countries. However, some transsexuals do not even want to be classified into the category 'transsexual' to argue for social acceptability. Instead they insist on their wish to fit in with 'normality'

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180 See also Justin 309-15. My empirical data confirms Kando's report on transsexuals who undergo sex change in order to normalise a former homosexual relationship: "far from militantly advocating their rights as a deviant minority, transsexuals wish to become normal, heterosexual women" (Kando 1973: 145). Transsexuals are aware of accusations from homosexual groups for this reasons: "they (homosexuals) say we are very hetero" (Pamela 591).

181 See also Ronnie 155-6, 495-6, 505-9; and Gwen 336-9, 345-6, 351.

182 "Spanish society [...] doesn't accept or admit homosexuality" (Gabriel 614).

183 Email in transsexual discussion group, Sun 8 Feb 1998, name of the author omitted.

184 Elias et al (1999) compare the "Transgendered Movement" (mainly the US transgendered community) to the Women's Movement, the Civil Rights Movement, and the Gay Movement. They report that the "Transgendered Movement" is "currently undergoing a defining period in which all groups ranging from cross dressers to transsexuals are coming together under the definition of transgender, a still badly defined term" (Elias: 1). This "Reformist Movement" aims at the social legitimisation of their gender position and argues for de-pathologising and normativising the condition.
by becoming invisible in their new sex: "with regards, like this Gendys conferences, I don't want to go there because I don't want to be / a minority group! I don't want to be labelled a transsexual! [...] I don't want to be pigeonholed as a minority group or whatever" (Ronnie 225-30).

Ronnie's position is a way for transsexuals to avoid abjection and gain acceptability, namely the "invisibilisation of transsexuality" (Silvia 295, 315): "if one has a favourable judicial sentence, one has changed sex, one has full recognition in documentation and nothing is known about your past, then to all practical effects one is already a woman like any other [...] if nothing is known about one's past and one is a normal woman with the appearance of a conventional woman, one has got it more easy to, to, that is, to be included within normality" (Silvia 291-5, 315-7). Hence, when transsexuals successfully pass and, like Justin, "didn't tell anyone" (Justin 103), then "as far as I know, most society doesn't know" (Gwen 200). Gwen is for invisibility: "some people might want to stand up and challenge society and say: this isn't right! But I think / political correctness has gone totally overboard and all this stuff that all minority groups have to get that attention. If everybody just gets on with life will be much better all round" (Gwen 346-9).

By defining oneself as transsexual a subject can avoid challenging the Matrix's norms by taking them as descriptive and prescriptive. In this sense, transsexuals' behaviour exemplifies how agents' attitudes towards social norms contribute to the persistence of those norms by reiterated citation, and validate themselves as self-fulfilling prophecies. Transsexuals' sanctioning practices towards transvestites also reinforce the thesis that establishing oneself as a proficient user of 'I' talk ensures one's social acceptance, since by sanctioning those deviating from normative transsexualism, transsexuals prove themselves to be deserving of their category and thus reflexively reaffirm its meaning stability.

Transsexualism has various potentially contradictory effects and thus its subversive power is impossible to calculate. It follows from my reconstruction of Butler that transsexualism destabilises the assumed reliability of judgements based on 'cultural genitals' (Kessler & McKenna), that is on appearances, and performs an unfaithful repetition of the Matrix's categories. However, in so far as sex-change is based on the equation body = gender and the concomitant mind/body dualism, it does not challenge the central laws of the Matrix. Although some transsexuals consider themselves as contesting the Matrix, they are arguably yielding to social pressure against non-normative identification by bending to their perceived need to change their bodies in agreement with normative standards of identity.

By accepting the Matrix's binary distinction as the only available choice, transsexuals are indirectly supporting it through their practices. For instance, Justin's change partly obeyed the wish to fulfill some "male" professional aspirations foreclosed to women. Hence, his change aimed to conform rather than to subvert the social constraints on women's professional aspirations that gave rise to his
perceived décalage. Thus, in so far as transsexuals change their body to fit in with social prescriptions, transsexualism is a way to get round social norms entailing acceptance of the HM's requisites.\textsuperscript{185}

Transsexuals themselves justify their contradiction by asserting that 'the' problem is not theirs but society's. However, 'the' problem they refer to is not the fact that they did not conform in the first place, but their social acceptability as \textit{transsexuals}. Thus, it is only once they have transsexualized themselves because of social pressure and shame, that they challenge discourse, albeit from the standpoint of a category created to relieve ambiguity, increase predictability and preserve binary sex distinctions. As Butler points out, although the HM works through instilling fear with the threat of the abjected positions, the abjected also offers the possibility of pleasure, a pleasure that can be erotic or the pleasure of insurrection. At times in my interviews, I sensed that transsexuals' (particularly Spaniards') social criticism revealed a certain pleasure of insurrection, a thrill of unconventionalism intrinsic to transsexuals' position. If this is the case, the subversive power of transsexuals' social critique might be theorised as a domesticated pleasure, and transsexualism itself a 'domesticated alternative'. Transsexuals' critical standpoint exemplifies the pleasure associated with forbidden positions.

The empirical study reveals transsexuals equating 'body' with gender in their discourse. This equation governs transsexuals' main practice, namely sex-change, since they associate gender characteristics with a particular 'body', and re-shape the body to properly accommodate and express the preferred gender. In other words, transsexuals feel they must change their bodies in order to align their identity with the Matrix's normative gender categories and cite the terms gender and sex equally. In thus far, transsexuals' discourse reiterates a notion of the body as a natural kind in a realist sense as origin and legitimation of social conventions, precisely the crux of Butler's fight. So, in spite of transsexuals' claims that transsexualism is politically challenging, sex-change can also be interpreted as performance of conformist actions.\textsuperscript{186}

Arguably, the institutionalisation of transsexualism functions as a mechanism to manage gender deviancy and enforce conformism, in so far as it locates a problem related to collectively defined categories at the individual's level, never at the level of the collective. To solve what is presented as the disorder of particular individuals, medicalisation presents treatment of transsexualism

\textsuperscript{185} Evaluation of the level of conformity and political commitment of the transsexual population is an interesting line of research that meets with serious limitations at present due to the lack of good statistics about operations performed and census of affiliation to transsexuals' groups. Hence, for instance, it would very difficult to evaluate the 'invisibilisation of transsexuality' in both countries. Apart from invisibilisation in the sense of choosing not to publicly acknowledge one's transsexualisation, the empirical study also reveals transsexuals actively choosing another sort of invisibilisation: that which results from faultless visibility, that is, from achieving the most 'real' gender performance.

\textsuperscript{186} It is interesting to note that, in opposition to current controls of deviance which attempt to alter the 'mind' but do not punish the 'body', transsexualism normativises deviant gender identity by transforming the body and not acting on the mind. Both strategies share the mind/body dualism.
as 'cure' for an ailment partly provoked by enforcement of Matrix norms in the first place.187 Since individual transsexuals cannot change the way the Matrix works, they change themselves. Hence, the apparent contradiction between their defiant self-assertion, such as: "I am what I am, and if society doesn't like it it's their problem",188 and the fact that they give up their difference from the ascribed gender and go to great lengths to fit the norms. Thus, in the same way that scientists do not challenge the paradigm, transsexuals choose not to challenge the Matrix norms.

Indeed, the Matrix functions in the same way as a Kuhnian scientific paradigm that is never challenged. Only individual practitioners doubt themselves and their deservingness.189 This empirical findings strengthen the notion of the Matrix as a theory, since it shows how the Matrix is being treated like a paradigm in the Kuhnian sense given that when a particular individual does not fit in the Matrix categories, the Matrix as a theory is not challenged but rather the individual practitioner.

6.6.4 UNFAITHFUL CITATIONS

The use of finitism as a sociological way to capture Butler's notion of citationality implies that the unfaithful citation is a potential consequence of each act of category application. Subversion, understood as the reworking of gender conventions, arises as consequence of meaning indeterminacy.190 Hence, in this reconstruction to say that every citation is potentially unfaithful is superfluous since this possibility is inherent to the definition of meaning finitism. Moreover, the unfaithfulness of the citation is not totally dependent on the intention of the utterer since the application depends on others' acceptance. Since the intelligibility of unfaithful repetition depends on it being couched in the HM's terms, it is difficult for an individual to challenge the HM and deviance must be concerted; it is also difficult to make an a priori judgement on the subversive capacity of a particular unfaithful citation.

In so far as the informants are subjects who choose to transsexualise because they failed to fulfil normative sex in the first place, the informants present what Butler considers the occasion for instabilities and subversion. The empirical study confirms transsexualism as adhering to binary gender categories but nevertheless effecting a defamiliarisation of meaning of the Matrix's categories. Transsexualism de-familiarises the Matrix categories in so far as it disrupts the meaning stability of the

187 The subjects' conformity to gender is ensured through pathologisation of deviancy. This issue could be further researched by looking at institutional controls of gender change in the UK with a view to exploring perceptions of compliance as duty or medicalisation.

188 This sort of statements is especially visible among Spanish interviewees.

189 The notion of the Matrix as a folk sexology and a paradigm has some parallels with Rubin's sex/gender system: "the set of arrangements by which a society transforms biological sexuality into products of human activity, and in which these transformed sexual needs are satisfied" (Rubin 1975: 159). Rubin also points to a notion of sex as a theoretical entity around which a series of social activities are organised.

190 In the following I will refer to the phenomenon of meaning indeterminacy as described by finitism simply as meaning finitism.
categories men/woman. It also de-familiarises by disturbing the reliability of genital attribution, that is, the 'natural attitude' that attributes gender and genitals from appearances.\textsuperscript{191} The appropriation of medical discourse by transsexuals and \textit{travestis} also effects a disruption in three different ways: a) by claiming transsexualism as a choice and thus challenging its definition as pathology; b) by not keeping coherence between sex and heterosexual desire; and c) in the case of \textit{travestis} by disrupting the link genitals/gender.\textsuperscript{192} Hence, transsexualism performs an unfaithful repetition of Matrix terms, norms and categories and, thus it is potentially subversive to the extent that it upsets classification.

However, in so far as transsexualism is considered an unchosen medical condition, it is not subversive, since social perception of transsexuals as 'freaks' neutralises their potential destabilising of the Matrix's categories. Thus, transsexualism exemplifies a citation of the HM categories so different that it is very difficult to make it cohere with those categories as they currently exist. When such a citation appears it is not dealt by questioning the categories but by simply abjecting the citing act, namely transsexualism. Thus, as long as transsexualism is abjected, it reinforces the Matrix's outer limits. Nevertheless, and regardless of social acceptance, transsexuals alter the Matrix. If they are rejected, they change the HM in so far as they demand efforts to keep and define a new abjected category. If they are accepted they modify the Matrix's norms of acceptability. But to what extent does transsexualism effect a public defamiliarisation of gender?

Transsexuals' gender and medical narratives are stereotyped in general but there are also deviations concerning the contents of medical discourse as well as concerning the specific context of transsexuals' own lives. Transsexuals' passing in front of doctors and relatives, in the first instance, involves a step of the application of a category (man, woman) in a new situation which calls for judgements of similarity. However, in spite of possible alterations caused by the interests and objectives of transsexuals, due to a general tendency to routinisation, change does not produce chaos but a new pattern of habituated routinised action. As a consequence, transsexualism becomes accepted as a cultural category and its subversive potential might be "domesticated" through the medicalisation of difference.

Transsexuals' role distance - that is, their affecting conformity - in relation to psychiatric discourse and practices reveals their awareness of the conventionality of rules and also of social institutions as not being laid out in advance but decided by the collective. Their passing practices also reveal their awareness of the existence of individuals who hold socially invested authority for deciding

\textsuperscript{191} The term 'natural attitude' was coined by Kessler and MacKenna (1978). Incidentally, the platitude characterising the 'natural attitude' corresponds to the central law of the HM: reproductive genitals constitute the essential insignia of gender and inform the category of sex. In other words, genitals are the crucial classificatory criteria for the Matrix standards of identity. The 'natural attitude' can be reformulated as a classificatory practice that conforms and assumes conformance to the Matrix norms.

\textsuperscript{192} As mentioned in the preceding section, the informants think that \textit{travestis}, that is females with phalluses, are socially considered more destabilising than men with vaginas, that is most FTMs. \textit{Travestis} seem to be performing an unfaithful citation threatening to the Matrix's terms, and thus undermining a collective good, namely stability of meaning.
what is the correct application of a rule. Their behaviour reveals the self-referentiality of the rules insofar as they know that the validity of their position - and therefore their social acceptance - depends on collective assessment represented by those who hold authority to judge, in this case, the medical and legal professions. However, as the Spanish case makes clear, the day-to-day interaction with their social milieu is also important. Hence, their behaviour confirms that gendered subjectivity is brought about by structures and processes maintained in social relations.

Although transsexuals have an input into the Matrix's norms and into medical definitions of transsexualism, the general public is not aware of their input. Thus, transsexualism does not raise subjects' awareness of power residing in their own reiteration of norms, rather than in the hands of the elite. In so far, it cannot be considered as subversive in the Butlerian sense of subversion, that is as disrupting the routinised system by making individuals regain awareness of their input into the constitution of the power system - just like the effect Brecht aimed at in theatre performances and that Butler commends. In other words, transsexualism *per se* does not reveal that the reproduction of routine and power partly depends on the conformity of one's own mutual and dispositional beliefs.

However, some potentially unfaithful citations spring from transsexuals' 'I' talk reiterating their deservingness as subjects: "I don't need a penis to be a man, hem, there's more to be a man than having a, big dick [laugh]" (Ronnie 330). Hence, interviewees' gender citations are unavoidably changing the meaning of the Matrix category of sex. Therefore, subversion arises from transsexuals transgressing both the folk sexological categories of male and female - and hence provoking abjection as non-humans - and appealing to medical ideas of pathology and thereby invoking humanistic sympathy. The dissonance between these two sets of meanings cited by transsexuals challenges and defamiliarises, and hence tends to subvert the existing categories of the HM by making apparent their conventionality. In other words, subversion arises through exploiting and exposing contradictions within and between our various institutional frameworks and categories of meaning. Transsexualism offers an example of the juxtaposition of folk and medical understandings of sexual identity by a group of people who then articulates their own collective categories of meaning. Transsexuals' organised assertion of such categories is brought into a dissonant relationship with prevailing folk categories thus constituting a kind of concerted political form of subversion which might be pursued through the kind of theatricality that Butler proposes.

The case of Spanish *travestis* supports the role of people in creating and sustaining rules theorised in 'Butler Reconstructed'. *Travestis'* unfaithful citation of the prescribed coherence of sex and gender categories inherent in the category transsexual reinforces the view that rules are not fixed norms but underdetermined applications of knowledge categories, in so far as *travestis'* unfaithful practices establish how their acts are calculated in accordance with an established routine system, the Matrix gender myths and medical discourse, but not completely determined by it. As a result of them

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193 See also Elias 181-2.
being aware of their double unfaithfulness to normative standards of identity, Spanish interviewees are more prone to see themselves as challenging society than their UK counterparts.

Those interviewees who perceived themselves as challenging social prejudices interpreted social rejection as a sign of their questioning. Transsexuals' interpretation of social rejection sustains my theorisation of the power of the Matrix's normative order as residing in people's conformity to the rules and in the power of the collective to constrain and sanction individuals' actions. It also reinforces the notion of the Matrix as a collective good defended by collective sanctioning. Thus, the empirical study reveals how people's capacity to grasp gender and desire (conceived as a Matrix knowledge category) limits the form that sex can take. In other words, the way in which people conceive sex constrains their ability to act differently from the norm.

6.7 THE HM IS CONVENTIONAL

The Matrix as a folk theory and social institution is conventional, and, therefore, the historicity of its terms and laws can be traced and its cultural contingency revealed. The anthropological research presented in 'Butler Reconstructed' supports the notion of the Matrix as conventional, hence historical and contingent. The cross-cultural comparison between Spain and the UK also reveals cultural variations concerning the Matrix's categories and laws. In the following I will introduce the different areas in which two cultures, Spanish and British, present the most obvious distinctions.

One of the most striking differences between the UK and Spain concerns the negotiation of meaning between different types of knowledge: medical, public, and private. There clearly are distinct emphases placed on the correct citation of medical platitudes between the UK and Spain; the citation of the transvestite/transsexual distinction is a conspicuous example, as are the distinction between transsexuality and homosexuality and between sex and gender. These phenomena might be due to the disparity in the sources of funding for medical treatment between the two countries but they are also mainly related to cultural differences that affect the processes of meaning negotiation carried out by subjects themselves.

For instance, in Spain the terms transvestite and transsexual have different usage than in the UK. In Spain MTF transsexuals are popularly known as 'travestis', a corruption of 'transvestido' (transvestite). Hence, the general public refers to biologically male persons who are interfering with their bodies at hormonal and/or surgical levels as travesti, not as transsexual. 194 With regards to the transvestite/transsexual distinction, British interviewees tend to emphasise "the big difference between

194 Spanish 'travestis' correspond to both UK categories of pre-op and post-op transsexuals in so far as 'travesti' refers to those who interfere either merely at the hormonal level, or both at the hormonal and the surgical level. In the UK the term 'she-males' roughly corresponds to 'travesti' when applied to persons who have a female appearance but are willing to preserve their male genitals.
transvestite and transsexual" (Jane 1 bis, 222). The stress in differentiating between TV and TS in the UK might be due to the stronger influence of the psychiatric model in that country. The model requires that transsexuals base their claim for a sex-change operation in an identity problem. Since transvestites are considered as persons who cross-dress not because of a problem with their sexual identity but for sexual arousal, transsexuals need to distance themselves from them. To be associated with transvestism has practical consequences since, in order to obtain permission for sex-change surgery in the NHS, one needs to be diagnosed as gender dysphoric. Therefore, it is in the best interest of transsexuals to make clear that they do not obtain sexual arousal from cross-dressing but that this activity merely obeys a profound feeling of belonging to the other sex. The fact that in Spanish folk culture MTF transsexuals are known as *travestis* might be due to an understanding of transsexualism characteristic of the period previous to the 1960s.195

If NHS requirements influence the correct citation of the standard narrative in the UK, we should expect a weaker normative citation in Spain where there is no public finance for the sex-change operation. Indeed, the evidence presented in the sections above supports this hypothesis by showing that the citation of medical standards is unfaithful not only with regards to the meaning of the term 'transsexual', but also concerning transsexuals' practices. For instance, Spanish transsexuals tend to support freedom of sexual orientation privately and publicly, unlike their UK counterparts who do not so spontaneously declare homosexual feelings, nor pronounce on matters of sexual freedom. Undoubtedly, the lack of public funding plays a role in Spanish transsexuals' lack of interest in fitting with medical categories, as Gabriel makes explicit: "since you don't have it paid by the Seguridad Social (Spanish NHS), you don't have to justify anything. You go with your money... ta, ta, ta [making a gesture of paying by piling bills]" (Gabriel 289-90). In Spain the situation is completely different since the Seguridad Social (Spanish equivalent of the NHS) does not cover sex-change surgery and only in a very few instances hormonal treatment (exclusively for FTM). Therefore, Spanish transsexuals must always approach a private clinic and cover the costs of their treatment themselves. Therefore, the lack of public financing of the operation effectively frees Spanish transsexual subjects from the economic stimulus to define themselves in conformity with medical standards.

It is also significant that, unlike their UK counterparts, no Spanish transsexuals hinted that they were using the interview as a rehearsal, nor had they assumed I had a deeper knowledge on issues of transsexualism than them; on the contrary, they often adopted a didactic tone to enlighten me about what transsexualism was about. The didactic attitude of Spaniards co-exists with more variation at the personal level than their UK counterparts. The self-narratives of Spanish interviewees include an element of a political stance in so far as they regularly criticise social conditioning (Silvia, Elsa), they

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195 The category 'transvestite' as defined in medical literature and used in the UK corresponds to what in Spain is called *transformista*, literally one who transforms oneself.
resist hegemonic Matrix platitudes as constraining, cite them from a critical standpoint, aim to subvert moral order, and use the notion of gender as a sociological category.

Another cultural difference springing from the lesser medicalisation of transgenderism in Spain concerns documental reorientation. In the UK documental reorientation is part of the real life test and a precondition for the operation; documental reorientation is only ever partial and documents are generally less significant than in Spain. In Spain however the change of name takes place after the operation in MTF and it is based on a sort of informal real life test. As a consequence, in the UK the medical profession holds great power to direct gender policing, whereas in Spain the legal establishment also plays an important part in directing social routines. Transsexualism as a medical condition does not seem to be very well known in Spain due to the lesser influence of the humanist discourse of psychiatry in comparison with the UK. The lesser prominence of transsexualism in Spain is also clearly linked to the lower influence psychiatric humanism has over the prevailing moral order. In its turn, the lack of public funding and low general income of potential transsexual clients makes it less worthwhile economically for the specialisation of surgeons or the establishment of more private clinics.

It seems that, in general, Spanish transsexuals read less literature on transsexualism (it is also less available) than their UK counterparts and rely instead to a greater degree on their friends as source of information for self-medication: "I was paying more attention to my pals. Yes, look... maybe I'm a bit old-fashioned, aren't I?" (Elsa 387-9).196 Indeed, Spanish transsexuals do not keep 'OTF' files and only well 'informed' MTFs and FTMs use the term 'transsexual', while the general public uses 'travesti' for MTF. These groups of 'informed' transsexuals tend to be also those politically motivated enough to be concerned about making the medical categories known and properly applied. All Spanish interviewees displayed a didactic attitude often expressed in a constant shift from the particular to the universal, that is, from using personal pronouns to making general references to the category 'transsexual'. Spanish transsexuals clearly aim to disseminate and establish basic information about transsexualism as a medical condition and cite the medical standard narrative to argue for social acceptance and legitimisation of sex-change with a view to achieving public coverage of the operation.197 Hence, in Spain only politically motivated transsexuals bother about making the normative medical category 'transsexual' known and 'properly' applied since the authority of medical discourse legitimises sex-change.198

196 A consequence of the lack of institutionalisation is a lack of control on medication: "at the beginning I was taking hormones in heaps. I'm being totally honest to you. I was taking hormones at my own whim" (Elsa 378-9).

197 This is particularly visible in Silvia's speech, the president of the TS association (especially Silvia 107-113). Maybe this is due to Silvia's office as president and main spokesperson of the transsexual association.

198 The Col·lectiu de Transsexuals de Catalunya is often contacted by the media. They do not generally refuse the attention but, on the contrary, are keen to collaborate with them in order to make their condition better known to the general public. Maybe for this reason, no Spanish interviewee reported being outed in the papers against their will in contrast with British interviewees.
Spanish interviewees associate medical science and the institutionalisation of transsexualism with modernity; in a way, they regard higher medicalisation, such as in the UK, as indicative of a more rational, superior and advanced society than their own. This view is also visible in so far as Spanish interviewees tend to assume that sexual roles and identities are less marked in the UK than they perceive them to be in Spain. For instance, in the context of discussing how in Spain roles and cultural sexuality apply different standards to men and women, Silvia expresses the belief that Scottish culture is not as sexist with regards to sexual morals (Silvia 602-3) and does not have so strongly marked sexual roles (Silvia 609).

In a much more accentuated form than their UK counterparts, Spanish transsexuals criticise the medical profession for not being well acquainted with the condition of gender dysphoria: "the thing is that in Spain, I don't know what is like in the rest of, I think that / they don't really know what transsexuality is" (Gabriel 309-0). Paradoxically, doctors are their own best advocates as the heralds of modernity in front of what transsexuals perceive as a backward moral order which condemns transgenderism. However - and in contrast with their belief on the supremacy of states with higher institutionalisation of medicine, such as the UK - Spanish transsexuals do not seem to be very prepared to acquiesce with medical standards and can be quite critical of the medical establishment: "biology! well it can pursue its own speculating ways, for often they say certain things that one doesn't want to argue with because they live within their corporatism and within their science and... whatever they say, well, many times 'goes to Mass'199, doesn't it? Another question is whether I obey them or not..." (Elsa 647-51). Science is criticised for being "anti-human because it is more concerned, it gives more importance to one chromosome in my cells than to the sum total of my cells which is me, isn't it?" (Elias 768-9, also 761-4). Spanish transsexuals accuse doctors of making a profit out of them: "they demand a psychological-psychiatric test, that is completely stupid. It is just a way of getting money out of you. It is a way of stealing with a white glove, right?" (Gabriel 343-5)

The mobilisation of conflicting discourses is very significant with regards to perceptions of the body and technology. The cross-cultural comparison between Spain and the UK shows how the views on the body - along the axis artificial/natural, and malleable/resistant - and the cosmetic/therapeutic notions of technology are inter-connected. In Spain the body is regarded as artificial and malleable, and sex-change surgery is considered a cosmetic procedure. In Britain the prevalent view of the body is as a resistant natural entity and surgery is considered a therapeutic procedure. These cultural variances reveal different understandings of the HM in Spain and in the UK.

199 I have chosen to make a literal translation of the Spanish expression ir a misa in order to keep the flavour of the idiom. To say that something 'goes to mass' means that it becomes sacred, hence unchallengeable, such as the sacred words and rites pronounced and performed in the Holy Mass. Thus, Elsa is likening the work of doctors to that of priests to denote that the authority of the medical profession goes unchallenged. The comparison between the medical profession and the Church as two moral orders in the context of transsexualism coincides with Billings and Urban (Billings and Urban 1982).
These differences are reflected in the different degrees of medicalisation of the condition in the two countries.

The greater medicalisation in the UK is evident in the emphasis British transsexuals place on the "natural" aspects of the condition by conceiving it as an "illness" that "naturally" occurs - doctors are merely helping to correct human suffering. As a consequence, UK transsexuals tend to cite standard medical narratives to justify the operation and present it as a "mistake of nature" (Justin, Gwen, Carol). In contrast, Spanish transsexuals place less emphasis on it being a problem of "nature" because they do not need to justify the op in front of a collective who funds it, since the ops are always privately funded. As reason for the operation, Spaniards tend to cite social pressure to fit (Gabriel, Silvia, Elsa, Maria), and when arguing for the legitimisation of the op they use the argument that compares it to a "just-like-a-woman" cosmetic procedure. The logic behind is that cosmetic technologies are already socially accepted.

In general, the notion of body as artefact is more acceptable and visible in Spain. Spanish transsexuals have more levels of interference with their bodies, hence a richer sense of artificiality of the body and a lesser degree of conformity to identity standards. In contrast, UK MTF transsexuals do not contemplate the state of having male genitals and female appearance as something that can be sustained for some time. They only sustain it during the real life test and as a requisite to acquire the "right" genitals. It is a "TRANSition" period that defines the condition "transsexuality" (Nanda 1990), whereas a significant number of Spanish FTM transsexuals hold the "TRANSitional" state for good. Hence, it can be concluded that the Matrix categories are less sharply defined in Spain.

Whereas British transsexuals' perception of surgery reveals a medicalised notion of gender concomitant with gender dysphoria as illness, Spanish interviewees presented a cosmetic view of sex-change which reveals lesser medicalisation and a more aesthetic notion of gender. That is, in Britain gender is a problem of 'inner' identity whereas in Spain gender is more readily conceived as a surface enactment. Due to the lesser institutionalisation of transsexualism as a medical condition in Spain there is less tension between its definition as a psychiatric ailment and transsexuals' claims to sanity. Maybe that is why, in spite of having greater difficulties than British transsexuals to obtain treatment, Spaniards tend to de-dramatise their ailment and seem generally more relaxed and confident about their chances of getting socially accepted.

With regards to their perception of the operation, again there were differences since British interviewees had the genital operation as their goal and strongly endorsed normative sex/gender coherence, but Spanish informants emphasised socialisation and performance over 'the op', and argued against the equation of genitals with gender. Hence, due to the strong emphasis on socialisation, the attitude of Spanish MTF subjects in relation to the operation is more ambivalent than that of their UK counterparts. It is not uncommon in Spain to find MTF transsexual subjects who remain for long periods of time in the pre-operative stage (travestis). Unlike the majority of the interviewed UK MTFs, Spanish MTFs seem to place less importance on genital surgery. Several reasons are cited as
explanation for the lesser interest in the operation, such as issues of visibility and self-perception: "the
operation, well, is something that remains under cover and nobody should know. It is an intimate thing
about myself that / whenever I feel prepared, then, I will do" (Pamela 19-21). Although Spanish MTFs
rarely mention economic factors in relation to their position with regards to the operation, the lack of
public funding makes economic considerations an important element when considering genital
surgery: "for some people ... the first step is the operation and for others it is the last one. This is
related to economic and social factors, to how you feel and how you think at that moment, isn't it? It all
depends on the person" (Gabriel 7-10, stress added). The only MTF interviewee who cited technical
reasons for having lived a long period of time before operating is Maria, a 41 year old post-operative
MTF, who refers to the past: "there was no guarantee in these surgical interventions" (Maria 113-4)

The cross-cultural comparison also reveals striking cultural differences concerning the "local
understandings of materiality" (Morris: 575) in Spain and the UK. Although interviewees in both
countries display evidence of dichotomised notions of the body as receptive and changeable matter, in
contrast to the mind as a dynamic actualising principle, it seems that the Spanish understanding of
materiality is more fluid. As Maria puts it "one's body is a universe of probabilities [...] in fact the
body has many, many potentialities. The thing is that people waste them! Thus, to intervene
technologically? [...] technological intervention in bodies can be very positive" (Maria 544-61). This
points to a variation between Spain and the UK concerning transsexuals' understanding of materiality
and technology.

Spanish interviewees display what I have termed a 'bold approach' to technology, that is, they
emphasise the body's malleability and indulge in what could be termed 'technology fantasy', since they
campaign for the development of techniques for genital transplant in terms of it being a right for
transsexual patients. For instance, a leader in one of the major transsexual associations explains their
campaigning in "support (of) further research concerning sex-change technology. I think that ideally
there should be research concerning transplants, organ transplants. That, at all effects, sexual organs
were, in our case, those of a woman, with all what / the possibility of becoming a mother, the
possibility of menstruating. Well, of course, I'm talking about a utopia but that perhaps..." (Silvia 205-
10). Silvia, a pre-op, thinks that new treatments should allow transsexuals "to be able to achieve
orgasm (so) that my sexual life was not too affected by an operation" (Silvia 204). Spanish
transsexuals also demand further scientific research into hormonal therapy to achieve "genuine
treatment only for transsexuals" (Elsa 378). As Elias puts it "medical technology is very advanced and
they obtain very good results that are very satisfactory but more is always wanted" (Elias 687-8). The
trust that Spanish transsexuals have in technological potential goes hand in hand with a lack of
awareness of the limitations of the sex-change operation. This difference between UK and Spain might
also be due to the fact that often when Spanish transsexuals operate on their genitals they have already
been living in the female role for a long time. Hence, Spanish transsexuals do not need to be warned
by their doctors about over-expectations concerning the operation and consequently, unlike their UK counterparts, they do not cite these warnings.\textsuperscript{200}

The differing notions of technology as cosmetic or medical appear in association with the emphasis on the body as an artefact (Spain) or as natural (UK) respectively. Sex change operations, particularly in Britain, are generally conceived by the medical establishment and cited by transsexuals as a form of medical surgery. For instance British MTF Jane declares: "I am not wanting to have thirteen, fourteen operations and try and be Naomi Campbell or // because I know I never could be! If I can be passable and feel comfortable, that's all I want" (Jane 1 207-9). In contrast, Spanish MTFs are totally in favour of using cosmetic surgery to "look divine" (Elsa 367) and are in favour "with regards to surgery, for instance, aesthetic surgery of the lips and all that, and aesthetic excellence" (Silvia 203-4).\textsuperscript{201}

Spanish transsexuals, particularly MTFs, did not hesitate in referring to sex-change surgery as a cosmetic procedure to achieve the desired appearance. They generally seem to be more overtly in favour of cosmetic surgery to embellish themselves than their UK counterparts. Spanish transsexuals tend to emphasise the body's malleability unlike UK transsexuals who tend to emphasise the body's resistance. Although British transsexuals talk about surgical intervention with a "faintly melodramatic gravity" (Aitkenhead 1998:3), they downplay surgery as a mere procedural part of the curative treatment of a recognised medical condition rather than a technology of the self (Foucault 1988). In general, UK transsexuals are more shy with regards to using cosmetic procedures and techniques to embellish themselves, and when they use them, to acknowledging it. It seems that they want to downplay the notion of the body as an artefact and the part that surgery plays in its construction. British informants display a reverential distance to technology and a feeling of awe, instead of the Spaniards' boldness and appropriation. The greater boldness and the imaginative approach of Spanish transsexuals towards the possibilities of change offered by medical technology reveal a notion of matter as more malleable and an acknowledgement of transsexuals' practices treating the body as an artefact. Hence, the cross-cultural comparison also reveals differences concerning understandings of materiality; Spanish transsexuals emphasise its malleability and display a clear notion of body as

\textsuperscript{200} British interviewees display an awareness that sounds like a repetition of medical platitudes warning them not to expect a miraculous change by virtue of the operation itself (see Jane 842-3 and Brenda 225-9). Billings and Urban (1982) show how physicians complain about transsexuals' "unrealistic expectations for an immediately blissful life, exciting and romance-filled" (Dr. R. Green, director of Gender Identity clinic in California in the 1970s, quoted in Billings and Urban 1982: 272). According to Billings and Urban, physicians themselves are the source of such hopes because they "offered men more than just the chance to be rid of their dreaded male insignia - they were promised the experience of female sexuality" (Billings and Urban 1982: 272).

\textsuperscript{201} See also Pamela 461-72. In general the MTF Spanish transsexuals I interviewed were younger than their UK counterparts. This might explain in part the differences relating to their expectations concerning their looks. Nevertheless, there is a marked cultural difference with the UK that Elsa puts succinctly without embarrassment: "we are in a society in which one has to be liked, right? It is a bit of a seductive society, isn't it? Those that do not seduce, well they don't, they don't... It's true! We work this way and it is established culturally this way but, in our culture (Spain) specially it is very noticeable, isn't it?" (Elsa 937-9).
artefact linked to a cosmetic notion of surgery, whereas UK interviewees tend to emphasise the body's resistance, to conceive the body as 'natural' but 'mistaken', and to consider surgery as medical.

The study also reveals conventionality concerning the gender ideal cited. For instance, Spanish MTF informants presented a notion of femininity very influenced by media images, whereas British interviewees, although also interested in appearances, aimed to project themselves as 'normal' women and emphasised caring for themselves and others as a feminine trait. Correspondingly, British FTM transsexuals stressed the limitations on males' self-expression and self-care whereas Spanish transsexuals cited a male gender ideal that offers more leeway for male narcissism. Concerning the social role of females, Spanish interviewees cited prescriptions for submissiveness as well as domestic and maternal roles - against which they reacted - whereas British interviewees did not cite a female's traditional role as their preference nor as prescription.

With regards to their social relations and their political stance, the cross-cultural comparison reveals yet another aspect of the Matrix's conventionality. Generally British interviewees seemed more concerned with fitting into hegemonic categories and displayed anxiety about not conforming. Accordingly, fewer British informants perceived themselves as subversive in contrast with Spanish informants who regarded themselves as subversive and displayed a critical and didactic attitude towards society. At times the importance of gender for the definition of personhood is challenged in transsexuals' discourse, particularly by Spanish interviewees, hence attacking the main crux of the Matrix's identity standards. The idea of an entity standing above gender is encapsulated in Spanish interviewees' citation of 'person', since it is a self-concept aiming to overcome gender identity as the main criterion for classifying subjects. In contrast, British interviewees did not employ the terms gender or 'third gender', and did not make explicit remarks concerning resistance to stereotypical female roles. Spanish informants stressed the importance of family support and reported a higher incidence of a moral order. Whereas Spanish interviewees had no qualms about allying with homosexual groups, British associations avoid such political alliance in order to avoid connotations of sexual perversity and maintain their identity as a medical predicament in agreement with normative medical definitions. Professionally the social situation of both groups is also markedly different since Spain presents higher discrimination against transsexuals in the professions and higher incidence of prostitution amongst transsexuals.

The present study might serve as starting point for establishing cross cultural comparisons between the HM and the social institutions of personal identity in radically different cultures. A possible point of comparison could be gender markers and gender platitudes, the relation between

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202 However, the subversive potential of this citation is debatable since it stands in contrast with transsexualism as a practice since their belief in their 'person' as being above sex and gender does not impede them from changing their bodies to align their appearance with normative models of gender. In thus far, transsexuals' practices reveal their adherence to a notion of the body as a sign of identity that is inevitably gendered.

203 Ethnographies such as Prieur's (1998) and Kulick's (1998) reveal sexual practices, rather than the body, as the main gender marker. 'Men' are those males who do not get penetrated; 'not-men' include anybody who gets
different levels of medicalisation and sense of artificiality of the body, attitudes to surgery, the interaction between moral and medical order, public perceptions of transsexualism, and so on. Cross-cultural comparisons could also be carried out between different cultures within the same state. During my empirical research in Barcelona several transsexuals pointed to considerable cultural differences between the transsexual populations in Barcelona and Madrid. Similarly, there seem to be considerable differences between Scotland and England concerning the latitude given to transsexualism.\textsuperscript{204}

\textsuperscript{204} Carr (1996) reports a stronger influence of moral order in Scotland relative to the rest of the UK.
PART THREE:

CONCLUSIONS
CHAPTER 7:

CONCLUSIONS

In this chapter I will present a summary of the empirical findings providing confirmation of my sociological reconstruction of Judith Butler's theories. I will also show how the empirical research supports the conceptualising of the HM as a social institution as a valid reconstruction. In the course of doing so I will also reflect on the success of the sociological reconstruction in meeting the objections of Butler's critics presented in Chapter 3, on the choice of transsexuals as informants, and on the political contributions of the present study.

The fieldwork data substantiate the self-referentiality and circularity of the Matrix's knowledge categories and laws as well as their collective definition, thus supporting the reconstruction of the Matrix as a language, that is a set of attributive, explanatory and predictive practices central to social interaction. The marked importance transsexuals give to the correct citation of the Matrix platitudes in order to be socially classified under their preferred gender category attests to the significance of the HM as folk sexological knowledge. Transsexuals' self-perceptions and self-monitoring, as well as collective sanctioning of gender categories, show how the Matrix functions as a theory shaping cognition of self and others and how, as a language and theory, the meaning stability of its categories is protected by sanctions.

Transsexuals' reports on the mismatch between body and mind reveal how certain body parts, desires and pleasures are conceived as belonging to a particular gender. The data show how bodies and gender performances sediment through the reiterated citation of the Matrix's normative gender platitudes. Thus, the empirical data confirm the performative character of the HM category of sex, since its platitudes define and rule the gender meanings that subjects 'map' onto the way in which the body is perceived. These gender meanings perform the subject's identity and desire towards heterosexuality, and prompt procedures to further feminise or masculinise the body (in the case of female-to-female and male-to-male subjects respectively), or to shift the body's gender markers altogether (as in the case of transsexuals). In other words, the Matrix category of sex performs our body as an artificial kind by shaping body perceptions of self and others through social kinds.

Hence, the empirical data presents evidence of sex and gender as theoretical entities defined under the criteria of heterosexuality and performing the sense of self as an essence residing in interior space. Transsexuals' accounts reveal gender as an identity label permeating several aspects of the subject, such as personality, aspired social role, preferred activities, sexual orientation, body perception, appearance, gesture, and the like. Moreover, transsexuals' narratives and practices support the notion of
gender as a performative category performing identity, body and desire. Hence, the data confirm Butler's argument that the traditional idea of 'gender core' should be considered as an interior essence articulated as a 'cause' for desire, gesture and act that can be localised within the 'self'. Thus, the present study provides empirical data for a "theory of subjectivity taking into account social discourses and discursive practices which provide the context in which we all ultimately become gendered subjects" (Moore 148).

Other Matrix dichotomies, such as the distinction between mind and body distinction, natural and artificial, subject and object support the performative power of sex. The Matrix platitudes governing gender define the standards of 'natural' sexed identity and become the referents for the performance of bodies into normative coherent sexes. As consequence, sex-change treatments are conceived as liberation from the 'wrong body trap' and the realisation of a normative 'right' sex body schema. The connection between the natural and the socially acceptable is exposed in transsexuals' arguments for social legitimisation by presenting transsexualism as an error of nature. Obviously, the medical profession regulates the standards of acceptable sex versus a nature devoid of moral significance, which can therefore can make 'mistakes' that can be 'corrected'. In transsexuals' usage, the mind is the locus of essential subjectivity that corresponds with potentiality and resides in an inner space; the body is a malleable object and its appearance is the visible surface of gender. Mind marks the content and form that can be imposed onto the receptive body's matter. Transsexuals conceive of matter as more malleable and 'less solid' than the mind. It is the latter which represents essential identity and, hence what performs (or to use a Butlerian term, 'matters') subjectivity through technology, cosmetic practices, clothes, performance, speech, and so on.

Thus, the Matrix's theoretical terms perform the body as an artificial kind that gets subsequently presented as a natural kind. In spite of interviewees' reports on the resistance and alienation from new organs, their insistence on playing down hormonal treatment and surgery - by calling it 'the op' or comparing it to a cosmetic procedure - illustrated the concealment of the artificiality of sex as natural kind. Their narratives also illustrated the double self-referentiality of biological discourse:

a) in so far as it shows how biological theories and transsexuals' treatment are informed by HM folk theories on gender, such as the feminine and the masculine myth,

b) and in so far its object of study (the body) has been performed by the Matrix categories and laws such as heterosexuality and various gender myths. The empirical data establish how the repeated citation of medical definitions performs transsexualism as a naturally given condition, an unchosen ailment appearing at birth. Thus, sex is constructed as a natural kind by being defined, performed and stabilised through medical categorisation and surgical intervention.

By looking into the interaction between the Matrix and biology, the study elucidates the notion of sex as inapprehensible.
The empirical study also sheds light into the processes of genderisation by looking into the technologies used for FTM and MTF change. In this respect, it makes the regular gendering processes of female-to-female and male-to-male more clear by showing the role of sex-change surgery as foundational in the definition of sex. Hence it opens the way for the re-articulation and re-signification of notions that naturalise gender, such as psychiatric discourse, by disclosing the naturalisation of sex as a natural given.\footnote{In as far as they reveal the equation male/penis/phallus as a conventional one, the empirical data might be useful in trying to answer the Butlerian question: "what would it mean to separate the heterosexual woman who has the phallus from the phallic mother? It's an important thing to do" (12: 37).} The empirical data also illustrates the role of the penis as the main signifier of social difference and as the alleged cause of that difference. Hence, the study confirms the collectively agreed and sustained consensus on sex as a given natural kind causing social differences, that is, as causing what are theorised as social statuses or social kinds. In this respect, the empirical findings provide material for one of Butler's political aims, namely "contesting ontology" or, to put it in terms of my reconstruction, for problematising the body as natural kind in a realist sense as the cause of the social kind gender.

Concerning the Matrix platitudes as normative standards of identity, the study reveals prescriptions acting on the body as source and locus of identity, and thus it exposes the importance of gender as surface performance in social interaction. Interviewees' citations of visual role models disclose the normative importance of the aesthetic, particularly for FTM. Moreover, the study confirms gender and sex as relations of power existing in social interaction by showing the self-referentiality and circularity of their definition and sustainability, as well as the importance of the social attribution of gender revealed by punishing mechanisms and general surveillance such as the monitoring of self and others.

As explained in Chapter 1, Butler is opposed to the abstract Lacanian notion of identification on the grounds that it disregards collective definitions for prescribed identities. The present study concurs with Butler's objection and it empirically clarifies how we should understand normative gender identification, i.e. as a collectively defined and sustained law that prescribes coherence between a set of arbitrarily grouped characteristics under the criteria of heterosexuality. Normative gender identification is constantly monitored and sanctioned by self and others and it pervades social relations to the point that it might impell some people to change their bodies in order to realise the prescribed identity of sexual orientation and gender. Furthermore, the analysis of the empirical study shows the possibility of a distinction between gender identity and sexual preference. For instance, identification must be distinguished from sexual orientation in order to account for, as an instance, a female-identified MTF transsexual who wishes to have sexual relationships with women but only while having a female's body. Hence, though this subject is identifying with the female category, she is not wishing to be heterosexual in her transsexualized sex but homosexual. That is, an individual can identify with the other sex and be 'homosexual' in their cross-gendered identity. Thus, it is possible to distinguish identification from
desire, for gender identification can be different from sexual orientation. Within the Matrix gender and sexuality are generally closely linked or even equated through the law of compulsory heterosexuality. Indeed, the equation might be so strong to the point that some people would go as far as changing their bodies in order to realise the identity of sexual orientation and gender. However, a number of people break the law of compulsory heterosexuality, thus showing that the equation of sexuality with gender can be broken, though such transgression may be punished or even abjected. In sum, as Butler thinks, sexuality should not be reduced to gender, although we cannot always distinguish them.

The numerous examples of collective constraint and punishment in transsexuals' accounts are evidence of the societal protection of the Matrix as a collective good. The empirical study corroborates the theorised overlap of standards of identity and standards of rationality and morality. The empirical study also ratifies the role of abjection in establishing and reassuring 'normally' sexed individuals of what constitutes the normative. The debasement felt by transsexual people is produced by societal dislike of their lack of coherence between gender identity and appearance, since "the 'intelligible' genders are those which institute and maintain relations of coherence and continuity among sex, gender, sexual practice, and desire" (Butler GT: 17). The metaphors 'clean' and 'proper' versus 'dirty' and 'debased' used by interviewees to refer to themselves confirms a social notion of transsexuals as "'incoherent' or 'discontinuous'... beings (that) call into question the very notion of 'the person' by which persons are defined" (Butler GT: 17).

By transforming their bodies, interviewees conform to the Matrix's standards of identity. Thus transsexuals' willingness to change their bodies can be interpreted as an attempt to attain acceptability by achieving sex/gender congruence instead of the dispersion they perceive themselves to be in. In so far as individuals calculate their actions in accordance with HM categories, the empirical research confirms the theorised reflexivity of accounts. Hence the study verifies how through the subject's rule following - that is the repetitive citation of HM categories - the HM self-validates as an accurate description of reality, thus behaving as a self-fulfilling prophecy.

The public scrutiny of transsexuals' gender performance is evaluated by reference to the Matrix standards of identity, thus revealing the Matrix's normative categories and its collective performative reiteration. The empirical study works on the assumption that the Matrix's folk sexological platitudes can be studied by looking at common sense accounts of sexual identity. The findings confirm this, since interviewees gave largely stereotypical responses regarding gender myths and the history of transsexualism in their effort to make the 'right' citation. Therefore, transsexuals provided information about the collective knowledge that shapes their T talk. Transsexuals as informants shed light on folk gender myths and exemplify several general genderising processes common to all members of the

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2 Butler herself points to this problem: "it is not (...) possible to free sexuality from gender even as it remains methodologically crucial to refuse the reduction of sexuality to gender (...) there is no easy formula for understanding the relation between sexuality and gender (...) Thus, it would make no sense to divide and oppose bodies and pleasure, on the one hand, and 'sex/desire' on the other, if the normativity of the latter continues to haunt and structure the lived modalities of the former" (Butler 1999a: 17, 18).
collective, such as modifying the body to fit gender stereotypes, through processes such as surgery, dieting, body building, depilation, make up, clothing.

Moreover, transsexuals, like other members of the Heterosexual Matrix, carefully construct self-narratives by engaging in autobiographical reconstruction and repressing information inconsistent with normative gender narratives, such as homosexual tendencies. Transsexuals also perceive traits of character, pleasure, and so on, as gendered and definitory of identity, as well as conceiving identity as strongly determined by sex. Like non-transsexuals, interviewees perceive their identity as unacceptable when not fitting the stereotypes. Hence, they feel shame when they believe their self is being negatively evaluated by others. Transsexuals, like non-transsexuals, need a certain degree of collective approval and seek it by redefining their identity and body in conformity with social norms. Nevertheless, transsexuals as informants have their own specificity, as for instance an enlarged distress about not conforming to the ascribed gender ideal, accentuated problems of social acceptance, monitoring and constraint, and citation not only of folk sexological gender myths but also of psychiatric discourse.

Thus far, the study of transsexualism throws light on the process of gendering of non-transsexual subjects through the trans-genderising process. In other words, the taken-for-granted process of performing female-to-female (FFF) and male-to-male (MTM) have been clarified by looking into the process of MTF and FTM. Observing transsexuals has proved informative of general gendering processes not only because the informants can reflect on their change, but also because their transformation takes place under the close surveillance of the medical profession and society.

Concerning the theorisation of the subject, interviewees also confirm the sociological reconstruction since to transsexuals the referent for agency is a subject abstracted from the collective - a self-determining subject. The empirical data confirms the thesis that the intuition of 'I' and inner space results from the repetition of self-referential 'I' talk at the individual level. In other words, the inner sense of gendered identity is shown to be collectively constituted by the performative citation of the Matrix's prescriptive platitudes. Concerning the self-referentiality of 'I' talk at collective level, the empirical study shows a reiterative citation of medical platitudes and gender myths that, together with transsexuals' process of transformation, is comparable to rituals and rites of passage in so far as the individual reaches a new identity by travelling a journey fraught with difficulties, and undergoes scarification and pain. The empirical findings also support Butler's view that 'gender core' is traditionally understood as an interior essence presented as a 'cause' for desire, gesture and act localised within the self.

This individualist concept of self is disclosed by interviewees' voluntarism visible in their usage of the mind/body distinction, in their notion of the malleability of their bodies, and in their pride at being self-made. Agency is localised in the subject's self-will by splitting mind from body and considering body as a malleable object whose 'agency', or resistance to modification, is explained away as resulting from the shortcoming of medical techniques. Thus, the human is dis-integrated into a subject split into mind and body. However, the performative dimension of the Matrix's platitudes seems
to be made invisible by the hegemonic discourse prompting subjects to think about the "I" as something that each individual shapes to her/his own accord independently of the collective.

Interviewees' narratives presented contradictions between their wanting to be a 'normal' fe/male and their undertaking the process of transexualisation, between their claims to be cogent free agents and their adoption of the pathologising transsexual label, and finally between their desire to fit and their claims to be subversive. These tensions spring from interviewees' individualist concept of self resulting from the lack of awareness of the 'I' as a collectively defined artificial kind. Although the respondents were aware of the shaping of their sense of interiority by past experiences, they did not seem aware of the shaping of self-attributions by collective definitions. In other words, though they perceived the importance of earlier applications of 'I' talk in constituting the sense of self, they were not aware of the self-referentiality of "I" talk at the collective level.

Concerning transsexuals' subversive potential, their 'I' talk presents a tension between their perception of themselves as fitting the rules and their view that they problematise those rules. On the one hand transsexuals present themselves as passive victims of a mistake of 'nature' or 'God', hence as politically passive. On the other hand, they refer to the Matrix norms as limiting their identity and they are active to the extent that they perceive their bodies as something that can be changed, and act on them through hormonal, surgical and cosmetic procedures. Hence, there are tensions within transsexuals' discourse and their practices. In their discourse transsexuals question the relationship between gender and embodiment (sex), but in their practices they adhere to the normative link between gender and embodiment (sex) inherent in the understanding of gender as a single, undisputed identification, fixed at the core of personhood and achievable through technological intervention. In other words, transsexuals assume a fixed psycho-sexual order - that is, the Matrix norms - and change themselves to fit in.

By showing the multilayered nature of citation this study contributes to the understanding of subversion through unfaithful citation. Since subversion arises from mis-citation, it is more likely to happen when the subject is citing more than one discourse. Moreover, the contradicting discourses and values cited by interviewees as well as their practices, such as travestis, reveal the possibility of subversion arising from actors mobilising conflicting resources to create a new collective identity with a particular value system. Hence, the empirical research exemplifies an understanding of subversive agency as "the result of specific social practices" rather than as "an abstract potentiality" (McNay 1999: 181). It does so in two ways: a) by presenting evidence of transsexuals' re-appropriation of gender deviancy as transsexualism, and the difficulty of re-appropriating the prescribed gender signals, such as desire, personality, appearance, and so on; and b) by contextualizing agency in two particular folk sexologies within different social, economic and political circumstances, i.e. those of Spain and the UK, thus showing how different cultures and their accompanying social practices circumscribe the possibility of agency.

Finally, the present study also supports the Matrix's conventionality by revealing cross-cultural differences between Spain and the UK, thus providing further evidence of it being a social institution.
The cross-cultural comparison shows conventionality in different areas such as: attitudes towards the body and technology, understanding of materiality, citation of medical standards, gender ideal cited, social position and political stance. Concerning differences in the citation of medical discourse, in contrast with their UK counterparts Spanish interviewees acknowledged homosexual experiences previous to transexualisation, and sexual arousal when cross-dressing; presented a citation of the distinction transvestite/transsexual that erased its boundaries, and did not show strong feelings about their classification; endorsed the equation transsexual = transvestite at folk level; maintained the pre-operative state indefinitely, and defended disobedience to normative sex in their discourse. Concerning the observed link between artificial/natural and the cosmetic/medical notions of surgery, I noted that Spaniards tend to have a richer and more articulated notion of the body as an artefact as well as a concept of sex-change surgery as cosmetic. In contrast, British interviewees considered surgery as a purely medical procedure. In general transexualisation in Spain is less medicalised and institutionalised than in the UK, and it is not subjected to the control of public health funding, thus freeing transsexual subjects from the compulsion to correctly cite medical standards in their self-narratives in order to obtain diagnosis, and loosening public control of hormonal and surgical treatment. Consequently, Spanish informants report less tension with the medical profession than their British counterparts.

There are several ways in which this study contributes to political debates, such as informing about normative gender practices, revealing the need to distinguish cross gendered-identification from desire, strengthening anti-essentialism by showing transsexualism to be a socially constructed category and by deepening the understanding of sex as a contingent non-universal category. It also supports anti-essentialism by showing the HM’s conventionality and thus increasing self-awareness of our own culture and facilitating the necessary ‘bracketing off’ of our own cultural categories by Western ethnographers. This is particularly relevant in order to truly grasp other cultures’ alterity, given that non-western cultures are usually required to take a particular definition of the category "woman" on board in order to be able to establish a dialogue with a culture that takes for granted its universality. Another political contribution of the study concerns it clarifying transsexuals’ political aims and the unfaithfulness of their citations - most importantly the sex/gender distinction, and their individualist notion of self and agency. The study of transsexuals’ political stance problematises their appropriation by academic theorists as a subversive ‘third gender’ group. I have argued that transsexualism problematises and destabilises the meaning of Matrix’s norms and categories but does not break away from it - a possibility excluded within meaning finitism which does not conceive change as sudden ruptures but as modifications over time.

3 However, my work is not political in its aim since I am not asking what needs to be changed in the HM in order to avoid gender dysphoria or to loosen gender definitions. Nevertheless I am offering some material on which these questions could be asked since the empirical data suggests the possibility of constructing sexual difference in a different way than in mutually exclusive binary categories (Moore 148).

4 In this regard I agree with Kessler and MacKenna’s description of transsexualism as “a category constructed to alleviate ambiguity - to avoid the kinds of combinations (e.g., male genitals-female gender identity) that make people uncomfortable because they violate the basic rules about gender” (Kessler and MacKenna 1987: 120).
In sum, the empirical evidence confirms that the HM exhibits all the characteristics of a social institution as understood in Barnes and Bloor's performative theory of social institution. That is the HM is self-referential and self-validating; conventional, normative and regulated by constraint and sanctioning. The empirical study also confirms that the Matrix is a collective good providing social order and predictability, as well as maintaining individualism and voluntarism as conditions of sociability. The study also supports my theoretical proposal of consensus about sex and gender, namely the predominating orthodoxy of folk sexology and the HM, is sustained by reflexive mobilisation and application of the HM's categories. Moreover, the study shows how the performative citation of the Matrix platitudes constitutes the body as an artefact that gets presented as a natural kind. Finally, the empirical data supports the reconstruction of the subject's sense of self and intuitions of agency as products of the double self-referentiality of 'I' talk, thus confirming the notion of the 'I' as an artificial kind. Therefore, it can be concluded that, as theorised in the sociological reconstruction of Butler's performative theory, the HM is a social institution.

In sum, this thesis presents a theoretical and empirical contribution to our understanding of sex and gender demonstrating that the highly suggestive but obscure attempts of our most insightful theorists to conceptualise sex and gender can be reformulated in terms of a coherent and rigorous interactionist understanding of social institutions; that such a re-theorisation of sex and gender is entirely consistent with and, indeed does much to illuminate and explain, the phenomena of transsexualism; and that this phenomena, when seen from this perspective, can be taken as a special case of the processes of sex and gender identification taking place among the population more generally.
APPENDIX 1

QUESTIONNAIRE

GENERAL:

- Could you explain to me why you want/ed to undergo surgery to change your body?
- Could you tell me a bit about your history in so far as you deem it relevant to your decision?
- Do you believe that you are 'in the wrong body'? Do you think this is an appropriate expression? If so, how did you come to believe it? Did you feel guilty about it? Did you feel you had to make efforts to suppress your feelings?
- Do you feel that the operation has made your body fit your mind?
- Did you feel that you could not obtain (sufficient) sexual pleasure from the genitals you were born with?
- To what extent does your body feel 'foreign'? How does that express itself?
- What will you do if no surgical intervention were possible? (What would you have done if surgical intervention had not been possible?)
- How many more operations are you prepared to undergo if you are not fully satisfied with the first operation?
- If it became possible in the future, how would you feel about becoming pregnant and having children? / how would you feel about fathering children?

SOCIETY AND ACCEPTANCE:

- How have you experienced society's pressure on you to be 'a man'/'a woman'? Did/do you felt/feel you didn't fit?
- How do you think society will react to you after the operation? Have you done anything to prepare those that surround you?
- Do you hope and believe that you will be fully accepted as a male/female after the operation? How important is that to you?
- How do you think people see you? Do you find that the way people treat you has changed since you started acting in the male/female role? If so, in what way?
How do you feel about having to 'prove' your admission to a sex-change surgery? Did you prepare yourself? How? What did you read, study, etc. to make sure you would 'get it right' (so to say)? Could you comment on the first year 'passing test'? Do you think it places you in a vulnerable position?

Do you think of yourself as challenging how society thinks about sex, sexuality, the roles of man and woman, the 'naturalness' of biological sex? Do you see yourself as 'radical' in any sense of the word?

How has your family reacted to your situation? In the past and now.

SEXUAL ORIENTATION:

- Could you tell us a bit about your sexual relationships? And your sexual orientation and desires? Perhaps also on your sexual fantasies as a child?
- How would you qualify the intensity of your sexual desire?
- In what way, if any, do you think that male and female sexualities differ?

BODY PERCEPTION:

- How strongly do you identify with your body? Is your body 'part of you'? How important is your body to you?
- Some people would say that transsexuals are moving towards a view of the body as something which can be endlessly moulded and changed, almost as if it was an artefact that we possess. What do you think about the possibilities that modern technology offers for changing our body? Do you find it liberating?
- Could you tell me a little about your changed body? Did you find it strange at first? Were there problems?
- In what way, if any, has your self-esteem changed since the operation?
- How happy are you to undergo the cosmetic procedures of make-up, depilation, waxing, etc.?
- Do you follow fashion? Do you have a role model?
- Could you tell me a little about your knowledge of anatomy, physiology, etc.?
- Do you think the change from the male to the female sex is somehow 'easier' than the other way around? Maybe mentally? Why?
- Could you imagine someone having a second change in which they return to their original sex?
- To what extent do you think that femininity/masculinity can be expressed in a male/female body and vice versa?
- Would you like to add anything else? Is there any aspect you expected me to cover that I haven't dealt with?
APPENDIX 2

TRANSCRIPTION CONVENTIONS

(....) Words undeciphered
. Talk omitted which is irrelevant to the issue being discussed
. . Talk omitted by request of the interviewee
= Contributions follow on without a break
/ Pause of less than two seconds
/// Pause of more than two seconds
CAPITALS Emphatic speech
[ ] Interjections by unidentified speaker
(??..) Approximate wording
[sigh] Stage directions (e.g. [laughter])
[ ] Simultaneous or interrupted speech
(&) Continuing speech, separated in the transcript by an interrupting speaker
ABBREVIATIONS:

**Books and papers**

SD: Subjects of Desire
GT: Gender Trouble
IM: "Imitation and Gender Insubordination"
BTM: Bodies That Matter
ES: Excitable Speech
PLP: Psychic Life of Power

**Interviews**

I1: "The Body you want"
I2: "Gender as Performance. An Interview with Judith Butler"
I3: "How Bodies Come to Matter: An Interview with Judith Butler"
I4: "On Speech, Race and Melancholia. An Interview with Judith Butler"

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