

**Re-Visioning Bisexuality:
Rhizomatic Cartographies of Sex, Gender and
Sexuality**

by

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BA (Hons)

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
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Abstract

This thesis argues that bisexuality offers an epistemological lens through which to consider how the master categories of sex, gender and sexuality are continually dismantled and revised through the lived realities that occupy 'in-between' spaces of corporeality – heterosexual/homosexual, man/woman, male/female, masculine/feminine. I contend this re-visioning is necessary in order to accommodate the fluidity of sexual and sex/gender subjectivities that proliferate in the contemporary social world. The principal research question thus interrogates the sociological nexus between bisexuality and sex/gender diversity. Specifically, it asks: 'how and in what ways do diverse and/or fluid articulations of sex/gender and sexuality inform, shape and reshape each other?' Proceeding from this, the study further inquires: 'what alternative practices of self, relationality and ethical living are produced from bisexuality's habitus of 'the middle'?'

A theoretical frame informed by the philosophy of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari is deployed to analyse qualitative data drawn from 47 in-depth interviews with a cohort including self-described: male, female, transgender, intersex and genderqueer persons. I argue that Deleuzian key concepts of becomings, rhizomes, and nomadism provide a new language for understanding bisexuality. This allows analysis to conceptualise the bisexual subject in non-binaristic ways, and move beyond dominant assumptions of 'identity' categories as seemingly fixed and stable. Importantly, this novel approach re-visions bisexuality as an *affect* – that is, it refocuses analysis to spaces of creative encounter that arise *between* desiring bodies, and the wider social structures within which such encounters occur. A Deleuzian method accordingly provides an innovative sociological tool to re-imagine the socius of libidinal connections as a relational process actuated between micro and macro fields of engagement. This study finds that participants' realities exceed and remake the dominant categories of sex/gender/sexuality through traversing border regions of corporeality. Further, their narratives reveal creative relationship arrangements that expand understanding of ethical, sexual, and gendered fields of self and sociality.

Glossary

The following will assist the reader in understanding particular terms, acronyms and abbreviations that concern sex, gender and sexuality as employed in this thesis. It is important to state that these are not rigid codifications and definitions, and often, as the participants in this study also found, it has been necessary to navigate the constraints of available language in novel ways.

BDSM: Acronym for bondage and discipline, dominance and submission, and sadomasochism. Some refer to this area of sub-cultural sexual practice as kink and it involves the consensual exchange of power for erotic stimulation or pleasure. Common practices include spanking, restriction of movement (hand-cuffing, being tied-up) and role-play (master-slave).

Beats: In Australia 'beats' refer to public spaces – usually public toilets in parks and railway stations – where men seek out other men for casual, often anonymous, sexual encounters. Beats are also commonly known as 'cottages' in Britain, and 'tearooms' in the U.S.

Bisexual: I use this term to refer to the capacity for, or experience of, physical, romantic, emotional and/or psychological attraction to more than one sex or gender. Variations of this terminology may include fluid, omnisexual, pansexual, multi-sexual, polysexual. I avoid *naming* individuals 'bisexual' or grouping individuals as 'bisexuals' unless directly quoting participants or other sources.

Cross-dresser: A person who intermittently wears clothes traditionally associated with those of the 'opposite' gender. The term is sometimes used synonymously or interchangeably with 'transvestite'. However, because of the association of 'transvestite' with sexological discourses of pathology (regarding fetishism and sexual arousal – which usually refers to men who

cross-dress for sexual pleasure) – the term is avoided unless quoting someone who self-identifies in this manner.

Drag Queen: Men who wear a commonly exaggerated form of female clothing for entertainment.

Lesbian/Gay/Homosexual: While these terms commonly refer to individuals who are exclusively same-sex or same-gender attracted, I avoid using this nomenclature to *name* individuals or groups unless referring to its usage by participants or other sources/authors.

LGBTI: Acronym for 'lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex' (also commonly denoted as LGBT, GLBT, LGB etc.), which is predominantly used to signify diversity of sex/gender/sexuality communities. Variations may include additional initials such as Q (queer), Q (questioning), A (allies), A (asexual).

Genderqueer: Individuals who may see themselves as being both man and woman, as being neither man nor woman, or as falling completely outside the gender binary and, therefore, not captured by current nomenclature.

Intersex: Refers to those who are physically diverse in terms of what we think of as biological sex characteristics – such as hormones, chromosomes, gonads, and external anatomy. Intersex can be seen as being: neither male nor female, both male and female at once, somewhere between male and female, or something that escapes current paradigms for describing human sexual difference. Intersex persons identify across the sex/gender and sexuality spectrum: as male, female, men, women, transgender, twin-spirited, straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual or in ways that do not fit current codification possibilities. Importantly, the term is not synonymous with transgender nor does it indicate sexuality.

Non/monogamy: This indicates that practices of monogamy (exclusive committed partnerships) and non-monogamy (non-exclusive partnerships)

are not dichotomously opposed and, therefore, not mutually exclusive terms. Rather, the participants in this study invested the terms of monogamy and non-monogamy with meanings specific to their own circumstances.

Polyamory: Also referred to as poly lifestyle, this indicates relationships in which individuals have multiple romantic, sexual, and/or affective partners. Polyamory emphasises long-term emotionally intimate relationships that are premised on an ethics of full disclosure and honesty. Guidelines and parameters for the organisation and logistics of each polyamorous situation are negotiated between partners and vary according to context.

Queer: Reclaimed from its pejorative history as a form of abuse (deriding homosexuality), queer is used variously, though not universally, to indicate LGBTI communities or people who contest the binaries of sex, gender and sexuality. The emergence of queer identities (or anti-identities) and queer politics has been integral in developing queer theoretical perspectives in academic scholarship across cultural studies, social sciences and humanities.

Sex/Gender: Sex and gender are highly contested terms in social scientific discourse, and often used interchangeably both in academic and lay discussion. While I use sex to refer to male/female physicality and gender to denote the social categories and/or internal sense of being man/woman, masculine/feminine, this distinction is not one of biological 'natural' fact versus social construct. As will be demonstrated in this thesis, designations of male/female sex are dependent upon codification of the human body according to typological norms (hormones, chromosomes, gonads, external anatomy etc.), which exist on a continuum rather than the dimorphic model that natural scientific discourse upholds. The relationship between sex and gender is, therefore, complexly constituted. Where appropriate, I thus employ 'sex/gender' to indicate the inability to disarticulate the two concepts as discrete 'categories'.

Sex/Gender-Diverse: The mosaic of persons whose chosen identity descriptors do not align with normative constructs of male/female sex, and/or man/woman, masculine/feminine genders.

Swinging: A broad term that encompasses the willingness of a couple to meet with other persons, couples or groups for consensual sexual or erotic engagement. Such sexual encounters may occur at various venues including: swinging clubs, parties, or private residences. Internet sites provide a popular mode of initial contact or advertisement. The prime focus of such encounters privileges sexual 'play' rather than emotional connection. However, this is not to say that emotional, friendship or other relational dynamics are precluded from consideration.

Transgender: Often shortened to trans or trans*, this is an umbrella term embracing all those whose gender identity is not congruent with their designated sex at birth. Transgender people may or may not choose to alter their bodies hormonally and/or surgically. It includes but is not limited to transsexuals, cross-dressers, and genderqueer. Transgender persons may also be referred to in terms of their status regarding genital re-assignment surgery as: pre-op (pre-operative), non-op (non-operative) or post-op (post-operative).

Transsexual: Originating from medical and psychological discourse, transsexual is often employed to indicate hormonal and/or surgical intervention. It is sometimes used interchangeably with transgender but is not an umbrella term.

Data Coding: Participants are denominated by pseudonym, age group and sex/gender: for example, Natasha (30s/F). The issue of how to determine abbreviations of sex/gender in a way that respects each participant's self-ascription is particularly thorny. It is problematised further by seeming to force a number of sex/genders into an epistemological system that is inherently dualistic, which appears at odds with the Deleuzian sociology I articulate within my thesis. However, while I must work within the

dominant language, participant discourse makes clear that meanings attached to the vocabulary of both sex and gender are malleable and porous. The following abbreviations are thus nominally provisional.

M/F **Men/women** who have not experienced any discord between their birth sex designation and subsequent sense of being a girl/woman, boy/man.

MTF/FTM **Male-to-female** or **female-to-male** persons who now live full-time in their chosen sex/genders. I will qualify this where participants indicated particular ways of referring to themselves, such as trans man, trans woman, bi-gendered etc.

I/F **Intersex female** designates the one intersex participant in this study, Dana, who described herself in these terms.

GQ **Genderqueer**

CD **Cross-dresser**

*Human sexualities wander in a world of ambiguity, disorder,
potential chaos.*

Ken Plummer (1995:177)

Introduction

Re-Visioning Bisexuality

The sociologist's task should be to deconstruct the conventional categories of sex, sexuality, and gender and build new complex, cross-cutting constructs into research designs. There are revolutionary possibilities inherent in rethinking the categories of gender, sexuality, and physiological sex. Sociological data that challenge conventional knowledge by reframing the questions could provide legitimacy for new ways of thinking

Judith Lorber (1996:143)

Beyond 'Identity'

Ken Plummer's (1995) and Judith Lorber's (1996) words, which introduce this thesis, speak to the core premise of my research project. This is a study about bisexuality, but what it contributes to sociological scholarship is in fact something far greater than just an understanding of bisexual practice. Bisexuality, as I have approached it through my conceptualisation, method design and theoretical framework, performs an epistemic intervention that calls into question and problematises the master categories that inform social science research of gender and sexuality. I do this by demonstrating theoretically *and* empirically, the porosity of categorical boundaries of 'identity' – male/female, man/woman, masculine/feminine, lesbian, gay, bisexual, heterosexual – upon which the greater proportion of sex surveys, and mainstream understanding overall, are largely dependent. As my thesis argues, bisexuality is the lens through which to understand how the disordering function of ambiguous, liminal and fluid sexualities contests the seemingly rigid social structures by which we attempt to understand the world. In order to examine this epistemic function, my study scrutinises, and expands understanding of, the nexus between bisexuality and sex/gender. It explores bisexuality as *sets* of complex, mobile, and dynamic

relational practices of diverse sex/genders beyond the limits of simply 'bisexual identity'.

The importance of this analytical shift is to move thinking beyond prevailing assumptions of bisexuality as a 'both/and' (heterosexual and homosexual), 'dual-sexed' (male and female) attraction, which sits divorced from its lesbian, gay and straight counterparts. I argue that a new language and way of thinking is needed because current bisexuality models are inadequate and fail to fully consider and make sense of the breadth of sex/gender arrangements, such as transgender, intersex and genderqueer. The significance of my research project, hence, lies in comprehensively interrogating the 'in-between' or interstitial spaces of, and the complex relationship between, fluidities of sex/gender *and* sexuality, which other queer scholarship identifies, but does not seek to explicitly analyse or address, particularly in terms of empirical investigation. The principal research questions of this thesis, therefore, ask: 'How and in what ways do diverse and/or fluid expressions of sex/gender *and* sexuality inform, shape and reshape each other? What alternative figurations of self, intimate partner arrangement and ethical sociality are created in these interstitial spaces? And how do these practices contest, subvert, contradict or rewrite the dominant assumptions inscribed by conventional identity labels and the social structures within which these arise?'

This study is based on empirical data of Australian experiences, and thereby contributes a much needed antipodean perspective to the international body of literature on bisexuality, which thus far has been dominated by North American and European research. Although still located within a Western context¹, my theoretical analysis seeks to open up a *flexibility* of conceptual thinking that can accommodate transversal and intersectional flows of

¹ Despite a small body of writings that consider cross-cultural perspectives of bisexuality (for example Asanti 2010; Bereket & Brayton 2008; Burleson 2008; Carrier 1985; Eisner 2012; Martinez et al. 2012; Stobie 2003, 2007, 2011; Tielman, Carballo & Hendriks 1991), the majority of bisexual literature takes a particularly Western paradigmatic view of sexuality and gender, both in terms of epistemology and cultural construction. This has been critically noted with respect to bisexual research by Clare Hemmings (2007) and gender/feminist discourse by Raewyn Connell (2007).

culture, knowledge, ways of living and self-expressions, which have come to define increasingly mobile landscapes of the contemporary world. I argue that a new theoretical paradigm is necessary because although scholarly discussion has variously steered towards queer, postmodernist and feminist theories, the ideas that have loosely come together under the rubric of bisexual theory present three major concerns. Firstly, bisexuality is predominantly theorised in terms of linear identity development models leaving consideration of it as a contingent, fluid or multiple social location under-theorised and empirically under-researched. Secondly, bisexual theory is fragmented along fault-lines of tension arising largely from politico-theoretical differences with and between queer and (lesbian) feminist perspectives, which overall accord limited analytical attention to the complex nexus of sex/gender and bisexuality. Thirdly, discussions of bisexuality across the disciplines of social science generally subsume or ignore gender within the wider gamut of sexuality, or more simply divide research cohorts into 'bisexual men' and 'bisexual women', which overlooks consideration of other gendered possibilities. Moreover, the weight of bisexual research, which derives from psychology and health science, focuses on mental and sexual health risk (especially regarding bisexual/gay men). I contend, therefore, that explorations of sex/gender in relation to bisexuality are largely reduced to notions of gender *difference*, which mostly leave the categories of male/female, man/woman and masculine/feminine unquestioned. Consequently, as the literature review in Chapter 2 demonstrates, sociological studies of everyday lived realities of bisexuality fail to comprehensively take account of sex/gender diversity.

Rather than replaying academic endeavours to determine or define what bisexuality *is* – either in psychoanalytic terms, biological causality, identity development or sexual behaviour risk models² – or demonstrate how

² This is not to ignore the contribution and ongoing worth of AIDS/HIV and sexual health research. However, it is important to clarify that as my study focuses on embodied productions of self, relationality and sociality, and how these urge a rethinking of the ontological categories used in social science, an in-depth review of sexual health literature is not within the scope of my thesis. It is hoped, however, that the model I develop in this dissertation will provide a useful tool for researchers, practitioners, and policy-makers in public health.

bisexuality is marginalised, oppressed or positioned as 'other' to dominant socio-cultural norms or groups, my study emphasises what bisexuality *does*. In other words, it scrutinises the *generative* capacity of bisexuality to *produce* polyvocalities of self and relationships, and how these operate to variously contest, dismantle and remake social and ethico-political formations. This allows analysis to move beyond the hegemony of dualistic frameworks, particularly the heterosexual/homosexual divide, which for the most part dominate bisexual scholarship and prevent discussion from venturing beyond majority/minority hierarchical paradigms of power into new theoretical territories³. Exposing unequal structures of power is revelatory and explanatory. But over-reliance on this model locks analysis into paradigms of marginalisation and minoritisation that not only perpetuate top-down analyses of core/periphery, dominance/subordination, oppressor/oppressed, and aggressor/victim, but also seem inescapable or beyond change.

The revision of thinking I propose in my theoretical and methodological approach is both relevant and important to sociology because it recasts the way in which the relationship between minority identity and wider societal structures is conceptualised and empirically investigated. The originality of my thesis, therefore, resides in re-visioning bisexuality as a *generative process*, which emphasises embodiment, motion and temporality, and thus speaks to prevailing concerns that sociology neglects the corporeal dimension of human potentiality (Turner 2008), action, creativity and capacity (Shilling 2008). This analytical intervention releases the sexual subject from justifying or locating an 'authentic' identity, and instead, focuses on bisexuality as a lived, embodied, relational and ongoing *process*. To some extent, this shift in thinking gestures towards queer and

³ Efforts to destabilise coherent categories of sexual and gender identity have attracted critical scholarly attention. For example, Stevi Jackson (2005:25) states that 'without gender categories we could not categorize sexual desires and identities along the axis of same-gender or other-gender relationships, as heterosexual, bisexual or homosexual/lesbian'. Indeed, Jackson (2005:33) specifically opposes the undoing of binary divisions arguing that posturing gender and sexuality in fluid terms of multiplicity, movement and finer gradations only serves to conceal 'material inequalities' sustained at both macro and micro levels of structure and social practice. I would counter Jackson in that *ignoring* multiplicities and heterogeneity runs the risk of reductionism and erasure through the constant reiteration of hierarchical relations.

poststructuralist theory. Indeed, sociology of non-normative genders and sexualities has in recent years drawn on Foucauldian-informed insights in particular, as well as Judith Butler's writings, to unravel the complex operations of power and discourse at the site of the body. I locate my research within, and build upon the insights of, this critical endeavour, which foregrounds the deconstructive impulse in considering for example, 'difference troubles' (Seidman 1997), 'postmodern diversity' (Plummer 2003, 2007), 'patterned fluidities' (Richardson 2007), 'mestiza/border identities' (Pallotta-Chiarolli 2010) and 'multiple identities' (Rust 2009a).

In order to do this I deploy the philosophical ideas of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari to theorise the complexity of the sex/gender/sexuality matrix in non-binaristic ways. A key finding from my data analysis is that a Deleuzian perspective establishes a new way of understanding (bi)sexuality as an *affect* – that is, what is produced or constructed in relations *between* elements in the social world (whether institutional, discursive, political, cultural, biological, human or non-human). Following Deleuze, the sociological approach I develop in this thesis is accordingly 'constructivist' (Deleuze & Parnet 2006:71) and examines how bisexuality functions to produce *emergent* subjectivities and social arrangements. Conceptual creativity, innovation and movement of thought are the primary ingredients of Deleuze and Guattari's corpus, which I maintain are crucial to advancing understanding of the dynamic topography of sex, gender and sexuality, and the intricate interplays between these grand structural divisions. What makes this thesis sociological, despite its philosophical framework, is the way it uses Deleuze and Guattari's ideas to analyse questions of structure and agency in reference to bisexuality. I argue that a Deleuzian-informed sociology enables not only rethinking the way gender and sexuality are approached in bisexual research, but also illuminates alternative ways of conceptualising the 'self' and the transformative potential of social relations.

The appeal of Deleuze and Guattari to my project is their rhizomatic method, which provides a way of navigating dualisms and hierarchies without being confined to them. For Deleuze and Guattari (1987), a rhizomatic method

locates the in-between spaces of ontological and epistemic formations, which challenge hegemonic frameworks that constrain, restrain and constipate analysis. I contend that Deleuzian philosophy provides a much needed reorientation of thinking that energises and enlivens the sociological imagination of self in relation to social structures, formations, processes and aggregates. Deleuze and Guattari do not negate the impress of social structure and differentials of power but uniquely situate human bodies as part of what they term desiring assemblages that are shifting, dynamic and self-productive sets of relations. It is this more richly textured perspective of subject and epistemology that I seek to bring to the field of bisexual research. Crucial to this innovative exploration of bisexuality is Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) conceptual articulation of the subject as one of 'becoming'. 'Becomings' are actuated through the productive creativity of desire – a mobilising force that arises as bodies enter, connect with, traverse, and depart social assemblages. As will be demonstrated in this thesis, the rhizomatic cartographies that emerge through my participants' stories speak to the dynamic interplays of sexed, gendered and sexual articulations as these overlap, expand, intersect, and contract in transversal and border zone movements.

Reconsidering Difference

As Dvora Zipkin (1992:57) points out, 'bisexuality itself is fluid – there is no one way to be "bi"'. Indeed, the trope of fluidity is one that permeates not only contemporary scholarship of sexuality and gender (Bornstein 1994; Diamond 2008a; Ferber, Holcomb & Wentling 2012; Hall & Pramaggiore 1996; Holmes 2011; Plummer 2007; Richardson 2007; Seidman 1996; Stein 1997), but also sociological theories of society, sociality and relationships. Key theoretical positions advanced here include: the transformation of intimacy via the plasticity of sexuality (Giddens 1992), liquid modernity, love, sociality, life and fear (Bauman 2000, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006), and elastic society (Elliott & Turner 2012). Consequently, a conceptual problem in sociological inquiries of bisexuality is how to reconcile the tension between an inherent assumption that 'identity' is a fixed construct and the mercurial qualities that manifest in the everyday realities of self, desire and

experience. This is all the more pressing given that millennial youth are now more apt to describe their sexualities in terms of fluidity, multiplicity, intersectionality and complexity rather than simply gay, lesbian, bisexual or straight (Owen 2011; Pallotta-Chiarolli 2010; Rust 2000b, 2011; Vaccaro 2009).

Hence, Paula Rust (2009b:100) maintains that a comprehensive examination of bisexuality, fluidity, and non-linear creative processes of sexual expression 'cannot be accomplished by "adding" bisexuals as a third category in the variable "sexual orientation"; it requires changes in theoretical approaches, measurement, sampling, data collection and analysis'. Therefore, a central concern I seek to address is that a methodology premised on notions of bisexual *identity* forecloses the concept of bisexuality and thus scuppers excavating the rich tapestry of sexuality in all its permutations. The tension between fluidity and identity is exemplified in the now common invocation of LGBTI (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex) and its expanding variants⁴. On the one hand, this signals sexual pluralism and proliferation – in Jeffrey Weeks' (2010:89) words, endless shifting boundaries, confusion of categories, and intersections of subjectivities. But on the other, it entrenches an implicit notion of *sameness* or homogeneity of sexual subjects according to assumed group membership. Two problems present here. Firstly, the principal axis of difference is ultimately structured in relation to heteronormativity⁵. Such posturing re-inscribes a binary logic of heterosexual/non-heterosexual that discourses of fluidity attempt to undermine. Yet, as will be discussed in the following chapter, sex surveys report mismatches between sexual desire, attraction, behaviour and identity labelling, such that gay men, lesbians, *and*

⁴ For example, LGBTIQQA (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer, questioning, asexual, allies).

⁵ The term 'heteronormativity' derives from a constellation of theoretical positions such as Judith Butler's (1993, 2004, 2006) 'presumptive heterosexuality' and 'heterosexual matrix', Adrienne Rich's (1980) 'compulsory heterosexuality', Gayle Rubin's (1993) 'sex hierarchy of the charmed circle' (1993), Eve Sedgwick's (2008) 'minoritizing' and 'asymmetrical' heterosexual/homosexual binary, and Michael Warner's (1993) coinage of the term itself. Broadly, heteronormativity refers to the default assumption of heterosexuality as a social and regulative norm, and the inequity of gender roles within this sexual relation that prescribes women and femininity subordinately to men and hegemonic masculinity (Holmes 2007; Ingraham 1994; Seidman 1996; Warner 1993; Weeks 2010).

heterosexuals frequently stray outside their definitional and dichotomous boundaries. Secondly, the complex realities of sexual diversity are accordingly reined in through the hierarchical ordering of LGBTI, which circumscribes 'identity' in terms of *difference from* or *between* other groups. My research, therefore, addresses these concerns by examining how bisexuality intervenes across multiple expressions of LGBTI sexual and gendered selves rather than distinguishing bisexuality as a category that sits *detached from* heterosexual and homosexual identities.

Proceeding from notions of difference, LGBTI nomenclature further insinuates a separation and subordination of sex/gender to sexuality. The tendency towards categorical division and disarticulation is underscored in social science disciplines that solidify around particular 'identities': 'lesbian/gay', 'bisexual' and 'transgender' studies, or more generally, 'sexuality' and 'gender' studies. This operates to create somewhat of an ontological and epistemological distance that undercuts understanding complex connections and disconnections that interweave the empirical realities of sex, gender and sexuality. As evidenced in transgender and intersex literature⁶, notions of sexed physicality and gender identities are not immutable, but like sexual identities, escape the epistemic boxes that dominant discourses inscribe. As Mary Holmes (2011:201) argues, complex expressions and performativity of gender fluidity direct us to question, not the concept of gender *per se*, but the concept of *identity* – 'how identities are connected to social structure' and 'understood as structured relations to others'. Entailed within identity categories is that each grouping (whether LGBTI, queer or heterosexual) possesses certain characteristics that impute it as a 'type'. Max Weber grappled with this problem in his formulation of ideal types. But, as Weber (1949:90) noted, an ideal type is an abstract notion, a mental construct that will never accurately reflect empirical reality. This premise is central to Deleuze's (1994a) philosophical problem of the concept. According to Deleuze, concepts must be flexible and mobile, constantly questioned and open to reconfiguration. This is

⁶ See for example Drescher (2007), Fausto-Sterling (2000), Holmes (2009), Namaste (2000) and Stryker and Whittle (2006).

chiefly why Deleuzian thinking provides a critical mode of analysis for my project, because a recurring theme throughout interview data is the inability to fit narratives to the conventions of sex/gender/sexuality labelling.

Following Deleuzian thinking, I utilise bisexuality as a viewfinder to interrogate *differences within* sex, gender and sexuality groups or identities, for there is always a gap in the conceptual border that allows for an inventiveness of self. This enables an analysis of *how* boundaries are blurred, dismantled, ruptured and new parameters of reference are continually being redrawn. Bisexuality accordingly furnishes an 'epistemic portal' (Anderlini-D'Onofrio 2011:472) or an epistemology of the fence (Eadie 1994; Pramaggiore 1996) that pivots on its troubling function to interrupt the master signifiers that seek to cohere or unify the subject. Theoretical discussion of bisexuality accords emphasis to its capacity to variously disorder (Eadie 1994), dislocate (Hemmings 1995), disassemble (Gurevich, Bailey & Bower 2009), destabilise (Yoshino 2000), disrupt (Owen 2003) or undo (Garber 2000) the hegemony of the heterosexual/homosexual binary. Such troubling of the sexual divide further questions and problematises the dualism of sex/gender upon which heterosexual/homosexual has traditionally been grounded. Significantly, bisexual and feminist scholarship variously refers to the middle ground (Hemmings 2002), liminality (Eadie 1994; Horncastle 2008; Whitney 2002; Wilson 2002), in-between spaces (Gatens 2000), between inside/out (Namaste 1994), borderlands (Anzaldúa 1987; Pallotta-Chiarolli 2010), nomadic subjects (Braidotti 1994a), and volatile bodies (Grosz 1994) as either loci or refigurations of corporeal and relational production. Accordingly, I take the ideas of in-betweenness and motion as the starting point of my investigation. Here, I establish the border regions as a place from which an understanding of bisexuality is more comprehensively explored in order to elucidate lived experiences that move within, through and beyond the binaries of heterosexual/homosexual, man/woman, and male/female.

Re-visioning bisexuality in this manner, therefore, has important implications at a meta-theoretical level for sociology. Not only does it address an identified need in sociological studies of bisexuality to '(de)(re)construct' sex and gender, as Michelle Owen (2003:33, 2011) puts it, but this thesis also provides a new framework for understanding the dynamic interaction between micro-fluidities of self and the malleability of macro social categorisations. The originality of my research, and a key contribution that it makes to both queer scholarship and the discipline of sociology, is the inclusive approach taken in recruiting across the sex/gender spectrum in order to more fully understand sexual fluidity and the *creative* ways in which master categories of 'identity' are expressed, re-signified or indeed made redundant. Through my innovative and critical deployment of Deleuzian ideas, a sociology of bisexuality is accordingly re-visioned as: composition rather than definition; relationality and process rather than 'the subject'; and capacity and *affect* (ethology) rather than cause and *effect* (etiology). For as Deleuze and Guattari (1987:257) write:

We know nothing about a body until we know what it can do, in other words, what its affects are, how they can or cannot enter into composition with other affects, with the affects of another body, either to destroy that body or to be destroyed by it, either to exchange actions and passions with it or to join with it in composing a more powerful body.

Central to the constructivist approach I have outlined here is an emphasis on process, motion and creative production. These elements are pivotal to the Deleuzian approach taken in the methodology, theory and data analysis chapters, the rationale for which proceeds from a critical review of sex survey and bisexual literature.

Chapter Outline

Chapter 1 therefore establishes bisexuality's epistemic location of 'in-between' from its origins in sexology as pathology to its emergence within the field of sex survey research as social phenomenon. I demonstrate that

the shifting focus from sexological to social scientific interest has seen bisexuality travel an epistemic and ontological pathway from sexual deviance (nineteenth century) and difference (twentieth century) to diversity (twenty-first century). Through a review of literature spanning the works of Richard von Krafft-Ebing, Sigmund Freud, Havelock Ellis, Alfred Kinsey and national sex surveys, the chapter argues that the journey from deviance to diversity has been (and continues to be) principally maintained through the hegemony of the heterosexual/homosexual binary, which subordinates sex/gender in a linear relationship to sexuality. Consequently, fluid articulations of sexuality have been subject to epistemic delineation as either a third 'bisexual' category or subsumed within 'gay/lesbian' categories. Despite such categorical division in sex survey research, which suggests each 'identity' is distinctly separate, and neatly correlated to gender of partner (predicated by dominant social constructions of sex/gender), qualitative findings in recent Australian GLBTI studies, however, indicate tensions between sexual identity and attraction/behaviour, which are further complicated by non-normative genders (such as transgender and genderqueer). I conclude that studies of GLBTI populations suggest that the fluidity and complexity of lived sex/gender and sexual realities exceed the master categories that continue to prevail and define Western paradigms of sexuality.

Chapter 2 reviews bisexual literature and charts bisexuality's discursive position in relation to prevailing narratives of sex/gender and sexuality. I firstly examine how the heterosexual/homosexual binary has dominated and sedimented discussions of bisexuality, which, although profitably exposing social structures of power that marginalise and render bisexuality invisible as a socio-sexual phenomenon, has marshalled thinking about bisexual desire and practices into a two-sex model. The chapter argues that bisexual theory is dispersed across psychological, queer, feminist, and social constructionist perspectives, each of which fail to profitably navigate beyond the binary confines of sex/gender. I demonstrate that the impress of such dualism sees a profound gap in bisexual research, which is either gender blind or divides sample cohorts into 'bisexual men' and 'bisexual

women'. Consequently, sex/gender diversity has yet to be thoroughly explored in bisexual research, theoretically and/or empirically. Alternative lines of inquiry, however, are suggested in the emergent fields of non-monogamy and transgender studies. These offer glimpses of bisexuality's potency as an epistemic intervention to rethinking the nexus of sex, gender and sexuality in more creative ways, which this thesis takes up as the principal area of inquiry.

Chapter 3 elaborates a creative sociological framework informed by the philosophy of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari to analyse the fluid complexion of bisexuality. In order to address the gap in current scholarship I have identified, the driving imperative behind this theoretical manoeuvre is to develop new ways of thinking about bisexuality. This enables a conceptual frame that releases analysis from the shackles of dualist epistemes, and allows a deeper consideration of the dynamic complexities between self, others and wider contexts. Deleuzian thought advocates that interrogation and understanding comes from a vantage point of the middle, borderline zones or in-between spaces. An epistemic viewpoint of the middle interrupts and upsets the 'great binary machines' that categorise and unify human and non-human entities into subjects and objects of epistemological tyranny (Deleuze and Guattari 1987), which, as this thesis demonstrates, is the predominant mode of understanding bisexual experience. This chapter canvasses key Deleuzian concepts – assemblages, affects, rhizomes, becomings, nomadism, and minor writing – in order to theorise the elusive, liminal, and in-between loci of production of bisexual bodies. I argue that employing such an inventiveness of sociological imagination re-visions bisexuality as bodies in motion and creative productions of desire. These, I contend, are embodied processes that operate at a micro level to negotiate and reshape dominant social structures. While feminist, queer and cultural studies have in recent decades engaged with Deleuze and Guattari's ideas to generate new imaginings of sexual and gender subjectivities, sociological foray into this philosophical territory is still in its infancy, and yet to be comprehensively embraced in terms of theory or method. This chapter demonstrates the benefits of doing so, and

argues for a Deleuzian inspired sociology that not only expands understanding of the complex and mobile relations between sex/gender and (bi)sexuality, but also offers a new approach to identity studies for sociology that places desire, production and process at the centre of analysis.

Chapter 4 articulates a new way of approaching qualitative methodology for studying sexual populations using Deleuze and Guattari, which I term a 'minor method'. This reframes the conventions of qualitative research practice concerning minority populations (in-depth interviews, purposive sampling and thematic analysis) through Deleuze and Guattari's concepts of minor writing, the rhizome and nomadism. Principally, a minor method does not 'represent' or speak for a minority, but is a method of de-familiarising the dominant language. Thus, I problematise the trope of the 'margins' (which holds court in studies of minority research populations) as this demarcates hierarchies of dominant/marginal, oppressor/oppressed that privilege the values of the dominant group. A minor method refocuses the margins as an exploration of lives that are lived within *multiple* border regions. These are spaces of 'in-betweenness', which moreover, are not reducible to the terms that structure dominant understandings of sex, gender and sexuality (male/female/, man/woman, masculine/feminine, heterosexual/homosexual, straight/gay). Accordingly, it is a non-reductive method that discards any preset assumptions about the nomenclature of 'bisexuality'. Importantly, recruitment was not confined to bisexual-identifying participants. Instead, this study asked for persons whose sexual histories included attraction to, or experience with, *more than one gender*. This is innovative and significant because research design, data collection and analysis were open to unfolding (nomadic) possibilities, non-linear (rhizomatic) connections and thematic assemblages across multiplicities of sex/gender/sexuality. Furthermore, my position as researcher was neither wholly 'inside' nor 'outside' but *alongside* my respondents. As such, I argue that a minor method articulates an original approach to sexuality and gender research. Firstly, it applies theory to methodology that demonstrates a novel way of doing bisexual research not previously undertaken. Secondly, it generates research design, recruitment and analysis that eschews binary

categorisations, and, therefore, renders visible socio-sexual and gendered complexity and diversity. Finally, it recasts the researcher/researched hierarchy as a relationship of proximity and affinity. The following chapters present and analyse empirical data drawn from 47 in-depth interviews with an adult cohort that spans the sex/gender spectrum including: self-identifying men, women, trans, intersex, genderqueer, bi-gendered, and gender neutral persons.

Chapter 5 explores the polyvocalities encapsulated within the notion of bisexuality as related by my participants. Sexual 'identity' labels are reoriented through a fluid cartography of sexed/gendered desires, attractions and practices that escape any attempt to unify 'bisexuality' according to a universal signification, meaning, or definition. 'Identity' is reconfigured through myriad ways that contest the dominant signifiers of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and heterosexual. Deleuzian themes of asignification and asubjectification are deployed to examine how respondents creatively produced (bi)sexuality through mobile sets of social relations. This chapter contends that such creative production re-imagines bisexuality as an *affect* – that is, the transformational and proactive force arising from within corporeal encounters. Participants' stories revealed conceptual hurdles (dominant discourses and social structural aggregates) in recounting their attempts to describe diverse articulations of desire, embodiment, and sexed/gendered expression. I argue that participants' innovative deployment of sexual vocabulary exceeds but does not devalue attachment to identity – rather it expands subjectivity as emergent, contingent, relational, and processual. Accordingly, respondents were not replicated in their naming – that is, reproduced through a predetermined template or universal ideal type. Rather they articulated their (bi)sexualities as ongoing productions that emerged from complex interactions between self, significant others, and wider social contexts.

Chapter 6 examines more closely the interstitial spaces of bisexuality through focusing on notions of corporeal anomaly, ambiguity, indeterminacy and liminality. These, I contend, are embodied border

regions, which haunt the socio-cultural and biological imaginary as monstrous incarnations that synchronously compel and confront, threaten and fascinate. This is the habitus of teratologies – a term derived from scientific codification of births that fail to conform to 'normal' male or female bodies. I appropriate the notion of monstrosity and teratology, not to construct bisexuality as negative 'other', but to interrogate its radical potential to illuminate possibilities of living beyond the normative and morally enshrined categories of male/female, man/woman that have come to define bisexuality in terms of dual-sexed attraction. This chapter, therefore, expounds the revolutionary potency of the anomalous that maps complex and novel pathways across sex, gender and sexuality. In particular, ambiguities of sex/gender – as evidenced through intersex, trans and genderqueer narratives – problematise not only defining relationships as same-sex, opposite-sex or both-sex, but also the social construction of gendered roles such as mother, father, wife and husband, and the sacrosanct institution of marriage. Through Deleuzian thinking, I argue that teratologies are not aberrations but *affects* that question, dismantle, and re-arrange the very terms that are encountered – male/female, man/woman, masculine/feminine, heterosexual/homosexual. This chapter brings a conceptual revision of corporeality that expands upon current feminist and sociological theories of the body – to take account of the complex relationships that navigate the diversity and fluidity of sex/gender and sexuality evident in my data.

Chapter 7 continues to map rhizomatic cartographies of bisexual bodies through the concept of contagion. Here, contagion does not concern viral sickness and decay but refers to a *positive* movement of contact and influence. This analytical move is a deliberate provocation to prevailing stereotypes of bisexuality as disease, infection, confusion, and infidel. Such stereotypes perpetuate bisexuality as morally reprobate, the impress of which is felt keenly by participants. However, I utilise Deleuze's idea of contagion to expose bisexual practices as the means by which ethical modes of living are generated, particularly with respect to activities that are socially impugned. This chapter thus focuses on respondents' experiences of sexual

adventuring, such as swinging and beat sex, which are dominantly constructed through moral discourses of risk and promiscuity. Here, respondents' accounts of sexual adventuring are configured as desiring productions between self, others and social surrounds, which unfold and mutate in multiple directions. I argue that the trope of contagion inheres a subversive potential that emerges *between* the structural binds of man/woman, heterosexual/homosexual – a positive affect in its capacity to challenge hegemonic regimes of normative sexual and gendered practice. The Deleuzian lens of contagion accordingly opens up inchoate desire to new socio-cultural and ethical ways of living, a viral process of rewriting the body and the socio-sexual relations within which it enters and moves. I refer to this as a generative ethics of corporeality.

Chapter 8 further develops the notion of generative ethics through interrogating the diversity of relationship styles and erotic practices, both conventional and non-conventional, of my participants. Here, the interconnecting ideas of asignification, teratologies and contagion make possible the performance of the Deleuzian concept of 'nuptials'. For Deleuze and Guattari (1987), nuptials speak of alliances and proximal relations that move between and beyond normative prescriptions of reproductive coupling or mating. This allows for an exploration of the inventive configurations of intimate partnering, both within and outside traditional monogamous relationships. As such, respondents' narratives complicate constructions of monogamy and non-monogamy as mutually exclusive practices. This chapter discusses themes such as participation in sexual sub-cultures, as well as everyday negotiations of intimate relations. Data analysis reveals that creativity of relational modes generates ethical modes of living, embodiment and sociality, pivotal to which is the disordering of normative compliance to gendered spaces of production. Bisexuality accordingly opens dialogue to multiplicities of becomings, which moreover, entangles human and non-human entities in ever-expanding permutations. Therefore, I demonstrate that man/woman, masculine/feminine binaries are continually complicated, reworked and re-signified through nomadic cartographies of ethical sexual relationships.

The thesis concludes with some reflections on the research process and findings. Importantly, I emphasise the significance of this dissertation for academe, the communities this study hoped to profit, and wider mainstream public and institutional domains. From an academic point of view, I reflect upon on how pushing an empirical sociological project into new plateaus of Deleuzian thought has the capacity to reveal new insights, not simply about bisexuality, but also about the master categories of sex, gender and sexuality that guide Western paradigms of social science. Such benefit, I maintain, should and must overflow into social, political and health arenas, particularly when notions of fluidity, changeability, borderlands, thresholds and multiplicity are not commonly understood, and sadly erase from view those whose lives do not fit neatly into dominant categories and the assumptions contained therein. My project thus hopes to illuminate and carry over beyond that of bisexuality, and thereby be relevant to all forms of 'identity'.

1

Bisexual Genealogies: From Deviance to Diversity

But bisexuality! You are certainly right about it. I am accustoming myself to regarding every sexual act as a process in which four individuals are involved. We have a lot to discuss on this topic.

Letter from Sigmund Freud to Wilhelm Fliess, August 1, 1899

The task of locating bisexuality as both lived reality and conceptual tool that questions, complicates and intervenes in the sex/gender/sexuality matrix requires looking firstly to its epistemological narrative of the 'middle'. Bisexuality's habitus of the 'middle ground', to use Clare Hemmings' (2002:2) words, aptly fits with the Deleuzian project of inquiry – the dwelling places of in-betweenness and uncertainty that synchronously portend peril and promise. This chapter reviews literature that illuminates the precarious locale of bisexuality and its sojourn from sexology to sex surveys wherein hints of revolutionary promise are obfuscated by the imperative to correct, contain or repress its constituent untidiness. At the heart of this enterprise is the requisite need to create a semblance of order, cohesion and linearity out of ambiguity and anomaly.

To this end, while in concrete reality articulations of sex, gender and sexuality speak to each other in myriad ways, 'bisexuality' as an ontological category has historically found itself firmly lodged (or buried) in an epistemic landscape governed by the often morally freighted sovereignty of dualism – heterosexual/homosexual, male/female, masculine/feminine. As will be seen, the shifting axis of attention from sexological notions of *deviance* (from norms) to social scientific interest in *difference* (from others) has been pivotal in positioning bisexuality as a univocal kind of sexual behaviour to which notions of sex/gender are largely subordinated to sexuality or construed as categorical givens. However, more recent studies

of GLBTI populations reveal that bisexuality is complicated by a *diversity* of articulations across attraction, behaviour and identity, and as such, present difficulties in maintaining clear linear correlations between sexuality and gender.

The Perverse and its Hidden Promise

The sexological turf is a richly sown field of psycho-medical discourses, which have been well surveyed in sexuality literature and oft-discussed in regard to bisexuality¹. For the purposes of my argument, I will focus on three prominent figures whose epistemological legacy in sex research has been significant: Richard von Krafft-Ebing – donned the 'true founder of modern sexual pathology' (Robinson 1947:ix), Havelock Ellis, and Sigmund Freud. Based on clinical psychopathological case studies, chronicled during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, what emerges from their foundational works is a complexly nuanced interplay of physicality (biological sex characteristics), gender (masculine and feminine expression) and sexuality (sex object choice). Such a 'sexual mosaic' has solidified into a classificatory system famously coined by Michel Foucault (1990:64) as 'scientia sexualis'. However, as will be seen in their writings, bisexuality occupies a curious space that straddles manifestations of both gender *and* sexuality – a space that, as Jeffrey Weeks' (2011:14) notes, is one of entrapment 'within a double binarism: of masculinity and femininity, and of heterosexuality and homosexuality'. For Krafft-Ebing, Ellis and Freud, bisexuality was posited as a primordial bedrock of psycho-sexual development from which various pathways evolved – moving toward or away from established 'norms' that inextricably bound sexuality to gender.

Krafft-Ebing (1947[1886]:348), posited a 'natural law' of monosexuality that evolved from an original bisexual state in which opposing male and female forces eventually annihilate the antipathic (contrary) sexuality. Homosexuality (complete sexual inversion) and 'mental hermaphroditism' (persistence of both-sex desire later known as bisexuality) were accordingly

¹ For comprehensive critical discussion see for example Angelides (2001), Katz (1995) and Weeks (1985).

inscribed as innate biological pathologies. The manifestations of these were delineated as progressive degrees of physical and mental degeneration: from the least abnormal instance being bisexuality (which he considered to be widespread, and overdetermines the homosexual impulse particularly in married men) through to exclusive homosexuality, effemination, viraginity, androgyny and gynandry (Krafft-Ebing 1947[1886]:352-399) ². The salience of such posturing is that as the sexual instinct moves to greater violation of normal monosexual development (heterosexuality), the gendered profile becomes more inverted. Alexander Hartwich's (1959) considerably altered and updated revision of Krafft-Ebing's *Psychopathia Sexualis* accords significant emphasis to the inverted gendered characteristics sought in partners, which he theorised in terms of sexual infantilism as:

a continuance of a defective sex-differentiation which otherwise only occurs in childhood, that is to say before the stage of puberty. It appears quite likely that the urge to sexual play which is so characteristic of bi-sexuality is not far removed from the child's play-urge (Hartwich 1959:333).

Based upon the accepted classificatory system endorsed by most psycho-medical authorities of the time, Ellis (1933) ³ similarly posited that deviations or inversions proceeded from bisexual origins of sexual development, thus distinguishing between 'complete inversion' or homosexuality (exclusive same-sex attraction), and 'psychosexual hermaphrodism', which was more generally termed bisexuality (attraction to both sexes). Such proclivities were posed in opposition to 'normal heterosexuality' (Ellis 1933:189). Although acknowledging the existence of

² Effemination denoted the manner in which males assume feelings, inclination and behavioural characteristics associated with the female role, while viraginity sees the woman assuming a masculine role. Androgyny referred to sexual inverts whose features (appearance, voice etc.) accord with the opposite-sex. For Krafft-Ebing gynandry represented extreme homosexual degeneracy in a woman whereby the only feminine qualities that accord with being a woman are evidenced by her genitalia.

³ Ellis (1933) acknowledged the valued contributions of earlier and contemporaneous sexological authors, drawing upon not only the works of Krafft-Ebing, but also Magnus Hirschfeld, Karl Ulrichs, Sigmund Freud, Albert Moll and Edward Carpenter.

bisexuality in human sexuality, both Krafft-Ebing and Ellis advocated an evolutionary model of monosexual development, which undergirded most of their discussion of clinical cases, and was generally couched within the idiom of homosexuality. However, 'homosexuality' was very much an umbrella term that embraced a range of deviating positions from the sexual norm of procreative heterosexual relations. The epistemological effect of their choice of nomenclature has over time been concretised into a language of sexual dualism.

The arbitrariness of this *scientia sexualis* is underscored in Ellis' observation of the elementary nature of such classifications. In reality, he argued, individual variations are so extensive that they 'do not easily admit of being arranged in definite groups' (Ellis 1933:198). Alluding to the thorny and problematic relationship between sexuality and the natural scientific model of sexual dimorphism, Ellis reflected upon the biological basis of what it is to be man and woman, believing in mutability between the sexes. To this end, he contended that because masculine and feminine elements mix on both *psychical* and *physical* levels there are 'many stages between a complete male and a complete female' (Ellis 1933:195). The revolutionary promise of rethinking the sex/gender/sexuality nexus that resides quietly in Ellis' postulation also permeates Freud's voluminous corpus. It is here that, conceptually, bisexuality hints at the possibilities of epistemological disruption. Locating sexuality within competing socio-psychological domains of unconscious desire, rational consciousness and the demands of civilisation, Freud regarded bisexuality as 'the decisive factor' in understanding the topos of sexual desire⁴ (Freud 1905:355). He argued that the bisexual disposition of the human psyche is inscribed according to an unconscious duality of masculinity and femininity, which exists in all individuals. Complicating the relationship between sex, gender and sexuality, this psychical topography, according to Freud (1905:290) allows for libidinal attachment to both sexes.

⁴Despite plans to fully elaborate a theory of bisexuality, problems of intellectual property concerning his colleague and friend Wilhelm Fliess prevented Freud from accomplishing this project (Freud 1901; Garber 2000).

The terms masculine and feminine are, however, problematic in psychoanalytic usage. Here, the tendency to couple masculinity with activity and femininity with passivity has attracted much vitriol from feminist critics (Mitchell 1974). But bisexuality upsets such convenient conceptualisation. Notably, Freud (1905:355) claims that libidinal energy is actuated through a co-presence of active and passive libidinal aims, which are not reducible to physically or socially derived characteristics attributed to males or females. In attempting to overcome essentialist notions of classifying man and woman according to anatomical distinctions, Freud problematises, and often confuses, the biological and psychological divide, repeatedly advising against conflating the terms masculine-active and feminine-passive (Freud 1920, 1930, 1933). It is this polymorphous structuring that allows sexual attachment to traverse both male and female objects (Freud 1905:290). Hence, Freud later poses a definition of bisexuality that comes closest to its contemporary meaning:

It is well known that at all periods there have been, as there still are, people who can take as their sexual objects members of their own sex as well as of the opposite one without the one trend interfering with the other. We call such people bisexuals, and we accept their existence without feeling much surprise about it (Freud 1937:244).

Freud casts this phenomenon clearly within the ambit of the divided subject who *may* become conflicted, stating that:

We have come to learn, however, that every human being is bisexual in this sense and that his libido is distributed, either in a manifest or a latent fashion, over objects of both sexes. But we are struck by the following point. Whereas in the first class of people the two trends have got on together without clashing, in the second and more numerous class they are in a state of irreconcilable conflict (Freud 1937:244).

Freud clearly asserts that where bisexual libido operates in a fully conscious and cognitive sense, this can occur without problem or conflict. However, this point is often ignored in favour of the more classic psychoanalytic complexion Freud goes on to present in which one libidinal trend is stronger than the other, thus repressing the weaker impulse into a state of latency. Hence, the notion that 'a man's heterosexuality will not put up with any homosexuality, and vice versa' (Freud 1937:244) is quoted in order to argue that Freud buried the notion of bisexuality in favour of a heteronormative model of sexual development (see for example, Klein, Sepekoff & Wolf 1985). Freud's position, however, is more complex, the radical potential of which is mostly lost in a miasma of reductionist clichés ('penis envy' being a case in point). While Freud arguably revised terminological use of bisexuality from biological to psychological considerations (Angelides 2007; Mitchell 1974), these distinctions, I suggest, are not clearly drawn by him; the boundaries continually blur. Indeed, he recasts sexuality within a multidimensional and dynamic model. Freud argues that from 'originary' bisexuality emerges an interactive relationship between three series of features: somatic sexual characteristics (male or female physicality), psychical sexual characteristics (masculine or feminine attitude), and 'kind of object-choice', which manifest variously in different individuals (Freud 1920:147-8). Significantly, then, bisexuality permits shifting dimensions of anatomical sex, gendered conceptions, and desire to be realised. Reading Freud through a radical lens, Henry Smith (2002) argues that Freud postulates a complex bisexual universe that anticipates a rarely acknowledged postmodernist view of sexuality. The radical potential for Freud's polymorphous and linguistic model of sexuality to dissolve gender and sexual distinctions is thus beheld in its capacity to jeopardise an 'entire universe of cultural controls' (Zaretsky 1997:80).

However, Freud's sexual theories have largely been perceived as prescriptive, casting homosexual behaviour as categorically abnormal, and bisexuality as an untenable and contradictory proposition. Much of this interpretation rests upon inferences of moral judgement drawn from the 'language of perversion' that Freud used throughout his writing (Weeks

1985:70-1) and the close alliance of normative sexological language with definitions of moral propriety enshrined by the procreative imperative of heterosexuality. The hidden promise of the perverse lies in its capacity to explode binary delineations (male/female, masculine/feminine, heterosexual/homosexual), which contain behaviour within controllable, identifiable, measurable and morally appropriate parameters. The disordering function of bisexuality, therefore, simultaneously provokes a tightening of these boundaries. Hence, the unruly and anomalous terrain of bisexuality is that over which the heterosexual/homosexual dominion seeks to establish a stronghold. As such, the lexicon of 'normal', 'abnormal', 'deviation', 'perversion' and 'inversion' implanted a register of sexual normalcy that has proven difficult to dislodge from the public psyche, even today. It is this coupling of categorical construction and moral judgement that will be a central motif of interrogation in subsequent chapters.

Of salience is that homosexuality was understood not only as abnormal, but also as a 'type' of 'essential' characteristics. The oft-cited 'invention' of 'the homosexual', which shortly after spawned its complement 'the heterosexual', is accordingly upheld as being a landmark moment in the modern history of sexology (Fausto-Sterling 2000; Katz 1995; Rust 2000b). Consequently, nineteenth century thinking, which framed homosexuality as a 'species' requiring social control, facilitated a 'reverse discourse' whereby 'homosexuality began to speak on its own behalf' (Foucault 1990:101). Thus, the emergence of powerful discourses espousing the hegemony of heterosexuality and counter-hegemonic defence of homosexuality, further cemented a two-sexed model of human sexuality as either heterosexual or homosexual premised upon the taken-for-granted assumption of same-sex or opposite-sex object choice. The importance of this historical juncture is that as a diverse array of sexual and gender traits solidified into monolithic objects of scientific and social scrutiny, bisexuality – overshadowed by the master binary paradigm of heterosexual/homosexual – receded from view until the latter part of the twentieth century. When bisexuality re-emerged, as no longer primordial infantile or sexual defect, but a problematic 'third' socio-sexual category, the hetero-homo binary represented its prime

epistemic nemesis that would attempt to curtail the hidden promise of its manifold and potentially disruptive constituents.

Sex Surveys: Scales, Grids and Statistical Aggregates

Alfred Kinsey

The dominance of the two-sex model of sexuality has profoundly shaped knowledge production through adherence to research methodologies that reinforce linear binary associations between sex, gender and sexuality. Empirical studies of sexuality, therefore, betray a tendency to be located within the prevailing heterosexual/homosexual paradigm (Paul 1985; Rust 2000b), the effect of which renders bisexuality invisible or fleetingly transient through under-representing self-identified bisexuals (Heath 2005; Pallotta-Chiarolli 2006). However, studies that measure multi-dimensional profiles of sexuality comprising experience, attraction, and emotion provide evidence that bisexuality is more common than generally assumed. Alfred Kinsey's (Kinsey, Pomeroy & Martin 1948; Kinsey et al. 1953) landmark survey of sexual behaviour in the United States, which initiated such an approach, synchronously introduced sexual behaviour into the public imaginary and paved the way for considering the diversity of sexuality. Although the results are somewhat contentious due to methodological flaws (Davidson & Layder 1994), Kinsey's research ushered in an epistemic shift that prised sexuality loose from the normative gaze of medical science, establishing it as a concern of social scientific inquiry. Significantly, the *Kinsey Heterosexual-Homosexual Ratings Scale*, which measured sexuality along seven gradations (0 to 6) ranging from exclusive heterosexuality (0) to exclusive homosexuality (6), attempted to challenge the prevailing binary sexual model. As the authors famously argued:

Males do not represent two discrete populations, heterosexual and homosexual. The world is not to be divided into sheep and goats. Not all things are black nor all things white. It is a fundamental of taxonomy that nature rarely deals with discrete categories. Only the human mind invents categories and tries to force facts into separate pigeon-holes. The living world is a continuum in each and every

one of its aspects. The sooner we learn this concerning human behaviour the sooner we shall reach a sound understanding of the realities of sex (Kinsey, Pomeroy & Martin 1948:639).

Echoing Ellis' (1933) concerns discussed earlier, and pre-figuring social constructionist arguments, Kinsey's statement underlines that human language imposes artificial boundaries upon human behaviour. Reconceptualising sexuality as a continuum, therefore, enabled bisexuality to be made visible. Kinsey's study thus found that 46% of males and approximately 25% of females reported sexual engagement or attraction to both sexes (Kinsey, Pomeroy & Martin 1948; Kinsey et al. 1953). The importance of this data was profound for the nascent field of sex research, for it suggested a greater prevalence in the general population of bisexual response than exclusive homosexuality. Although the authors explicitly refrained from denominating respondents as noun categories (heterosexuals, homosexuals and bisexuals), the research publications – which divide findings into *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* (Kinsey, Pomeroy & Martin 1948), and *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female* (Kinsey et al. 1953) – ultimately failed to escape the categorical confines of human sexual dimorphism. Indeed, Kinsey's works explicitly define bisexual behaviour in terms of the sex of the partner, which is fundamentally determined by genitalia. Considerations of intersex anomalies, hormonal variations and differences, or perceptions of masculinity and femininity are dismissed as irrelevant to the greater project that locates sexual behaviour strictly in terms of anatomical sex object choice.

National and International Sex Surveys

More recent sex surveys add further weight to the proposition that bisexual behaviour or desire is more common than exclusive homosexuality. National probability samples conducted during the 1990s and early 2000s in the U.S., U.K. (Laumann et al. 1994) and Australia (Smith, Rissel et al. 2003a) found that overall bisexuality was frequently reported in both homosexual and heterosexual identifying populations. However, numbers of bisexual-identified people tend to be fewer than those identifying as

lesbian or gay (Barker, Richards et al. 2012; Rust 2002). Recent U.S. surveys indicate that this trend may be reversing (Barker, Richards et al. 2012; Herbenick et al. 2010⁵). Generally, however, because sexual behaviour and sexual identity are not necessarily coterminous or synonymous concepts, bisexuality had historically been obscured from statistical analysis. As such, while statistical studies that use random sampling techniques are valuable in providing a macro view of structural patterns and trends, available data thus far have only provided skeleton information about bisexuality in the general population and are aggregated statistically according to differences between men and women.

The Australian Survey of Health and Relationships, which was based on a representative sample of 19,307 people (Smith, Rissel et al. 2003b), elucidates these issues, revealing differential dimensions of sexual identity, attraction and experience. The survey found that 97% of men identified as heterosexual, 1.6% as gay or homosexual, and 0.9% as bisexual, while 97.7% of women identified as heterosexual, 0.8% as lesbian, and 1.4% as bisexual (Smith, Rissel et al. 2003a). However, 8.6% of men and 15.1% of women reported some same-sex attraction or experience. Put another way, half the men and two-thirds of women with same-sex experience or attraction did not identify as gay, lesbian or bisexual but as heterosexual (Smith, Rissel, Richters, de Visser et al. 2003). Supporting trends in other national surveys, the finding that bisexual desire or behaviour appears greater in women leads the authors to recommend that further research is needed to explore the meaning and impact of gender in relation to sexuality. This identifies a gap in current literature that my study seeks to address.

⁵ Herbenick et al. (2010:262) concluded from their survey of sexual behaviour in the U.S. (based upon a national probability sample of men and women aged 14-94) that findings reflect previous surveys, which reported a greater number of males and females have engaged in same-sex sexual behaviours than identify as homosexual or bisexual. While their statistics found that overall slightly more people identified as bisexual than gay or lesbian, the authors acknowledge that the numbers are too few in a national probability sample for adequate analysis.

GLBTI Surveys in Australia

Surveys of general populations have, therefore, indicated that gender may be a significant aspect in bisexual experience. More revealing, however, are two series of reports of national Australian GLBTI surveys conducted by the Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society (ARCSHS): *Private Lives 1* and 2 (Leonard et al. 2012; Pitts et al. 2006); and *Writing Themselves In 1, 2, and 3* (Hillier et al. 1998; Hillier, Turner & Mitchell 2005; Hillier et al. 2010). *Private Lives 1* surveyed 5476 GLBTI individuals – the largest study ever undertaken of GLBTI people in Australia and one of the largest in the world (Pitts et al. 2006) – while *Privates Lives 2* comprised 3835 respondents (Leonard et al. 2012). Although fewer people were surveyed, the authors argue that *Private Lives 2* is arguably more representative of the diversity of GLBTI people given that the sample included a greater proportion of female, transgendered, disabled and senior-aged respondents than *Private Lives 1*⁶. The *Writing Themselves In* reports led by Lynne Hillier and conducted over six year intervals, investigated experiences of same-sex attracted youth (SSAY), which, in the most recent study, broadened conceptually to include gender-questioning (SSAGQ). Participant numbers increased four-fold from 1998, with 3134 respondents partaking in *Writing Themselves In 3*.

Similar to *Private Lives 1* and other studies, *Private Lives 2* found that more females than males identified as bisexual (Leonard et al. 2012). However, the findings of *Private Lives 2* were reported only according to sexual identity (gay, lesbian/dyke, bisexual, queer, undecided, preferred other, heterosexual/straight). While the majority identified as gay/lesbian, approximately a quarter selected from the remaining categories (bisexual, queer, undecided and other). Although a small percentage (4.5%) gave their own descriptions, such as 'pansexual', 'heteroflexible', and 'I dislike labels' (Leonard et al. 2012:12), it is unclear what each category signifies at an individual level, particularly the nebulous term 'queer'. The significance of

⁶ The authors acknowledged a gender bias in the *Private Lives 1* study, with a larger number of males responding than females. Furthermore, survey feedback revealed that some gender-diverse participants felt alienated and excluded due to the forced choice option of only male or female gender and, therefore, did not participate (Pitts et al. 2006).

this is clearly seen in the reporting of *Private Lives 1*, which gave a more nuanced analysis of sexuality to show that identity labels are not always indicative of behaviour. Pitts et al. (2006) found that although more men and women identified as gay or lesbian, a significantly large number stated some degree of same-sex *and* both-sex sexual attraction and sexual experience (approximately four-fifths of women and half of men). Moreover, both studies revealed how transgender identities further complicate the sexual landscape. Pitts et al. (2006) observed that sexual attraction for transgender persons is more complex than for others. *Private Lives 2* found that nearly half of those identifying as trans males or other preferred genders (such as genderqueer) self-described as 'queer' while a quarter of trans females nominated 'bisexual' (Leonard et al. 2012:12).

The *Writing Themselves In* reports of SSAY/SSAGQ (Hillier et al. 1998; Hillier, Turner & Mitchell 2005; Hillier et al. 2010) delved deeper into excavating gender as a critical vector in understanding same-sex attractions and sexualities. As Dempsey, Hillier and Harrison (2001:67) point out, empirical social research into homosexual identity and experience in Western cultural settings is not only dominated by North American scholarship but has privileged gay male populations, which under-represents women and bisexuals and, as such, does not sufficiently differentiate between homosexual experience for women and men. With this in mind, the authors conclude that because research has tended to construct homosexuality as the axis of 'difference' in heteronormative culture, gender is considered only in terms of similarities. Dempsey, Hillier and Harrison (2001:68) draw attention to the fact that a wealth of literature considers how dominant discourses of masculinity and femininity shape the lives of heterosexual people. Referring to R.W. Connell's key concepts of 'hegemonic masculinity' and 'emphasised femininity', the authors explain that hegemonic masculinity in Australia (predominantly heterosexual) is constructed in relation to a number of subordinate masculinities (a primary form of which is homosexual). Conversely, all forms of femininity are positioned in terms of the hierarchical power relation to men and, therefore, no one type of femininity is hegemonic in the same manner. The question

Dempsey, Hillier and Harrison are thus prompted to pose is how might dominant discourses of masculinity and femininity come to bear in experiences of homosexuality? Consequently, notions of gendered subjectivity provided the impetus for the SSAY/SSAGQ research projects. And while the research targeted *homosexual* experiences, emergent themes of bisexuality opened up significant new territory for explorations of gender.

All three *Writing Themselves In* studies found that female youth generally displayed greater diversity in both self-labelling, attraction and behaviour than young men and thus provide provocative insights into the complex relation of gender and sexuality. Significantly, these studies identified the need for more research into the impact of gender on young people's experiences of homosexuality (Dempsey, Hillier & Harrison 2001:67). For example, in the first study, while almost half the sample were both-sex attracted, young women were far more likely than young men to: report both-sex attraction; identify as bisexual; nominate the 'other' category; prefer an alternative self-generated identity label to those offered (e.g. 'queer'); and engage in sex with both males and females (Hillier et al. 1998). Furthermore, Hillier et al. (1998:43) noted that young same-sex attracted women who displayed greater likelihood of heterosexual activity, recounted how publicly acknowledged heterosexual relationships proved an effective mechanism to mask their same-sex attractions. However, it appeared this option was not as available to the young male participants. Many referred to being labelled 'poofers' from an early age arising from playground behaviour deemed to be not masculine enough and physical characteristics perceived as 'girly'. The authors suggest that such outward portrayal of 'being gay' may preclude young men from experimenting with or hiding under the guise of public heterosexuality. Moreover, the results largely reflect observations by writers such as Richard Troiden (cited in Hillier et al. 1998:43) that same-sex attracted young men have greater access to opportunistic sexual encounters in public and highly sexualised 'gay' contexts, whereas young women are more likely to explore homosexual feelings within the context of established friendships. Overall, young male participants displayed more congruence between feelings of gender a-

typicality, same-sex attractions and behaviours, whereas young women revealed greater ambiguity and fluidity in their sexual feelings, practices and identities. Furthermore, young women were more likely to have engaged in private explorations of lesbianism alongside heterosexual sex and relationships. With fewer outlets than their male counterparts, who frequented gay beats and bars, these young women negotiated emotionally risky chances for sex with girls who were their friends.

The major finding of the *Writing Themselves In* studies, therefore, was that young women were less likely to choose a sexual identity in line with their attractions and behaviour. Data analysis demonstrated a profound incongruence between identity, behaviour and desire. Hillier, Turner and Mitchell (2005:80) suggest that adherence to gender norms and expectations plays an integral part in the articulation of their sexualities on several levels. Firstly, the notion of the 'good girl', who is permitted to have sex only within a relationship, as opposed to the 'good boy', who has freedom to engage in casual sex, thus enables young men to experiment in casual sexual encounters. Secondly, the construction of 'passive feminine' renders greater difficulty for young women to instigate sexual encounters. Thirdly, young women can participate in sexual activity without prerequisite desire, whereas this is more difficult for men. Finally, strident policing of gender conformity, which is more explicit in male cultures, may accelerate resolution in one sexual direction rather than entertain lengthy periods of uncertainty. Such 'periods of uncertainty' also refer to the articulation of bisexuality, which for males is evidently less than desirable in terms of hegemonic masculinity. The most recent findings of *Writing Themselves In 3* (Hillier et al. 2010) reinforce that young women are more fluid in their sexualities than young men and that sexuality labels are not simplistic predictors of sexual attraction or behaviour. However, congruent with the identified need to take account of sexual and gender diversity, *Writing Themselves In 3* provided greater flexibility for participants to articulate their various identities with the inclusion of options: Queer, Questioning, and Gender Questioning (an umbrella category comprising transgender, genderqueer and other). This demonstrated how method design reflected

the authors' 'acknowledgement of social and cultural change' (Hillier et al. 2010:27).

The results of these surveys are very suggestive in terms of gender differentiation among men and women and their negotiation with bisexual desire, behaviour or identity. However, transgender people are strikingly few in studies that are all-encompassing of GLBTI populations. This factor was brought to the attention of ARCSHS researchers who initiated ground-breaking research of transgender issues. Focusing on the health and well-being of 253 transgender participants from Australia and New Zealand (Couch et al. 2007), the published report provided little detail about sexuality. While a summary comment noted that the majority of participants identified according to dominant cultural categories, namely heterosexual, gay, lesbian, or bisexual, no statistical profile was offered. However, it was observed that many of these participants acknowledged their own definitions of sexual identity may be different to others' perceptions of them. Example statements included: 'I am bisexual, but I don't have an issue with being called a straight or gay man either'; and 'in the eyes of society gay, but technically straight' (Couch et al. 2007:22). A small number conveyed uncertainty of sexual identity, some avoided self-identifying their sexuality, while others used alternative phrases, such as 'non-specific' and 'variable', to indicate lack of fit with traditional sexual identity labels.

Conclusion

As this chapter has demonstrated, there has been a profound shift in the epistemological landscape of sexuality from that of scientific object to social phenomenon. However, the renowned works of nineteenth century sexologists, such as Krafft-Ebing, Ellis and Freud, were instrumental in shaping a discourse of sexuality that not only pathologised homosexuality, but as Weeks (1985:75) argues, 'constructed a unitary model of sexuality from which it has been difficult to escape'. The enduring ideas and scientific authority of classical sexology consequently sedimented into, and endorsed, a binary model of sexuality – heterosexual/homosexual – that

corrallled manifold expressions of sexuality and gender into neatly delineated and correlated 'types'. Importantly here, as Steven Angelides (2001:46) argues, '[t]he category of biological bisexuality provided the conceptual link for the alliance of gender and sexuality, purportedly generating the distinct categories and anomalous variations of sex, gender, and sexuality'. But from its evolutionary genesis, bisexuality travelled a somewhat confused and ambiguous pathway of the biological and psychological, wherein sex/gender object choice was firmly welded and seconded to categories of sexuality. As a 'type' of sexual behaviour, bisexuality entered the twentieth century stage via sex surveys – counted, coded and categorically contained. The epistemic lens now focuses on ontological difference and putative social identity rather than taxonomies of perverse traits as deviations from established norms.

But, as Elisabeth Young-Bruehl (2001) notes, the legacy of *fin de siècle* sexology has left a degree of inertia with regard to considering more explicitly how object choice and gender identity are related beyond fossilised notions of gender role inversion. In other words, the complex relationship of gender and sexuality is left wanting, despite the promise that bisexuality holds for disrupting and interrupting coherent notions of sexual selves. The kernel of such promise is glimpsed, however, as bisexuality begins to exert its epistemic potential in the contemporary landscape of GLBTI surveys. On the one hand articulations of bisexuality appear to be differentially experienced across the conventional gender binary. The emergent patterns thus far suggest that firstly, women are more likely to express some aspect of bisexuality and appear more sexually fluid than men; and secondly, men are more reticent in negotiating bisexual feelings, tending to articulate these in sexualised 'gay' contexts. Dominant constructions of masculinity and femininity form an overarching backdrop against which such articulations are played out. Importantly, the Australian studies reviewed in this chapter yield rich data across diverse manifestations of sexuality and gender, which confirm not only the paradoxical tension between identity and experience or attraction, but also supports the notion that bisexuality and its troubled and troubling location in the

sex/gender/sexuality matrix deserves closer scrutiny. It is this gap in scholarship, which my research hopes to address through providing a critical intervention.

An emerging trend in GLBTI research sees the employment of a greater suite of descriptors to convey the diversity and fluidity of sexuality and gender. Moreover, the complex interplay between sexuality and gender, which is beginning to surface in these studies, suggests that lived realities exceed dominant categories that persist despite the anachronism of their sexological genealogy. The recent turn towards inclusion of transgender, genderqueer and other sex/gender-diverse individuals in sex survey samples renders more visible that the epistemic question, having shifted from deviance to difference, is now more properly articulated as one of diversity. This analytical move to diversity further emphasises the urgent need to develop critical ways of thinking that accommodate such categorical excess and 'in-betweenness'. My thesis contributes to this call for critical innovation through mapping and articulating such complexities in meaningful ways. The following chapter examines how this shifting epistemic landscape has informed empirical and theoretical treatment of bisexuality. It is here that bisexuality's contested habitus of the 'middle' – as both conceptual construct and experiential reality – paradoxically affixes it within and beyond the dominant binaries of sex, gender and sexuality that seek to contain it.

2

Bisexuality: Mapping Sex/Gender

Dictionary definitions of bisexuality that rely on an idea of "both sexes" are inadequate. As human beings, we live and love in a world that is far more complicated than these narrow ideas allow. Our attractions do not stay within tidy borders, and our understanding of bisexuality must rise to this level of complexity. People are attracted to both sex and gender; gender and sex do not necessarily coincide.

Robyn Ochs (2005:8)

As demonstrated in the previous chapter, a tour through key sex surveys reveals that bisexuality is more than a category of sexual identity or behaviour, but is cross-cut by articulations, delineations and practices of sex and gender. However, in attempting to aggregate the diversity of human sexual behaviour into neat epistemic categories, statistical analyses in particular offer a generalised view in which firstly, the terms sex and gender are used synonymously, and secondly, the categories of sex/gender (male/man, female/woman, transgender) are employed unproblematically as determiners of sexuality. Hence, the mosaic of possible sexualities is commonly reduced to various lexicon (heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual, gay, lesbian, straight) denominating same-sex, opposite-sex and both-sex attraction. Put simply, dominant conventions, which hold court in mainstream understandings, unproblematically subordinate sex/gender to sexuality.

As indicated in the most recent study of SSAGQ youth in Australia, methodological rationale is acknowledging the utility of incorporating flexibility when constructing sex/gender/sexuality categories (Hillier et al. 2010). It is here that bisexual scholarship offers valuable insights and a useful lesson in considering why flexibility of thinking is needed in this

often muddy landscape. Indeed, as I argue throughout this thesis, bisexuality affords the potential to open up the 'taken-for-granted' terrain of sex/gender/sexuality categories to question.

This chapter thus scrutinises the field of bisexual research and traces its vexing location in relation to dominant narratives of sexuality and sex/gender. As will be seen, bisexuality as an expression of, and capacity for, ontological diversity has been subjected to epistemological tyranny, which up until the late twentieth century, relegated it to being invisible, irrelevant or inconvenient. As such, it suffered the legacy of reductive reasoning that rendered it simply as a both/and (heterosexual/homosexual) proposition to which notions of anatomically circumscribed sex (particularly genitalia) and gender (masculine/feminine) were consigned as secondary and binary variables in the libidinal equation. Accordingly, I seek to excavate profiles of sex/gender that lie beneath the conceptual surface of (bi)sexuality, to bring these to the foreground beyond mere definitional circumscriptions of 'both-sex' object choice. I begin by examining the dominion of heterosexual/homosexual dualism, which takes centre stage in social scientific and cultural analyses of bisexuality. This is pivotal to understanding how thinking about bisexual practices and identity is channelled into a two-sex model that is underlain by, and reinforces, stereotypical notions of gender. Proceeding from this, I contend that bisexual theory, although forging a conceptual space for bisexuality, has over-determined the axis of sexuality at the expense of gender. Prevailing paradigms that guide bisexual theory – identity development models, social constructionist, queer, and feminist perspectives – have each in some way contributed to this structural bias.

Such bias is clearly reflected in empirical studies that tend to either aggregate bisexuality as one homogenous group or divide research samples into 'bisexual men' and 'bisexual women'. The remainder of the chapter, therefore, examines the treatment of, and findings related to, gender in bisexual research. This review of empirical literature is arranged according to themes that bring gender clearly to the foreground: sexual histories;

relational modes; dominant discourses; socio-sexual relationships; and transgendered bisexuality. The overwhelming picture is one where gender is intractably shackled to dichotomous hierarchies of man/woman, male/female, and masculine/feminine typologies. As such, empirical results are largely discussed in terms of gender *differences* between bisexual men and women. However, innovative areas of empirical inquiry (such as non-monogamy and transgender studies) reveal transgressive and transversal articulations of gender that offer glimpses of bisexuality's potency as a critical and creative interdiction to rethinking the socio-sexual-gender nexus in imaginative ways. I survey these contributions in order to position my research within such paradigms.

Either/Neither/Both: Bothersome Binaries

Socio-culturally, bisexuality sits uneasily in the liminal relationship between the governing poles of heterosexuality and homosexuality. The sovereignty of such dualism is principally sustained by the hegemony of two competing narrative frameworks that structure dominant societal assumptions. The first is the unquestioned 'triad of marriage, monogamy and heterosexuality' (Pallotta-Chiarolli & Lubowitz 2003:68). As detailed in a report from The Australian National University's Democratic Audit Unit that focused on the rights of sexual and gender minorities, the primacy of heteronormativity and the privileged status of marriage as a heterosexual union remains entrenched in our culture and politics (Maddison & Partridge 2007). Unsurprisingly, the dominant ideal of monogamy, which impugns and ostracises bisexuality on the basis of stereotypes such as promiscuity and infidelity (McLean 2004, 2011), is a powerful denominator in societal coding.

The second prevailing discourse that secures the heterosexual/homosexual divide, issues from a consolidated challenge to heterosexual dominion instigated by sexual minority politics and culture. Within this context, the lexicon of 'gay', 'lesbian' and 'queer' has been implanted into mainstream consciousness as a polar opposite to 'straight' society. Notwithstanding the considerable body of bisexual literature that has emerged since AIDS ushered bisexuality somewhat inauspiciously into the spotlight during the

1980s (Ault 1996; Rust 1992a), the dominance of gay, lesbian and latterly queer studies has tended to relegate bisexuality to the background. Mirroring the way in which bisexuality has been subsumed within or ignored by broader terms of reference (Angelides 2007; Rust 2000a, 2000b), cultural representations of bisexuality, particularly in the media, are similarly vulnerable to such idiomatic resolution as either gay or straight (Watson 2007, 2008). Moreover, although 'queer' ostensibly connotes a more fluid sexual terrain, it is often used interchangeably with 'gay' (Gammon & Isgro 2007:172).

In both academic and everyday language the binary implicitly returns. Mary McIntosh's (1968:33) observation that 'many scientists and ordinary people assume that there are only two kinds of people in the world: homosexuals and heterosexuals' remains salient today. According to contemporary vernacular, you are either gay or you are not. Consequently, considerable weight is accorded to the heterosexual/homosexual axis in bisexual literature, for it represents the framework through which bisexuality is ambiguously situated: epistemologically (Angelides 2001, 2007); theoretically (Gammon & Isgro 2007; Rust 2000b; Zinik 1985); and empirically (Ault 1996; Blumstein & Schwartz 1977; McLean 2003; Rust 1992b; Weinberg, Williams & Pryor 1994).

Sociological Themes

To date, sociological discussion draws upon a limited number of ground-breaking studies that have provided the foundation for bisexual research. Central here are the works of U.S. sociologists Paula Rust and Martin Weinberg, which include: a study of 427 North American lesbian and bisexual women (Rust 1992a, 1993a, 1993b, 1995); an international survey of bisexuality drawn from a sample of 917 participants (Rust 2001a, 2001b); and a multi-stage project investigating up to 680 bisexual, homosexual and heterosexual people in San Francisco spanning 1983-1996 (Weinberg, Williams & Pryor 1994, 2001). Smaller sociological undertakings have expanded upon and supported the insights of these key studies (for example, Ault 1996; Bradford 2004; Esterberg 1997; McLean 2003; Pallotta-Chiarolli

& Lubowitz 2003; Pallotta-Chiarolli 2010; Pennington 2009). These studies crucially reveal the impress of the heterosexual/homosexual schema in experiences and articulations of bisexuality.

Blumstein and Schwartz's (1974, 1976a, 1976b, 1977) landmark socio-psychological studies investigated the interface between wider cultural understandings of sexuality and concrete constructions of bisexuality. Their findings emphasised that the process of identity formation is influenced and constrained by various factors, including: dominant cultural perceptions of sexual categories; antagonism from gay men and lesbians; social invalidation; and wide-ranging sexual profiles that preclude defining a bisexual prototype. Similarly, Weinberg, Williams and Pryor (1994) found that bisexuals negotiate dominant attitudes, which invalidate bisexuality via privileging homosexual or heterosexual identities. Their data revealed how persons with similar sexual profiles may label themselves differently. Thus, sections of heterosexual and homosexual identifying participants displayed varying degrees of same-sex and opposite-sex attraction and/or behaviour. Correspondingly, Rust (1992a) found that sexual identities of lesbian and bisexual women were based on differing conceptions of sexuality despite similarities in sexual profiles that embraced a mixture of heterosexual and homosexual behaviour. Rust (1992a:382) concluded that because bisexuality blurs the heterosexual/homosexual boundary, it threatens lesbian liberation through confounding the distinction between 'oppressor and oppressed'. Consequently, bisexuality disturbs the ethos of lesbian politics that depends upon the preservation of an essentialist, dichotomous construction of sexuality.

As such, the pattern of 'blending' into gay, lesbian, queer or heterosexual culture emerges as a dominant theme in social research. This is articulated through assumptions by others that a person is gay when with a same-sex partner and straight when with an opposite-sex partner (Ault 1996; Bradford 2004; McLean 2001, 2003). Rust (2001b) found a tendency for bisexuals to be partial members of multiple communities – gay, lesbian, heterosexual, queer – based on the presumption that bisexuality is an aggregate of gay and

straight components. Furthermore, negative perceptions of bisexuality, particularly within gay and lesbian circles, have resulted in alienation or non-disclosure of bisexual identity (Bradford 2004; McLean 2001, 2003, 2007; Rust 1992b, 1993; See & Hunt 2011; Shokeid 2001; Weinberg, Williams & Pryor 1994). Exclusionary practices derive from commonly held perceptions that bisexuality retains the comfort of heterosexual privilege, which synchronously threatens gay politics (Rust 1992b, 1995; See & Hunt 2011; Weinberg, Williams & Pryor 1994).

Research findings, therefore, emphasise that bisexual behaving or identifying people experience a sense of dislocation through straddling gay and straight worlds rather than fitting neatly into either one. Significantly, this leads to feelings of isolation, rejection, invalidation, confusion, uncertainty, lack of support, and compromised mental health (Bradford 2004; McLean 2000, 2003). Allied to such experiences is a profound vulnerability to biphobia – double discrimination from both heterosexual and homosexual worlds (Barker, Richards et al. 2012; Browne & Lim 2008; Mulick & Wright 2011; Obradors-Campos 2011; Ochs 1996). As Robyn Ochs (1996) argues, the organisation of dominant cultural norms around binaries (particularly gender) is fundamental to articulations of biphobia. A burgeoning field of LGBT health research suggests that bisexuals experience poorer mental health outcomes (such as depression, anxiety, and suicidal ideation) than gay, lesbian or heterosexual populations (Barker, Richards et al. 2012; Browne & Lim 2008; Corboz et al. 2008; Couch & Pitts 2006; Heath 2010; Leonard 2003; LGBT Advisory Committee 2011; Kaestle & Ivory 2012; Mulligan & Heath 2005). Such responses are seen to be correlated to, and reinforced by, factors including: insufficient bisexual information and resources; lack of an identifiable bisexual community; absence of visible bisexual-identifying role models in mainstream society; and a dearth of positive bisexual representations in popular and mainstream culture (Barker, Richards, et al. 2012; Bradford 2004; McLean 2001, 2003; Pallotta-Chiarolli & Lubowitz 2003; Weinberg, Williams & Pryor 1994).

Instead, the social and cultural imaginary is replete with myths and stereotypes that vilify and negate bisexuality (Barker, Richards et al. 2012; Garber 2000; Klesse 2011; McLean 2003; Pallotta-Chiarolli 2010; Udis-Kessler 1996; Weinberg, Williams & Pryor 1994). Predicated upon threat and danger posed by transgressing the heterosexual/homosexual divide, such circumscriptions include: 'fence-sitters' (confused or undecided); transitioning to gay/lesbian identity; promiscuous; AIDS carriers; untrustworthy; traitors to lesbian/gay liberation; and unfaithful. Reinforced by epidemiological research of AIDS and mental disorders, health studies locate bisexuality within risk discourses of 'sad, bad or mad', which establishes fertile ground for moral panic and surveillance (Couch & Pitts 2006). These images arguably inflect cultural representations of bisexuality, particularly in the mainstream press, film and television (Baumgardner 2007; Barker, Bowes-Catton et al. 2008; Barker, Richards et al; 2012; Bryant 1997; Garber 2000; McLean 2003; Pallotta-Chiarolli 2010; Pramaggiore 1996; Watson 2008). Within parameters of cultural repudiation, social invalidation, dislocation and expectation of negative reactions, studies have found that bisexuals are more inclined to denial or selective disclosure of their sexual identity than gay men or lesbians (McLean 2003, 2007; Pallotta-Chiarolli & Lubowitz 2003; See & Hunt 2011; Weinberg, Williams & Pryor 1994).

This summary of sociological findings and cultural analysis demonstrates that discussions of bisexuality are overwhelmingly positioned in terms of *sexual* discourse, which I argue is instantiated through according primacy to heterosexual/homosexual schema as an analytical axis of examination. As will be discussed later in the chapter, while empirical findings note differences between bisexual men and women (and occasionally transgender), these become secondary to overall considerations about the marginal location of bisexuality in respect to gay/lesbian and straight society. Consequently, because bisexuality is invariably wedded to the heterosexual/homosexual schema, either in terms of affirmation or negation, gender is relegated to a definitional element of self (bisexual men, bisexual

women) or sex/gender object choice (same-sex, opposite-sex)¹. Ultimately, the intricate meshing and dynamic complexions of sex and gender (social, cultural, discursive biological, psychical, and relational) have largely remained in the shadows of (bi)sexual discussion.

Bisexuality as Identity

Instead, bisexual scholarship has demonstrated a preoccupation with theorising *sexual identity* pathways. In part, this responds to a considerable deficit in sexual identity linear stage and 'coming out' models, which historically have focused on homosexual, lesbian and gay identities, leaving bisexuality theoretically absent². Proceeding from Kinsey's heterosexual-homosexual continuum model, various theorists such as psychologists Klein, Sepekoff and Wolf (1985) and Zinik (1985) have sought to challenge the authority of the heterosexual/homosexual paradigm, positing alternative models of bisexual identity that attempt to dismantle the premise of mutual exclusivity inhered within binary constructions. Such 'either/or' thinking, which constructs bisexuality as a temporary or transitional state circumscribed by conflict, confusion, or denial of an authentic homosexual orientation (Zinik 1985:9), writes bisexuality out of the sexual script. Zinik (1985:11), therefore, proposed a 'flexibility' model of 'both/and' that allows for the coexistence of hetero-homoerotic behaviour thereby integrating heterosexual and homosexual identities. In order to revise sexual orientation as a dynamic multi-variate process Klein, Sepekoff and Wolf (1985) extended the Kinsey scale in their formulation of the *Klein Sexual Orientation Grid* (KSOG), which has been widely adopted in socio-psychological studies. The KSOG is a scalar grid that measures dimensions of attraction, behaviour, fantasy, lifestyle, emotional preference, social preference and self-identification across past, present and ideal responses.

¹ De Cecco and Shively (1983/1984) attempted a radical shift away from sexual identity as defined by gender-object choice to psychological motivations, attitudes and expectations of sexual partners. But, as Rust (2000:49) comments, such thinking fails to produce a concept of bisexuality, and thereby theorises it out of existence.

² For a comprehensive and critical review of models that have been foundational to gay and lesbian studies – particularly Cass (1979), Plummer (1975) and Troiden (1989) – see Eliason (1996) and Eliason and Schope (2007).

Sociologists Weinberg, Williams and Pryor (1994) similarly adapted the Kinsey scale to derive five types of bisexuals: pure, mid, heterosexual-leaning, homosexual-leaning and varied. Concluding that successful progression to a bisexual identity (via development stages) necessitated 'unlearning' the traditional gender model that sexual preference is determined by gender of partner in favour of an 'open gender schema', Weinberg, Williams and Pryor (1994:295-7) reasoned that bisexuality entails the separation of sexuality and gender. However, given that their construct of bisexuality was measured according to heterosexual and homosexual components (the definitions of which depended upon gender object choice) begs the question as to the logic of their conclusion. As these various models demonstrate, rather than avoid the dominant heterosexual/homosexual polarity, such conceptualisation re-inscribes binary thinking through dissecting bisexuality into reducible and measurable elements, each reified according to essentialist meanings of 'heterosexual' and 'homosexual'.

Social constructionist theorists have thus sought to challenge identity models predicated by assumptions of hybridity. Arguing that identity formation is contingent upon spatial, temporal and discursive context, bisexuality is posited as a distinctive 'whole'. Rather than comprising essentialist heterosexual and homosexual elements, bisexuality is defined as uniquely constituted (Blumstein & Schwartz 1977; Eadie 1993; Gibian 1992; Hansen & Evans 1985; Hemmings 2002; Rust 1992b) or as narrative production (Rust 2009a). Here, the emphasis on stable identity formations gives way to notions of fluidity, multiplicity and contingency. The manner in which identities are constructed and described, therefore, references social location regarding relations to individuals, groups and institutions:

Social constructionism teaches that self-identity is the result of the interpretation of personal experience in terms of available social constructs. Identity is therefore a reflection of sociopolitical organization rather than a reflection of essential organization (Rust 1992a:68).

For example, intersecting fields of social location, the heterosexual/homosexual binary, and identity pathways provided the theoretical backdrop to Kirsten McLean's (2003) sociological study of bisexual identity. Based on data from 60 bisexual-identifying Australian men and women, McLean proposed that bisexual identity formation may be non-linear in that any one stage of bisexual identity (self-labelling as bisexual, settling into bisexual identity or identity re-evaluation) may entail reappraisal and reconfiguration according to a range of psychological, social, environmental and cultural factors within which one moves and interacts. Although not incorporated into her analysis, McLean's model provides a provocative cue to thinking about how gender as a *socio-cultural location* might deepen understanding of bisexual realities beyond that of gendered attraction. While authors such as Rust (2000b) have argued to de-reify sex/gender as a defining characteristic of sexual attraction, owing to empirical data that highlights the prevalence of non-gendered aspects of sexual attraction, theoretical discussion implicitly reverts to homogenous and clinical notions of 'modelling' bisexual orientation based on behavioural traits or constructing typologies of bisexuality based on patterns of sexual contact³.

As Hemmings (2002:22) notes, a plethora of bisexual definitions accordingly pepper the literature. Bisexual theorists and researchers have, therefore, grappled with capturing a mosaic of experiences and relationship structures through offering a range of sexual profiles including: potential capacity for sexual, emotional or romantic attraction to both sexes/genders (Rust 2001a); monogamous or non-monogamous; multiple identities/selves (McLean 2001, 2004); multi-sexual relationships (Pallotta-Chiarolli & Lubowitz 2003); border sexualities (Pallotta-Chiarolli 2010); dual attraction (Weinberg, Williams & Pryor 1994); and simultaneous, concurrent or serial bisexuality⁴ (Zinik 1985). Gendered experiences, while often noted in

³ See Rust (2000b, 2002) for a comprehensive review of theoretical models.

⁴ Specifically based on sexual behaviour, Zinik (1985:8-9) defined *simultaneous* as having sexual relations with same-sex and opposite-sex partners at the same time, *concurrent* as having separate sexual relations with males and females during the same period of a person's life, and *serial* as alternating male and female sexual partners during one's lifetime.

empirical findings (as will be discussed shortly) are not accorded any significant theoretical weight. Although Tom Brown (2002) tentatively sketched a model of experiential differences between *identity* development of bisexual men and women, his discussion draws predominantly from gay/lesbian literature and homosexual identity models (for example, Cass 1979; Troiden 1989) to develop his hypothesis. Problematically, this approach ignores that issues pertinent to bisexuality may differ from those of gay men and lesbians, and indeed, as See and Hunt (2011:291) argue, may serve to 'mask the distinct experiences of bisexual men and women'.

Bisexuality as Epistemology

Contrasting the dominance of socio-psychological modelling of bisexuality – which takes the construct of gender (and its linear correlation to biological 'sex') as a given determinant – and offering the potential for more theoretically rich understandings of bisexuality that incorporate gender as a vector of analysis alongside sexuality, are critical and cultural perspectives. Here, the turn towards poststructuralist and postmodernist thinking has propelled bisexual scholarship towards a deconstructionist mode of inquiry. While destabilising the heterosexual/homosexual binary is integral to these projects, such perspectives steer thinking from understanding what bisexuality *is* to what bisexuality *does*; in other words, a paradigmatic shift from analyses of identity and behaviour towards epistemology. As Maria Pramaggiore (1996:3) argues, bisexuality offers a unique vantage point of creating knowledge via 'epistemologies of the fence', such that fence metaphorically references a 'place of inbetweenness and indecision'. Bisexual epistemologies, therefore, offer a position from which to reconfigure dictates and spheres of desire through rendering boundaries as porous and nonexclusive. In creating new ways of viewing and knowing the world, this epistemic lens enables:

ways of apprehending, organizing, and intervening in the world that refuse one-to-one correspondences between sex acts and identity, between erotic objects and sexualities, between identification and desire [that] acknowledge fluid desires and their continual

construction and deconstruction of the desiring subject (Pramaggiore 1996:3).

It is from this epistemic location that queer and feminist dialogues circulate. A key point of contention that emerges at the juncture of these theoretical perspectives – and one that is crucial to my study – is whether gender and sexuality should be analytically distinct or relational categories. Elizabeth Reba Weise (1992:ix), for example, proclaims the exciting possibilities afforded by a bisexual feminist perspective, given the capacity for bisexuality to challenge many of our cultural assumptions regarding the duality of gender and the binary configuration that demands sexuality be either lesbian/gay or straight. Nonetheless, attempts to synthesise bisexuality with feminist theory are fraught by encounters across the socio-political divide. The appropriation of feminism to bisexual theory has largely sought to address and reconcile tensions between lesbian and bisexual women that have arisen from the antecedents of the lesbian feminist challenge to heterosexism and patriarchy (Ault 1996; Rust 1992b). Bisexual women are frequently subject to suspicion by lesbians due to their tenuous borderland position in which an alliance to the long-held symbolic nemesis of lesbian politics – the male phallus – 'lurks in the shadows', to use the words of Hemmings (2002:78). Feminist bisexual theorists and writers have thus opened up the discourse of women's issues and bisexuality in considering the impact of gendered dichotomies, sexism, heterosexism and invisibility within lesbian communities on bisexual women's diverse lives (Weise 1992). However, the predominance of bisexual women in literature is not matched by a corresponding focus on bisexual men, the subjectivities of whom are located primarily within the arena of AIDS/HIV discourse and research (Hemmings 2002; Steinman 2011). Despite the significant contribution of Connell (2005) to theorising masculinities, bisexual feminist perspectives ultimately fail to incorporate the breadth of gender into considering bisexual realities; that is, how multiple constructions and expressions of femininity *and* masculinity are embodied, enacted, and negotiated within dominant systems of social being.

In response to this theoretical deficit, bisexual epistemologies would seem to have a natural affinity with queer theory, given its focus on fluidity, multiplicity and polymorphous constructions of identity. For queer theory attempts to debunk the stable categories of sex, sexuality and gender (Jagose 1996:3) – in order to break down the binarisms of male/female, masculine/feminine, and heterosexual/homosexual. But, as Michael du Plessis (1996:32-3) argues, bisexuality is accorded 'shabby treatment' by queer theory, which commonly makes sexuality stand for 'homosexuality' and 'heterosexuality', while gender comes to signify 'women' or 'men'. Several scholars, such as Angelides (2001), Hemmings (2002, 2007), and Gammon and Isgro (2007), variously observe the tendency for exponents of queer theory to reinstate the heterosexual/homosexual binary despite aiming to deconstruct this oppositional schema. This has principally occurred through queer theory's preoccupation with challenging heteronormativity conferred by the heterosexual/homosexual hierarchy. Articulated as such, queer theory 'silences' not only bisexuality, but also transgender and transsexual subject positions (Namaste 1994, 2000). As Hemmings (2007:14) argues, 'queer theorists invoke gay and lesbian as the defacto subjects of queer'. Queer theory, therefore, appears moored to the terrain of sexuality, while at the same time erasing bisexuality from epistemic view (Angelides 2001, 2007; Gammon & Isgro 2007; Hemmings 2007). Because key theorists of the queer canon, notably Lee Edelman, Diana Fuss, Gayle Rubin, and Eve Sedgwick⁵, have placed sexuality as the central paradigm of queer theory, this has arguably disentangled sexuality from gender (Angelides 2007; Butler 2006; Gammon & Isgro 2007; Hemmings 2002; Rosenberg 2008). Thus, an apparent epistemological divide emerges that assumes gender belongs to feminism and sexuality to queer.

Rather than dispensing with queer theory however, some critical sexuality scholars advocate the need to rethink how bisexual epistemology can enhance the deconstructive potential of queer theory – that is, to pursue the project of destabilising the hegemony of binary thinking, which naturalises

⁵ For a comprehensive critical analysis of these theorists and how their ideas have forged a divide between gender and sexuality see Angelides (2001, 2007).

'identity' categories – and push the paradigmatic boundaries of sex, gender and sexuality into new conceptual arenas (such as Angelides 2001, 2007; Callis 2009; Gammon & Isgro 2007; Hemmings 2007; Horncastle 2008; Namaste 1994, 1996). Angelides (2001) suggests that the queer move to disarticulate gender and sexuality is not entirely misplaced, pointing out that the problem lies in *how* queer frameworks are utilised rather than the theoretical principle *per se*. To this end, he defends a degree of analytical breathing space between gender and sexuality in order that the two may be viewed as relational rather than mutually constitutive. The productive possibilities afforded through bisexuality as an analytic vantage point are thus enabled because:

such a distance between gender and sexuality opens up other discursive spaces for thinking certain forms of identity, desire, and pleasure rather differently. It is here that bisexuality as a *polymorphic analytic category* has much to offer feminism and queer theory. Among its many meanings, forms, and uses, bisexuality can, on the one hand, *foreground* gender ... and thereby highlight the interconnections of gender and sexuality. On the other hand, it can also *displace* gender as the primary means for understanding certain forms of identity, sexuality, desire, and pleasure (Angelides 2001:189).

In other words, bisexuality opens up *new ways* of conceiving both conjunctions and disjunctions between sexuality and gender. The critical potency of this idea is pivotal to the Deleuzian sociology I propose in the next chapter. Of particular importance to my theoretical framework is the notion of partial subjectivities. Indeed, Hemmings (2002:42-3) identifies the value of queer feminist epistemology to bisexual theory through its capacity to vocalise the 'partiality' of bisexual subjectivity. Here, Hemmings locates bisexuality in terms of movement or overlap (rather than a dependent relationship) between sexuality, gender and space. For the most part, her discussion focuses upon the socio-political space of women, particularly the overlap and differences between bisexual women and

lesbians in Northampton, Massachusetts. While deployment of the term 'partiality' may seem to reference the heterosexual/homosexual paradigm – wherein bisexual women negotiate the perception of having a foot in each camp – Hemmings' theoretical exposition appeals to the possibility of integrating gender and sexuality as relational yet fluid categories of analysis. This is provocatively and cogently demonstrated in her discussion of bi-femme and trans-FTM sexual relationships, which she argues problematise conventional sexual and gender categories through invoking a slippage between sex, gender and sexuality. It is this idea of categorical slippage that my research builds on and advances as a pioneering approach in the sociology of bisexuality. As such, I take Hemmings' lessons of partiality, movement and overlap into a more capacious empirical exploration and analysis that considers the *breadth* of sex/gender diversities, which includes and goes beyond the queer feminist subject.

The conceptual landscape of bisexuality, while opening up theoretical directions that more ably take account of fluid identities, is often somewhat obscurant, and furthermore, largely divorced from empirical realities of bisexual behaving, desiring or identifying people. This sentiment punctuates several critiques of contemporary bisexual theory. Jonathan Dollimore (1996:531) writes that the postmodern sensibility of much bisexual theorising is 'wishful' in the sense that it 'tends to erase the psychic, social and historical complexities of the cultural life it addresses'. The postmodernist complexion of queer theory is variously criticised for eliding bisexuality of materiality (Storr 1999) and embodied complexity (Lingel 2009), or excluding bisexual bodies from scholarly discussion (Callis 2009). Critical bisexual theorist Michael du Plessis (1996:22-3) relates a telling personal story from his attendance at the *Rutgers Lesbian and Gay Conference* in 1991. Angrily bemoaning the fact that 'Bisexual' had been dropped from the conference title, du Plessis recalls a conversation with two other queer graduate students. When asked by one, 'what would a good bisexual theory look like?' du Plessis' tersely responded 'We don't need theory, we need bodies!' To the contrary, I would argue that we do need theory, and that what is missing from bisexual theory is not simply

empirical bodies, but as I have demonstrated, *sex/gendered* bodies. As Dollimore (1996) quite rightly argues, theory needs, and indeed ought, to be concretely tangible.

Locating Gendered Realities

While bisexual theory needs bodies the reverse is also true; there is an apparent schism between theoretical, political or cultural analysis on the one hand and empirical research on the other. With few notable exceptions – Maria Pallotta-Chiarolli's (2006, 2010) innovative use of borderland theory, and Paula Rust's (1993a; 2009a) social constructionist-narrative frameworks are *par exemplar* – empirical studies of bisexuality are by and large a-theoretical or theory light, from a critical sociological perspective, at least. The remaining discussion of this chapter looks to empirical literature that brings sex/gendered realities of bisexuality into view and alongside that of the sexual. Doing so, I examine what these insights might afford in posing bisexuality as an ontological intervention to dominant constructions of sex/gender/sexuality subjectivities – and hence, as an epistemic tool of 'polymorphic' analysis (Angelides 2001:189) and 'partiality' (Hemmings 2002:42-3).

The Gender Divide: Emotional versus Sexual

For the most part, bisexual research classifies cohort samples as either an homogenous entity or divides them according to the gender binary of 'bisexual men' and 'bisexual women'. As such, empirical findings tend to reinscribe conventional and dominant assumptions about gender and ascriptions of masculinity and femininity. Mirroring sex survey data reviewed in Chapter 1, a highly gendered landscape emerges, which pivots on the repeated finding that women's sexuality is more flexible and liable to change over the life-span than men's. A substantial body of social science literature underlines how women's sexual identities are multiple, contingent and flexible, and may not necessarily reflect actual sexual practices: for example, lesbian women having sexual contact with men, and heterosexual women indulging in same-sex experiences (Blumstein & Schwartz 1974, 1976b; Diamond 2000, 2008a, 2008b; Diamond & Savin-Williams 2000;

Esterberg 1997; Kinsey et al. 1953; Lienert 2003; Loewenstein 1984/85; Russell & Seif 2002; Rust 1992a, 1993b, 2000a; Weinberg, Williams & Pryor 1994; Zipkin 1992).

Countering biological explanations of differential sexual organisation in males and females (for example, Baumeister 2000; Lippa 2007), gender socialisation and social constructions of gender emerge as key feminist and sociological arguments in accounting for women's propensity for sexual fluidity. Supported by empirical findings, several researchers contend that Western gender role expectations and social norms permit affective ties (hugging and kissing) between women, which for men are considered taboo (Blumstein & Schwartz 1974, 1976a, 1976b, 1977; Diamond and Savin-Williams 2000; Hyde & Durik 2000; McLean 2003; Rust 2000b). Accordingly, several studies observed that heterosexual and sexual minority women's same-gender experiences commonly progress from close intimate friendship to sexual relationships (Blumstein & Schwartz 1974, 1976a, 1976b, 1977; Diamond & Savin-Williams 2000; Esterberg 1997). Women's sexual experiences are thus argued to be more contextually dependent than that of men (Diamond 2008b). The significance of this is that 'sexual intimacy can be an outgrowth of socially acceptable emotional intimacy', which does not necessitate adopting a lesbian identity (Rust 2000a:214). Lisa Diamond's (2008b) longitudinal study (based on 79 non-heterosexual women) found that although self-labelling differed over time, sexual attraction to both sexes remained consistent. Hence, Diamond (2008b:5) concluded that the difference between lesbianism and bisexuality is 'a matter of degree not kind' wherein bisexuality is both orientation and capacity for context-specific flexibility in erotic response. Further subverting notions of exclusivity upheld by the heterosexual-homosexual binary, Blumstein and Schwartz (1977) also noted that cross-gender friendships between lesbians and gay men sometimes cultivated sexual encounters.

The discussion of women's greater propensity for sexual fluidity and flexibility intersects with an emergent gender construction in bisexual literature: that intimacies with women privilege emotionality whereas

connections with men focus on sexual aspects (Blumstein & Schwartz 1974, 1976a, 1976b, 1977; Brown 2002; Coleman 1982/1983, 1985; Diamond & Savin-Williams 2000; Esterberg 1997; McLean 2003; Weinberg, Williams & Pryor 1994). McLean's (2003) Australian research found that women were more likely to discuss their bisexuality in terms of affective relations whereas men more often described a sexual experience. This supports findings from Rust's (2001a) international research, which revealed that for both men and women, attractions to women were framed in emotional terms whereas attractions to men were couched in sexual terms. Weinberg, Williams and Pryor (1994:7) observed a similar 'traditional' gender pattern in their San Francisco study, commenting that women were more inclined to 'fall in love', whereas men tended to 'have sex'. Furthermore, their data highlighted gendered emotional differences during the sexual act: men were circumscribed as more impersonal and less sensitive; conversely, women were perceived as more person-centred and caring. Weinberg, Williams and Pryor (1994:74) thus posited bisexuality as an 'add-on' to heterosexuality, which for men satisfied the need for more sex and for women the need for affective qualities felt to be lacking in heterosexual relationships.

As such, the empirical field of bisexual experience is discursively bifurcated along demarcations of masculine/feminine binarism. In juxtaposition with feminine qualities of emotionality in female bisexuality, the impress of hegemonic masculinity is central to analyses of male bisexuality. It is here that we glean a complex power relationship arising between gender and sexuality. As theorised by Connell (Connell 1987, 1992, 2005; Connell & Messerschmidt 2005), hegemonic masculinity is produced from within an hierarchical binary relation that privileges heterosexuality and devalues femininity. Blumstein and Schwartz (1976b) found that heterosexual competence was seen as crucial to maintaining masculine worth as feminised relations between men were associated with the stigma of effeminate gay male imagery. Indeed, the authors comment that several male respondents had in their youth been labelled 'class sissy' and felt marginalised as being sexually 'odd' (Blumstein & Schwartz 1977:345). Notions of impaired gender and sexuality were found by Blumstein and

Schwartz (1977) to be less problematic for women than for the men. Robert Rhoads (1997) also noted this tension in perceptions of masculinity in his study of gay and bisexual college male students. Gay male stereotypes of 'camp' raised concerns for some of Rhoads' participants who struggled to reject commonly held associations between gender and sexuality that invert masculinity through the feminisation of gay identity.

Such issues appear to downplay emotionality in male bisexual relations with other men. However, as noted by Blumstein and Schwartz (1976a), although bisexual men's same-gender experience was largely initiated in terms of purely transitory genital contact, it often progressed later to something more meaningful than mere physicality. This male balancing act of adhering to the cultural hegemonies inbuilt within heterosexual relationships while pursuing sexual contact with men is evident in Terry Evans' (2003) study of men-who-have-sex-with-men (MSM) but do not identify as gay. Although many of his participants remained married and significantly distinguished between the deep love felt for their wives in contrast to their encounters with men – which were generally viewed as 'purely physical and fun' – some did form romantic or close emotional bonds with other men. The masculine/feminine gender divide is thus more complexly constituted in bisexual realities than aggregated summaries suggest.

Gender Stereotypes: AIDS, Risk, Promiscuity

The commonly portrayed perception that bisexuality is less inflected by affective relations for men compared to women is in part perpetuated by a wealth of research motivated by health concerns regarding risky sexual practices. Risk discourses concerning discussions of HIV/AIDS predominantly focus on bisexual men (Couch & Pitts 2006; Pitts & Couch 2005; Rust 2000b; Stokes et al. 1996; Stokes, McKirnan & Burzette 1993). That bisexual women are erased from empirical scrutiny in such research (Namaste et al. 2007), constructs a marked gender divide in epidemiological models. Consequently, high risk behaviours – such as multiple sexual partners, anal sex, drug use (Couch & Pitts 2006), unprotected anal/vaginal

sex and public cruising (Stokes et al. 1996), particularly among married, closeted bisexual men (Gagnon, Greenblat & Kimmel 1998) – become synonymous with male bisexuality. Indeed, the portrayal of men's bisexual behaviour within milieux of impersonal and public venues prevails throughout the literature, and is often drawn in stark contrast to the more personalised and friendship-oriented context of women's experiences (Blumstein & Schwartz 1974, 1976a, 1976b, 1977; McLean 2003; Rust 2000b; Weinberg, Williams & Pryor 1994). For example, Blumstein and Schwartz (1977) observed that men's first sexual experiences (with either gender) were likely to be with strangers (prostitutes, 'bad girls', and engaging in homosexual tricks), whereas for women it more often occurred with a friend. Here again, the gender divide is reinforced through dominant narratives of femininity and masculinity. The notion that men engaged in more impersonal sex was predominantly associated with those who feared homosexual stigma and impaired masculinity and thus adopted the masculine 'insertor role' (Blumstein & Schwartz 1977:349).

Two decades later, Weinberg, Williams and Pryor (1994) recounted a similar socio-sexual landscape that drew a close affinity between male bisexuality, sexual opportunism and enjoyment afforded by casual and anonymous public sex. This gendered pattern is particularly dominant in research on bisexuality within a marital context. Rust (2000b:301) concluded from an extensive review of empirical studies examining heterosexually married bisexuals, lesbians and gay men (also referred to as mixed-orientation or multi-sexual relationships) that:

gender patterns in the expression of bisexuality appear to reflect cultural gender roles. Men for example, are much more likely to seek anonymous sex with other men in tearooms, as an *extramarital* activity and sometimes without the knowledge of their wives. Women, on the other hand, if they participate in sex with women while married, tend not to do so anonymously; women have nothing analogous to men's tearooms. Instead, they might become involved with another woman in the context of swinging; that is an activity

they engage in *within* their marriages and with the knowledge of their husbands.

The hegemony of the heterosexual paradigm figures centrally in such accounts. Joan Dixon's (1984, 1985) research on bisexuality in swinging married women found that, overwhelmingly, same-sex erotic engagement occurred with the spouse's knowledge and encouragement. In this context, the male partner's masculinity is reinforced and upheld through his own erotic pleasure and being in a position of control (he bestows permission). Conversely, same-sex activity between men is frequently associated with fear of impaired masculinity. An abundance of literature notes the prevalence of non-disclosure of men's bisexual behaviour to their female spouses (Arias 2007; Blumstein & Schwartz 1976a; Brownfain 1985; Coleman 1982/1983; Gagnon, Greenblat & Kimmel 1998; Humphreys 1970; Joseph 1997; Matthews 1969; Paul 1996; Rust 2000b; Stokes et al. 1996; Stokes, McKirnan & Burzette 1993; Weinberg, Williams & Pryor 1994; Wolf 1985). Gagnon, Greenblat and Kimmel (1998:101) observed that bisexually-behaving men are less likely to disclose their sexuality to their partners than those who identify as bisexual. These studies construct and perpetuate a particular narrative of covert male bisexuality contoured by guilt, loneliness, anxiety, depression and isolation, which lies hidden beneath the edicts of heteronormativity and monogamy.

Further emphasising this negative portrayal of male bisexuality, several studies have found bisexuality is significantly more problematic for men than women (Blumstein & Schwartz 1977; Bradford 2004; McLean 2003; Paul 1996; Sheff 2006; Weinberg, Williams & Pryor 1994; Zinik 1985). In particular, bisexual men have variously recounted feelings such as: internalised homophobia, biphobia, and heterosexism; gender role conflict such as fear of femininity; and guilt arising from diminished masculinity (Sheff 2006; Szymanski & Carr 2008; Weinberg, Williams & Pryor 1994). Consequently, Mary Bradford's (2004) study of 20 bisexual men and women, found that men couched their sexuality within the idiom of 'fight' and 'battle', whereas women described their sexuality in positive terms such as

'flowering' and 'wholeness'. Sociological explanation that social taboos discourage same-gender affection between men but permit it between women (McLean 2003), and that homosexuality in the public imagination implies impaired masculinity (Blumstein & Schwartz 1977) implants a profoundly recurring refrain in empirical literature.

While social norms may permit affective relations between women, bisexual women are nonetheless vulnerable to negative representations. As noted earlier, within the context of swinging, female bisexuality is commonly deployed to satisfy the heterosexual (male) gaze. Reinforcing this, the 'three-some' fantasy is often invoked in advertising. For instance, one of a succession of controversially provocative billboard advertisements by Australian shoe manufacture Windsor Smith during 2002 incited much public debate and feminist condemnation. The offending image foregrounded a rakish man in a seamy bedroom removing his shoes, while in the background two seductive and fashionably slender women waited enticingly for him on a bed. Attracting Australian media attention, then Women's Affairs Minister Mary Delahunty convened an advisory committee after complaints about Windsor Smith's billboards were criticised for promoting 'brothel-chic' (Benbow 2002). Hence, although bisexual women embrace their sexuality in more positive terms, sexist discourses of immoral promiscuity that circulate via sensationalised media images (such as 'hot bi babes') colour their experiences in the social world. Bisexual women's accounts in Christian Klesse's (2005) research thus related how being sexualised rendered them vulnerable to opportunistic and inappropriate solicitation for sex, and sexual violence and abuse.

Pertaining to the sexualised symbolic of female bisexuality, a recurring theme throughout empirical literature is that bisexual women experience negative reactions from lesbian and feminist communities (Esterberg 1997; Klesse 2005; McLean 2003; Rust 1993b; Weinberg, Williams & Pryor 1994). Commonly cited reasons for such disaffection included: charges of 'sleeping with the enemy', spreading STDs to the lesbian community, retaining heterosexual privilege, and instantiating a threat to lesbian/feminist

politics (Klesse 2005; Rust 1993b). As such, the conflict between bisexual and lesbian and/or feminist women is repeatedly emphasised and the subject of much discussion and research (for example Ault 1996; Hartman 2005; Hemmings 2002; Jeffreys 1999; Klesse 2005; Rust 1993b, 1995; Young 1992). Klesse (2005:456) argues that because of the assumption of 'an essential bisexual non-monogamy or promiscuity' bisexual women are considered to be risky lovers, both in terms of fidelity and AIDS, hence lesbians prefer not to be involved with them. Although bisexual men's encounters with gay communities are often reported in negative terms (Coleman 1982/1983; Leonard 2003; Rust 2001a; Weinberg, Williams & Pryor 1994), these are significantly eclipsed by the pronounced estrangement between bisexual and lesbian women related in both empirical literature and socio-political commentary.

Non/Monogamy and Gender Economies: Accentuating the Positive

Overall, the empirical literature is dominated by a somewhat homogenised and negative view of bisexual men, with cursory reference to bisexual women's relationships beyond scenarios of swinging and eroticisation within friendship contexts. Research to date has found that open relationships, polyamory and non-monogamy commonly intersect with bisexuality (Barker & Langdridge 2010b; Klesse 2006; McLean 2003, 2004, 2011; Rust 1996, 2002; Sheff 2005; Weinberg, Williams & Pryor 1994). The strong association between bisexuality and non-monogamy drawn in the literature summarily reinforces a highly gendered and stereotyped (promiscuity, infidelity, three-somes) portrait of bisexuality. Hence, as Klesse (2005:459) puts it, 'hegemonic discourses on bisexuality assume a peculiar interrelation between bisexuality and nonmonogamy'. Calls to rectify such biases in order to accommodate and theorise multi-partner and multi-sexual relationships (Pallotta-Chiarolli & Lubowitz 2003; Sheff 2005) have not gone unheeded. Recent explosion of scholarly interest in consensual non-monogamies sees intersections of sexual diversity, alternative relationship formations and gender more expansively treated (Barker & Langdridge 2010a, 2010b; Pallotta-Chiarolli 2010). As such, this relatively new body of research and discussion offers new ways of

conceptualising the nexus of gender and bisexuality beyond conventional dichotomies that reliance on out-dated research perpetuates. For example, Rust's (1996) international study found that the most common polyamorous relational form – having a primary 'open' relationship/marriage with one partner and secondary sexual, romantic, and/or emotional relations with others – bore a gender difference: women preferred secondary *romantic* relationships, whereas men preferred secondary *sexual* relationships. This replays the feminine-emotional/masculine-sexual gender divide discussed earlier.

However, the growing field of consensual non-monogamy research suggests that the interplay of gender, sexuality and relationship formations is richly contoured and contested. A repeated refrain in this literature suggests alternative relationship styles that facilitate multi-sexual partnering foster broader articulations of gender. Notions of challenging hegemonic masculinity, which is heavily invested in the heteronormative economy, figure centrally. Gillian Dunne's (2001) sociological study of 100 non-heterosexual fathers reveals a dynamic matrix of sexual, emotional and familial experiences that challenges prevailing gender stereotypes of married men who seek male lovers. The majority of Dunne's participants were 'out' to their wives, and variously described having loving, loyal, sexual marital relationships where wives demonstrated flexible and supportive attitudes towards their husband's sexuality. Here, transformative relational spaces, which accommodated both wife and male lover (such as triadic cohabitation, or alternating wife/lover domiciles), beheld a tendency toward more egalitarian gender relations. Dunne (2001 para. 4.18) thus argued that non-heterosexual fathers in her sample remake and reinterpret masculinity in a way that contests hegemonic masculinity via being more emotionally connected, domestically competent, and 'better than most men'.

Similarly, Pallotta-Chiarolli and Lubowitz's (2003) Australian research of multi-sexual relationships emphasised the importance of choice, agency, and the expectation of gender equality and interpersonal connectedness for women living with bisexual/gay men. Indeed, some women actively sought

bisexual or gay partners in their quest for 'equitable, flexible and emotionally and sexually satisfying relationships', believing that 'these men had interrogated hegemonic constructs of heterosexual masculinity and the interlinked traditional gendered expectations and assumptions of women' (Pallotta-Chiarolli & Lubowitz 2003:75). The capacity of polyamorous arrangements to challenge power differentials was noted in Meg Barker's (2005) study, where some participants construed polyamory as a feminine way of managing relationships defined according to open communication, expression of emotion and support networks. Klesse's (2006) interviews with gay and bisexual males variously framed polyamory in terms of affection, intimate friendship and honesty, which similar to previous research findings, reconfigures masculinity. Thus, as Klesse (2006) argues, discourses of polyamory tend to de-emphasise sexuality and privilege love, intimacy, emotion and ethical practice.

Providing further evidence of a more gender flexible economy in polyamorous relationships, Elisabeth Sheff (2006:622) concluded from her research that multiple and situational masculinities are enacted in poly contexts, such that the majority of male respondents 'resisted hegemonic strictures to a greater degree than complied with them'. Of note, although many retained a heterosexual identity, some broadened their definitions of sexuality to embrace flexible or queer heterosexual masculinities that allowed for erotic or emotional interactions with other men. Sheff (2005) further explored the ways in which polyamorous women expand conventional familial, cultural, gendered and sexual roles and engage in agentic forms of power. The sense of liberation from traditional roles that polyamory cultivated was simultaneously a source of both exhilaration and terror for these women, which testifies to the strength with which hegemonic constructions of gender are internalised and shape our sense of self and place in the social world. Sheff's (2005:260) respondents commonly reported a shift in women's gender roles and redefinition of sexual desire from traditional circumscriptions of 'putting everyone else first' to 'a more agentic life pattern of self-focus'. However, Sheff (2005:280) observes that despite such expanded subjectivities, several 'struggled under

the yoke of an androcentric society that demands women's sexuality function in the service of men'. Although the private sphere of polyamorous relationships afforded the scope to develop new roles and power dynamics, Sheff noted that these women endured public stigma imposed by the dominant cultural script of monogamy that condemns their lifestyle choices as deviant.

While intersections of bisexuality and alternative partnering styles seemingly cultivates what Jamie Heckert (2010) describes as democratisation of gender and sexual relations through open and ongoing participatory questioning, the field is by no means utopic. Klesse (2010:120) underlines paradoxical tensions that surface in polyamorous practice – on the one hand idealising positive images of egalitarian ethics for the bisexual community while on the other 'glossing over persisting power dynamics' between bisexual men and women in their sexual relationships. Suzanne Pennington's (2009) examination of bisexuals 'doing gender in romantic relationships' (which encapsulated a spectrum of marital, non/monogamous, polyamorous configurations), found that bisexuals navigate relationships in direct dialogue with normative hetero-centric gender ideologies. Her participants strove to subvert gender norms (equity, gender-switching etc), yet re-inscribed traditional gender dichotomies through lacking the discursive resources to reconceptualise gender scripts. Sheff (2006) also noted that some male participants in her research were complicit in, and expressed aspects of, traditional gender roles. These included: seeking relationships with multiple women to fulfill 'hot bi babe' sex fantasies and thus fetishising women; emotional ineptitude; and 'alpha male' competitive behaviour.

Gender equity, even in alternative lifestyle contexts, is still a hard-fought battle. Overall, redefinitions of gender are treated somewhat differently in discussions of men. While for women, we have seen that polyamorous contexts afford possibilities of agency, for men, discourses of counter-hegemonic masculinity are couched in terms of relinquishing power accorded by male-dominant social positions. In other words, men's

openness to innovative options that alternative relationship structures offer is seen as redistributing gendered social power through eroding traditional masculine ideals. Empirical evidence points to men's ability for positive reflexivity through moving into areas traditionally deemed to be feminine (such as emotion-work, child-caring, friendship-centred affective relations). Though argued to challenge and contest heteronormative and dominant relationship structures, in exactly what ways these men may perceive such gender reconfigurations as self-empowering or liberating nonetheless requires further inquiry.

Trans-Bi Borderlands

The landscape of bisexuality thus far maps out sex/gender through differential experiences of bisexual men and women. While the lens of inquiry is shifting the empirical eye towards a greater interest in diversity, discussions that foreground differences and similarities *between*, or subversions and re-inventions *of*, men/women, masculinity/femininity, inevitably re-instate a binary framework. Noting that theorists have questioned the role of gender, particularly in determinations of sexual orientation, Rust (2000a:209) pointedly asks:

Given that gender is not dichotomous and not related simply to biological sex, a sexual classification system based on a simplistic dichotomous distinction between male men and female women is not viable; what, for example, are we to call a male-to-female transsexual who is attracted to men both before and after surgery? What should we call a male cross-dresser who approaches his female sex partner dressed in a teddy? What should we call his female partner?

It is here that empirical research on bisexuality reveals a glaring absence, making only occasional reference to transgender population samples. In these cases the numbers are mostly too small for any meaningful analysis to be made. As such, empirical findings about bisexual experiences inevitably replay the gender divide through muting transgender, intersex and other

sex/gender-diverse voices. The irony, however, is that bisexual and transgender populations share common ground. As Max Valerio (1998) comments: '[t]ranssexuality and bisexuality both occupy heretical thresholds of human experience. We confound, illuminate and explore border regions'. These border regions open up spaces of discomfort for those who adhere to explicit binaries of male/female, heterosexual/homosexual: of choosing to be *with* a man or a woman, or choosing to *be* a man or a woman. As such, both bisexual and transgender people are frequently marginalised not only by dominant heterosexual culture, but also within gay and lesbian communities. This has significant implications for psychological well-being as discovered in Mathy, Lehmann & Kerr's (2002) mental health study that found a prevalence of suicidal ideation and psychotherapy treatment in transgender individuals and bisexual females. While the now common invocation of queer nomenclature – LGBT – purports to uphold notions of harmony across all designations, the 'B' and 'T' are for the most part considered tokenistic by some critics (Alexander & Yescavage 2003; Mathy, Lehmann & Kerr 2002). While it is argued by some that bisexual and transgender communities engage with each other more harmoniously, and that significant numbers of transgender and transsexual people have been involved in the bisexual community (Alexander & Yescavage 2003; Lano 1998), such people remain underrepresented in bisexual research.

Notably, transgender literature suggests a prevalence of bisexuality in transgender persons (Denny & Green 1996; Devor 1993; Hines 2007; Lawrence 2005; Tobin 2003). However, empirical studies of transgender populations are largely dominated by clinical research, which subordinates or neglects sexuality issues to pathologies or dysphoria of gender identity (Coleman, Bockting & Gooren 1993; Denny & Green 1996; Ekins & King 2006; Hines 2007; Namaste 2000; Tobin 2003). Indeed, as both Sally Hines (2007) and Viviane Namaste (2000) argue, the medical model fails to take account of the everyday lived realities of what it is to be transgender. Moreover, clinical studies are eschewed by social researchers for being heteronormative (Hines 2007; Tobin 2003), heterosexist (Denny & Green 1996) and hetero-hegemonic (Rosario II 1996). These commentaries

commonly underscore that medical intervention is expected to 'correct' sexual responses in a heterosexual direction after gender ambiguities have been successfully treated. Accordingly, Aaron Devor (1993) stresses the need to recognise bisexuality and concludes from his sociological study of 47 female-to-males (FTMs) that sexual orientation identity is not stable. Devor found that all but one reported attraction to women pre- and post-transition. But, significantly, there was an almost three-fold increase in post-transition attraction to gay men. David Schleifer's sociological analysis (2006) of FTM sexuality further confounds conventional assumptions about the relationship between sex, gender and sexuality. Schleifer noted that while all participants underwent some form of hormonal or surgical reassignment none pursued phalloplasty and, therefore, retained female genitalia (two retained their breasts); yet, all erotically engaged with gay men. Citing a Dutch study that found gay males were satisfied with 'pre-op' female-to-gay-males, Rosario II (1996:43) argued that:

there is no necessary association between gender identity, gender role, sexual orientation, and sexual aim. Clearly the union of same-sex genitals is not the *sine qua non* of homosexuality.

Sociological and ethnographic researchers that offer more than cursory insights into the complex intersections of (bi)sexuality and transgender are limited to a few studies (notably Cromwell 1999; Devor 1993, 1997; Ekins & King 1999; 2006; Hines 2007; Tobin 2003). What this body of research suggests is that experiences of gender and sexuality are expressed in diverse ways that defy easy categorisation. As recounted through these studies, transgender narratives commonly underline fluid sexual practices and desires that are experienced in dialogue with multiple reconfigurations of gender. Richard Ekins and Dave King (1999, 2006) conducted two decades of fieldwork and qualitative analysis of several thousand cross-dressers and sex-changers across the globe. Their writings depict myriad transgender experiences that complicate intersections of sex, gender and sexuality. While some participants held to unproblematic acceptance of the binary divide that established a congruity between sex, sexuality and gender, others

disturbed this neat relationship between categories in ways that presented sex/gender and sexual identity as polymorphous entities. Highlighting such porosity of identity, Hines' (2007) research found a significant relationship between bisexuality and transgenderism, suggesting that bisexuality enables articulation of gender fluidity as an ongoing, relational process. As such, bisexuality offers a promising gateway to expand understanding of the complex relationship between sex, gender and sexuality, which my thesis takes as its entry point of inquiry.

Conclusion

Indeed, as Vanessa Schick and Brian Dodge (2012:162) argue, understanding the intersection between gender and bisexuality is a 'top priority' in bisexual scholarship, because 'grouping research studies by gender implies a gender binary that is not a reality for many bisexual men and women in terms of their personal gender identity and in the gender identity of their sexual/romantic partners'. The literature review in this chapter is testament that the impress of their words cannot be overstated. For, while current research is starting to redraw the gender landscape of bisexuality less rigidly, the literature presented here underlines that dominant narratives of gender are a significant vector in constructing bisexuality as both a sphere of inquiry and as a lived reality. As made evident, such realities are woven across multiple and intersecting fields of engagement – socio-cultural, political, biological, psychological, discursive – which are filtered through normative constructs. But, these reside elusively within the substrata of empirical and theoretical writings. Whether linear or non-linear, historical preoccupation with identity pathways has imbedded teleological thinking in much theoretical treatment of bisexuality, and accordingly privileged *developmental* models premised on descriptive taxonomies. Consequently, bisexuality overall remains inadequately or under-theorised in current scholarship (Angelides 2007; Gammon & Isgro 2007; Gooß 2008; Hemmings 2002).

In particular, *theoretical* treatment of gender is limited, fragmented, and largely out-dated: disappearing from view in identity models; lurking in the

background of queer theory, and sitting in an often uncomfortable and paradoxical alliance with feminism. Sociological studies of bisexuality have been confined to examining gender in terms of categorical difference, and thus largely positioned within explanations of gender role socialisation and socio-political location. Although informative, I argue these are out of touch in failing to embrace the complexities and diversities now apparent in the contemporary sex/gender/sexuality landscape. Indeed, foundational empirical studies that catapulted bisexuality into the social science arena, and remain a reference point in academic discussion, are now at least a decade (in some cases, several decades) out of date. As such, sociological investigation and analysis has yet to fully take account of the diverse and everyday embodied experiences of individual sex/gendered lives. This occludes the analytical and phenomenological dimensions of a range of sex/gender positions and what the vocabulary imputed to these may differentially signify, be these: man, woman, transgender, cross-dresser, intersex, genderqueer, gender-questioning, masculine, feminine, butch, femme and so on. Although theories of the body in sociology and feminism, which will be discussed in Chapter 3 (notably Braidotti 1994a, 2002; Butler 1993, 2004; Fausto-Sterling 2000; Grosz 1994; Shilling 2008; Turner 2008), have cogently tackled the sex/gender binary, comprehensive *empirical* examination of this, particularly in relation to bisexuality, as I have demonstrated, is lacking.

As established in the latter sections of the chapter, non-conventional relationships and sex/gender-diverse populations, open an 'epistemic portal' to borrow Serena Anderlini-D'Onofrio's apt phrase (2011:472). Here, we can see the germinal seeds of exploring sexuality in more fluid and complex ways through unravelling the complex interrelationship between sex, gender and bisexuality. As Klesse (2011:239) argues, bisexuality remains a marginal topic in much of the theorisation of sexuality and gender. The task of this thesis then is to deploy bisexuality's border region location as a critical lens through which sexuality and gender can be re-imagined with theoretical and empirical creativity. For, as Michelle Owen (2011:496) poignantly notes, though bisexuality has 'the power to denaturalize and

destabilize categorization', the exciting ways in which sex, gender and sexuality are now being 'deconstructed and refigured' are not reflected in the discipline of sociology.

The following chapter, therefore, takes up this challenge to develop an innovative sociological model, which integrates empirical and theoretical paradigms in a way that productively explores bisexuality as an *in-between* space of lived embodied reality. To restate, I argue this is necessary in order that sociological method can keep pace with, and accommodate, the fluid dimensions of increasingly mobile subjectivities. Locating bisexuality in its habitus of the 'middle', thus allows a cartography of connecting fields of engagement to be drawn – rendering visible vectors of sex/gender alongside that of the sexual. Here, I look to Gilles Deleuze and occasional co-author Felix Guattari, whose deconstructive/reconstructive philosophy of subjectivity and knowledge formation offers a creative way to re-imagine bisexuality as it traverses multiple plateaus of lived reality. The next chapter develops key concepts of their corpus to reconceptualise bisexuality as movement, flow and process. Central to this endeavour is the notion of desire as a pivotal engine that allows analysis of bisexuality to engage with and beyond dominant binary configurations, which have come to define and constrain human sexuality: male/female, man/woman, masculine/feminine, and heterosexual/homosexual. This thesis accordingly asks: 'how and in what way does bisexuality as both an epistemic tool and a lived embodied reality, intervene in the sex/gender/sexuality socio-cultural symbolic?'

3

Towards a Deleuzian Sociology

What would a sociology look like that rendered the dominant frameworks of society and knowledge into a mere "other" or that imagined the social as a decentred space of difference?... The voices of difference need to be heard but they should be disturbing – the screeches and scratching sounds which remind us that our worlds are, if we listen carefully and are willing to see, full of aliens – queers everywhere. Are we prepared to imagine a social space with no center, no ground, no endpoint...?

Steven Seidman (1997:99)

Given that the 'messy' (Hall 2003; Pallotta-Chiarolli 2010) and 'muddy' (Yescavage & Alexander 2009) realities of sex, gender and sexuality are bisexuality's home ground, the appeal to Seidman's imagined social space of decentredness is compelling. Indeed, the contemporary socio-sexual-gendered landscape, which urges consideration beyond notions of fixed identity categories to that of theorising and investigating fluidity, multiplicity and diversity, would seem to steer thinking in the queer direction that Seidman advocates. But while the case for queer sociology has been well articulated (for example, Epstein 2002; Namaste 1994; Plummer 2003; Seidman 1997), as discussed in Chapter 2, the promise of queer theory to *empirical* investigations of bisexuality is fraught with theoretical tensions (see for example, Burrill 2002; Fraser 1999; Gammon & Isgro 2007; Storr 1999). Queer theory's lessons are nonetheless instructive, and in particular I take heed of Julia Horncastle's (2008:33) entreaty that a queer 'concepto-lingual bloom' and 'creative climate' of sexgender¹ language is necessary if we are to understand bisexuality beyond its relational location to the dominant schemas of heterosexual/homosexual, male/female, man/woman.

¹ Horncastle co-opts the term 'sexgender' to signify the mutability of both sex and gender.

The bisexual subject, howsoever named by self or others, demands to be considered not simply as 'both this and that' (hybrid parts) or 'neither this nor that' (different from) – in other words, a coherent unified self or identity imputed with a fixed meaning. Rather than attempt to define what bisexuality *is* or *is not* I foreground the very quality that vexes the possibility of a unitary identity – incoherence, elusiveness – and take this as a theoretical entry point. Bisexuality's (queer) location within spaces of liminality, interstitiality and in-betweenness (Horncastle 2008) is not to suggest a discursively constructed corporeal vacuum that nullifies the impress of socio-structural dominion. Rather, these spaces productively telescope the bisexual body as motion: that is, in terms of connections, relations and configurations as it moves in-between the borderlines of sovereign dualisms.

My thesis accordingly re-visions bisexuality as a creative production that negotiates dominant structures of the social. In order to do this I utilise the philosophy of Gilles Deleuze and occasional co-author, Felix Guattari, which I argue is vital to the sociological task of interrogating bisexuality's liminal, mobile, and relational dimensions. While feminist and queer theorists² have in varying degrees turned to Deleuze for theoretical inspiration, sociological foray into this novel terrain is nascent. Although Nicholas Gane (2009:83) argues that Deleuze's work offers a 'radical alternative' for a 'new generation of social scientists and sociologists in particular', sociological engagement with Deleuzian philosophy is in its infancy³. Thus, sustained critical debate within this academic field has yet to be articulated, and unsurprisingly, empirical research that employs Deleuzian analysis in the social sciences is minimal⁴. Therefore, my

² Notable examples are Braidotti (1994a, 2002, 2011), Colebrook (2000b, 2002, 2009), Gatens (2000), Grosz (1993, 1994, 2005), Nigianni and Storr (2009), and Probyn (1996, 2000).

³ Deleuzian inspired sociology can be found in the writings of Bogard (1998), Fox (2002), Fraser (1997a, 1997b, 2006, 2009), Gane (2009), Lash (1984, 2009) and Probyn (2005).

⁴ Examples of empirical social research that employs a Deleuzian conceptual framework include: Alvermann (2000) – adolescent discussion of library texts; Coleman (2009) – teenage girls' experiences of their bodies through images; Goodley (2007) – parental care of differently-abled children; Potts (2004) – articulations of masculinity and unsuccessful Viagra use; Saunders (2008) – transgendered/intersexed bodies in family spaces; St Pierre (2000) – the role of education in older women's subjectivities.

deployment of Deleuzian concepts contributes to, and expands the utility of, this emergent paradigm in sociology. This novel approach to bisexual scholarship is necessary so as to augment understanding of the complex interplays between sex, gender, (bi)sexuality, and society.

I begin by examining Deleuze's reformulation of 'concepts' as multiplicities and assemblages, which are predicated by movement and flexibility, rather than rigid categorical definition. Re-visioning bisexuality as movement accordingly looks to what bodies are *doing* within sets of assembled arrangements and relations. I then explore the Deleuzian idea of affect in order to understand bisexuality as a generative process that emerges from within constellations of assembled relations. Drawing on feminist readings of Deleuze, I contend that such posturing enables thinking about bisexuality to move beyond dualist epistemes of sexual difference that demarcate hierarchical schemas of the unified subject, and more adequately consider a pluralistic conception of sex, gender and sexuality. Proceeding from this argument, Deleuze and Guattari's central figurations of the rhizome, nomadism, becomings, and the Body without Organs are explicated in order to understand bisexuality's habitus of the 'middle', and the productive knowledges that are rendered visible from this epistemic and ontological vantage point. In order to establish not only a new way of thinking, but also speaking about bisexuality, the chapter concludes by examining Deleuze and Guattari's concept of minor writing. A recurring motif in their writings, minor writing functions to rupture or destabilise the power invested in, and meanings attached to, dominant significations. Minor writing provides not only a mode of theoretical analysis, but, as will be further elaborated in Chapter 4, also a *method* that breaks apart rather than solidifies key terms of reference, such as bisexual, gay, lesbian, man, and woman.

Central to my project then, is to articulate the capacity of bisexuality as an epistemic perspective that destabilises the authority invested in master signifiers (categories of gay, lesbian, bisexual, man, woman), which cohere sexual and gendered subjects as unified entities. In Deleuzian language, this process is asignifying and asubjectifying; it does not disembody bisexuality,

rather, it exposes the heterogeneities of corporeality through identifying the congealing function of signifiers, which rein in and police 'subjects'. The mercurial quality of bisexuality, which I am principally addressing here, is in Elspeth Probyn's (2005) words, precisely that which sociological frameworks find difficult to accommodate. Concomitant with a cornucopia of sexual expression, the slipperiness of conceptualising sex and power as objects of study, and the connections between them, Probyn (2005:517) argues, inspires sociologists to look to new ways of thinking about society and structures. I therefore argue that Deleuzian theory and method allows inquiry to scrutinise the in-between spaces of binary structures, which *name* (categorise, codify, organise, signify) sexual bodies and inscribe bisexuality as *different from* other sexual identity categories. The value of this theoretical manoeuvre for my study is the ability to bring to light multiplicities of experience that might otherwise slip between the cracks of dominant thought-frames and be erased from empirical view. The conceptual frame set out in this chapter, therefore, speaks to prevailing concerns of sociology's neglect of 'active body-subjects whose corporeal properties enable them to intervene creatively in the world' (Shilling 2008:4). As Bryan Turner (2008) observes, if sociology is to keep pace with multiple permutations of mobile bodies, sociologists must take account of human potentiality through foregrounding embodiment, corporeality, temporality of the body, and the body-in-motion.

Re-conceptualising Bisexuality: Multiplicities, Assemblages

This thesis, therefore, advocates that a flexible approach to conceptualising bisexuality is required. Sociological method, which is predicated on the need for conceptual definition in order to execute data analysis, often leaves little or no room for fluid or transformative possibilities of a particular concept. Indeed, this is often the case in LGBT research where survey instruments employ forced choice method to denominate sexuality, which as discussed in Chapter 2, ignores not only individual variance, and incongruence between identity and behaviour, but also the growing trend for many to refuse sexual identity labels. The benefit of Deleuzian thinking enables conceptual movement and experimentation, for a core premise of

the Deleuzian project is to challenge the rigidity of concepts. Indeed, the language of Deleuze and Guattari's writings continually invokes the idea of movement – rhizomes, nomadism, becomings, lines of flight, flows, flux – that accordingly operates to dismantle the coherence of categorical thinking. Rethinking conceptual frames in terms of movement is not to evacuate bisexuality of any content, rather it entails rendering visible processes of signification, and their location within, and in relation to, elements of the social sphere and disseminations of power. The idea advanced here addresses the need to critically analyse the social semiotic operation of the term 'bisexual', how it is encoded, and the social relations within which signs and discourses circulate (Namaste 1996:88). Thus, a Deleuzian schema opens up the signifier or concept 'bisexual' to question, possibility and potentiality, rather than constraining it within the bounds of dominant meaning.

A concept (bisexuality) is not defined according to an essentialist meaning or 'despotic' signification, but for Deleuze is a multiplicity; it comprises several components of which the 'whole' or 'totality' does not form a coherent or regular entity, but rather is cut and cross-cut by irregular contours (Deleuze 1995:21, Deleuze & Guattari 1994:15-16). The key point is that a multiplicity is not reducible to its component terms. Rather, for Deleuze, it is what the relational space *between* the elements *produces* and assembles that matter – that is, the *encounter* between bodies. Thus, concepts are not totalities or unities but encounters between bodies, which 'may be physical, biological, psychic, social, verbal' (Deleuze & Parnet 2006:39). Multiplicities accordingly form assemblages that relate to:

a precise state of intermingling of bodies in society, including all the attractions and repulsions, sympathies and antipathies, alterations, amalgamations, penetrations, and expansions that affect bodies of all kinds in their relations to one another. What regulates the obligatory, necessary, or permitted interminglings of bodies is above all an alimentary regime and a sexual regime (Deleuze & Guattari 1987:90).

As Anne Gordon (2003:7) explains '[d]ifferent assembled relations produce different signifying practices that are often impenetrable to an interpretive mode that has been formulated on the assumption of a pre-modelled understanding of subjective and social formation'. Hence, re-visioning bisexuality as a multiplicity of interconnecting bodies interrogates and looks beyond the dominant meanings that attach to particular social configurations. For example, a partnered bisexual-identifying man and woman are likely to be perceived as 'straight' by others in a suburban shopping mall, whereas in a queer setting the question of identity, sexual practice and relationships is more open to alternative configurations. The multiple ways in which signifying practices are embodied and expressed in bisexual realities will be explored in greater detail in Chapter 5.

A Deleuzian approach, therefore, opens up conceptual boundaries depending upon how and where bisexual bodies are located in complex and mobile networks of relational assemblages. In other words, the Deleuzian lens refocuses analysis on motion and process. As Macgregor Wise (2005:77) points out, 'assemblage' does not refer to a static state of 'arrangement or organization' but to the 'process of arranging, organizing, fitting together'. Significantly, this transfers theoretical emphasis away from categorical naming to *capacity*. Each assemblage presents one of a multiplicity of arrangements that has the capacity to undo the homogenising and authoritative effects of dominant signifiers, such as gay and lesbian. Hence, bodies are refigured as multiplicities. The point to note is that multiplicity is not synonymous with conventional understandings of difference and diversity – that is, the numerous empirical 'types' of individuals across gender, race, sexuality, and culture etc. Rather the Deleuzian lexicon of multiplicity and difference invokes a constant movement *within* each individual, transforming subjects so that subjectivity can never be fixed to a particular point. It is a *difference in itself* rather than distinguishing *from* something else (Deleuze 1994:28). Multiplicity and difference, therefore, unfold within a particular 'geography of relations' (Deleuze & Parnet 2006:42) in which '[t]he notion of unity appears only when there is a power takeover in the multiplicity by the signifier' (Deleuze

& Guattari 1987:8). The persistence of bisexual stereotypes (for example, promiscuity, vector of sexual disease) exemplifies how power circulates through a sexual regime that disallows particular articulations of intermingling as undesirable, immoral or deviant.

The utility of assemblages as a conceptual tool enables analysis of lived realities of bisexuality to be realised as multiple sets of relations and circumstances. As will be discussed in later chapters, my respondents' narratives refuse the neat linearity that chronology attempts to inscribe, but rather spread transversally. Deleuzian ideas suggest that bodies are criss-crossed by labile states of affair, events and motion – negotiating labyrinthine pathways through social forces and structures both discursive and non-discursive. My research data exposes the generative processes that revise bodies at each juncture: school, university, friendship circles, cultural-political groups etc. This appears to replay queer theoretical notions of identity as multiple, contestatory (Butler 1993), transformative, provisional and ongoing (Cornwall 2009). However, my intent is not to insinuate a postmodernist bisexual self – identity as fragmented, contradictory, splintered, several – but to consider bodies as constellations of connections through which both power and desire ebb and flow. One identity does not replace, vanquish or jettison another – straight now queer, bisexual now lesbian, 'gay until graduation', wife now mother. Rather, the body is reconceived in Deleuze's philosophy as machinic, undergoing micro-transmutations as connective elements enter and depart from fields of engagement (Deleuze & Guattari 1983, 1987). In other words, social spheres and sexual bodies do not exist as discrete and separate entities, but overlap, expand, and contract, and hence, are rewritten or remade in each encounter.

The Deleuzian notion of multiplicities is not simply a philosophical concept, but a method of scrutiny that foregrounds *processes* that produce such vicissitudes, elucidating *what* is created in multiple, contingent and transitive unfoldings and *how* – not what bodies *are* but what bodies *do*. The focus on 'doing' is also central to Judith Butler's approach to gendered

bodies⁵. For both Butler (2006) and Deleuze, conceptualisation of the body can be said to involve the 'doing' of bodily practices – the body has no intrinsic 'natural' essence in terms of sex/gender/sexuality. Both consider how the body is 'organised' according to dominant regimes of signification and that to contest these involves a reworking of the body. For Butler (2006:1) it is the performative action of 'becoming undone', while for Deleuze it is the disorganisation of the coherent body in its encounters with other bodies (Deleuze & Guattari 1983, 1987). This theoretical resonance will be explicated more clearly in Chapter 6 through an analysis of ambiguous bodies that reside in the border regions of male/female, man/woman, and masculine/feminine. But, I argue that the theoretical move from Butler to Deleuze affords greater benefit to illuminate sociological understandings of fluid sexualities and genders via a situational shift from *body-in-performative-act* (reiteration) to *body-in-assemblage* (production). While Butler provides a profitable way of conceptualising the instability of sex/gender categories, her theory is largely reliant on a psychoanalytic narrative of negativity. Addressing this point, Colebrook (2009:16) maintains that Butler's reiterative bodies introduce differences in terms of *not* being – the self is negated by that which is not. Conversely, for Deleuze, bodies *produce* positive differences in their encounters with other bodies. In other words, the Deleuzian view emphasises the body's *generative* capacity.

Bisexuality as Affect

This way of thinking about bodies as generative entities reorients the ontology of bisexuality to consider all bodies (human or non-human) in terms of encounters and *affect*. Affects are not synonymous with feeling or sentiment, which is a reactive state, but are understood as transformational and pro-active; 'the passage of one experiential state of the body to another and implying an augmentation or diminution in that body's capacity to act' (Massumi 1987:xvi). The Deleuzian notion of affect emerges as a crucial motif in the data analysis of my research, whereby participants' narratives

⁵ For writings on the connections between Butler and Deleuze see Conley (2009) and Hickey-Moody and Rasmussen (2009).

reveal the transformative dimensions of self and relationships that are animated within and through micro and macro fields of encounter⁶. Deploying Deleuzian ideas in this manner, I reconfigure thinking about the complex interconnections between, sex/gender diversity and sexuality as processes of bodily movement. Following Deleuze, I thus argue that bisexual bodies are perceived in terms of 'the affects of which they are capable – in passion as well as in action' (Deleuze & Parnet 2006:45). The potential of Deleuzian thought for sociological examinations of bisexuality is that it enables inquiry to explore the body-in-motion (Turner 2008) and its creative interventions (Shilling 2008), which produce multiplicities of self and sociality. Doing so elucidates fluidities of embodied practice and relationality that escape conventional categories and the imperative of these to make orderly sense of the socio-sexual world. Such a perspective revises analysis from positioning the body as simply reactive to social forces (being affected) to one of active material engagement (creating affect). The importance of this for a sociology of the body is emphasised by Nick Fox (2002:356), who writes:

Asking 'what can a body do' recognizes an active, experimenting, engaged and engaging body, not one passively written in systems of thought. Bodies are not the locus at which forces act, they are the production of the interactions of forces.

Turning the analytical focus to affect avoids defining the body according to scientific taxonomies of characteristics (organs, functions) as species or genus, which compel conformity to a model. The significance of this argument to my Deleuzian refiguring of bisexuality cannot be overstated, for it enables inquiry to take account of dominant discourses without reducing the body to a discursive construct (an effect of language), or

⁶ Affect theory has emerged as a burgeoning field of study, which, informed by various writers including Gilles Deleuze, Eve Sedgwick and Silvan Tomkins, is moving beyond its origins in philosophy and psychology to more broadly consider its relevance and application across the sciences, humanities and social sciences (see for example, Ahmed 2004; Clough & Halley 2007; Gregg & Seigworth 2010; Massumi 2002; Sedgwick 2003). However, my conceptual use of affect is confined to that of Deleuzian philosophy, as it is not within the scope of this thesis to incorporate or venture into the wider body of theoretical works that have since flourished.

forsaking other elements in the social field with which bodies engage. Deleuze's oft-cited statement that '[a] race-horse is more different from a workhorse than a workhorse is from an ox' (Deleuze & Guattari 1987:257) is illuminating for the conceptualisation of bisexuality I am proposing. The key point is that despite sharing the scientific name *Equus*, what differentiates a workhorse from a race-horse and locates it in proximity to an ox is the set of relations within which it moves: farmer + harness + plough + earth and so on. In this sense, beings or entities always exist in sets of relations or assemblages as explained earlier. Hence, anchoring a subject to a name, that is, to attach an identity, fixes the body to a particular way of 'being' and to differentiate it in binary terms of difference *from* an other, what it is *not* – for instance, female is *not* male, bisexual is *not* straight and *not* gay or lesbian.

Rethinking Sexual Difference

The specific advantage of Deleuzian thinking to my study, therefore, is that it enables conceptualisation of fluid and diverse sex/genders and sexualities to move beyond dichotomous schemas of sexual difference, which, as demonstrated in Chapters 1 and 2, have soldered understandings of bisexuality to binary thinking, particularly the heterosexual/homosexual divide. Such conceptions demarcate the bisexual body, positioning it within a hierarchised sexual economy. As Mary Holmes (2007:21) explains:

contemporary society is based upon a heteronormative gender order; an order based on the idea that there are two opposite sexes that are attracted to each other. The gender order demands that we categorize people as women and men. People usually try to imitate what are perceived as 'normal' femininity and masculinity and the complex intersections between gender and sexuality are key to how this operates.

The gender order, therefore, inscribes the human body according to a normative model of sexual difference – male/female, man/woman,

masculine/feminine, heterosexual/homosexual – which has proven difficult to dislodge from the libidinal economy in all social fields.

According to Deleuze, this *organisation* of the body occurs in *transcendental* juridical fields such as religion, science, the State, family, and especially psychoanalysis. Transcendent universals (abstract concepts), organise matter into social bodies: 'forms, functions, bonds, dominant and hierarchized organizations, organized transcendences' (Deleuze & Guattari 1987:159). All attempt to cohere the subject, to corral and constrain desire. Delineated by external representations (objects), transcendences variously consolidate as *molar* entities, *strata*, *organisms*, and *majorities* in Deleuzian idiom. For example, the grand structures of social scientific measurement: race, class, sex, religion are *par exemplar* of transcendentalism. But as will become clear throughout the diverse sex/gender voices of those who I interviewed, the master categories of male/female are called into question, and thus problematise conceiving bisexuality as simply a both/and, dual-sex attracted proposition. For instance, the two-sexed schema does not easily accommodate my intersex participant, whose biological 'sex characteristics' sit somewhere in-between the 'typical' model of a chromosomally XX female and XY male.

The notion of ambiguous human biological sex consequently 'threatens a social order' (Holmes 2007:27) based on the dominant assumption of heteronormative sexual dimorphism. What would constitute a lawful marriage for an intersex person in Australia given that marriage is predicated upon the legal union of a man and a woman? How does one conceive of sexual identity for an intersex person? The dominant episteme that divides the social order into men and women cannot tolerate indeterminacy of the in-between, whether bisexual, intersexual or transsexual. The respondents in my study demystify these corporeal border regions. Rather than positioning the border regions of sex/gender and sexuality as marginal 'other' to the majority order, my participants' narratives operate to contest, subvert, dismantle and remake the dominant categories that attempt to cohere their diverse realities into 'whole' subjects.

Therefore, it is 'not a question of being this or that sort of human', Deleuze (1995:11) writes, but of 'unraveling your body's human organization'. The corporeal in-betweenness of bisexual bodies in my study thus heralds the potential to contest moral and social norms through refusing to be categorically tethered to the dominant narrative of sexual difference.

Feminist Lessons

Feminist engagement with Deleuze, which has sought the benefit of alternative ways of interrogating sexual difference, offers valuable insights for the bisexual epistemology I envisage. As Rosi Braidotti (1994a:162-163) points out, the Deleuzian body is not of the natural biological order (in other words, an organic human body) but is a highly nuanced and complex interplay of social and symbolic forces that enables the feminist subject to be reconsidered as a 'multiple, complex process'. Braidotti (1994a) thus argues we need to rethink sexual difference and discard the unified subject in favour of a pluralistic vision of sexed relations – one that is released from a them/us dichotomy while retaining specificities of embodiment. Conceptualising difference beyond 'metaphysical oppositions' and hegemonic constructions of self/other requires seeing how the body is different *in and of itself* (Grosz 1994:164). Preoccupation with monolithic and abstracted constructions – 'woman' as subordinately 'other' to 'man' – have thus given way in a particular strand of feminist thought to more fluid terms such as 'volatile bodies' (Grosz 1994), 'nomadic subjects' (Braidotti 1994a, 1994b) and 'outside belongings' (Probyn 1996). Such conceptualisations variously emphasise corporeality, spatiality, relationality and movement of bodies, wherein the 'global concept of Woman' is surrendered for particular instantiations of 'woman' or femininity (Currier 2003:335). Notably, as Currier maintains, this does not devalue feminist practice by erasing the category 'woman' as a site of inquiry, but rather brings to the fore new subjects of study.

It is this problem with the logic of 'identity' that has steered feminist thinking in an innovative Deleuzian direction and bespeaks the urge to more ably consider difference and diversity in lived realities that cuts across

geographies of ethnicity, location, economy, and age etc. Hence, I argue that bisexual research is not diminished by moving beyond 'bisexual identity', which differentiates bisexual 'objects' of research as 'other' to gay, lesbian, and heterosexual identities. Rather, this theoretical initiative makes visible specificities and multiplicities of (bi)sexual selves that travel across, between, and beyond categorical boundaries. The Deleuzian sociology I advocate in this thesis is, therefore, aligned to this critical feminist interrogation of sexual difference. But the innovative move that my study deploys is to open thinking to the possibility of proliferating sex/genders, and moreover, what these actively *create* in terms of ethical, sexual and social bodies. Accordingly, the impossibility of coherence should be an animating feature of not only knowledge creation (Wiegman 2001), but also social transformation.

The deployment of Deleuzian ideas has thus contributed to reprising a history of feminism hitherto defined according to the privileged position of 'molar' feminisms⁷. The trajectory of feminism through successive waves (liberalism, radical sex difference, and poststructuralism) is for Colebrook (2000b:10), a process of feminism *finding itself*, 'creating new terrains, different lines of thought and extraneous wanderings'. In the same manner that contemporary feminism interrogates and breaks open orthodox limits of 'woman' set by the oppressor/oppressed paradigm, so too, this thesis articulates a bisexual epistemology beyond structural delineations that foreclose subjectivities of bisexuality. Such feminist lessons reverberate in bisexual discourses where attempts to reconcile diversity with unified claims to legitimacy sit in tension. Bisexual scholarship and identity politics can, therefore, also be articulated as one of finding itself – navigating binary pathways activated within and through molar formations of gay liberation, feminism, and LGBTIQ politics and culture to inhabiting and mapping interstitial spaces. The Deleuzian instantiation accordingly

⁷ Each wave of feminism is signified in linear terms: denominated as first, second and third, which discursively cohere as social and political formations defined according to particular characteristics. In Deleuzian language, these constitute molar feminisms.

detaches (deterritorialises) bisexuality from molarising identity politics through creating lines of flight from the dualist binds that entrap the subject.

Beyond Dualism

Central to understanding how a Deleuzian episteme liberates thinking from dualism is the concept of *immanence*. Deleuze and Guattari (1987) refer to immanent planes or zones as unstructured processes, flows, fluxes, states, and content of life, such that entities (human and non-human) are always 'within' life. These existential planes rebel against the authority of transcendent abstract universals, which attempt to impose a structure. For instance, diverse expressions of bisexuality contest 'bisexuality' as a monolithic or static concept. Transcendent universals are thus not dichotomously opposed to the immanent, but are *processes* of inscription that emerge from within immanent planes of ontological existence. In other words, the master categories of sexuality (gay, lesbian, bisexual, heterosexual) are processes of signification, which although attempting to arrest or delimit multiplicities of corporeality, are open to continual revision. For Deleuze, there are only 'processes at work in concrete multiplicities' (Deleuze 1995:145). As such, planes of immanence are constituted by modes of operation and action in which investigation focuses upon the 'way they proceed and their power to continue', rather than judging or interpreting a final outcome or resting place (Deleuze 1995:146). Hence, a Deleuzian frame of understanding bisexuality does not seek to understand the sexual self as having sedimented into an 'identity'. Linear bisexual identity models typify thinking that seeks an endpoint, and thereby delimit or structure bisexuality in terms of 'fixed' subjects (for example, Kinsey, Pomeroy & Martin 1948; Klein, Sepekoff & Wolf 1985, and Weinberg, Williams & Pryor 1994). Rather, Deleuzian thought dismantles the unified bisexual subject by reconfiguring sexuality as a process of ongoing movement that continually rewrites the self at each juncture. This method, therefore, permits a more complex exploration of how transformations of self and sociality are made possible – within, through, and beyond the signifying regimes of transcendent binaries.

Importantly, Deleuze repeatedly counters any suggestion that his ideas reinstate a new or another form of dualism. For Deleuze, dualisms are the enemy – we cannot avoid encounters with dualisms, and indeed we must confront them in order to effect transformation – 'the furniture we are forever rearranging' (Deleuze & Guattari 1987:20-1). Accordingly, as Colebrook (2002:xxiv) states, thought is not outside and representative of the world but is within the flux of life itself – thinking does not represent, but rather transforms and acts upon the world. In summary, my project, therefore, examines bisexuality as corporeal and material encounters within mobile assemblages, which foregrounds the *composition* of social entities and their modes of aggregation and disaggregation. Rethinking the concept of bisexuality through Deleuzian ideas of multiplicities, assemblages and affects thus enables an inventiveness of the sociological imagination, which as Gane (2009) contends, is necessary in order to meet the empirical and analytical challenges posed to us today. Having explored the benefit of these Deleuzian concepts, the rest of the chapter now examines the rhizomatic method by which the in-between spaces of sex/gender and bisexuality are mapped in my study.

Rhizomatic Cartographies

In order to move beyond the hegemony of dualistic epistemes, Deleuze (1995:86) argues to position analysis in the middle and break open arrangements where modes of operation are at work. This analytical intervention is significant for my study as it enables an augmented understanding beyond the confines of 'bisexual identity'. It does this by refocusing the sociological lens of inquiry on open-ended movement, affects and generative capacities of bisexual bodies and their desiring-relations. Such reorientation of thinking about bisexuality is, in Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) terms, a cartographic method that maps linguistic, epistemic and ontological plateaus of engagement via rhizomatic and nomadic thinking. The fluidity of rhizomatic thought contrasts with the inflexibility of arborescent (tree-like, rooted in the ground) epistemes that Enlightenment reason spawned. According to Deleuze and Guattari (1987:23), arborescent systems impose an hierarchical structure – a tripartite division of reality,

representation and subjectivity. For example: the female-sexed biological body (matter/object), woman (signifier/image), and wife (signified subject/socio-cultural inscription). Conversely, Deleuze and Guattari (1987:7) radically propose that the landscape in which bodies move and ideas are processed is rhizomatic, explaining that:

A rhizome ceaselessly establishes connections between semiotic chains, organizations of power, and circumstances relative to the arts, science and social struggles. A semiotic chain is like a tuber, agglomerating very diverse acts, not only linguistic, but also perceptive, mimetic, gestural and cognitive ...

In a rhizomatic schema the signifier 'woman' is rendered in a multiplicity of relations that assemble, disassemble and reassemble. For example: wedding + mother + wife + divorce + lesbian + lover + dominatrix + whip + triad + so on. Signification does not solidify at one point but transmutes in tandem with different relations and sites of power and desire. The rhizomatic landscape engenders 'nomadism' – a 'smoothness' of space that contests and subverts closed and sedentary systems of knowledge. Braidotti's sophisticated development of nomadic politics and theory (which reads Irigaray's feminism in conjunction with Deleuzian ideas) cogently signals exciting possibilities for the sociology of bisexuality I envision. Committed to reconciling 'partiality and discontinuity with the construction of new forms of interrelatedness and collective political projects', Braidotti (1994b:5) utilises nomadism as a form of critical consciousness that resists ossification into sedentary codes of thought and behaviour. Her nomadic project reveals a proliferating expanse of mobile subjectivities and border-crossings in which social, biological, technological and symbolic fields overlap. Produced in these polymorphous spaces are 'teratologies' of borderline figures (Braidotti 2000), such as bisexuality, transgender, transsexual and intersex. Here, micro-geographies of power relationships subvert dominant paradigms, such as psychoanalysis, which privilege the phallus as an ordering symbol of sexual relations (Braidotti 2005). Braidotti (2005/2006) thus calls for a shift from a *metaphysics* of sexual difference to

an *ethics* of sexual difference, which focuses on the immanence of conceptual creation rather than master discourses. My appropriation of Deleuzian thinking to the study of bisexuality empirically demonstrates the veracity of nomadic philosophy. In particular, this idea resonates in Chapters 7 and 8 of this thesis, as the participants of my research eschew universalising morality in favour of a generative ethics of corporeality.

The analytical utility of the rhizome lies in the capacity to map open-ended networks of varying elements that connect, detach, extend and proliferate. The rhizome, therefore, is akin to the production or construction of a map comprising multiple entryways and exits; it is decentred and non-hierarchical – a plateau, which is 'always in the middle, not at the beginning or the end' (Deleuze & Guattari 1987:6-7, 21). This is not to refute the existence of dominant systems of thought – such as the binaries of sex and sexuality that operate to corral the plenitude of human experience into male/female, man/woman, masculine/feminine, heterosexual/homosexual – or that such hegemonies wield social dynamics of power and authority. Rather, re-imagining these spaces as nomadic and rhizomatic confers the ability to conceptualise such binaries as actively produced and thus open to possibilities of being dismantled – in Deleuzian terms, to be *detrterritorialised* by establishing *lines of flight*. Such detrterritorialisation may occur through micro-stages – discerning small escape routes that in one action is not sufficient to overthrow the sovereignty of binaries, but plants a seed that holds the possibility of germination. Indeed, the growth of bisexual research, which although existing in the shadows of gay and lesbian studies has, over a period of three decades, carved a space of scholarship and visibility – one that is slowly working towards opening up dualist sex/gender/sexuality models to question. As 'a way of creating a pluralism' (Colebrook 2002:xxviii), a rhizomatic cartography thus maps possible trajectories between and outside dualisms. The consequence of rhizomatic thinking for reorienting how bisexuality is empirically and theoretically examined is that it brings into view the transformative possibilities of self. In other words, the body is always in 'the middle' of

sets of relations that activate change. In Deleuzian language, such ongoing relational change is referred to as 'becomings'.

Becomings, Becoming-Woman

Deleuzian *becomings* provide a central plateau of thought from which to explore bisexuality in ways that bring to light the complex interplays with sex/gender. Becomings are immanent processes of bodily engagement that expose the 'molecular' dimensions of molar entities – the micro-heterogeneities that move differently to the stratum. These comprise a diverse array of singularities that come together in fluid assemblages – social spaces of production that destabilise the unilinear and binary logic of traditional canons of thinking. To recalibrate bisexual theory through becomings rejects an hierarchical and authoritative system of organisation, and hence, in Deleuze-Guattarian terminology delivers a 'war-machine' against conceptual fossilisation. A war-machine, which is everywhere mobilised in the Deleuzian enterprise, is not military, but occupies cartographies of connections and extensions (Deleuze 1995:33) – attacking the foundationalist assumptions that bear down and attempt to organise social process and production into tidy categories. The war-machine is a space of nomadic thought, which dismantles binary regimes that overcode and police us as 'wholes' (Deleuze & Parnet 2006:106).

It is here that Deleuzian philosophy – which reconceptualises sexual difference by dissolving the sex binary in favour of dispersed and transitive sexes – reveals its radical potential for reframing how (bi)sexuality is understood. Whereas arborescent thought binds sexuality to reproduction, the rhizome liberates it (Deleuze & Guattari 1987:18). Of salience, a creative space is made available to consider bisexuality beyond conventional constructions grounded upon genitality of partner. This offers an analytical position that more ably accommodates consideration of those who are sex/gender-diverse. The Deleuzian project seemingly installs a post-gender vision – a polysexual, multi-sexual reprisal that de-essentialises the body, sexuality and sexed identities (Braidotti 2003, 2011). The analytical problematic of the two-sexed system is replaced by 'a thousand

tiny sexes' that emerge in ever-changing configurations of assemblages, hence, 'there are as many sexes as there are terms in symbiosis' (Deleuze & Guattari 1987:213, 242). Deleuze and Guattari consider that the social categorisation of man/woman, as well as psychoanalytic narratives of psychical bisexual organisation (masculine/feminine), ignores how:

Sexuality brings into play too great a diversity of conjugated becomings; these are like *n* sexes ... Sexuality is the production of a thousand sexes, which are so many uncontrollable becomings. *Sexuality proceeds by the way of the becoming-woman of the man and the becoming-animal of the human* ... (Deleuze & Guattari 1987:278-9).

Deleuze and Guattari's radical treatise of immanence, which subverts the privileged place held by rational man in Enlightenment philosophy, posits *becoming-woman* as the means to contest the dominion of 'man' as molar standard (Deleuze & Guattari 1987:291-2). To become 'something other' thus requires becoming-woman to begin the process of deterritorialising 'molar man' from the stratum. Consequently, men as much as women need to find the lines of flight, the ruptures in the majority that disturb hierarchical structures of subjectification. Critical feminist interrogation of this concept elucidates its alternative ways of thinking about sex/gendered subjectivity. For instance, Braidotti (1991:109) argues that given woman's position – feminine as structural 'other' – women are crucial, although by no means the only minority concerned here, to subverting the dialectic of identity/otherness that orders classical philosophy. Becoming-woman for Braidotti, envisions positive figurations of desire that destroy phallogocentric representations of 'woman' (Braidotti 1991, 1994a, 2002). Consequently, the concept of becoming-woman allows analysis to move beyond structural limitations of gender identity as subjects of the sovereign phallus. Hence, woman must become-woman in order to destabilise molar feminine identities, just as man must become-woman to de- and re-structure their privileged position and genital domination (Grosz 1994).

Becoming-woman, therefore, makes available a *range* of gender subject positions beyond 'hegemonic masculinity' and 'emphasised femininity' (Connell 1987:183-188) that perpetuate the heterosexual gender order and woman's subordinate position. Deleuzian philosophy thus allows masculinity and femininity to be read as 'clusters of specific affects and powers of bodies', which are organised around an exclusive binary form (male/female) through various complex assemblages (Gatens 2000:69). This renders visible the micro-effects of the gender order and, in particular, how different articulations of masculinity and femininity may challenge monolithic assumptions about structural relations between men and women. Put another way, a Deleuzian analysis locates vulnerable points and weaknesses in social relations of power that fracture structural coherence, and makes possible the creation of other subjectivities. As the growing body of global research into male bisexuality suggests, masculinities are differently embodied according to cultural and sexual norms (for example, Carrier 1985; Dowsett, Ventuneac & Carballo-Diequez 2008; Muñoz-Laboy & Dodge 2001; Petkovic 1999; Rust 2000b; Stokes et al. 1996; Tielman, Carballo & Hendriks 1991). Rather than position masculinity as normative or non-normative (what masculinity *is*), or femininity as simply subordinate to hegemonic masculinity – a Deleuzian approach to empirical studies of bisexuality scrutinises the generative relations between bodily encounters that contest dominant patterns of coherence. This brings into view the 'multi-centred enfleshed subject', which demands a 'radical materialism' of the ilk that Deleuze can provide: 'the production of new desiring subjects [that] require massive reorganizations and changes in the material fabric of society' (Braidotti 2003:60-61).

Consequently, it is possible to challenge suggestions that Deleuze and Guattari's multi-sexed structure evinces a flat symmetry between the sexes 'in attributing the same psychic, conceptual, and deconstructive itineraries to both and to all sexes' (Braidotti 2011:40). Rather, as Braidotti (2011) argues, difference can be reasserted as nomadic difference, which is a constant becoming produced through asymmetry. My reading of Deleuze alongside Braidotti and Grosz, addresses a 'central anxiety' for feminism concerning

'the lack of the subject' (Colebrook 2000b:10) – that becoming-woman insinuates a 'journey of diminishment' (Fleiger 2000:39) and structural disappearance of 'woman' (Jardine 1984). Instead, within the schema I adopt, becoming-woman is a micro-revolutionary process. And herein lies its value to my bisexual inquiry. Becoming-woman does not denote literal transformation into 'being' a woman. Rather, it is an ethico-political process, which necessarily engages with, and exposes, broader social structures of power in order to locate weaknesses that might generate sex/gender pluralism and proliferating sexualities beyond molar categories. As Grosz comments (when interviewed about her turn away from Lacan to Deleuze), rather than de-naturing sexual difference, this epistemological shift is interested in 'renaturalizing' and 'redynamizing a certain kind of nature' that produces 'sexually differentiated ontologies' (Ausch, Doane & Perez 2005: para. 31). It is the creation of differentiated ontologies that my study of bisexuality brings to the foreground.

Micro-Political Becomings

These foregoing ideas, therefore, challenge the univocity of subjects upon which identity politics is predicated. The question 'who is this we that is not me?' (Deleuze & Guattari 1987:159) accordingly weighs heavily here, particularly for bisexual politics, and is the impetus to forge micro-political fields of becomings: becoming-molecular, becoming-minoritarian. Deleuze and Guattari acknowledge that 'minorities' can be objectively definable states in terms of language, ethnicity or sex residing in their own socio-cultural enclaves or 'ghetto territorialities'. But rather than positioning minorities as molar forms in binary opposition to majorities, minorities can be efficaciously thought of as 'crystals of becoming whose value is to trigger uncontrollable movements and deterritorializations of the mean or majority' (Deleuze & Guattari 1987:106). Becoming-minoritarian is thus an *affect* of minority groups in their encounters not only with the majority but within their own cultural domains or territorialities – movements propelled by desiring forces to dismantle the transcendent. Moira Gatens' (2000:69) contention that we need to rethink the 'order-words' of molar feminisms –

such as aggressor/victim⁸, which operate to foreclose women in terms of 'violability' – is equally salient for reorienting how bisexuality is discursively positioned beyond dominant paradigms of oppressor/oppressed. Gatens (2000:65) argues that violence towards women should be read through an 'immanent ethological appraisal' of bodily formations – that is, in terms of affects and relations to other bodies. While a feminist molar politics is necessary, it is not *sufficient* Gatens maintains; we must also engage with the micro-political possibilities created on a plane of immanence.

The Deleuzian-informed idea of micro-political becomings allows analysis to map metamorphoses of subjects who do not 'fit' within gay and lesbian molar politics. While gay liberation has been necessary to carve spaces of positive visibility, a micro-politics of other sex/gender/sexual becomings, such as bisexuality, transgender and intersex, proceeds by way of those who escape capture by dominant inscriptions of identity categories. A majoritarian identity or group is defined by a finite perceived unit (such as national character, birth or spirit) as the basis or reason for grouping together (Colebrook 2004:61). The majority is thereby a 'constant and homogenous system' (Deleuze & Guattari 1987:105-6) – a transcendent signifier that 'contains' the signified through constancy of expression, content or image. Hence, for Deleuze and Guattari (1987:106) 'the problem is never to acquire the majority, even in order to install a new constant'. To become other than a molar unity is not to replace it with a new normative standard – in other words, to replace one form of fascism with another rule-bound identity that commands conformity. Revolution comes not from ghettoising, which inheres the danger of micro-fascisms solidifying⁹ (Deleuze & Guattari 1987:228) – but from connecting and assembling a number of minority elements – to continuously invent, and create the

⁸ Radical feminists, such as Andrea Dworkin and Catherine MacKinnon have been key figures in positioning women within the aggressor/victim paradigm of rape, violence and pornography (see for example, Dworkin & MacKinnon 1988).

⁹ Clear examples are lesbian-feminist exclusion of transgender women (for example, Raymond 1979) and bisexual exclusion from the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras (Pallotta-Chiarolli 2010).

unforeseen. Becoming-minoritarian comprises those whose identity is *constantly* transformed by the events of its grouping or assembling.

As strikingly apparent in my participants' stories, which will be discussed in later chapters, becoming-minoritarian produces polyvocalities of self. Such polyvocality finds expression in Deleuzian thought through the mobility of transversal relations, cross-dressing, S&M, inventing sexes, the progressing of sexual becoming, and hence, is the yielding of all otherness contained within 'homosexuality'. Here, Deleuze (2004) eschews the nominalism of homosexuality – that is, the foreclosure of the homosexual subject. Rather, homosexual production of desire opens itself up to the loss of identity through non-exclusive connections of polyvocal desire, 'with as many sexes as there are assemblages' (Deleuze 2004:285-7). Becomings of 'homosexuality' are thus pregnant with micro-political potentiality in exposing 'a whole array of power relations to which society submits sexuality', whereas homosexuality as *nominalism* prescribes and commands 'you will be on the margin' (Deleuze 2004:286).

The margin is thus a borderline location in which struggles between homogeneity (the Subject) and heterogeneity (multiplicities of subjectivity) are negotiated. Hemmings' (2002) examination of the tension between lesbian and bisexual women's politics in Northampton, Massachusetts, illustrates this tension between molar identity and becoming-minoritarian. Here, debate concerning the eligibility of bisexual women to participate in lesbian community events (such as the annual Pride March) opened up questions of who is being named by the terms 'bisexual' and 'lesbian'. While ardent lesbians maintained fervent adherence to same-sex exclusivity, wide-ranging arguments challenged any claims to a unified 'lesbian' subject. When a range of experiences, identities, and histories, which include bisexuality, cannot be accounted for by separating 'lesbian' from 'sex with men', the incontrovertibility of lesbian *difference from* bisexual women thereby falters (Hemmings 2002:80). A molar lesbian politics is hereby interrupted by the proliferation of sexual possibilities that insistently gnaws away at the limits of an 'authentic' lesbian identity. Hemmings' account

notes lesbians who have been previously married, engage in complex gender play, are aroused by gay male porn, or who come to identify as trans men. The Northampton Pride March, a premier gay and lesbian event accordingly *becomes* a shifting assemblage of bodies – social, political, cultural, linguistic, corporeal, sexual, gendered – that collide, connect, and disconnect to produce something entirely different than assumed by its nomenclature.

Desiring Production: Body without Organs

The cogency of Hemmings' observations underline that becoming is a productive process of desire that revokes the authority of master signifiers. In order to understand the significance of this for my study of bisexuality, I now turn to Deleuze and Guattari's concept of the Body without Organs. Importantly, for Deleuze, the domain of desire is not an object (a thing that is desired), but is a constructivism; it constructs an assemblage, such that desire operates as a relation between elements in an aggregate (Deleuze & Parnet 1996). Hence, desire is reconfigured as productive – an activating force that produces what Deleuze and Guattari (1983, 1987) refer to as the Body without Organs (BwO). Simply put, the BwO is an ongoing process of becoming that divests the body of transcendent planes, values and regimes of signification, which name, unify and order subjects. In Braidotti's (1991:110) words, the BwO is the 'death of the subject'. Importantly, such de-subjectification (of molarities such as class, sex, sexuality, ethnicity etc.) does not evacuate the body of substance. Rather, according to Deleuzian thought, it is a politically productive action that strips the inscribed body of the *organisation* of its organs. The BwO is a body without image (Deleuze & Guattari 1983:8) – a body without representation by master signifiers. Our bodies are stolen from us in every declaration that unifies the subject. The BwO, therefore, seeks to reclaim what has been stolen:

The question is not, or not only, that of the organism, history, and subject of enunciation that oppose masculine to feminine in the great dualism machines. The question is fundamentally that of the body –

the body they steal from us in order to fabricate opposable organisms (Deleuze & Guattari 1987:276).

This idea is taken up in greater detail in Chapter 8, where BwOs provide a radical re-reading of the sex/gender/sexuality matrix in sub-cultural activities. Here, I demonstrate how practices, such as BDSM, look beyond the authority of sexual regimes, which demarcate deviant practices as 'otherness' in contradistinction to social and moral norms. Hence, I argue that BDSM bodies creatively produce BwOs on immanent planes of desire. Assemblages of becomings strip back the organised, prescribed and proscribed body to one that activates new territories of corporeal production through constructing desiring connections. Whip, dog collar, wrist cuffs, leather bindings, metal studs, chains, variously transmute into becoming-submissive, becoming-dominatrix, becoming-dog, becoming-horse, becoming-animal, becoming-vampire. These are not mimetic, literal transformations but are proximities – a shared element from the animal, not imitation or playing the animal (Deleuze & Guattari 1987:279). Sexuality proceeds via the becoming-animal of the human, divesting the 'human' of its master status. The nature/culture binary dissolves as corporeality synthesises the organic and non-organic: strap-ons, dildoes, bindings, corsets, hormones, and masks, all operate to confuse the molar constructs of man and woman, top and bottom, passive and active, masculine and feminine. Consequently, the exchange of power is divested of its social inscription within the gender order, which as Deleuze argues, is 'de-sexualizing' via privileging the sign of the masochistic contract as a mode of resistance (Deleuze 1995:142, 1991:12).

Assemblages are thus fields of desiring-production that create, activate, connect and flow across molecularities and proximities of sex and gender. Understood in such productive terms, Deleuze and Guattari wrench desire from repressive and negative constructions consigned by the authority of the Oedipal law wielded by the priests of signification – psychoanalysts; their writings are unashamedly anti-Oedipal (Deleuze & Guattari 1983, 1987). The Oedipal version of desire is grounded in lack: I (subject) desire a 'thing'

(object) which I do not have (lack). Classic psychoanalysis reduces such lack to a single object – mother, father, phallus (Deleuze & Parnet 1996): a 'phallogocentric' system in Luce Irigaray's (1985) terms. Here, the split subject is represented as a conflicted Oedipal topography (ego, id, superego) that requires resolution in order to produce the 'whole' subject. For Deleuze, this incapacitates desire by introducing lack and rendering it subservient to the law of the phallus (Deleuze & Parnet 2006:71). The legacy of Freudian discourse and its metamorphosis into Lacanian analysis (both clinical and cultural) has cemented an Oedipalised view of sexuality that pivots on repairing a hitherto fractured self (excavating the unseen, unvoiced, unheard realms of desire). Deleuze and Guattari thus critically view psychoanalysis as an organising system of social and psychic realms that sediments dualist notions of man/woman, masculinity/femininity, heterosexual/homosexual around the sovereign signifier of the phallus (castration/lack defines woman). This reiterates the point made earlier that Deleuzian philosophy is an ally of feminism, not its nemesis.

Most importantly for this study, subverting a socio-sexual regime predicated by genitalia holds considerable promise for better understanding contemporary articulations of (bi)sexual and sex/gender fluidity. Movement towards the BwO entails molecular (micro) actions to deterritorialise or detach the body from dominant systems that hierarchise and unify the subject. Dismantling the organism does not entail obliteration but opening the body to connections within the stratum. This signals the revolutionary potential of becoming: for to challenge and transform the majority necessitates moving within and passing through it. Doing so entails retaining a vestige of the stratum in order to be able to respond to and subvert dominant representations of reality:

It is through a meticulous relation with the strata that one succeeds in freeing lines of flight, causing conjugated flows to pass and escape and bringing forth continuing intensities for a BwO (Deleuze & Guattari 1987:161).

As will be fully elaborated in Chapter 5, this is instructive for a sociology of bisexuality, because the bisexual body is one that eludes rigid codification, signification and subjectification – it resides in liminal corporeal spaces as it navigates within, between and beyond dominions of gay and straight realms of experience. For example, Mariam Fraser (1997b) proposes that bisexuality stands apart from gay, lesbian and queer identities in refusing to cohere in material corporeality under a specific signification. In claiming that the bisexual body eludes the Foucauldian imprint of historicisation, Fraser turns to Deleuze and Guattari's concept of the BwO to demonstrate how bisexuality escapes regimes that would cohere it as a recognisable and identifiable 'organism'. In order to be recognised as an 'identity' then, Fraser argues that bisexuality is erased and supplanted as 'inauthentic' lesbianism. Analysing textual representations of Simone de Beauvoir's bisexuality, Fraser (1997b:39) thus asks: 'what of a sexuality that does not 'belong' to a self? Might bisexuality be an identity without selfhood?' Fraser examines how desire is able to produce assemblages outside both the self and normalising techniques, reconfiguring de Beauvoir's bisexuality as a BwO – flows of forces that 'will be able to do things and make things happen', rather than discursively constitute a bisexual self.

Reprised as actively engaged and reflexive (Fox 2002), BwOs are processes of activation whereby bodies operate in composite relations of desire that include power as one element alongside others. This is made clear by Deleuze in his correspondence to Foucault, writing that:

Of course, an assemblage of desire will include power arrangements (for example, feudal powers), but these must be located among the different components of the assemblage... Power would therefore be a component of assemblages and yet these assemblages would also include points of deterritorialization. In short, power arrangements would not assemble or constitute, but rather assemblages of desire would disseminate power formations according to their dimensions (Deleuze 2007:125).

Instead of simply *exposing* power arrangements, Deleuze offers a productive move to articulate power as one element of relational arrangements. Re-conceptualising operations of power as such avoids the tendency to reify power as a superordinate entity that *acts upon* subjects in a linear top-down manner. This notion takes on a particular salience in Chapters 6 and 7, where the concepts of teratologies and contagion are re-imagined as productive borderline spaces of desire, rather than constructed through dominant narratives of the monstrous, anomalous, abnormal, diseased or deviant body. In this sense, Deleuze is variously argued to extend upon and radicalise Foucault (Bogard 1998; Braidotti 2005/2006; Conley 2009; Currier 2003; Lash 1984; Potts 2004; Probyn 1996; Shildrick 2009).

Somewhat in sympathy with Eve Sedgwick (2008), the Deleuzian approach I am advocating here moves beyond the project of seeking causal explanation of reductive sexual categories. Sedgwick favours exploring their irresolvable instability and the implications and consequences of their incoherences and contradictions. Offering a way around the 'topos of depth and hiddenness' and 'drama of exposure' that has dominated critical inquiry in the latter part of the twentieth century, Sedgwick (2003:8) signals a Deleuzian solution, invoking the planar notion of 'beside', which dispenses with dualism and resists a dependence on origin and teleology. Deleuze and Guattari accordingly provide a way of navigating the binds of dualist models of sexuality through 'becomings', which are proximal (alongside) relations rather than hierarchical. As will be explored in the final chapter of this thesis, the Deleuzian project is anti-genealogical in dispensing with recourse to the procreative impulse that defines normative sexual and gendered couplings. Such a deconstructive undertaking is not to suggest a utopic rendering of the heterosexual/homosexual binary as benign. Conversely, as is illuminated through the narrative voices of my participants, a Deleuzian field animates bodies in corporeal and non-corporeal configurations that are provisionally connective, undoing universalist laws of cause and effect wielded by *a priori* thinking, and disarming the sovereignty of sex/gender, nature/culture, matter/representation, and human/non-human binaries.

A Minor Writing Method

In order to move beyond such dualisms, I deploy Deleuze and Guattari's concept of minor writing to demonstrate *how* binary thinking can be undone or dismantled. Hence, minor writing is not simply a theoretical device; it is also a *method* of inquiry. As I have demonstrated in this chapter, rhizomatic cartographies speak to the middle without reductive recourse to polar limits. That bisexuality presents a conceptual challenge in its myriad configurations, directs us to rethink the body in terms of productive connections, and hence, as envisioned by William Bogard (1998:59) 'encourage us to think that once relieved of its reverence for the Subject (capital S, the transcendental Subject), sociology might rediscover the forces that generate subjects (small s, 'minor' subjects). To reprise bisexuality in terms of rhizome, nomad, assemblage and multiplicity is in Deleuze and Guattari's terminology a *minor* writing method. The purpose of such a method intervenes in the *major* (dominant) language by a rhizomatic process of stammering, making us 'strangers' in our own language (Deleuze & Parnet 2006:42-3). Deleuze seeks to liberate Western philosophy's prevailing concern with the problem of conceptualising being as *IS* (a female *IS* chromosomally XX) by locating the self within a geography of relations that substitutes *AND* for *IS*. The conjunction *AND* creates assemblages; multiplicities that:

undo dualisms from the inside, by tracing the line of flight which passes between the two terms or two sets, the narrow stream which belongs neither to the one nor to the other, but draws both into a non-parallel evolution (Deleuze & Parnet 2006:26).

As noted in Chapter 2, bisexuality suffers from definitional inconsistencies as scholars attempt to define bisexuality according to binary terms: heterosexual/homosexual, man/woman. But rather than constraining bisexuality to definitional terms of *being*, what a person *is* – for example a bisexual woman *is* dual-sex attracted, we can undo the binary logic by discerning a line of in-betweenness that occurs in shifting sets of relations: trans *and* woman *and* hormones *and* surgery *and* lesbian desire *and* dance partner *and* male lover *and* ... Not only does this 'stammering' allow the

multiple richness of a person's desires and behaviours to unfold, but it also draws an interstitial line between dualistic terms (man/woman, heterosexual/homosexual) that creates something different, something ongoing, mobile and unfixed, which moreover, is not reducible to the dominant signifiers that it contests. Deleuze and Guattari's (1987:25) words evoke the bisexual project I am creating here:

Between things does not designate a localizable relation going from one thing to the other and back again, but a perpendicular direction, a transversal movement that sweeps one *and* the other away, a stream without beginning or end that undermines its banks and picks up speed in the middle.

Introducing the conjunction *AND* creates a pause or interruption that intrudes and asks us to question the coherence of bisexual subjectivity and look to what bodies are doing, and what affects or forces result from the connections and proximities between bodies. The body is central in this quest – to locate bisexuality beyond signifying formations of universalising totalities, 'bisexual woman', 'bisexual man' – and seek out the corporeal and material embodiment that exceed the causally defined terms of sexual difference. A minor writing method thus ruptures the signifying chain that coagulates around and upholds dominant signifiers and the authority wielded in their circulation. Through charting the interstices of bisexuality via locating slippages between the majority structures such as gay, lesbian, heterosexual, homosexual, same-sex, opposite-sex – we open up investigation to the micro-heterogeneities that exist in these ontological fissures. This endeavour is not simply a discursive one that plays with language, for as Ronald Bogue (2004:71) explains, language according to Deleuze is a mode of action charged with power relations in which regimes of signs constantly interact with non-discursive forces. Minor writing accordingly confounds the *process* of signification – which forges connections between sign (word), signifier (meaning) and signified (referent, reality). It is a process of locating the escape routes from the dominant

regimes of understanding, which will be explicated in greater detail in the methodology chapter that follows.

Conclusion

This chapter has introduced, and explained the benefit of, key Deleuzian concepts – assemblages, affect, the rhizome, becomings, BwO and minor writing – that are central to my examination of bisexuality. It has explored how these ideas enable a rethinking of bisexuality through mapping the in-between spaces of corporeality and relationality, which, following Deleuze and Guattari, I refer to as rhizomatic cartographies. Because bisexuality is located along borderlines that demarcate hierarchical divisions of sex, gender and sexuality, a rhizomatic approach offers an alternative paradigm to traditional Western philosophical epistemes of unitary identity (object/subject), linearity (cause/effect) and teleology (origin/evolution/endpoint) – that construct the 'great binary aggregates' (male/female, man/woman, heterosexual/homosexual). I have argued that this new way of thinking via Deleuzian ideas, provides a more comprehensive understanding of bisexuality through investigating from the vantage point of the 'middle'. From this innovative perspective, a rhizomatic cartography of bisexuality discerns multiple pathways of connection, disconnection and reconnection across the master categories of sex, gender and sexuality, and wider social structural formations. Like a tuberous rhizome, this analytical manoeuvre has no beginning or endpoint but spreads horizontally and transversally. Via approaching bisexuality from its habitus of the middle, my study explores the in-between spaces of desire and sexuality where sexed, gendered and sexual bodies fracture the imaginary social boundaries constructed to demarcate, delineate and contain subjects therein.

Donald Hall (2003:101-4) bemoans how queer theory avoids accommodating the 'messiness of bodies' and the ways in which 'sexual desire and erotic charges change, wane, and are piqued by variation, newness in response to repetition or sameness'. Historically, such 'messiness' has been pejoratively imputed to bisexuality in its disordering of

neat categories and incitement of anxiety and suspicion. But it is precisely this constituent messiness of bisexuality that renders it a potent tool for reorienting theoretical analysis. Bryan Turner's (2008) call for an ontological reprisal in sociology thus strikes at the heart of the Deleuzian project I have developed here. For humans are not simply sign-receiving but *sign-inventing* beings, with such inventiveness arising from social interaction (Turner 2008:150). Sociological concepts must accordingly be creative in order to reflect the inventiveness of the social. Attention must focus on not simply discursive regimes but, as both Turner (2008) and Shilling (2008) underline, look to the creativity of human encounters between discursive and non-discursive (including inorganic) bodies. As I have argued in this chapter, Deleuzian philosophy establishes the conceptual apparatus for my study, which brings a fresh and much-needed perspective to a sociology of bisexual bodies that takes account of diverse, fluid and contingent material realities.

To that end, the approach advocated in this thesis starts from what Seidman (1997) calls 'difference troubles'. Bisexuality is accordingly not pinned to a 'proper name' of what it is to be bisexual, whereby difference is staked in terms relative to 'otherness' and negation, that is, how 'bisexuals' are different *from* lesbians, gays, and straights. Rather, the concept is expanded to explore multiplicities, potentialities, differences *within* individuals. As Grosz (1994:172-3) contends, Deleuze and Guattari do not disarm the potency of divisions and categories of oppressed groups, but render a greater complexity to understanding the nature and forms of such oppressions. Deleuzian philosophy inquires into the nature of relations between elements in order for there to be desire (Deleuze & Parnet 1996). The question therefore is not *what* is desired, but how desire *works* – what does it produce in the aggregation of elements? Recasting sociological inquiry as such brings a more complexly constituted perspective to the field of bisexual research. This allows the sociological imagination to interrogate assemblages of social, biological, psychic, linguistic and ethico-political fields of engagement, to seek what is produced and created not what is rendered immobile.

The Deleuzian schema I have outlined thus provides a capacious analytical tool to reconceptualise social connections in terms of movement and fluidity, rather than inflexible structures. At the heart of this thesis is the ever-looming question of ontology – if we can reorient how we think about the ontology of sexual/sexed/gendered bodies from what they 'are' to what they 'do', then the fact that a lesbian might sexually desire a man, or a gay man might enter into an intimate relationship with a non-operative trans man, will not throw us into empirical and epistemic confusion. The particular strength and cogency of Deleuzian thinking for my thesis lies in what Grosz (1994) and Braidotti (1994a) argue is the imperative to move beyond conceptual dualism. To disturb and unsettle the binary requires finding a language and method that accommodates this endeavour. In Deleuzian thought, it is to institute a minor language – to be a foreigner in one's own language – to interrupt the dominant symbolic. The following chapter thus explicates how a qualitative approach can be situated as a minor method, one that opens up investigation to the productive flows of desiring bodies through foregrounding the conjunction *AND*, which multiplies rather than delimits the body. For Deleuze considered that theory is a practice, a toolbox that must not only function and be useful but multiply itself and erupt into different areas when encountering obstacles (Deleuze 2004; Foucault 1977).

4

A Minor Method

[R]ead against your preconceived notions of academic disciplinarity, research, language, and scholarship to reimagine the practice of knowledge production... Look for multiple, resistant, rhizomatic readings... Read the white spaces, hear the silences, peer into the shadows, look beyond the margins...

Juana Rodriguez (2003:3)

This chapter explicates the research method employed for this thesis, which comprised data collection via 47 in-depth semi-structured interviews of an Australian purposive non-random sample¹, and thematic analysis using NVivo qualitative software. I position the methodological rationale, project design and execution within the Deleuzian sociology developed in the previous chapter. For a Deleuzian apparatus is not simply an explanatory frame, but also delivers a method, one that sustains and encourages what Erica McWilliam (2009:281-2) refers to as 'epistemological agility' – an inventiveness of knowledge production that keeps pace with new and emerging cultural forms and contexts. The method articulated here accommodates the liminal and in-between spaces of sociality and corporeality, which as I have argued, contours the empirical realities of bisexuality as flexible, fluid, and elusive. Moreover, it accordingly redraws sociality as relational productive assemblages of flows, connections and associations².

¹ See Appendix for a summary of participant profiles.

² In seeking new ways of interrogating the social, these Deleuzian concepts are tentatively being broached in sociology – for example: Scott Lash's (2004) 'vitalist' non-linear social forms of flux, flows and intensities of desire; Bruno Latour's (2004, 2005) sociology of mobilities and associations, and Nikolas Rose's (2004) technologies of assemblage in the governmentality of the social. Yet, no empirical sociological studies to date bring Deleuzian approaches to bear on (bi)sexuality and gender.

The efficacy of such an approach is in the creativity of design, execution and analysis that allows multiplicities and complexities of lived embodied experiences to be rendered empirically without resorting to rigid confines of conventional classificatory systems, which erase, misrepresent or colonise (bi)sexual and sex/gender-diverse bodies under master categories. Accordingly, I argue that this is a non-reductive method that releases inquiry from predetermined definitions of bisexuality. Rather, bisexuality is drawn as emergent, mobile and contingent fields of subjectivity as these unfolded through participants' stories.

I therefore incorporate Deleuze and Guattari's concepts of minor writing, the rhizome and nomadism, as explained in Chapter 3, to develop what I term a minor method. A minor method is a methodological intervention that does not *oppose* established qualitative methods; rather, it takes the conventions of social science language and de-familiarises or unlearns the assumptions upon which these are founded; it make us strangers in our own language (Deleuze & Parnet 2006:43). A minor method, therefore, queers the terrain of social scientific straight thinking – it will not *answer* questions but rather *problematise* and create more questions concerning sexed and gendered realities of bisexuality. Accordingly, my project and method articulates social science research as a process of deterritorialising (uprooting) normative methodological practice to generate novel ways of speaking and thinking differently about the nexus of sex, gender and (bi)sexuality, to discover escape routes from established paradigms and forge new pathways of inquiry.

It has been well argued that sexual life is not easily measured or quantified (Dowsett 2007; Rothblum 2000). The multi-dimensions of experiences, attitudes, interpersonal relations, reflections and self-perceptions of sexuality demands more than quantitative statistical analysis can offer. Thus, qualitative method is 'simply a better fit' (Creswell 2007:40) in order to move beyond assumptions that social phenomena have an 'external, stable and verbalizable form' (Lee 1993:104). The merits of qualitative approaches for an exploratory project such as this – principally the ability to

probe, clarify and illuminate the richness and abundance of lived realities and produce situated knowledges – have been comprehensively canvassed in social science methodological literature (see for example Creswell 2007; Denzin & Lincoln 2008a; Silverman & Marvasti 2008). Therefore, I do not intend to replay the quantitative-qualitative debate here. The key issues I seek to reframe as a minor method relate specifically to: firstly, the nature of researching what is variously referred to as vulnerable, sensitive, hidden, marginal and minority populations; secondly, the complexities of sexual lives, identities and relationships that bedevil attempts at categorical neatness in method practice; and thirdly, how these two issues taken together inform creative practices of recruitment, data collection, and analysis, as well as map ethical researcher-researched relationships. Moreover, I demonstrate that the actuality of the research process is not the clinical linear trajectory that text book procedures seem to suggest (sequentially progressing through recruitment, interviewing and analytical phases); rather, it unfolds rhizomatically. Finally, I argue that a minor method produces a nomadic practice that places myself as researcher, neither inside nor outside, but *beside* – a proximal location that renders visible the conceptual taken-for-grantedness of margins, marginality and minority.

Making 'Strange' the Margins

Methodological literature pertaining to non-heterosexual behaviour or identities is limited to a few valuable monographs in which bisexuality is either aggregated as LGBTI, or more generally subsumed within all populations considered marginal or minority. The prevailing idiom of marginality and minority, therefore, requires excavating the underlying assumptions attached to these concepts. LGBTI studies have historically favoured a structuralist approach in locating analyses in terms of differential relations between majority and minority groups³. Positioned against the majority heterosexual viewpoint, such relations circumscribe non-heterosexual behaviour/identity as sexual minorities, which are commonly

³ See Eliason and Schope (2007) for a comprehensive literature review of LGBTI identity models and the structural forces that come into play.

referred to as marginalised populations. The notion of being located on the margins presupposes an abstract boundary or limit, which by definition of transgressing it, distinguishes between dominant societal norms (what is preferred, acceptable, permissible, desirable) and that which is perceived to exceed these norms and boundaries (labelled as abject, deviant, non-normative, other). Positioned as such, the margins construct hierarchical and binary relations of oppressor/oppressed, which betray a tendency to be negatively construed as places of victimhood and taboo – always in the shadow of the dominant order. The language employed to circumscribe marginality – vulnerable, hidden, invisible (Liamputtong 2007; Miller & Glassner 2004; Smith & Pitts 2007) and sensitive (Brannen 1988; Catania 1999; Lee 1993; Liamputtong 2007; McNair, Gleitzman & Hillier 2006; Wiederman & Whitley 2002) – implicitly confers such a negative status. The problem here is a propensity to uncritically install marginality, which diminishes or ignores that such locations might cultivate new socio-cultural resources, possibilities and pedagogies (Hurley 2007).

Given the tendency to negatively construe bisexuality as marginal 'other' in binary terms (Barker, Richards et al. 2012), and the limitations of such thinking already identified, it appears necessary to expand the focus beyond reactions to power to consider the social realities of marginality as dynamic and render visible *social capacity* (Hurley 2007:160-1). Accordingly, in this schema, marginality is refigured as constitutive and activating rather than constructed as an effect of structural social difference (Hurley 2007). Research design, therefore, demands a methodology that not only enables and empowers those being studied (Hash & Cramer 2003; Kirby & McKenna 1989; Lapovsky & Davis 1996; Liamputtong 2007; Meezan & Martin 2003; Silverschanz 2009) but also decolonises sociology from Western universalising attitudes, to recognise and respect diversity (Matsinhe 2007) and contest the monopoly of certain groups over knowledge production (Kirby & McKenna 1989). Accordingly, my research method seeks to locate social capacity as an *affective*, that is, transformative force. A Deleuzian sociology thus strives to de-familiarise the language of the margins. Rather than locating my sample *within* the

margins, a minor method operates to reveal affective potency through resituating bisexuality *in-between* multiple borderlands that, moreover, are not reducible to binary terms (heterosexual/homosexual, man/woman, male/female, urban/rural, human/non-human). Importantly, this is a non-reductive method that discards preset assumptions at the outset of the research design about what bisexuality *is*, but rather, respects difference, diversity, multiplicity and complexity as it emerged in my participants' retelling of their stories.

Hence, I retain 'minority' in writing about and exploring bisexuality, but deploy a minor usage of the lexicon that makes the trope of minority work differently to dominant linguistic meanings. Major language 'limits, organises, controls and regulates linguistic materials in support of a dominant order', whereas minor writing disrupts the equilibrium in its constituent elements, thus exploiting language's discursive potential for diversity and divergence (Bogue 2005:168). Deleuze and Guattari (1987:105) accordingly distinguish between the majority as a 'constant and homogenous system' (e.g. adult-white-European-heterosexual-male) – which assumes a state of power or domination – and a minority as a sub-system or out-system that differs from that of the constant. A minority does not oppose the majority (as in a binary structure), but deterritorialises from *within* the majority by seeking out movements between dualisms. The minor method I employ, therefore, identifies how majority states *become* something other than imposed or foreclosed by dominant thinking.

Moreover, the method is consciously queer because it is underpinned by the assumption of identity as complex and decentred. Where queer and Deleuzian methods meet is at the refusal of unified sexual identities that have grounded the structuralist underpinnings of the modernist project of sociology. As Stephen Valocchi (2005:751) argues, by not accepting sex/gender/sexuality binaries as givens from the outset of method design opens up 'unanticipated manifestations' of both gendering sexuality and sexing gender. The queer field research, within which I position my study, focuses on ever-changing stories (Gamson 2003), and a mobile dynamism

activated through 'constant movement of borders, locations and societal shifts and transitions' (Hammers & Brown 2004:96) that is sympathetic to Deleuzian inquiry. Significantly, the minor method I articulate entails taking a 'bottom-up' approach posed by Deleuze and Guattari's multiplicity of differences that allows investigation of *all* the ways in which bodies are different (Colebrook 2004:43), rather than relying on binary difference. Advocating the value of this Deleuzian viewpoint to sociological method via Gabriel Tarde's micro-sociology⁴, Bruno Latour (2002:124) insists that:

To be a good sociologist one should refuse to go up, to take a larger view, to compile huge vistas. Look down, you sociologists. Be even more blind, even more down to earth, even more myopic.

The task of Deleuzian empiricism is to place dominant representations (coherent concepts or ideas) in question and inquire into how subjects are constituted through engaging with the empirical or pre-conceptual world (Gane 2009:85). The aim here, according to Gane, is to create more meaningful ways that respond to, and locate, the conditions under which the immediacy of lived social reality is assembled and reassembled. This research project is, therefore, phenomenological in one sense, through inquiring into the meanings people give to their lived experiences of a particular concept or phenomenon (Creswell 2007). However, Deleuzian method departs from orthodox phenomenology, which is largely informed by Edmund Husserl. Husserlian phenomenology is ultimately reductive in seeking to distil described experiences of a phenomenon and unify it according to an essential consciousness of the individual 'I'. Husserl's famous axiom, the transcendental reduction, asks us to disengage pre-judgement about the natural state of objects and inquire into the experiences of these objects. In this endeavour alone 'we gain the field of the pure stream of consciousness which, of course, contains nothing of nature but

⁴Deleuze and Guattari (1987:216-8) and Latour find favour with the epistemology of Gabriel Tarde. A key figure in early nineteenth century French sociology, Tarde's theories sit in contradistinction to Durkheim's functionalist view of society through emphasising a molecular approach premised on a principle of connections between all elements in the world – whether social, biological, metaphysical, scientific, or technological (Latour 2002, 2005).

only the experience of nature plus all the other acts of presenting, feeling, desiring, and willing, which are interwoven with it' (Husserl 2006[1910-1911]:75). Such experience, for Husserl, is attained by pure consciousness, 'an essence of the unified phenomenological I' (2006[1910-1911]:1).

Conversely, the Deleuzian method articulated in this thesis emphasises an ontology of multiplicity that dispenses with Western philosophical preoccupation concerning the 'I' or cogito. As Alberto Toscano (2007:202-4) explains, Deleuze wavered between critical hostility to Husserl's phenomenology, and extracting and transforming certain Husserlian ideas for his own conceptual developments. Hence, Deleuze fundamentally differs from Husserl in rejecting the teleological project of determining the structure of consciousness through which a unified 'I' experiences, perceives and engages with the spatio-temporal world. The end result can be described as a Deleuzian phenomenology of production (material fluxes, breaks and assemblages), events, and concepts that pivot on generative and transformative dimensions of affect, desire and becomings of bodies.

At issue here is that empirical data, which according to Deleuzian schema is characterised by difference and singularity, refuses to be subsumed under a 'general law', and as such, does not advance a simple linear progression from experiential data through to representation and then an idea (Gane 2009:85). Reconceptualised as 'nomad science', this 'follows the connections between singularities of matter and traits of expression, and lodges on the level of these connections' (Deleuze & Guattari 1987:369). A minor treatment is thus rhizomatic (Deleuze & Guattari 1987:25; Deleuze & Parnet 2006:26), which enables the complexities and multiple realities of particular social worlds to be revealed. It ultimately seeks to expose the 'molecular' operation of bisexualities – the micro-heterogeneities that move differently to, and thereby dismantle, majority entities or signifiers – whether these are gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender identities, or more broadly, the master categories of sex, gender and sexuality, which ground queer research. A minor method is, therefore, a practice, which through subverting dominant language usage, destabilises major conventions and

norms of qualitative methodology. The writing and research process is accordingly one of *become-minoritarian* through re-visioning a dominated minority as 'an active force of transformation' (Bogue 2005:169).

'Conceptualising' the Research Population

Proceeding from the foregoing methodological rationale, a key task in the research design required creatively articulating the bisexual research population in ways not bound by rigid preconceptions or definitions. As discussed in previous chapters, congruence between the categories 'gay', 'lesbian', 'bisexual' and actual practices and desires is not a fixed and linear correlation. Inconsistencies in sexuality research regarding lesbian, gay and bisexual definitions pose a minefield of potential misunderstandings (Parks, Hughes & Werkmeister-Rozas 2009:71-2). Not only does gender-crossing (transgender, genderqueer etc.) problematise the sex binary (Silverschanz 2009), but the boundary between gay and straight is now very much blurred with a tendency (particularly evident in youth) to reject labelling or employ creative descriptors beyond conventional categories (Barker, Bowes-Catton et al. 2008; Barker, Richards et al. 2012; Dowsett 2007; Hillier et al. 2010; Leonard et al. 2012; Rust 2009a). The issue for bisexuality research is that potential participants may escape the net of empirical scrutiny if categories are constructed inflexibly. The imperative to move beyond scalar measures (such as the Kinsey Scale) that fail to assess multiple sexual identities, non-standard identities or non-identification (Rust 2009a, 2009b), urges re-imagining how bisexual populations are circumscribed in research designs.

These lessons informed the rationale for recruitment. Thus, because 'bisexuality' is a term widely used in sexuality literature and readily comprehended, I retained usage of it despite the inherent dualism insinuated via the prefix 'bi', as more expansive terms (such as fluid sexuality) might have risked miscomprehension by potential participants. To dispel adherence to binary categories, however, the recruitment flyer offered a broad inclusive definition of bisexuality calling for persons of *all gender expressions* including trans and intersex people, who during their lives had sexually related to *more than one gender* on some significant level

(emotional, physical, erotic and/or romantic). Furthermore, I did not restrict participant selection to 'bisexual-identifying' individuals, because (as repeatedly noted) self-descriptors of multi-gendered attractions/behaviour may vary from person to person. Accordingly, the flyer stated:

You don't have to identify as a bisexual person to participate: you may consider yourself as heterosexual, homosexual, gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered, intersex, queer or choose to be labelled differently or not at all.

Disrupting molar sexual identity labels (gay, lesbian, bisexual, straight) in this way, I rendered the dominant language in a minor voice – to open words onto 'unexpected internal intensities (Deleuze & Guattari 1986:22). Doing so, I avoided positioning bisexuality as explicitly constrained by a 'naming' process – that is, by naming individuals as 'bisexual'. Anthony Smith and Marian Pitts (2007:8-9) underline the importance of researchers' choice of words when researching minorities in that 'naming' participants as a group may be the product of an externally applied definition. Naming confers homogeneity onto those being named. This raises the question of: who is doing the naming and whose interests are at stake? Deleuze and Guattari (1987:27) refer to the *extensive* usage of proper names and common nouns that replaces multiplicity with 'dismal unity'; the 'devious despotic' signification that ensures 'unification of an aggregate they subsume'. The 100 responses of interest I received regarding participation in the study – from a diversity of sexes (male, female, intersex, transsexual), genders (men, women, bi-gendered, transgendered, genderqueer, gender-neutral), and sexualities (bisexual, gay, lesbian, queer, pansexual, polysexual, heteroflexible, bisensual, to name a few) – thus spoke to Deleuze's multi-sexual becomings as:

all sorts of possible new relations, micro-logical or micro-psychic, essentially reversible, transversal relations with as many sexes as there are assemblages, without even excluding new relations between men and women: the mobility of particular S&M relations,

the potency of cross-dressing, Fourier's thirty-six thousand forms of love, or the n-sexes (Deleuze 2004:287).

Creative Recruitment

Despite approximate population estimates from national surveys (for example Smith et al. 2003b), sexual minorities often present sampling difficulties in being hard to reach or resistant to being identified (Dowsett 2007; Meezan & Martin 2003). Hence, self-selection was a crucial and ethical component to the research process. The relative invisibility of bisexual behaving/identifying populations and concomitant lack of social support groups specific to bisexuality compared to that of gay men and lesbians in Australia (McLean 2003:89), therefore, necessitated a creative approach (Wiederman 2001). A purposive method, which aimed at reaching a specialised population (Creswell 2007; Neuman 2006), utilised snowball sampling, also referred to as chain referral, network or reputational sampling (Neuman 2006:223). Via this strategy, where I initially approached some members of the sample population and asked they distribute the call for participants on to their own networks, I targeted a range of community and queer sites both online and offline.

I chose the Internet as the principal tool of recruitment because of its efficacy in quickly reaching a diversity of people and organisations throughout Australia. As a mode of social networking across vast geographic expanses, the Internet's ability to collapse physical distances and extend the potential reach of the researcher to a more global scale renders it particularly useful for qualitative research of minority populations (Hash & Cramer 2003; Markham 2004; Mustanski 2001), which are often dispersed, undocumented, or secretive (Rust 2009b). In particular, the Web provides access to socially and geographically isolated LGBTI populations, especially rural and older persons (Hash & Spencer 2009). Accessing those who may otherwise be difficult to contact not only increases the pool of participants but also facilitates a greater likelihood of sample diversity (Mustanski 2001). Exponential Internet growth (Negroponte 1995; Rheingold 2000) has transported social connectivity to new levels of

interactivity. Computer-mediated communication affords opportunities for social interaction between people of similar interests and values via the formation of 'virtual communities' (Wellman & Guilia 1999). Gaining entrée is thereby improved as sexual minorities forge cyber-connections via Web-pages and list-serves for their members to exchange information (Mustanski 2001). In addition, online sampling might produce less sampling bias than traditional methods of non-representative sampling as the demographic of Internet users is rapidly approaching that of the general population with Internet access becoming more widespread (Rust 2009b)⁵.

An initial 'Call for Participants' to two bisexual Web groups and LGBTI community leaders known to me (which included sending hard-copy pamphlets for distribution) launched the chain referral process. Within three weeks I had received more than 100 responses from rural, regional and urban locations in Australia. The flyer reached an incredible diversity of community, queer and media sites both online and offline⁶. This demonstrated the efficacy of 'respondent driven sampling' (Smith & Pitts 2007:25-6), and underlined the Internet's 'unprecedented efficiency' in sampling hard to reach populations (Hash & Spencer 2009:238). The Internet clearly augmented the snowball method through its non-linear rhizomatic global reach. Deleuzian thought arguably crystallises *par exemplar* in this technological milieu, through forging proliferating connections via the human-digital interface⁷. The multi-directional, decentred and non-hierarchical flow of Internet information accordingly redefines chain referral sampling more appropriately as a rhizomatic method. It should be noted however, that distribution was not confined to digital form, but via this rhizomatic snow-ball process, organisations also advertised my study in their newsletters, magazines and radio stations. In part, this addressed a limitation of online recruitment, which excludes those

⁵ Internet penetration in Australia is currently estimated at 89.8% of the population (31 December 2011, <<http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats6.htm#oceania>>, source Nielson)

⁶ These included: AusQueer, BFriend, Community Action Against Homophobia, TransGender Melbourne Project, SA AIDS Council, ButchFemmeTrans, Pleasure Activism Australia, Organisation Intersex International Australia, Prahran Medical Clinic, The Star Observer, The Southern Star, Melbourne Community Voice, Sexpo, Midsummer Carnival, and Joy FM, 3CR, 5UV, 5DN radio stations.

⁷ Social media scholarship has found benefit in employing Deleuzian language of the rhizome (for example, Carroli 1997; Clothier 2005; Ingraham 2004; Seto 2006).

without Internet access or new migrants who may lack comprehensive English literacy skills.

The sample generated was thus not random; hence, results are not generalisable to the broader population. Qualitative research is less concerned about a sample's representativeness than on how cases, events or actions can clarify and augment understanding of social processes (Neuman 2006:219). Hence, generalisability and comparability have been traded for internal validity and contextual understanding (Maxwell 2009:233) and scope sacrificed for detail (Silverman & Marvasti 2008:14). Of the responses received, 47 interviews were conducted, which is considered sufficient for a qualitative research project of this scope and time frame (Creswell 2007). Ranging in age from 19 to 67 (the median age being 35), the cohort comprised 15 men and 15 women (who have never questioned their designated sex at birth and subsequent sense of gender), and 17 sex/gender-diverse persons (for whom conventional notions of the sex/gender binary have in some respect been disrupted either through disavowal, transition, gender-play or biological anomaly). Sex/gender-diverse persons included: transgender, transsexual, trans man, trans woman, cross-dresser, genderqueer, bi-gendered, gender-blending, and intersex (see Glossary for definitions). Read through Deleuzian thought, sex/gender-diverse is accordingly an open 'concept' not moored to any pre-ordained notion but constantly in flux, open to change, transformation, and metamorphosis. Similarly, the nomenclature of men and women is not intended to 'represent' a molar unity but is likewise characterised by shifting and multiple expressions of gender. The three categories of gender are thereby not distilled into univocal states but comprise heterogeneities or 'molecular' dimensions, which are 'reducible neither to One nor the multiple' (Deleuze & Guattari 1987:21). The majority of this research cohort was Anglo-Australian; some were born in the U.K. and Europe, and a small minority were of Asian background. This was a well-educated sample, most of whom had some level of tertiary education or vocational qualifications. The majority held professional or administrative occupations in a range of fields including health, education, human services, media, and law, while

only a few worked in trade-related or service industries. As the focus of this study primarily explores the nexus of sexuality and sex/gender, considerations of other structuring elements of the social (such as cultural and linguistic diversity, ethnicity, socio-demographic status, and religion) were not within the scope of purposive recruitment strategies employed here⁸.

Mapping Ethical Spaces

Researching bisexuality brings with it specific ethical issues beyond the principles that guide studies of human subjects – protection from harm, avoidance of exploitation, ensuring privacy and confidentiality, and conducting research with integrity. This is because of the vulnerable, sensitive and often hidden or potentially stigmatising nature of sexual minority behaviour or identity. Given the paucity of literature here, two invaluable resources – *Handbook of Research with Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Populations* (Meezan & Martin 2009), and *Researching the Margins* (Pitts & Smith 2007) – informed an appropriate ethical practice for my study⁹. *The Human Research Ethics Handbook* (NHMRC 2008), which notably confines its language of sexual minorities to gay men and lesbians, provided general guidelines regarding: community involvement; the appropriateness of the language usage and methodology; confidentiality and disclosure of sexual orientation; respect for cultural difference; and recruitment issues.

Project information comprised sufficient detail stated in clear, plain, non-offensive, inclusive language as an ethical approach to researching sexual minorities should cultivate and maintain trust, not only with potential participants, but also with all others amongst whom the research circulated.

⁸Recruiting LGBTI research participants, which is impeded by the 'hard to reach' nature of potentially hidden, socially isolated or stigmatised sexual minority populations, is doubly compounded when seeking to recruit from other marginalised locations, such as those based on class or ethnicity. Indeed, qualitative studies are criticised for ignoring the diversity of human experience (Stevenson 2002). Efforts to ensure greater sample diversity, therefore, often require greater time, money, and resources than can be accommodated by small-scale non-probability sampling methods, as utilised in my study. For an overview of these issues in reference to sampling bisexual communities see Hartman (2011).

⁹ The research was approved by Deakin University Human Research Ethics Committee: Project code EC 170-2008.

Following Martin and Meezan (2009), extra care was taken in composing text that avoided imposing sex/gender binaries or heterosexist assumptions. In particular, my research ethic was mindful of not imposing molar identity labels that might serve to homogenise the diversity of sexual possibilities. The 'art of self-presentation' (Kong, Mahoney & Plummer 2001:252) and 'cultural competence' (Martin and Meezan 2009:31) were, therefore, essential to conducting my research in a manner respectful of sex, gender and sexual diversity.

Assuring confidentiality throughout the project was also fundamental to fostering trust. Because participants' details (names, email addresses, phone numbers) were known to me, allocation of pseudonyms ensured protection of identities in the presentation of findings. As recommended, data files were de-identified at the completion of the project and research material stored in locked cabinets and password protected computers (Martin & Meezan 2009; Smith & Pitts 2007). Furthermore, the unique nature of individual narratives means that written reports may identify not only respondents, but also friends or associates mentioned during interviews to others in their communities or networks (Brannen 1988; Lapovsky Kennedy & Davis 1996; Smith & Pitts 2007). Paying heed to Lapovsky Kennedy and Davis' (1996:181) advice, distinctive identifying features (such as birth place and occupation) were altered or generalised to scrupulously ensure the privacy of all concerned. Therefore, an ethical presentation of participants' narratives was rendered in as much detail as possible without risking identification, to accord both value to their contribution and validity to the analysis and discussion. As Gary Dowsett (1996:47) comments, case material presented at some length ensures that the reader's familiarity with detail allows the veracity of conclusions drawn from and across individual cases to be evaluated.

How information is presented, likely to be used or interpreted by others also presents ethical concerns. Of paramount importance, then, was an awareness of such sensitivities to communicate findings in a manner that avoided minoritising, stigmatising or imposing victim status upon

respondents and their communities (Brannen 1988; Lee 1993; Liamputtong 2007; Martin & Meezan 2009; Smith & Pitts 2007). Without exception, all my participants evaluated the interview experience positively – some commenting on how questions provoked a pleasing and unexpected level of reflective introspection, others surprised at the detailed volumes of information that were effortlessly and unselfconsciously disclosed. Also evident was a general level of interest in my project and its outcomes – many asking to be kept informed of the results and expressing the desire to read the finished document; others hoping to see it readily accessible in published book form owing to the dearth of mainstream Australian literature on this topic. Such encouraging responses underlined the importance of reciprocity and mutuality – that my work can be returned to those whose stories have made it possible. Participants commonly referred to the importance of being given a voice in a domain that is largely silenced, dismissed or demonised and, as such, expressed positive feelings of being legitimated and validated by the research process. Importantly, employing respondents' own words and stories in the writing of this dissertation not only increases cultural knowledge and visibility, but also empowers and confers agency to those who participated (Gubrium & Holstein 2001; Hammers & Brown 2004; Lapovsky Kennedy & Davis 1996; Meezan & Martin 2003; Miller & Glassner 2004; Minichiello et al. 1995; Pallotta-Chiarolli & Lubowitz 2003).

Interviews for this project were typically an hour in length. Consequently, the researcher-researched relationship was often deeply interactive, emotionally laden and at times intense. Three issues were of ethical concern here: provoking respondent stress or distress; simulating 'friendship'; and researcher safety. Interviews dealing with sensitive issues have the potential to provoke stressful reactions or feelings (Brannen 1988; Liamputtong 2007). To minimise this risk, Julia Brannen (1988) advises allowing the research topic to emerge gradually on its own terms. Indeed, this proved an effective strategy. Asking a gentle introductory question ('how do you refer to or describe your sexuality and gender?'), allowed participants to initiate narratives on their own terms and open up areas for further probing. Topics

more likely to be confronting (relationship problems, experiences of discrimination) were not broached until some time into the interview when the interviewee appeared comfortable with the subject matter and the interview situation. Although no participant demonstrated any visible stress, appropriate referral services offering expertise relevant to LGBTI populations was provided to respondents if needed¹⁰.

Lapovsky Kennedy and Davis (1996) advise against becoming too friendly with interviewees, as this could be potentially damaging if such friendship was perceived to fuel gossip, factional tensions and rifts within the respondent's communities. The ethical issue of friendship also raised the question of whether to include persons within my own friendship networks. Avoidance of 'dual relationships', wherein the researcher is a friend or co-worker of members of the sample population, is generally recommended to circumvent any potential ethical dilemmas (Martin & Meezan 2009; McNair, Gleitzman & Hillier 2006). Because I had more than 100 responses to my call for participants, I was able to sample beyond my friendship circle. In balancing the friendship-like interaction that sometimes occurred during interviews, it was important not to give misleading cues that might have been misinterpreted as sexual interest, given the nature of the research topic. McLean (2007) advises against disclosing personal information, particularly sexual preference and relationship status, and avoiding conducting interviews in respondents' homes. The issue of researcher safety informed my decision to conduct interviews either by phone, or in person on campus, which offered a safe public and professional space supported by 24-hour security staff.

Interviewing: Flexible, Fluid, Relational

As widely acknowledged in methodological literature, the in-depth interview stands as the hallmark of qualitative research. Because in-depth interviewing is active, interactional and interpretive (Holstein & Gubrium 2004:140) it is well-suited to the aims of exploring minority populations in

¹⁰ The nominated referral services were: Victorian Gay and Lesbian Switchboard; and Gay and Lesbian Counselling and Community Services Australia.

eliciting rich information, probing for a deeper understanding of participants' experiences and realities, and accessing subjugated voices and knowledges (Hash & Cramer 2003; Kirby & McKenna 1989; Lee 1993; Liamputtong 2007). Often described as unstructured by virtue of its conversational nature (Burgess 1984; Minichiello et al. 1995), the approach taken in my study is more accurately described as semi-structured. As Dowsett (1996:53) maintains, no researcher embarks upon the interview process without ideas, interests, issues and above all, a research question that inevitably gives form to the interaction.

Interviews were guided by the following topics: self-descriptions and self-perceptions of gender and sexual expressions; sexual attitude to, and relations with, differing genders; gender preference in choice of intimate partners; socio-sexual relationship styles; experiences within various social spheres (family, work, leisure, queer communities); disclosure; and negotiating public perceptions and discourses of gender and sexuality. Face-to-face and phone interviews allowed answers to be rendered in extensive detail and provided the ability to further clarify, probe, and direct questions to areas relevant to each individual (Smith et al. 2003a). As online communication does not easily permit such interaction, which I considered to be a key aspect of my methodology, I decided against the Internet for data collection. Furthermore, difficulty in verifying respondent identities compromises the validity of Internet research and has been a 'sticking point' for many Internet researchers (Dowsett 2007; Markham 2004; Rust 2009b).

Phone interviewing enabled flexible, convenient and easy contact with respondents both Australia-wide and locally. In addition to accommodating busy schedules, it also allowed interviewees to be less self-conscious when discussing sensitive aspects of sexuality or gender. Few studies have compared face-to-face versus telephone interviews in terms of data quality (Shuy 2001). The main differences noted in the literature suggest that phone interviews have reduced interviewer effect but tend to be shorter, while face-to-face interviews offer the advantage of visual clues and

contextual naturalness (Shuy 2001; Smith et al. 2003b). The average length of interviews in my study was approximately one hour regardless of mode. Given the depth to which my participants responded to questions, and conversed with a sense of comfort and ease, little difference was observed between the two interview methods overall.

Interviewing in this manner, therefore, fostered inter-subjective depth and mutual understanding, which not only operates to bridge social distances between interviewer and interviewee, but also builds trust and familiarity (Miller & Glassner 2004). Furthermore, the reflexivity required of myself as interviewer is a central and overriding principle in qualitative interviewing, which privileges the dialogic nature between researcher-researched rather than detached objective distance (Dowsett 2007). As Dowsett (2007:436) comments, 'indeed, the dialogue is itself the data'. Reassuring confidentiality and conveying non-judgemental, sensitive attitudes were critical aspects to fostering an environment in which dialogue flowed easily and organically. This facilitated eliciting information and allowing respondents to 'talk back' – to ask questions, point out misinterpretations (Miller & Glassner 2004:134), and dictate the content via immersing themselves in their own stories, often discharging feelings in cathartic moments of revelation (Brannen 1988:555, 558). The interview was thus an active, two-way interactional conversation (Holstein & Gubrium 2004).

Consequently, often one question would generate lengthy responses that took the respondent down tangential tracks. Narratives were rarely related with coherent linearity (beginning, middle, end). Rather, one thought would arouse an association and provide a connecting line to another plateau of the story. The Deleuzian idea of plateaus vividly depicts how participants revealed their thoughts and experiences – nomadic, wandering, rhizomatic, always in the middle and 'becoming', not contained and ordered (Deleuze & Guattari 1987). Because each narrative is unique, the researcher will not elicit the full story if too directive (Brannen 1988). Both the research and interview, therefore, evolved as 'a method in process', continually 'unfolding'

(Kirby & McKenna 1989:32). This demonstrated one of the key virtues of qualitative research – its capacity to accommodate flexible, fluid and relational processes (Brannen 1988; Dowsett 1996, 2007; Liamputtong 2007; Meezan & Martin 2009).

Throughout interviews I was conscious of not imposing preconceived labels or assumptions about meaning – to allow participants to relate their stories, experiences and sense of self in their own language. This allowed multi-vocalities to be revealed, which paralleled the approach in selecting the research sample – that is, one defined in terms of multiplicities of self rather than constrained by unitary labels. This method is akin to that of 'queering' the interview (Kong, Mahoney & Plummer 2001; Valocchi 2005). Advocated here is a departure from 'identity-driven language of the closet' – which is structured in relation to the concept of homophobia and 'coming-out' narratives – and the allied notion that *sexual* identity is the defining element of self (Valocchi 2005:761). Valocchi argues that a queer analysis attends more closely to intersections of gender and sexuality, and thereby renders visible not only queer sexualities but also gender nonconformity. Indeed, as will be evident in the next chapter, my participants frequently struggled to find words from the available queer lexicon to adequately describe the complex interplay of their sexual and gendered locations.

The characteristic techniques of in-depth interviewer style – active, reflexive, reflective and reciprocal engagement – are hereby steered towards a decentred and deconstructive attitude. Navigating the queer field is premised upon: de-essentialised homosexuality; no clear type of person; multiple pathways and experiences; emergent queer formations as 'mainstream gay' becomes normalised; and asking fragmented, de-essentialised and wide-ranging interview questions (Kong, Mahoney and Plummer 2001). A minor method thus operates on a queer plateau of multiplicity and non-linearity in which bodies refuse to be reduced to transcendent signifiers. My role as interviewer was accordingly more 'down-to-earth': alive to how multi-sexualities and social worlds emerge and

are drawn during interview dialogue, some which are 'amorphously nascent and forming' (Kong, Mahoney and Plummer 2001:244).

The minor method I advance here also acknowledges the legacy of feminist paradigms. Minority sexuality literature commonly notes feminist origins of research practice, particularly the capacity to be: flexible, sensitive, reflexive, empathic, egalitarian, and socially transformative (Lapovsky Kennedy & Davis 1996; Lee 1993; Liamputtong 2007; McLean 2007; Minichiello et al. 1995; Oakley 1981; Smith & Pitts 2007). Just as feminist methods seek to legitimate women's voices through foregrounding their experiences, subjectivities and knowledge in the research process (Hammers & Brown 2004; Lee 1993; Liamputtong 2007), so too, the minor method I deploy aims to render visible those who reside beyond, between and on the borderlines of the heterosexual/homosexual binary. A minor method, therefore, accommodates exploration across multi-dimensions of sex, gender and sexuality – a methodology that transplants the lessons of queer and feminist perspectives into a Deleuzian landscape of inquiry. Such methodological innovation thus recognises that 'boundaries' of sex, gender and sexuality are in constant production of being dismantled and reassembled by our research subjects. Hence, this demands an approach that reprises 'objects' of study as subjects of their world (Hammers & Brown 2004:99). In Deleuzian terms then, my participants were conceptualised as becoming-subjects and their narratives as becoming-stories – which emerged in the *encounter between* researcher-researched.

The 'Nomadic' Researcher: Inside, Outside, Beside

The interview encounter thus raises the issue of researcher location in this relationship dynamic. Queer-feminist method advocates that a 'true understanding' of material realities is effectuated through an insider's view, in which empathic subjective engagement uncovers alternative and multiple subject positions *within* individuals (Hammers & Brown 2004:90). A minor method agrees in part with such posturing: that, as stated, the research process aimed to reveal multiplicities of the sexual/gendered selves – or as Deleuze and Guattari (1987:213) would say 'a thousand tiny sexes'.

However, an empathic approach raises the thorny issue of 'insider' versus 'outsider' research – one that has stimulated much methodological debate regarding qualitative methods. This debate is located within a wider dialogue in social science concerning the virtues of 'cool detached and uninvolved' objectivity versus 'warm, connected and involved' subjectivity (Deutscher 1983:29); or more simply, the quantitative-qualitative divide. The literature here is extensive¹¹ and it is not my intent to engage at this level as I have clearly argued that qualitative methods are appropriate for the research question under examination here. However, it is important to reflect upon my location as a researcher, given the virtues imputed to insider research particularly with sexual minority communities.

Hailing from feminist paradigms¹², 'insider' research refers to researching one's 'own' – the common ground experienced by both interviewer and interviewees, be it defined in terms of culture, gender, sexual identity, ethnicity or otherwise. In terms of studying sexual minorities, discussion of insider perspectives generally looks at the advantages and disadvantages particularly regarding gaining entry into LGBTI communities and producing valid research. Despite the valuable contributions of 'outsiders' to the pool of knowledge, Smith and Pitts (2007:10) note that the purist view of LGBT research maintains it is 'best carried out by researchers who are themselves members of the communities or groups of interest'. In general, the pros and cons canvassed here include: greater access to and understanding of hidden samples due to cultural competence; improved participation rate via perceptions of shared or similar experiences with the researcher; versus: the negatives of familiarity, which may blind the researcher to unique information or deeper exploration of taken-for-granted issues; projection of one's own assumptions onto participants; and perceived threat of gossip and social desirability for respondents (LaSala 2009).

¹¹ See for example: Brannen (1992), Bryman (1988), Crotty (1998), Howe (1992), Sil (2000).

¹² Feminist sociologist Ann Oakley (1981) has played an instrumental part in the development of a feminist participatory research model, and the value to social inquiry has seen its wide recommendation and implementation in qualitative practice.

However, such discussion wields the idiom of insider/outsider unproblematically as if a self-evident boundary exists between inside and outside from which a position can be fixed. The crucial issue is that the language of inside/outside is conceptually fraught. The notion of being an 'insider' is based on a shared characteristic – in the case of my research, sexual experiences with more than one gender, nominally 'bisexuality'. But this ignores the multiplicity of other subject positions that may come into play, such as gender, age, ethnicity, profession, political alignment, religious beliefs, and economic status, as well as the mosaic of sexual expressions and practices enacted and experienced by individuals. Importantly then, rapport based on identification is problematised because 'identities are criss-crossed with a range of possible connections' that express a multiplicity of subject positions in relation to an array of discourses (Schostak 2006:55-6). While my social, sexual, and cultural biography converged and diverged with my participant's narratives at various points (for example, I actively engage in bisexual, queer and trans groups on a social and political level, so in that sense I am an 'insider'), my current subject position is cross-cut by my age, sex/gender, academic standing, parenthood, intimate partner relationship, Anglo-heritage, moral and metaphysical belief system to name but a few. I cannot claim to establish rapport simply on the basis of sexual identity politics, for, as argued in previous chapters, the notion of a coherent bisexual subjectivity is impossible to pin down or fix to any one meaning. It is no more possible for me to authentically identify with other bisexual persons than it is for me identify with a gay man, or a Jewish trans person.

In terms of a Deleuzian minor method, the insider/outsider dichotomy is particularly problematic. Given that, as argued, bisexual subjects are located in-between borderline spaces, does inside or outside make ontological sense? Smith and Pitts (2007:10) comment that recent shifts to egalitarian modes of interviewing have reoriented the relationship between researcher and respondent to one of researching *with* rather than *on* communities. In other words, the subject-object opposition between researcher and researched (which frames individuals as data mines and places the researcher in a position of power or control) arguably dissolves in

a non-hierarchical relationship of subject-subject. This suggests that the researcher-researched relationship is symmetrical. The preposition *with* is pertinent to the planar relations that Deleuzian method articulates. Rather than locating the researcher position inside as opposed to outside, I argue that my position is more accurately described as *beside*. If I am beside, I am neither above nor below the imaginary line that demarcates outside (detached, objective) from inside (within, subjective). *Beside* accordingly absolves any recourse to dualism. Eve Sedgwick (2003:8) poignantly touches on the very aspects of this researcher position arguing that:

Beside permits a spacious agnosticism about several of the linear logics that enforce dualistic thinking: non-contradiction or the law of the excluded middle, cause versus effect, subject versus object... *Beside* comprises a wide range of desiring, identifying, representing, repelling, paralleling, differentiating, rivaling, leaning, twisting, mimicking, withdrawing, attracting, aggressing, warping, and other relations.

In other words, *beside* is not equivalent to symmetry (equal power), but rather produces differing asymmetries (shifting relations of power). Positioning myself beside, placed me in 'zones of proximity' – to use Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) recurring motif – alongside numerous elements of the assemblages that constitute my participants' narratives. Proximity does not confer a relation of imitation or one-to-one correspondence but extracts a shared element (Deleuze & Guattari 1987:279). The interviewer-interviewee relationship generated here did not place me *inside* my respondents' shoes, but rather was rhizomatic – synchronously convergent and divergent as each unique story unfolded. Lines of connection, where our narratives briefly touched and resonated, drew us adjacent, thus *affecting* a sense of empathy, commonality, complicity and sharing, before being dispelled into trajectories, spaces, experiences, ways of knowing different to my own. Hence, the power dynamic shuttled back and forth in continual exchange between myself and participant – sometimes directed by me, and at other times, by the

interviewee. Moreover, as a nomadic researcher, this position does not seek to trace a determinate path and endpoint, but – as in Deleuze and Guattari's (1987:380) articulation of the nomad – looks in-between to find a new direction, an 'intermezzo'.

Rhizomatic Cartographies: Disassembling, Reassembling

At a glance, data analysis for this study seemingly followed a text-book approach: coding interview transcripts and identifying themes for discussion. However, a minor method required that I make myself a foreigner in this process, to make strange or unlearn ingrained methodological habits, which as John Law (2004:9) maintains, are premised on the desire for certitude, reaching end goals of firm conclusions. Remaking the analytical landscape after Deleuze demanded refocusing the methodological lens to questions and problems already present in methodological literature and reorienting these as the driving mechanism of inquiry. As such, data analysis is re-imagined via a minor method as a process that produces rhizomatic cartographies, which addresses current methodological issues concerning a 'crisis of representation' (Lather 1993:677) and the ensuing lack of certitude.

Verbatim interview transcripts were imported into NVivo qualitative software analysis program. By virtue of the voluminous amount of textual content generated (more than 650 pages), computer-assisted analysis is recommended for ease of data storage, management, searching and retrieval (Creswell 2007:165). Moreover, NVivo allowed for a creative and flexible system that involved reading closely, annotating (via linked memos, journals) and coding transcripts for thematic analysis. In broad terms, coding is defined as identifying an idea, event or property that tags a section of data, proceeding from which analysis establishes links and connections between codes (Kirby & McKenna 1989:145). Although described as emergent and exploratory (Ezzy 2002:88), coding is often presented as a *reductive* process that progressively condenses codes into broader themes (Creswell 2007:148). However, this is at odds with the Deleuzian enterprise I have presented in my theory and methodology, as reductive coding

insinuates 'categories' of molar formations, thus preserving rigid structures and hierarchical thinking.

NVivo on the other hand operates via breaking apart the text, producing nodes (codes) with maximum versatility. The software encouraged close line by line reading of transcripts, which enabled me to create nodes that reflected participants' words and experiences. Sections of text were coded across multiple nodes. For example, a participant's account of school life might generate nodes including: 'school life', 'rural', 'discrimination', 'psychological response', 'gender dissonance', 'queer'. The advantage of NVivo is its capacity to handle a *proliferating* number of nodes. This offered nuanced microanalysis that *linked* data to ideas rather than *reducing* data (Bazeley 2007:66, 69). Importantly, node creation and organisation in NVivo is a dynamic and fluid process – changes can be made at any point in the coding process – shifting, renaming, merging, deleting, grouping, ungrouping etc. Such flexibility did not force data into a rigid structure but cultivated an adaptable, mobile and protean 'smoothness' of space in Deleuzian thought – nomad spaces not defined by boundaries, limits, and grids that 'parcel out a closed space to people' but are polyvocal and variable (Deleuze & Guattari 1987:380, 382).

Analysis of interview transcripts entailed mapping assemblages via establishing rhizomatic connections across nodes. For Deleuze and Guattari (1987:21), the method of *mapping* does not produce a definitive end-product. Rather, a map is ever-changing and continues to be drawn – there is no edge, no limit, no beginning, no end; a map is always in the middle. Hence, rhizomatic cartographies look to the middle, to find ruptures between disparate elements to discover something new. This underscores the experimental aspect of qualitative research, in which Denzin and Lincoln (2008b:5) describe the researcher as a quilt-maker who pieces together data in an inventive style akin to montage. Notions of montage and quilting find parallels in Deleuzian thinking. Just as montage in filmmaking juxtaposes several images, not sequentially but synchronously – blending, overlapping and forming new composites (Denzin & Lincoln 2008b), so too, finding

connections between often seemingly incongruent elements forms new assemblages. Indeed, Deleuze and Guattari point out the virtues of nomadic thinking via the quilting process – a patchwork that assembles elements of varying size, shape, colour and texture. The value-added benefit of Deleuzian thinking is that the quilt is a non-formal space comprising a 'collection of juxtaposed pieces that can be joined together in an infinite number of ways – we see that patchwork is literally Riemannian space¹³, or vice versa' (Deleuze & Guattari 1987:476-7). For Denzin and Lincoln (2008b:7), however, quilting forms 'psychological and emotional unity', a gestalt. A minor method trades the idea of unity for the micro-realities of multiplicities that continuously assemble and reassemble the social. In Latour's (2005) terms, a sociological method of reassembling the social is not driven by looking for macro-structures, patterns and forces but zooming in on micro-heterogeneous components and their associations. Rhizomatic cartographies do not ignore macro structures, but scrutinise encounters between micro and macro. For example, data coding revealed links between BDSM practices and innovative ways of 'embodying' non-human objects, which ruptured the binary distinction between human and non-human, and thereby created new ways of perceiving embodiment.

Laurel Richardson (Richardson & St. Pierre 2008) argues that the creativity afforded by incorporating Deleuzian thinking into methodology is not at odds with the analytical imperative of social science. Validity is provided by a process of 'crystallisation' for crystals grow, change and alter, combining substances with infinite varieties of shapes, transmuting and refracting within themselves creating different colours, patterns, and arrays casting off in different directions (Richardson & St. Pierre 2008:478). Rhizomatic analysis, therefore, encouraged me as a sociological researcher to view data through different eyes that took account of, rather than

¹³Deleuze draws upon Riemannian geometry to elaborate his ontology of multiplicity. Bernhard Riemann theorised a geometry of curved space, as opposed to Euclidian geometry of flat space (Sormani 2002). Referred to as multiply extended magnitudes, Riemann (1873) formulated a mathematical principle based on *n*-dimensions, which extends thinking beyond that of two or three-dimensional space. Deleuze (1995:124) explains this space as 'setting up neighboring portions that can be joined up in an infinite number of ways'; hence, his example of quilt-making as *par exemplar* of Riemannian space.

overlooked, such refractions of self as it encountered the socio-cultural, political and biological world. The primary methodological question has accordingly shifted from 'how to write during a crisis of representation' to 'how to document becoming' (Richardson & St. Pierre 2008:483). In this manner, I have redirected the methodological focus of bisexual research away from the 'meaning' of bisexuality to its embodied location in lived experience, the contexts in which it is enacted, its place in relation to other bodies, and *how* it becomes placed, dis-placed, re-placed and re-invented.

Conclusion

Plummer (2003) remarks upon a challenging new turn in methodology that imparts a more experimental self-reflexive feel to the research process. Important here, Plummer (2003:521) argues, is 'to sense ourselves in and around our research, jolting the reader in almost Brechtian ways to rethink what the data is actually about and what is being presented'. The minor method explicated in this chapter steers this new turn in a distinctly Deleuzian direction that answers Patti Lather's (1993:677) call for methodology that experiments with 'counter-practices of authority', starts with 'the crisis of representation', and creates 'a nomadic and dispersed validity' predicated upon 'a strategy of excess and categorical scandal'. This not only advances a way forward to resolve methodological tensions engendered by the mismatch between sexual identity categories and the fluidity of experience, but also interweaves a political imperative that reinvests sociological examination of sexuality with materiality – that is, bodies. As discussed in Chapter 3, such an endeavour accords with critical sociological and feminist interrogations of embodiment (for example, Braidotti 1994a, 2002; Grosz 1994; Shilling 2008; Turner 2008). In line with the ethos of qualitative research of sex/gender/sexuality minorities the methodological process has been guided by Deleuze and Guattari's (1987:22-23) concept of an assemblage, which 'in its multiplicity, necessarily acts on semiotic flows, material flows, and social flows simultaneously' such that '[t]here is no longer a tripartite division between a field of reality (the world) and a field of representation (the book) and a field of subjectivity (the author)'. In rethinking what my data presents I am

bound to reflect also on my role as a nomadic researcher and the implications of my writing. The aim of writing is ultimately an ethical one in that I write as minoritarian, which means:

that writing always encounters a minority which does not write, and it does not undertake to write for this minority, in its place or at its bidding, but there is an encounter in which each pushes the other, draws it on to its line of flight in a combined deterritorialization (Deleuze & Parnet 2006:33).

The following four chapters present the rhizomatic cartographies that unfolded through this 'combined deterritorialization'. Unfolding in each chapter is an intricate interplay between dominant discourses of sex, gender and bisexuality and the heterogeneous elements of people's lived realities. Participant narratives reveal that interwoven within their rich and diverse lived subjectivities are encounters with moral majorities. Their stories bring to the foreground how desire is a productive force or affect that creates ethical pathways through dualisms to 'become' something other, to queer, disturb and confront the well-trodden paths of convention.

5

Emergent Subjectivities

If identity becomes the problem of sexual existence, and if people think they have to "uncover" their "own identity", and that their own identity has to become the law, principle, the code of their existence; [then] the perennial question they ask is "Does this thing conform to my identity?"... If we are asked to relate to the question of identity, it has to be an identity to our unique selves. The relationships we have to ourselves are not ones of identity, rather they must be relationships of differentiation, of creation, of innovation. To be the same is really boring. We must not exclude identity if people find their pleasure through this identity, but we must not think of this identity as an ethical universal rule.

Michel Foucault (1989:385)

This chapter explores how my participants recounted 'identity' in myriad ways and descriptions that contest dominant significations of lesbian, gay, bisexual and heterosexual. It demonstrates that sexuality is complexly constituted and creatively *produced* through multiplex assemblages of bodily encounters that traverse micro and macro fields of engagement. I argue that bisexuality provides a way of scrutinising these spaces of production through the Deleuzian concepts of asignification, asubjectification and affect. My data reveals how participants' lived and embodied practices recast sexual identity as a *process* of continual revision, which emerges within and through fluid, diverse, and relational cartographies of sex/gendered desires, attractions and behaviours. As such, this process of revision problematises any attempt to cohere bisexual subjects according to a universal signification, meaning or definition. I thus contend that participants' lived realities 'asignify' and 'asubjectify' (Deleuze & Guattari 1987:9) the taken-for-granted idiom of LGBT. This is evidenced by examining how respondents variously dismantle and reassemble

dominant identity categories in meaningful yet inventive ways. Accordingly, this chapter establishes that asignification and asubjectification are conceptually central to understanding bisexuality as an *affect*. In other words, the narratives presented here cogently reprise bisexuality as an emergent and creative space of corporeal movement – one that telescopes the potential of affect as a transformative and agentic force of social production.

Respondents' stories thus expose how bisexuality occupies indeterminate spaces of in-between that 'play with different regimes of signs, and even nonsign states' (Deleuze & Guattari 1987:21). Analytical focus, therefore, examines not what a label *means* – which for Deleuze (1995) is despotic, tyrannical and diagnostic, and for Foucault (1989) is identity-bound by ethical rules – but how it is *produced* and what ways of living are thus rendered possible. In doing so, ruptures and schisms are made apparent that allow polyvocalities of sexuality to surface, which the unified sex/gendered/sexual subject and its reliance on binary logic suppresses from view. Here, I examine the conceptual hurdles that emerged in the course of participants' attempts to describe and discuss diverse articulations of self – desire, embodiment, gendered and sexual expression – and how these shape, inform, and contextualise their intimate relationships.

Individuals in this study conveyed their sexualities as a *process of becoming* that negotiates dominant binary discourses and culturally-scripted categories, which attempt to nail down the subject as 'one' (Deleuze & Guattari 1987:159), while carving out spaces of heterogeneity and movement. From this viewpoint, I propose that bisexuality is re-articulated as rhizomatic cartographies of 'emergent subjectivity' (Guattari 1996:195). For Guattari, the key activators of such emergent subjectivities are asignifying dimensions of 'heterogenesis'; in other words, transformations of subjectivity (Guattari 1996:194) through embodied social practices of innovation and experimentation. Conceptualising bisexuality in this manner allows analysis to move beyond the theoretical impasse that has stalled at notions of *determining* 'bisexual identity'. Evidenced by my research

findings is a complexly constituted landscape of bisexuality wherein signifiers of queer sexualities are rejected, reprised or re-imagined and taken up in novel ways, which, moreover, disrupt any assumed equivalence between sex, gender and sexuality.

Participants' innovative deployment of sexual vocabulary betrays more than simply a vestment of one's identity; rather, it apprehends subjectivity as creative, contingent, multiple and processual. This is not to discard participants' attachment to and investment in identities, but allows an analytical breathing space to investigate how labels are variously taken up, struggled with, discarded, replaced, embellished and/or proudly displayed in respondents' existential realities. Accordingly, the individuals I spoke with are not replicated in their naming – that is, not reflected by a preconceived template of identity, subject or object. The radical notion of asignifying bisexuality is not to evacuate comprehensibility but urges us to rethink the sexual body in terms of *content* and *expression* rather than structural *form* (Deleuze 1995:21; Deleuze & Guattari 1987:43).

Battling the Binaries: A Tug-of-War

Initial interview questions sought to ascertain descriptors of sexuality and how easily or not these were taken up. Less than a quarter of participants self-identified as 'bisexual', and while a few happily embraced this label without further reflection, in most cases 'bisexual' warranted varying degrees of interrogation, qualification, debate, tentative appropriation or outright rejection. The remainder of responses traversed a range of terms, some more creative than others, including: queer, fluid, mostly heterosexual, lesbian, primarily lesbian, gay, a bit gay, bi-sensual, mostly female-bodied attracted, polymorphous, polysexual, sexually-open, predominantly male-attracted, or alternatively opted for no labels. Overwhelmingly, interview conversations revealed the difficulty posed by binary language constraints and dominant assumptions within which sexuality and sex/gender discourses are predominantly framed. Responses to the question 'how do you refer to or describe your sexuality?' rarely elicited short answers, as one or two word labels were commonly considered inadequate in conveying a

sense of sexual self. Strikingly, detailed explanations revealed conscious and reflexive negotiation around multiple dualisms: male/female, man/woman, gay/straight, as well as the binary assumption encoded within the prefix *bi*. This related to both individuals' self-perception as well as their sexual attractions. A strong awareness of the 'authority' of dualisms permeated interviewee discourse. Anthony's (30s/M) words typified cohort responses:

Bisexuality is problematic – like anything that doesn't fit [dualisms]. It strikes me how our culture is really obsessed with dualisms, and I don't know where we inherited that from, whether it was from the Enlightenment or Christian Manichaeism: male and female, black and white, gay and straight, work and play, spirit and body. Many cultures don't see those divisions in that way, like male and female, they see other genders in-between, other possibilities. But our culture doesn't or hasn't traditionally liked grey areas in lots of things.

Such sentiments were bound up with a profound stated desire to disengage – to establish lines of flight – from the binary position that *bisexuality* evokes. However, as Deleuze and Guattari (1987) explain, one must be located within the dominant system or structure in the first instance in order to effect a revolutionary position. This does not entail complete obliteration of the organised body, but rather diminishes by micro-increments such that:

you have to keep small supplies of signifi¹ance and subjectification, if only to turn them against their own systems when circumstances demand it ... and you have to keep small rations of subjectivity in sufficient quantity to enable you to respond to the dominant reality... Staying stratified – organized, signified, subjected – is not the worst that can happen; the worst that can happen is if you throw the strata into demented or suicidal collapse (Deleuze & Guattari 1987:160-1).

¹ This translation of *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1987) imports the French word 'signifi¹ance' into English without modification, and herein refers to 'signifying capacity' (Masumi 1987:xviii).

In other words, to challenge the dominant order is not to effect an outright overthrow, which risks complete disorder. As Foucault (1990) has demonstrated in his genealogical undertakings, the knowledge foundations that have discursively deployed sexuality as a bio-political field of power are deeply entrenched in Western epistemology. These are not easily 'uprooted'; the arborescent model is not one that can be directly confronted by militant force but must be approached with patience and a 'meticulous relation with the strata' (Deleuze & Guattari 1987:161). The BwO – the disassembling of the organised organism, be it bisexual, lesbian, gay, heterosexual, man, woman – is a desiring and productive process that necessarily warrants a tug-of-war with binary delineations, 'swinging between surfaces that stratify it and the plane that sets it free' (Deleuze & Guattari 1987:161). It is precisely this pendulous motion – between dominant significations and micro-realities – that pulsates throughout my interviews, launching processes of asignification. Some stated explicit objection to binary assumptions:

I don't really hold to a binary notion of gender. I'm a sexual person; gender doesn't necessarily come into it that much (Rachel/30s/F).

I don't like the term bisexual because it makes gender very binary. I don't find it's everyone's experience. In terms of who I am attracted to, it doesn't really capture it. I've had a couple of partners who've identified as trans or genderqueer (Kate/30s/F).

Someone asked me when I was out meeting some new people – and they were being binary – "are you straight or gay?" I said, "I am neither". They asked, "Are you bi then?" I said, "I suppose, if that's where you would sit me". But I explained that I see it as broader than that because my attraction is to do with the spirit of a person; it is not necessarily what I see on the outside that is attractive. So my attraction crosses those binary boundaries if you like. I tend to not necessarily pigeonhole myself and say I am either this or that because it's something more than that (Ben/40s/M).

Ben's comment in particular underscores a persistent Deleuzian attitude evident throughout my data that rejects being corralled by 'this-ness' or 'that-ness'. The notion that sexuality is an *affect* – 'something more' than *being* straight, gay, or bi arising in singular moments out of encounters between bodies – synchronously rejects and experiments with conventional language categories. It is in these spaces of affect that asignifying practices exert their revolutionary potential. For such a tactic counters people 'who think "I'm this, I'm that" ... by thinking in strange, fluid and unusual terms: I don't know what I am – I'd have to investigate and experiment' (Deleuze 1995:11). Indeed, Ben's experience of opening up a space for discussing fluidity encouraged and gave permission to others in his social world to consider sexuality beyond a simplistic binary proposition, to look inwards and interrogate their own intimate lives with a more expansive view. During one such social dialogue with new acquaintances, Ben recounted that:

they shared their experience around similar connections to both males and females. So in me being open and honest, they then revealed something of themselves.

However, the difficulty in relinquishing dependence on dualisms became apparent as individuals examined the breakdown of their gendered attractions. Ben felt unable to identify 'exclusively on one side of the percentage equation' because he enjoys '*both* genders and sexes, physically, emotionally and socially, sitting somewhere in the middle'. Lisa (40s/MTF) unhesitatingly referred to herself as bisexual, but added 'using the definition of bisexual as being attracted to *more* than one sex or gender'. As a trans woman who devotes much time and energy to queer activism and advocacy, Lisa is vigilant in her use of inclusive language that avoids binary divisions, yet described her sexual attractions as '75 percent towards women and 25 percent towards male, if we have to classify it into a binary of course'. Similarly, Anthony (30s/M) now identifies as queer in order to circumvent his view of Western culture's predominant obsession with black and white categories. Nonetheless, binary constructs seemingly resurface in the thought process, as Anthony reflected upon his primary attraction toward

men: 'I've always been predominantly attracted to men; now it's probably 20 percent of my attractions towards women'. The dominant construct of bisexuality as 'dual' attraction was further elucidated as some interviewees variously interrogated the common stereotype that 'authentic' *bisexuality* is dependent upon demonstrating to oneself and others *equal* attraction or sexual experience with *both* genders:

I use the term fluid, which means it's similar to bisexual, but I don't see an equal split. I feel that I am more just attracted to people (Samantha/20s/F).

Well it's kind of fluid – it changes I guess, so it's a bit complicated. Predominantly it's females [I'm attracted to] but there's a bit of me that's – rather than bisexual – I think I'm a bit gay and 80 percent straight (Jordan/40s/GQ).

The idea of 'splitting' – that bisexuality is a hybrid identity comprising divisional components of straight/gay or heterosexual/homosexual impulses (which has its antecedents in scalar measures of sexuality as discussed in Chapters 1 and 2) – seeps into the cultural symbolic, particularly via key texts that perpetuate the hybrid model. For example, *Dual Attraction* (Weinberg, Williams & Pryor 1994), *Look Both Ways* (Baumgardner 2007), *Two Lives to Lead: Bisexuality in Men and Women* (Klein & Wolf 1985), and *Sexual Pathways: Adapting to Dual Sexual Attraction* (Williams 1999). An apparent intractable dilemma of overcoming the tension presented between dualism and non-dualism thus ensues. As Sedgwick (2003:2) comments, it is far easier to critique binary thinking and expose its tendentious effects than to offer alternative models, and that even to invoke *non-dualism* 'is to tumble right into the dualist trap'. Amber Ault's (1996) sociological research of bisexual women illustrates this conundrum. Ault maintains that respondents' attempts to 'smash' binaries that erase their ambiguous discursive locations reappear in their own discourse. Descriptors, such as 'half and half', 'bi side and lesbian side', 'masculine and feminine sides', and hyphenations such as 'bi-dyke' are structured around

gay and straight parts, according to Ault. These, she argues, not only recreate the very dualisms that render bisexuality invisible, but furthermore, reinforce familiar oppositions (male/female, lesbian/straight, heterosexual/homosexual) or produce new dichotomies (queer/non-queer, bisexual/monosexual).

A Deleuzian provocation, however, inquires beyond the impulse to halt analysis at dualism as if it presented an insurmountable hurdle. While my participants employed an apparent discourse of partitioning their sexual attractions, the lexicon of complexity, complication and fluidity commonly occurred in close proximity. Such language use not only contaminates attempts to reduce bisexuality to its polar terms of reference, but opens a different pathway of thinking that avoids collapsing into a dualism/nondualism binary. Accordingly, bisexual hybridity is reconceived as a *becoming*, which as Patricia MacCormack (2009:144) argues, focuses on 'transformative potentialities or germinalities' whereby the qualities of each term enter into each other, transforming in the 'contagion of movement'. In other words, the preceding examples of participant dialogue are located within a binary on one hand, yet establish a line of escape (deterritorialisation) from it on the other. Participant discourse conveyed an indeterminate border region of becoming, entering into proximities with stereotypical representations (dual, split, proportional, or divided attraction that invests dominant constructions of an essential 'bisexual-ness'). This idea guides analysis in the following chapter, where unitary assumptions of male/female, man/woman are disturbed and detached from their molar organisation through focusing on borderline regions of corporeality. As Brian Massumi (1992) explains, thought-in-becoming takes the endpoint as its launching point – moving in an inverse direction from the general (categorical or stereotypical) to the individual. Thus, participants engaged with notions of the split subject (which is dependent upon the binary model of sex/gender) only to dismantle it. Becoming-other (than the general) is not imitative, analogical, or mimetic, but as Massumi (1992:98) writes, 'the goal is not to develop a general idea (model) that would stand out and above

(transcend) the bodies it subsumes; it is to create a new body at ground level'.

Becomings urge the body beyond each moment of subject formation, eluding complete capture by the dominant signifier, settling momentarily within specific locations before again moving on. This movement of decoding or undoing oneself, for Deleuze and Guattari (1987:400, 475) impels a 'defacto mix', which, rather than evincing simple opposition moves towards complex differences. William's (60s/M) narrative eloquently encapsulates this Deleuzian moment. While relating that he has been monogamously married for more than 20 years, his account entwines binary thought with fluid becomings that destabilise any unitary figuration or attachment to iconic stereotype. Gregarious and flamboyant in all respects – language, dress and demeanour – which might easily be read as 'camp', he described himself as:

Polymorphous perverse [laughs] – I've had relationships with men and with women throughout my life and I've never felt I had to join a group in terms of my self-identification – I've always *said* that I was gay, because I've never been prepared to say that I wasn't.

Bisexual subjectivity is synchronously now (signified, subjectified) and something yet to come (asignified, asubjectified, becoming, emergent). Through the body's affects or capacities, bisexuality is accordingly re-visioned in Deleuze and Guattari's terms as nomadic. Such nomadism is constituted through spaces of the in-between or *intermezzo* that lodge like a wedge between the striated or bounded territories of molar identities, which are limiting and limited, and slowly gnaw at the edges of the boundaries (Deleuze & Guattari 1987:382-4). It is a movement of interstitial disruption, where in Homi Bhabha's (2004:2) words,

there is a sense of disorientation, a disturbance of direction, in the "beyond": an exploratory restless movement caught so well in the

French rendition of the words *au-delà* – here and there, on all sides, fort/da, hither and thither, back and forth.

As participants manoeuvre a tug-of-war movement back and forth between the binaries, their lived realities install such a wedge that embodies an insistent process of unravelling both the unity of signified and subjectified 'bisexual' self and the dominant signifiers that touch each body. As such, their comments complicate not only a molar definition of bisexuality but its component parts – whether gay or straight, man or woman.

Innovation and Experimentation

As noted, my interviewees utilised a cornucopia of terms – singly or in combination, some more creative than others – or conversely rejected labelling altogether, in order to overcome perceived inadequacies of available cultural scripts to accurately reflect their sexual narratives. This poignantly captures Deleuze's view that 'there are no literal words ... only inexact words to designate something exactly' – hence, his injunction that if you do not like one word, or it does not suit you, replace it with another (Deleuze & Parnet 2006:3). Participants thus expressed a profound desire to resist or innovate dominant constructions of sexuality and sex/gender – 'a desire to escape bodily limitation', whether this be cultural or biological (Massumi 1992:94). A popular recourse was to invoke some form of queer idiom to indicate wide-ranging intimate or sexual attractions/experiences. Brett (20s/M) commented that 'some of his friends who identified as gay or lesbian a couple of years ago are now identifying with the term queer – the idea of exploring sexuality'. Participants who identified as queer variously explained it as being: 'broader than gay or bisexual, it can mean lots of different things' (Anthony/30s/M); 'being attracted to all sorts of different people' (Kate/30s/F); 'something not quite inside the box, sexuality I believe is fluid – I'm attracted to a person not a gender' (Tim/30s/M); 'attracted to people of all bodily types and gender identities' (David/20s/FTM). Queer was often con-joined or switched with other vocabulary to better convey a more nuanced portrayal such as: queer/bisexual, queer/both-sex-attracted, and queer/fag/gay boy. Such elaborations of 'queer' sought to counter

mainstream perceptions that position queer and gay as equivalent terms. David (20s/FTM), for example, rejected the label of bisexual for a period, but has now reclaimed it, telling people he is queer *and* bisexual to avoid the way in which queer is frequently conflated with gay. Cameron (20s/M) on the other hand switches between queer and bisexual:

Depending on different contexts both are kind of valid – I use both identities, probably more queer. I use "bisexual" when I want to disclose the fact that I'm also attracted to women when I'm around other queer people and "queer" when I'm around straight people most of the time.

Some modified molar categories to indicate their stories did not sit neatly within the dominant assumptions these terms evinced: 'mostly heterosexual' (Sarah/20s/F), 'primarily lesbian' (Julia/60s/F), 'a bit gay' (Jordan/40s/GQ), and 'not quite straight' (Paul/40s/M). Others explicitly circumvented limitations of sexuality labels, describing their attractions in terms that do not foreclose future possibilities or potentialities: 'mostly female-bodied attracted' (Morgan/50s/GQ), 'polymorphous' (Karen/50s/MTF, William 60s/M), 'poly-poly' (polyamorous-polysexual) (Lesley/30s/MTF), 'pansexual' (Anna/30s/F), and 'sexually open' (Billy/30s/M). James (20s/M) articulated a commonly felt dilemma about sexual identity labelling and its assumed correlation to male and female bodies, explaining himself as:

Complex. I do have a preference, which took me a long time to work out. My first two serious dates were bisexual girls. Another ex-female partner I met again later in university as a transgendered male. My current partner is also FTM transgendered. I think I have a preference for ambiguity or bisexuals. I just couldn't find any identity that fit descriptively. When I heard the term pansexual it was more comforting to realise that there was something that might possibility fit. But it didn't quite work either. When I discovered my ex [female partner] at uni as a male, that started to click a little more,

and I had more success in working out where my preferences lay. I came to the conclusion that there isn't really a label.

Previous sociological studies of bisexuality reveal similar conundrums of self-labelling evidenced through the prevalence of adopting multiple, conjoined or alternative nomenclature to reflect complex sexual selves (Ault 1996; McLean 2003; Rust 1996, 2001b, 2009b). These studies variously note the importance of social context in constructions of bisexuality but remain attached in some way to an empirical category of bisexual *identity*. For example, Rust's (1996) social constructionist analysis highlights contingencies of bisexual identity that rest upon shifting processes of self in relation to changing socio-linguistic sexual landscapes. While claiming both the revolutionary potential and theoretical importance of bisexual identity to resist definitional solidification, Rust posits an unresolved paradox that locates a political *subject* of bisexual 'identity' on one hand while refusing the subject's ontological coherence on the other.

A Deleuzian response bypasses this philosophical dilemma through focusing on ontological incoherence as an ethico-political *process* and *practice between bodies*. Rather than establishing parity between identity and subject, this approach looks to relationality between signifiers and multiple subjectivities. As Guattari (1996), argues this brings into view polyvocalities of desire as a mode of transmission that arranges, connects, modifies and abandons signifying components. Adele (20s/F) for instance, is an international university Arts student studying in Australia, whose story reveals a continual process of disassembling and reassembling the terms by which she defines herself. What emerges is a rhizomatic configuration of self. Adele related a reflexive process of investment and divestment of subjectification that traverses within and beyond dominant binary categories – an asignifying practice, which is:

a work in progress for me right now – I've always had same-sex and opposite-sex feelings. I'm just kind of non-heterosexual, so I've considered myself: straight, but heterosexually-challenged,

heteroflexible or bisexual, or 80-20 straight-gay; I considered myself gay when I was younger. I'm at a point now where I don't want to identify myself with a label – and I've just got out of a long relationship with a boy so now I'm just exploring my options and meeting different people and trying different ways of having relationships with people that don't include monogamy and commitment.

Adele thus recognises the agentic possibilities of her sexuality, which, through experimentation, actuates a transformation of her sense of sexual self. Stating a current preference for women and trans guys rather than 'men', her attractions cut across sex/gender divides. Moreover, Adele's narrative unfolded through constellations of mobile configurations: liberal upbringing, cross-national lifestyles, university culture, and frequenting of queer/lesbian venues. These evince nomadic subjectivities expressed through transversal motion across geographic, social, sexual, and gendered planes of engagement. Adele poignantly commented this is 'experience-based rather than identity-based' because 'no-one comes out and declares that they're straight'.

Brett's (20s/M) narrative similarly reveals bisexuality as a transformative affect, a becoming that has arisen out of varying social assemblages. But this has not occurred without struggle in his encounters with the totalising imperatives of sexual labelling. Describing himself as queer/both-sex-attracted, recognition of these attractions during high school was unproblematic. But after encountering his first sexual relationship with a man at university, Brett's sense of sexual identity altered. He recounted 'hanging around more with men' and consequently decided he was 'same-sex attracted having never really identified as bisexual'. His thinking shifted again a couple of years after a brief relationship with a woman. Brett explained that:

I had to change my way of thinking and go back to the idea of being attracted to both sexes. That was a bit of a hassle, because I'd just

spent two years thinking I was just attracted to men and it was a strange readjustment to coming back to a bisexual view.

Brett's university friends are now more diversely queer and accepting of sexual and gender fluidity, although outside the university arena, his same-sex-attracted male friends are 'very much attached to the young gay boy image'. Brett has negotiated but subsequently established lines of flight from both molar 'bisexual' and 'gay' identities, to his uniquely circumscribed queer location, not pre-fixed by a particular signifier. His bisexuality is an affect of encounters with other bodies – in his relationships with men and women at different times, as well as those who mobilise around particular identity labels and those who refuse such molarities. As Deleuze and Guattari (1987) submit, a minority that seeks solidarity via attachment to a unified representation or image – which is ultimately mimetic – nevertheless betrays a minority-becoming, something other than Other. In becoming-something other, Brett thus asignifies the dominant stereotype that bisexuality is a linear transitional phase to cementing a 'gay identity' (McLean 2008b; Udis-Kessler 1996).

For several of my participants, thinking of their sexualities as anything other than straight emerged through non-linear trajectories – assemblages of circumstances, which propelled their sexual lives on unexpected lines of flight from the majoritarian norm of heterosexuality, spawning movements of minoritarian-becomings. Often divorce or relationship break-up opened up exploration and experimentation through new frontiers of sexual desire, social milieux and relationship formations: for example, Cass (30s/F), Charlotte (30s/F), Cliff (60s/M), Jenna (30s/F), Leigh (30s/M), Morgan (50s/GQ), Paul (40s/M), Rachel (30s/F) and Sarah (20s/F). Sarah's story highlights the stranglehold of heteronormativity in shaping self-perceptions of one's sexual narrative. However, the boundaries that seek to contain and maintain socio-sexual order leach into unforeseen spaces of encounter. Sarah betrayed great difficulty in articulating inchoate bisexual feelings for which she struggled to find adequate language. Her responses were frequently punctuated with long reflective pauses, particularly in attempting

to conceptualise the implications of her sexuality, which for her, was a site of much consternation. A doctoral student of law and feminist theory, Sarah described herself as 'mostly heterosexual', explaining that she had 'almost always been completely heterosexual' except for one episode as a young teenager. However, she revealed that a recent overwhelmingly strong attraction towards another woman has unexpectedly thrown her relationship future into disarray:

I've been very heterosexual. I've had two fiancés in the past ten years, and we were planning children. I've had very monogamous heterosexual relationships since then. But I've recently fallen in love with another woman and broken up with my most recent partner because of it. It's a great unknown. I think it's the sudden switch because I've convinced myself so completely that I'm heterosexual, and for the past 10 years most of my friends have been heterosexual couples and they're having children. I know that I'm not lesbian so that's quite easy. I'm quite heterosexual so that's also quite easy. But I think it is a very difficult thing for me to work out. Being in love with a woman for me is a problem. It manifests itself as a problem, not socially as such, but psychologically I'm trying to work out where it fits, how it fits.

Several issues are worth noting about Sarah's narrative. Firstly, her teenage experience involved a two-year relationship with a male-female couple, a few years older than herself. Despite the significance of this relationship, she has discounted it from her subsequent strong sense of predominant heterosexuality. Secondly, Sarah's dilemma concerning her current feelings are problematised by her desire for children, which she believes would be 'tricky' in a same-sex relationship given her conservative, Eastern Asian family background, where in her words, 'gay doesn't exist'. Thirdly, and paradoxically, Sarah is strongly committed to feminism, particularly in terms of scholarship and personal relations. Throughout the interview, Sarah was cognisant of these contradictions and the ensuing confusion it presented to her, stating:

Partially, one thing I'm trying to work out is whether, just reading so much feminist theory, and having had three or four failed long term heterosexual relationships, I just wonder whether I'm considering the options, rather than *being actually* bisexual or *actually* gay.

Sarah, therefore, navigates between and within the border regions of several strata where kernels of becoming are making apparent that beneath the veneer of desired coherence, unity and order, molecular and heterogeneous movements are disturbing her equilibrium. At the time of the interview, Sarah was indeed 'swinging between surfaces' of stratification (Deleuze & Guattari 1987:61) and the possibilities that might liberate her towards a BwO, to disorganise the unity of majoritarian heterosexual organisation. Glimmers of transformative potential evoked nascent lines of flight when later Sarah wrote to me saying:

Your interview has opened up a different way of thinking about myself, and I thank you for it. It has made me confront the hidden nature of bisexuality (both within society and to myself!) and has provoked me to think about gender and sexuality in a much more personal way.

Such narratives speak to Deleuze's project of asignification that disdains the invidious authority held within the rigidity of identity labels in favour of articulating: 'I don't know what I am – I'd have to investigate and experiment with so many things in a non-narcissistic, non-oedipal way – no gay can ever definitively say "I'm gay"' (Deleuze 1995:11). Dean (40s/M), Tim (30s/M), Anthony (30s/M), Billy (30s/M) and Karen (50s/MTF) exemplify this asignifying impulse, having variously moved through and beyond the strata of the 'gay scene' and its attendant molar constraints of gay cultural codes. Their stories convey the complex conjunctions of difference, singularity and milieux from which emergent subjectivities realise multiplicities of sexual-becomings. Moreover, these recall the point made earlier by Massumi (1992) that becomings launch from a general model (stereotype) and create new bodies on the ground. This reiterates the overall

argument in this thesis, that bisexuality is an affect. Dean, part-time lawyer and student, lived in the U.K. during his 20s and 30s. Attracted to boys from his early teens, his first relationships in his 20s were with men, and it is during this time he tentatively referred to himself as 'gay'. When asked why, Dean replied:

Pretty much social pressure. At that time [mid 1980s], people were either straight or gay. I started having sex with men so thought, I must be gay. By about 27, I thought this is silly – I'm a gay man and I'm having a relationship with a woman. So at that point I said I must be bisexual because I'm not going to pretend that my past relationships with women were a mistake or I'm still finding my sexuality or I'm confused or those other stereotypes.

Dean struggled with the issues surrounding his public sexual identity until he attended a national bisexual conference in the U.K.². Here, he found others with whom he could be open and honest about his intimate relationships, which importantly, did not negate his relations with women. Tim (30s/M) recounted a similar struggle with 'gay' identity in his younger years. His first awareness of attraction towards men occurred in his late teens. Visiting a male neighbour one night, he experienced a compelling and unusual desire to 'cuddle him'. For Tim, such feelings presented an intense psychological struggle, being pulled between one molar identity and its polar opposite. Juxtaposed against majoritarian edicts of his Christian upbringing and moral conservatism of the regional 'redneck' environ in which he lived, Tim attempted 'many times to go completely straight' and alternatively 'go completely gay', noting that 'it was hard tying off religion versus sexuality'. Serendipitous conversations with a publicly-identified gay priest enabled him to eventually reconcile his religious beliefs with his queer sexuality. He now identifies as queer, and at the time of interview claimed to be more emotionally and sexually attracted to women, adding

² The U.K. hosts an annual five day conference, *BiConUK*, themed around bisexual issues, which caters to both academic and lay audiences (<<http://bicon.org.uk/>>).

'that could change; at different stages I have completely and utterly just wanted to be with a man; my sexuality is extremely fluid'.

Anthony (30s/M), on the other hand, was not troubled by his bisexual attractions *per se*, but for a period of his life appropriated a gay identity on pragmatic grounds:

I went through a process of exploring my feelings for men in my early-mid 20s. I came out at the time as "gay". It was a label I took on that I was ambivalent about for multiple reasons. Not only because my actual desires are bigger than that, but also for cultural and political reasons. Having lived and experienced other cultures, I think our culture has bit of an obsession with having labels, categories, and stereotypes. "Gay" was the available stereotype. At the time I saw it as quite liberating because it allowed me to explore my sexuality and my main sexual drive, which was towards men. So it seemed, "well I want a boyfriend, this is the best way to do it", the means to access and meet partners.

Anthony's relinquishment of 'gay' in favour of a queer idiom, designates 'broader' attractions, which are not simpatico with cultural codes of the 'gay scene' that conscript the subject into particular ways of being – organising the organism in Deleuzian language. Anthony reflected that 'gay for me now has a lot of cultural baggage, in terms of stereotypes and you have to have this lifestyle'. Billy (30s/M) also dabbled with a gay identification in his twenties, journeying through gay male sub-culture, which he found to be similarly constrained by rigid cultural codes. While strong sexual feelings for boys in his early teens led him to conclude he was 'gay', Billy's first sexual encounters were with girls, explaining that he 'just wanted to find a shag'. Eventually partnered to a woman, Billy occasionally solicited men for casual 'three-ways' with his girlfriend. When this relationship ended, Billy moved into what he referred to as 'gayland' – gay nightclubs, bars, venues, and dance parties. Like Anthony, the 'scene' enabled him to meet potential partners, but he described the social climate as variously: 'uber-

gay', 'nasty', 'misogynist', 'straight-hating' and 'cliquey'. After four years, he left 'gayland' behind, claiming it represented a 'false world' defined by 'bigotry and face-value'. Billy's account of this sub-cultural environment conveyed a prescriptive 'gay' lifestyle that, in his words, commanded, 'how you look, what you wear, who you fuck, how many times you've gone to the gym, and what drugs you are on'.

Dean, Tim, Anthony and Billy have variously sloughed off dominant strictures of *being* signified and affixed to a particular *form* of 'gay' subject, thus creating new bodies on the ground. Perhaps the *par exemplar* of this asignifying, asubjectifying process is Karen's (50s/MTF) encounter with 'gay' sub-culture. Prior to transition and during her time of gender confusion, Karen contemplated a gay identity, socialising and sleeping with gay men:

For an eight month period I experimented with being a gay man, thinking maybe I'm homosexual rather than trans. I tried to examine the Janice Raymond³ theory of transsexuality that deals with the homophobic gay man, who is so homophobic that he can't admit he is attracted to men, and the only way to resolve it, is to say you are a woman. I read that and thought: that's not true in my instance, in that I'm attracted to men but I'm attracted to women as well. So for that period, I seriously thought maybe I'm really gay. But by the end of it, the realisation was that these men were attracted to my penis not to me. That meant I'm not like them. I haven't found a category that fits me. And it took me a long time to figure out that I didn't have to fit into a category, I could just be me.

In contrast to those whose prior choice of identity labels were framed within and in response to gay men's culture, previously-identifying lesbians in my sample present a very different picture primarily because all are transgendered. Trans men Jay (19/FTM) and Matthew (30s/FTM) both

³ For transgender critiques of Janice Raymond's feminist treatise *The Transsexual Empire: The Making of the She-Male* (1979), which impugns male-to-female transsexuals, see Stryker & Whittle (2006).

experienced a broadening of their prior 'lesbian' desires to include men after beginning testosterone therapy. Hence, their revision from lesbian to a more expansive experience of gendered attractions occurred alongside corporeal 'becomings' involving gender-transition rather than any disaffection or disillusionment with lesbian worldviews. More dramatically, Glenda's (30s/MTF) steadfast and exclusive attraction for women unexpectedly reoriented during transition. Her story illuminates that hormones are but one aspect in a constellation of a becoming-life: multiple surgeries (face, breasts, genitals), hormonal therapy, psychical readjustments to her fully-realised gender as woman, nascent intimacies, reconfiguration of parent-child bonds, new hobbies. As a previously married 'man' with a wife and children, to the outside world Glenda appeared ostensibly straight or heterosexual. Further confounding any natural connection between sovereign signifiers and their embodied subjects, Glenda has (since childhood cognisance of gender) always considered herself to be female/woman, and therefore 'lesbian'. However, after taking up ballroom dancing after transition, a slight tremor created a hair-line fracture in Glenda's hitherto solid foundation of lesbian identity. This offered a glimpse of transformative possibility not previously imagined:

This guy kept on asking me to dance, which I declined. Eventually he grabbed me by the arm and literally dragged me onto the floor. What is surprising is that I did not have my automatic reaction I do when a guy does that; more than a few guys have ended up on the ground for doing similar [...] For some reason at ballroom dancing my reaction is modified or muted in some way. It has been the same with other guys at dancing as well [...] I have fallen in love with what can only be described as sex on four legs – the Paso Doble, which is *the* most sensual dance that just screams sexuality. There is no doubt about the gendering of the dancers. The lead exudes masculinity and dominance and the follower exudes femininity and submissiveness.

Glenda's transitional processes actuated molecular singularities of a body moving towards a BwO – morphing, changing, and responding to shifts in milieux and thereby discovering new forms of interpersonal gender relations. Corporeal transmutations entered proximities of the ballroom, a rule-driven milieu of choreographed routines scripted by gendered performance. In Glenda's words, a startling affect ensued:

I was a card carrying lesbian, just entering a relationship with a lovely lady. Along came this guy; in a heart beat I went from lesbian to bi. We danced last Saturday week and the brain went from being not interested in guys, except to dance with, to "I want to make babies with this guy". I've been walking down the street and looking at guys and finding something interesting. Prior to this I always said I would prefer to die rather than be with a guy. My simple neat worldview has been torpedoed and sunk in one fell swoop. It appears my revulsion to guys is a thing of the past.

Glenda speculated that perhaps this cataclysmic shift was caused by the lack of testosterone and a concomitant sexual re-wiring of the brain. Rather than seeking recourse to etiology, however, Deleuzian thinking recasts *cause-effect* analysis as ethology: *capacity-affect*. Glenda and her male partner are not simply two sexualised bodies dancing according to the prescribed roles of each. Rather, this relational connection is better understood through Deleuze's oft-cited refrain, the wasp-orchid becoming (Deleuze & Guattari 1987; Deleuze & Parnet 2006). Indeed, this refrain will recur throughout subsequent chapters as a key intervention in rethinking the sex/gender/sexuality nexus, particularly where I examine intimate partner arrangements in Chapter 8. Glenda and her dance partner exceed the hierarchical relationship (masculine/feminine, leader/follower) inscribed via the ballroom social field. Like wasp and orchid, one element becomes-other, not literally, but in symbiosis – in the desiring-production that charts a line between the two bodies – each entering the space of the other and emerging as something-other.

Glenda's XY chromosomal morphology cannot be altered; her metamorphosis thus refuses a linear articulation: from father, husband, heterosexual to mother, ex-wife, lesbian, bisexual. Cultural scripts do not easily accommodate such incongruity nor look beyond dominant significations that striate and codify familial, gendered and sexual molarities. The encounter between wasp-orchid, Glenda-child, or Glenda-partner is not defined by its component terms or a final product – pollination, procreation, Oedipalisation (mother-father-child triad), the dance – but the act itself, the space of engagement *between*. Such space is productive, creating processes of asignification and asubjectification. Two bodies connecting, dancing, are not reducible to separate entities masculine/active, feminine/passive but entail a 'double-capture' (Deleuze & Parnet 2006:2) rather than a take-over or unequal exchange. In becoming-feminine of the Paso Doble, Glenda enters a space of 'conjugating' bodies, a zone of proximity defined by co-presence rather than hierarchical relations (Deleuze & Guattari 1987:280). The becoming-sexual for Glenda is, therefore, a germinal seed, an affect that 'throws the self into upheaval and makes it reel' (Deleuze & Guattari 1987:240). In this becoming, Glenda deterritorialised molar attachment to the master signifier 'lesbian', and hence, reconsidered her sexuality in more expansive bisexual terms.

Asignifying Gay and Lesbian

In contrast to the accounts of those such as Glenda, Anthony, and Billy, several participants retained some investment in gay and lesbian identities. But the articulation of their identities is not bound to an 'ethical universal rule' to borrow Foucault's (1989:385) words; rather 'gay' and 'lesbian' are reconfigured or re-signified to reflect complex corporeal realities. Creative figurations entail disorganising the normative unity of physically-sexed bodies, which under the aegis of master signifiers perpetuate notions of sexuality predicated by reproduction and genitalia. The most striking examples of this are beheld in the cases of Matthew (20s/FTM), Morgan (50s/GQ), and Dana (50s/I/F), whose sex/gender-diverse profiles complicate unified claims to gay and lesbian identity. Their histories underscore the troubled conceptual relationship between sexuality and sex/gendered bodies.

Aided by testosterone therapy, Matthew 'passes' as male, but retains uterus, ovaries and vagina. He previously identified as lesbian, and was in his current relationship (with a lesbian-identifying woman) when beginning his gender-transition. Although describing his relationship as 'queer' and planning to start a family with his lesbian partner, Matthew prefers to identify as gay, as this better reflects his predominant sexual preference for men. Morgan, designated female at birth and having lived contentedly as a woman for most of her 50-plus years, is currently undergoing transition from 'female/woman' to genderqueer in order to validate what she feels is her 'whole' gender, which comprises a mosaic of masculine and feminine qualities. After ending a 20-year marriage, Morgan moved into an academic and women-centred lifestyle mid-life. Despite ongoing occasional sexual relationships with men, she identified predominantly as lesbian, actively engaging in feminist/LGBT advocacy and activism. However, Morgan's recent shift to genderqueer, in her view, 'explodes all boxes', and thus, problematises the deployment of same-sex, both-sex, and opposite-sex identity categories. Dana is an XX chromosomal intersex female, who was surgically 'assigned' male at birth. She was brought up male and lived as an androgynous 'man' for more than four decades before discovering her intersex status due to serious illness. Subsequent medical treatment for this illness altered her hormonal morphology resulting in a 'female' appearance. Dana nominally described her current relationship as lesbian, but noted that her intersexuality undermines the accuracy of applying lesbian or same-sex status to her situation.

However, it is not simply corporeal ambiguity that renders conventional assumptions about gay and lesbian identity problematic. Jenna (30s/F), Graham (40s/M), Julia (60s/F) and William (60s/M), each of whose sense of sex/gender has remained stable throughout their biographies, invoke a becoming-minoritarian of their gay and lesbian identities. Rather than being ruled by tyrannical signifiers, these participants invested their nominated sexual identities with transformative possibility – a futurity of subjectivity that is not beholden to a preconceived template. Jenna hesitantly identified as lesbian having debated the appropriateness of 'bisexual', which she now

considers more aptly described the transitional phase when her marriage was waning and attractions towards women forming. Divorced with a young child, Jenna is currently in a relationship with a lesbian-identifying woman. Her partner has had a significant sexual history with men, and still acknowledges that sexual play with men is a future possibility. Jenna, therefore, interrogated the term 'lesbian':

After we were separated, I bonked my first girl – and thought "yeah, I really like girls". There wasn't a whole lot of turning back in terms of interest in men in many respects. Having said that, since then I have noticed on the odd occasion I will find a guy attractive. There was part of me at first thinking – "oh, but now I'm a lesbian, I can't find men attractive – it's wrong!" I'd get really bothered about that. Although I *predominantly* identify as a lesbian, sometimes I don't like that label. Sometimes labels are helpful and sometimes they aren't. So I sit with sometimes saying I'm same-sex attracted. I sometimes toy with the idea of queer but I don't know how I am with some of the political implications: "we're queer, and we don't want labels".

Jenna (30s/F) conveyed a gnawing unease concerning the ethical codes embedded in 'lesbian' as a universal signifier. Again, the Deleuzian idea of swinging between the strata and flight lines that offer an escape are pervasive. Jenna's movement in both lesbian-centred networks and the community sexual health sector have fostered reflexive attitudes to identity labelling. Indeed, she observed that within her personal circle the 'idea of lesbian' is broader than the dominant assumption of exclusive same-sex relations, and includes lesbian-identifying women who have sex with men, and also genderqueer. Jenna's observations echo McLean's (2008a) study of lesbian communities, which found that particular boundaries around the articulation of lesbian identities contain space for diversity. Evident in Jenna's following comment is a consequent erosion of fixed boundaries through examining the operation and affects of fluidity:

Permission to acknowledge fluidity has been key in our 'coming out' group, to not freaking people out by them feeling that they have to adopt a lesbian identity. There's something about recognising fluidity that gives people a real sense of safety around being free to explore. Instead of, "Right, one day you are Miss Straight and the next day you have to be Ms Lesbian". I think that is very confronting – so that's been really helpful for me to identify that. It's about permission to have freedom to *not* have to have a label.

Graham (40s/M), previously married with teenage children, now identifies as gay and is in a committed relationship with a man. Juxtaposed alongside a milieu of rural Catholic conservatism, he 'suppressed' his sexual desire towards men for many years, 'choosing' the majoritarian path of heterosexual marriage. This period was not without profound anxiety; yet, his narrative does not frame or cast aside his marital relationship as undesirable, unloving, aberrant or inauthentic. Rather, Graham's reflections invoke a eulogy:

I was madly in love with my wife and it hurt for a long time when that finally came to an end. I admit however, that I chose to be heterosexual, and that somewhat tainted the feelings I had. Nonetheless, I was in love. We get on really well, we still do, we were married for about seven years, and I'm still really good friends with her; we share the parenting of our children. When we were married – normal marital problems I suppose with learning to live with another person, and we had a full good sex life, it was quite enjoyable, I had no problems. I have never described myself as bisexual, but certainly it was good.

Graham's bisexual history, therefore, unravels and decodes the predominant stereotype of 'married gay men' – a stereotype that congeals male bisexuality around misogyny, repugnance of sexual contact with women, and covert infidelities. As Angelides (1995:29) argues, bisexuality urges a challenge to the uncritical adoption of rigid unreflexive categories of gay and lesbian

whereby differences *between* unified categories repress differences *within*. Hence, alternative realities are obscured from view. Julia's (60s/F) story underlines how such alternative realities can become manifest within seemingly rigid planes of social structure. Unlike Graham, Julia did not experience a moral compunction to adhere to the normative edicts of marital convention. Against the backdrop of 1960s socio-sexual transformation, Julia deterritorialised the dominant paradigm of Western marriage, entering into an 'open marriage' that allowed concurrent relationships with a man and later a woman to flourish. Julia conveyed some discord with the idiom of bisexuality, initially perceiving it to be negatively associated with promiscuity or the need to sexually 'roam' between men and women. While her views have tempered somewhat, she emphasised that her sexual relations with men and women were framed by love for and attractions to personal qualities rather than gender. As such, Julia distanced herself from sexual labelling, but hesitantly described herself according to available cultural lexicon as 'primarily lesbian' because:

The latter part of my life has been pretty much exclusively lesbian, although the earlier part of my life wasn't. I've never labelled myself as bisexual but probably that's what I should really call myself if I need a label at all. But it's still not one that fits very well. The most important single relationship in terms of my own emotional and sexual life was with that second man.

After the demise of these various relationships, Julia (as a single parent) moved into a woman-focused social sphere, undertaking tertiary Women's Studies during the 1970s. Located within a politico-cultural landscape of sexual freedom, second wave feminism, and explorations of lesbian lifestyle, some of Julia's lesbian friends were likewise coming out of marriages with children. Her 'primarily lesbian' lifestyle was not a militant response to patriarchal power, but rather a relational process of becoming-minoritarian. Each encounter with a molar domain, its attendant role/s and singular experiences produced a particular affect that peeled back micro-elements of dominant norms: marriage + wife + mother + open-relationship + lover;

divorce + student + feminist + single parent; academia + literature + lesbian; retirement + grandmother + author + hobby gardener. As Claire Colebrook (2002:xv-xvi) argues, a body becomes what it is, not through assigning terms but through desiring relations such that a 'female body can become lesbian, mother, human, citizen – I become human in perceiving other bodies "like me", which is a relation of desire'.

Not only does Julia asignify 'lesbian' through the importance accorded to each of her relationships regardless of gender, but she also embodies 'becoming-woman' as the possibility of 'beyond identity' or domesticated subordination (Colebrook 2000b:3). That becoming-woman is not attached to the signifier 'woman' is made clear in William's (60s/M) 'gay' political identity, as he disorganises hierarchies of sexuality and gender. William, married for some 20 years, proudly proclaimed himself a 'frock fairy', telling me: 'I've always done the housework in every relationship I've ever been in. I did the washing, ironing and I did a better job of it'. Bullied as a 'sickly, fragile' child, he was frequently 'girled'. Strengthened through both his upbringing by a tertiary-educated mother with socialist sympathies and egalitarian ethos, and marriage to a feminist, William advocates for both gender and sexual equality on all levels of social functioning. His peregrinations have seen him travel continents in academic, performance arts, and AIDS-related advocacy. In terms of his sexuality, William has much life experience to reflect upon, and instantiates a Deleuzian affect in arguing for a middle way:

I'm quite sexually capable and experienced with men and women but I've never felt I had to join a group in terms of my self-identification. The reason I've said I was gay was basically for political reasons rather than because of identification. I think there are a lot more people like me than you would imagine. There is this middle path without being trapped in a quagmire of definitions. Affectiveness [*sic*] I suppose is the correct word.

Conclusion

Karen (50s/MTF) reflected at one point that her life has been, and continues to be, a 'reinvention of the self'. It is this notion of reinvention that insistently pulses throughout my data. While my participants negotiate and clearly take pleasure in their various identities, the terms they use are not beholden to a universal ethical rule, but are a constant production of emergent subjectivities. Narratives of queer, bisexual and complexly conceived sexualities underlines that (bi)sexual becomings are entangled in multiplex assemblages of contingent yet continually moving elements across multiple and immanent planes of engagement: social, relational, discursive, biological, institutional, psychical, and emotive. Discursive dualisms figure centrally in participants' reflections of their sexualities as hurdles of the sex/gender/sexuality landscape that must be circumnavigated. The question is not to be rid of dualisms, as Claire Parnet comments to Deleuze, but to find where language flows between the dualisms (Deleuze & Parnet 2006:26). Consequently, dualisms are not rejected out of hand, but apprehended as one element of multiple-textured spaces that bodies navigate.

Rather than merely look to discourse, Deleuze urges us to consider how bodies in connection with other bodies navigate the net of binaries that attempt to entrap us and to locate the fractures that might allow us to pass through. My data exposes such ruptures, invoking new ways of thinking through the in-between spaces of corporeal encounters. The micro-elements and heterogeneities of respondents' lived realities negotiate, confront, struggle with, and flow through and between the strata, revealing the inadequacy of language and rigid concepts to accurately reflect the intricacies and multiplicities of one's unique self. Bodies and names intertwine, synchronously being made and unmade, coded and decoded – a corporeal dynamism that with each change in milieu reshapes the specificities of bisexuality. Each individuation is not a formation of the 'whole' subject but entails a shift in proximity from which a different utterance (as opposed to signification or signifier) ensues. As demonstrated, Deleuzian thinking challenges the fixed totality and authority of closed and contained signifiers that codify and organise bodies into static beings, such

as 'gay', 'lesbian', 'man', 'woman'. Rather, we should undo these from the inside, as my participants have done, and prise open the binds and pincers of sedimentations, which impose 'forms, functions, bonds, dominant and hierarchized organizations, organized transcendences' into an abstract homogenous notion of 'we' (Deleuze & Guattari 1987:159).

The following chapter builds on the perplexities made evident thus far in sex/gender-diverse narratives through the paradigm of 'monstrosity'. Participants' stories of intersex, trans, genderqueer, and gender ambivalence figure centrally in the discussion. Because these are manifestly cross-cut by corporeal rearrangement, conceptual boundaries are continually in motion. The nexus between sex, gender and sexuality becomes accordingly entangled in novel, often surprising ways. Such entanglement resists teleological resolution, and in particular, underlines and augments difficulties in reducing or defining sexuality according to sexed body-parts (particularly genitalia) and gender of partner. I therefore examine the tropes of embodied ambiguity, anomaly, and indeterminacy. In order to do this, I deploy Deleuze and Guattari's explication of anomalous borderline spaces, which spawn monstrous incarnations referred to as teratologies. Here, I develop new avenues of exploration, which map convoluted trajectories and interstitial spaces of transitive embodiment, sexual becomings and experiential realities, which rarely appear in bisexual literature. Utilising monstrosity as a theoretical lens brings to light a positive underside to those spaces of corporeal in-betweenness, which are dominantly constructed and represented as deviant, aberrant, or morally impugned. I thus argue that 'monstrous assemblages' generate a potent affect through hybrid-becomings, which challenge dominant social constructions of sex, gender and (bi)sexuality. The next chapter demonstrates that residing within the teratological cartographies of my participants are the kernels of revolutionary promise to rewrite the norms of sexual organisation and social formations.

6

Teratologies

The monster always represents the disruption of categories, the destruction of boundaries, and the presence of impurities and so we need monsters and we need to recognize and celebrate our own monstrosities.

Judith Halberstam (1995:27)

As witnessed through my participants' dialogue, relieving bisexuality of its dependence upon dominant signifiers opens up the in-between spaces of embodied reality to further scrutiny. These interstitial regions, as concluded in Chapter 5, are multiple – a veritable concatenation of interconnecting sexed/gendered bodies that exceed univocity. While feminist and sociological critiques convincingly argue that biological sexed difference relies on the construction of normative gender categories in order to uphold the binary distinction, and hence, open up the episteme of sexual dimorphism to question (Butler 1993; Connell 2009; Delphy 1993; Fausto-Sterling 2000; Holmes 2007; Rahman & Jackson 2010), sexuality research frequently lapses into an unquestioned use of man/woman, male/female nomenclature. As concluded in Chapter 2, this is particularly striking in studies wherein the categories of 'bisexual men' and 'bisexual women' escape critical interrogation.

Accordingly, this chapter explores the corporeal spaces and lived realities that flow *between* the totalising signifiers of man/woman, male/female, masculine/feminine. Here, I examine data from my study in which embodied expressions of diverse sex/genders, such as trans, intersex, and genderqueer are key thematic figurations. As such, I locate my participants' narratives within the conceptual field of teratologies and monstrosity. I argue that this analytical perspective further develops the central contention in this thesis, that bisexuality is a complex and contested site of

transformative affects. Interpreting my data through a teratological lens importantly opens up the sociological imagination of bisexuality to manifold possibilities, which are realised when empirical inquiry expands beyond that of simply 'bisexual men' and 'bisexual women', as undertaken in my study. In order to do this, I employ the tropes of Deleuze and Guattari's (1983, 1987) *Body without Organs* (BwO), and Guattari's (1995, 1996) autopoiesis as central schematics to demonstrate how anomalous borderline figurations are enacted as hybrid-becomings, which, as argued in Chapter 5, are not reducible to their component parts. In addition, I deploy Deleuze-Guattarian thinking to expand upon critical feminist interrogation of the female body as monstrous-feminine (for example, Braidotti 1994a; Creed 1993; Kristeva 1982), and explore indeterminate femininities, which disrupt and re-imagine dominant constructions of sexual difference.

These theoretical ideas are mobilised to show how my participants creatively invent the self (autopoiesis), which is produced through 'breaking apart' the coherent body and rearranging corporeality (producing the BwO) in connection with self, others, and sociality. This will elucidate how sexed bodies, gender expression, and sexuality co-mingle in complex non-linear relationships. My data thus foregrounds the epistemic problem of tailoring polymorphous realities to normative paradigms. The teratological vista enacted through respondents' narratives, not only brings into view proliferating possibilities of the (bi)sexual subject, but also rewrites conventional constructions of gendered roles – such as mother, father, wife and husband. Although embodied teratologies are filtered through dominant representations (of fear, threat, moral impropriety etc.), these, I contend, exceed notions of deviance and otherness constructed by circulations of power and socio-structural inequity. Rather, the evidence from my research reveals that monstrosity is actuated through the positive production of desire (as opposed to the psychoanalytic view of desire as lack), and is, hence, enlightening and enabling. This chapter, therefore, illuminates the deconstructive and reconstructive capacity of respondents' embodied sex/genders, which are located across multiple and interconnecting border regions. I submit that the teratological analysis explicated here exposes the

possibility of revolutionary worlds through reconfiguring bisexuality as transformative affects of monstrous corporeal assemblages. The epistemic relation between body and society is thus re-imagined as metamorphic – which, viewed from the habitus of the 'middle', radically reorients thinking of bisexuality from ontology to teratology.

Crucially, diversities of non-normative sex/gender and bisexuality share a common 'middle' ground – a mutuality of 'life in the border regions', which Max Valerio (1998) opines, offer thresholds of experience that are at once heretical and revelatory. For border regions are inhabited by anomaly and ambiguity – liminal bodies, desires and practices, which resist the shackles of moral governance and normative categories. Liminality threatens social order and hygiene: variously positioned in relation to purity and danger (Douglas 2002), moral hygiene and the abject (Kristeva 1982), wherein constructions of monstrosity haunt the cultural imaginary. Hailing from nineteenth century study of biological monstrosities or anomalies (OED 2011), the language of teratology has found its way into cultural, queer and feminist examinations of monstrous and hybrid figurations (both real and phantasmagorical), which slip between the cracks of categorical veracity¹. While constructions of the monstrous in relation to women's and queer subjectivities looms large in such analyses, empirical social science studies of LGBTI have yet to embrace its potential. It is in these border zones, which are often termed 'no man's land', where indeterminate corpora (bisexual, transgender, intersex, androgyny) instil both fear and fascination of uncertainty – unknown becomings.

Intersex and 'Borderless Love'

I begin the discussion with the only intersex participant in my study, Dana (50s/I/F). For, it is here, in the largely invisible realm of intersexuality, that the phenomenon (and mythos) of teratologies is acutely realised. Intersex births fell under the scientific gaze of 18th and nineteenth century biologists, which spawned a new science of teratologies (Fausto-Sterling 2000;

¹ See for example Baumgartner & Davis (2008), Braidotti (1994a, 1996), Cohen (1996), Creed (1993), Halberstam (1995), Haraway (1991) and Shildrick (2002).

Shildrick 2002). As Foucault's (2003) juridico-biological analysis of abnormality elucidates, from the Middle Ages to the 18th century the monster was a mixture of two realms, species, bodies or forms – a transgression of natural limits and classifications. The monstrosity of the hermaphrodite accordingly materialised under a discourse of malformation, defects of nature and imperfection, thus defying the natural law of two sexes (Foucault 2003:72). As Halberstam (1995:6) importantly notes, the monster represents a 'crisis of knowledge, a category crisis' that becomes all the more monstrous in the uneasy alliance between sexuality and gender. However, it is not simply an epistemic crisis but an ontological one as ambiguous corpora escape the policing of sexually organised bodies.

Such policing of sexed bodies is palpably drawn in Dana's story, which I briefly mentioned in the previous chapter. Intersex troubles the bisexual landscape in portentous ways. It shakes the very foundations of how we have come to see the division of the human species into male and female as a natural or scientific 'truth' of nature – a truth that has incontrovertibly welded the concepts of gender (boy/man, girl/woman) and sexuality (homosexual, heterosexual, bisexual) to the binary model of sexual difference. Indeed, what Dana's experiences highlight is how the body figures centrally as a malleable and morally freighted object of scientific scrutiny, technological intervention, and socio-sexual functioning. Intersex voices are rarely heard in sociological discourse and empirical research. Academic attention to intersex is mostly focused through the medical gaze (Kerry 2008), that is, how intersex profiles are deemed *abnormalities* of the male or female condition. As such, intersex is a neglected area of critical scrutiny in terms of how it is discursively constructed, understood and theorised, not only in bisexual research, but gender and sexuality scholarship overall. Nomenclature that describes and codifies a wide range of physical variations and features (chromosomal, gonadal, genital, and anatomical) beyond 'typical' ascriptions of 'male' and 'female' includes: hermaphrodite, pseudo-hermaphrodite, intersex and Disorders of Sexual Development (DSD). Such terminological variance is set against a battleground of medical, cultural, political, moral and ideological discourses

that foregrounds pathology of corporeal anomalies and human rights issues concerning forced surgical intervention in infants (Dreger 1998; Fausto-Sterling 2000; Holmes 2007; Holmes 2009). The debates and tensions surveyed in these texts surfaced in Dana's interview. Dana considered 'hermaphrodite' to be a demeaning term that consigned the complexity of sexual variations to mythological stereotypes, while DSD, in her view, pathologised physiological difference as medical conditions warranting treatment, correction or cure. I, therefore, employ 'intersex' as this was Dana's preferred term.

Self-describing as a lesbian, intersex, XX chromosomal female, Dana made clear that these labels do not confer any sense of molar identity as lesbian, woman or female. When asked why she elected to participate in this project, Dana commented that she likes to challenge people's understandings of bisexuality, which alongside lesbianism and homosexuality, is an 'iffy' concept. Dana quizzically remarked:

So when you say bisexuality, how does that fit in with an intersex person; how does *that* [intersex] fit in with gender and sex stereotypes? You then want to define people who are participating in this [...] you need a fairly substantial definition of what it is to be a man and what it is to be a woman. We assume there is; but there is not. For every single feature – fertility, ways of reproducing, external genitalia, internal reproductive organs – those things that you would like us to define, there are exceptions. And it then becomes apparent that the idea of male and female is very much a human construction just as gender is.

Issuing the following challenge, Dana asked: 'when my [female] partner and I have sex is that bisexual – that all three sexes are involved at once?' Dana's case is instrumental in realising the micro-possibilities of bisexuality as a teratological intervention – one that makes correlates of sex, gender and sexuality stammer in Deleuzian thought. Questions concerning the veracity of the two-sexed model, which present 'male' and 'female' as discrete

objective entities, resounds throughout intersex literature (for example, Dreger 1998; Fausto-Sterling 2000; Holmes 2009; Kessler 1990). The transcendental signifiers of 'male' and 'female' do not in actuality reflect the complexities of physical embodiment. Hence, Anne Fausto-Sterling's (1993, 2000) tongue-in-cheek proposition that there are at *least* five sexes – males, females, herms (true hermaphrodites), ferms (female-gonadal hermaphrodites) and merms (male-gonadal hermaphrodites). What becomes apparent is how the intersexed subject disorganises the expected order of biological elements and subsequently fails to 'add up' to a complete whole. Dana is thus *par exemplar* of Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) molecular Body without Organs, which breaks down the organisation of the physical body into a collection of parts rather than aggregating these under tyrannical signifiers (whether male, female, lesbian or bisexual) – molar identities that codify how we should look, behave, think or function.

Dana's intersex narrative does not simply jettison the male/female binary into a transcendental abstract wilderness. It is important to restate here that transcendent universals are not separate from 'reality' or 'materiality' – but occur within planes of immanence. Dualisms, as Deleuze maintains throughout his philosophy, are a necessary enemy. We need to understand their modalities and affects – what bodies *do* in response and how actions at the micro-level might weaken their univocity. Thus, Dana's narrative indeed weakens the signifying sovereignty of not only the male/female sexed model but also the heterosexual/homosexual schema. But the scientific authority invested in this binary, one that has manufactured the 'male' and 'female' body out of a mosaic of physical elements located within the immanence of life (gonads, hormones, chromosomes, genitals, muscle mass, fat distribution, facial and bodily hair) has profoundly affected Dana's entire biography. Her intersex narrative evinces Deleuze and Guattari's (1987:159) exclamation:

The BwO howls: "They've made me an organism! They've wrongfully folded me! They've stolen my body!" The judgment of

God uproots it from its immanence and makes it an organism, a signification, a subject. It is the BwO that is stratified.

In fact, Dana's body could be understood as having been literally stolen from her at birth in order to manufacture a semblance of normative sexed physicality. For Dana, the sex/gendered division of humanity into male/female, man/woman, and boy/girl present material concerns, for in her words:

The idea of maleness and femaleness and gender roles are real issues because that is what informed the surgeons who decided that there was enough bits and pieces there to make me a male at birth, and they did some fairly extensive surgery way back in the 1950s so that I wouldn't insult the idea of heteronormative binary lives. And I've suffered. I've paid dearly for that so that the binary can be kept in place. I've paid dearly so that gendered expectations can be kept in place and we are the ones that pay the cost, the exceptions.

Foucault (2003:56) argues that the monster is both impossible and forbidden. At birth Dana's body was judged by medical authorities to be a breach of nature, bearing attributes that required modification in order to *conform* and *perform* according to morphological standards. Her corporeal make-up was therefore deemed impermissible, unruly, or as Butler (1993:33) might say, unintelligible. That the monstrous figure represents the uncontrollable through inciting both 'horror and fascination, aberration and adoration' (Braidotti 1996:136-7), the notion of monstrosity ultimately pivots on the construction of a morally appropriate (and functioning) body. Genital surgery therefore delivers the means of taming monsters according to Katrina Roen (2008:53) – to ensure moral compliance. As Susannah Cornwall (2009) argues, the medical criteria regarding 'successful' surgery for intersexed children is still based on how the finished genitals will measure up. That genitals must work for heterosexual penetration, upholds adherence to the abnormality paradigm thereby reifying normalcy. Such normalcy is specifically heteronormative, and as Cornwall maintains,

assumptions about gender, therefore, work backward to the interpretation of nature and the body. 'Who has been closeted in such delineations?' Cornwall (2009:223) asks.

Dana's account of her life goes some way to answer Cornwall's question. The surgical (re)construction of Dana's body, as in many intersex cases, was not revealed to her – she discovered it when a series of health circumstances conspired to lay bare the secrets of her corporeality. The secretive aspect by which family and doctors contrive to withhold knowledge from a child of their intersex status is referred to as 'social surgery' – a practice that seeks to uphold and preserve gender and sexual norms (Preves 2011:131). Unbeknownst to both herself and medical practitioners for some four decades, Dana was born with a life-threatening metabolic disorder – Congenital Adrenal Hypoplasia (CAH) – a condition that affects hormone level uptake, and may lead to 'ambiguous' or 'atypical' male-female external physiology, as in Dana's case. Assigned 'male' at birth, Dana was brought up mostly as a boy. Yet, a residual 'ambiguity' of physical sexual characteristics rendered her vulnerable. Shildrick (2002:6) comments that without the security of boundaries, vulnerability is the 'irreducible companion of the monstrous'. Thus, in certain circumstances, Dana was treated and dressed up as a girl, suffering significant child sex abuse by male offenders. Up until her metabolic condition was diagnosed and treated, she told me her appearance was quite androgynous, but perhaps more (conventionally) male than female. Following treatment for CAH, Dana's hormonal balance and outward appearance gradually altered to that of an apparent 'female', at which point she changed her name and lived as a woman.

While Dana sees surgical interference as an abuse of human rights, notions of sex and gender have been of little personal concern to her. The 'fly in the ointment' Dana told me, was her experience of significant child sex abuse, which rendered her immune to sexual feeling and lacking any sexual life until after undergoing lengthy psychological counselling mid-life. Having now developed enough trust in both herself and others, she stated a

preference for women as intimate partners. Yet, when referring to her relationship, Dana explains that even if her partner were male she believes their relationship would be no different, telling me:

I think we probably still would have ended up being together, but because we are supposedly same-sex, and given the limits of language, we end up being classified as lesbian. We have never actually felt that we are lesbian; same-sex reinforces the gender binary and it's all very iffy. From the moment we met we were just in love – a kind of borderless being in love.

Strange Encounters: Monstrous (Trans)Formations

The ontological elusiveness of bisexuality when coupled with corporeal instability pivots on unhinging an obsessive Western epistemic concern with the coherent constitution of the human form and the relations into which it enters. Positioning bisexuality within this teratological exchange renders visible human-technological relations that re-imagine the stable and normative corpus as a creative potentiality. As Braidotti (2002:225) suggests, such a connection realises a new symbiotic unity of the Deleuzian kind, a becoming-machine that refashions how we conceptualise sexuality and procreation. The co-extension of human and technology, as witnessed in Dana's case, was life-altering in terms of the surgical intervention at birth, and life-saving with regard to her metabolic condition. Both events produced an affect that metamorphosed her libidinal profile. The issue of identity boundaries, therefore, 'raises its monstrous head' (Braidotti 2002:191) as we saw in Dana's story, where attempting to label her sexual identity and intimate partner relationship is fraught by an undecidability of not only language but ontology.

Such undecidability telescopes a radical alterity in monstrous bodies, which as Jeremy Cohen (1996:18) argues, illuminates possibilities of other genders, sexual practices and social customs. Deleuzian thinking recalibrates the sociological field of the bisexual subject (and its relation within the structure/agency dynamic) from ontology to teratology through elucidating

the productive regions of liminality and monstrosity. Inhabited by BwOs, the categorical disturbance of corpora announces 'a thousand tiny sexes' (Deleuze and Guattari 1987:213) and multiplicities of libidinal encounters beyond the majoritarian paradigms of sex/gender. Sex/gender-diverse narratives in my study are thus a rich repository of such monstrous non-conformities. But rather than confine analysis to a molar category of 'transgender' (which insinuates a 'third' gender), a teratological analysis opens outwards and rhizomatically, which enables vicissitudes of sex/gender embodiment and expression located elsewhere to be rendered visible for examination. For the rhizome not only positions the monstrous at every threshold of borderland existence, but reprises monstrosity as the futurity of desiring-production.

Participants spoke of their lives in terms of events in which sexual desires and experiences were recounted as one part of complex and mobile assemblages of transformative connections. Such transformations betray elements of the monstrous wherein the porosity of boundaries affords the 'uncertainty of strange encounters' (Shildrick 2002:7). Morgan's (50s/GQ) narrative epitomises such uncertainty having arrived recently at a cross-road that contests shifting social figurations of wife, mother, and lesbian. Self-describing as genderqueer and feminist, Morgan explained that:

My transition would be from female to queer not female to male [...] I'm not comfortable as just a woman, I want to embrace the whole range of my personality, not just that part of it – but I don't want to discard it, or reject it or leave it behind, I want to bring it with me on this journey into being something other than being just male or female, which is what I always felt when I was a kid anyway.

Morgan is contemplating modifications including: testosterone therapy to deepen her voice and redistribute fat and muscle mass; and a double mastectomy. However, the psychological assessment process for such desired corpora does not look favourably on those who wish to remain in the queer interstices of gender. Morgan informed me: 'still engaged in a war of

attrition with the gender clinic, which is very much stuck in the gender binary, so no T [testosterone] yet'. Divorced from a long-term marriage, with now adult children, Morgan's journey has traversed through and beyond the tightly policed strata of fundamentalist Christianity, where gender norms, regimes of power, value systems and agency were intricately imbricated. Morgan's entry into and exit out of such social conservatism revealed a Deleuzian pathway of lodging in the strata in order to understand its invidious stranglehold on the body before establishing a line of flight. To fully appreciate the 'body of the girl' that was 'stolen' from her (Deleuze & Guattari 1987:276) required Morgan to understand and repeal the corporeal binds of heterosexual, married, molar woman:

When I was a kid, gender was completely irrelevant to me. I always knew I was a girl, but it wasn't important. I didn't understand why it was relevant. I was fiercely intelligent and independent and it didn't affect my life, it didn't seem to affect how anybody treated me. I wasn't conflicted about being a girl, because I didn't see it as being a handicap or anything. At puberty I was very happy to get my period, grow breasts and become interested in boys, but I was usually the one who asked them out – like I didn't do femininity in a conventional way. I never took on the normal Australian way of doing femininity or masculinity because I was usually reading books. But then I got involved in Christianity, and in Christianity gender did make a difference [...] I got involved in a fundamentalist church, which was very misogynistic.

Deterritorialising the molar scripts of servile wife, mother and missionary ensued from an assemblage of life changes as Morgan discovered and revelled in feminist studies and queer-feminist activism and advocacy. The affects of this were considerable, leading to the simultaneous demise of her marriage, withdrawal from the Church and exploration of sexual relations with women. While adopting a lesbian lifestyle, Morgan has had occasional 'friendship-sex' with 'male-bodied' persons and does not rule out future recurrences of such intimacies. However, rejecting conventional categories

in favour of an 'emergent' gender identity and re-defining her prior 'lesbian' identity as 'generally attracted to female-bodied persons', Morgan explained, is complex because fluidity is largely not understood in the public domain:

It somewhat problematises the concepts of "same-sex", "opposite-sex" and "both-sex" attracted. It's like speaking two languages – you have to translate across the two cultural worlds – and that's what people like me have to do all the time too, because my identities and my behaviours aren't really understood in the LGBT communities.

The creativity required in rethinking future possibilities for Morgan is evident in a follow-up email to me where she stated, 'I'm attracted to a person who defines herself as 'trans-sensual' – that is, attracted to trans people. So there's hope!' Such categorical excess, which finds escape routes from dominant ways of conceiving relationships, is a recurring motif in narratives that traverse the border regions between male/female, man/woman. While some participants have undertaken physical modifications via surgery and/or hormone therapy, others have not. Various encompassing a range of identifications – including transgender, genderqueer, bi-gendered, or simply men and women – the lived realities betray the difficulty in drawing lines or correlations between gender labels and sexed bodies. Hence, stories like Morgan's and Dana's offer a teratological interdiction to conventional assumptions about sexuality. Though neither identify as bisexual, the fluid terrain of their sexual biographies sees an excess of unspoken bisexuality seep out beyond the limits of the signified subject. The monstrosity of in-between or border region living evokes a mixed category system, a non-binary polymorphism, which as Cohen (1996:7) points out, calls attention to what must not be crossed – the transgressive and perversely erotic.

Indeterminate Femininities

What both Dana's and Morgan's stories underline are indeterminate qualities of the female-feminine-sexual body. Indeterminacy does not simply refer to a state of being (neither 'this' nor 'that'), but is a space of corporeal

production – that is, something-other than hegemonic 'male', 'female' or 'lesbian' ensues from this borderline zone. Bisexual, intersexual, transsexual, and genderqueer bodies intertwine producing a teratology, which in Braidotti's (2000:171) words, is 'monstrously different'. Such monstrous transfigurations are haunted by spectral anxieties of sexual difference. Teratologies constantly negotiate molar formations that seek to ensnare the subject. Revoking subjective entrapment is subversive and potentially liberatory, but nonetheless carries the burden and threat of injury. The promise of 'future sexual becomings' (Deleuze 2004:286) pivots on disarming the hierarchical authority of male/female boundaries. This effectively produces anarchic bodies – Bodies without Organs that upset, disturb, and rewrite Oedipal narratives, which privilege a patriarchal phallic economy.

Consequently, Dana and Morgan invoke echoes of the 'monstrous-feminine' (Creed 1993, 2004) in threatening to castrate the coherent gender order. As feminist scholars (for example, Braidotti 1994a, 2002; Creed 1993, 2004; Kristeva 1982; Shildrick 2002; Toffoletti 2007; Ussher 2006) have variously argued, the cultural imaginary has a tendency to construct the female body as a monstrous borderline figure. Depicted as the embodiment of abject decay (via excremental maternal bodily fluids), moral threat (sexual seduction), and hysterical passions and neuroses (Douglas 2002; Freud 1931; Kristeva 1982), the feminine body is a site of consternation within the patriarchal symbolic field. As such, the coupling of femininity and monstrosity as 'monstrous others' in feminist discourse (Braidotti 2000:164) entraps the female body within differential power relations of oppression (castrated) or resistance (castrator). This dynamic plays into stereotypes of homosexuality as monstrous other, in which gay men are overwhelmingly represented as effeminate (castrated), whereas the iconic lesbian is a butch-dyke (castrator). However, the nexus between gendered attributes, sexed anatomy, and the erotic body provokes a different teratological landscape if behaviour, corporeality and choice of sexual partner interrupt notions of sexual difference, which are grounded upon 'freaky leaky bodies' (Braidotti 2002:200) and the 'uncontrollable generative force, the maternal abyss,

toothed vagina, phallic threat' incumbent within female monstrosity (Creed 2004:58). The efficacy of Deleuzian thought here is to expand the conceptual terrain of teratologies via rhizomatic interjections that expose multiple and interconnecting border region realities.

As Braidotti (1996:150) argues, the monstrous body articulates a slippery process that eludes, yet pivots on, difference – differences that continually shift, move and propel discourses. In other words, monstrosity creates knowledge through revealing that which touches but slips beyond the grasp of dominant tropes. Indeterminate femininity is, therefore, a process of contestation and negotiation that crosses over between desiring conceptions of self and intimate others. This is particularly acute for transgender people, where the time and energy devoted to gender-transition – psychological-medical assessments and life adjustments that must accompany such a profound alteration to body and biography – often eclipses the complex nexus of corporeal change and sexuality. For Astrid (40s/MTF), the 'do or die' decision to transition – a poignant attitude that was replayed in almost every trans narrative in my study – involved a troubled relationship with notions of femininity. The feminine for Astrid is a signifier of something both desirable and undesirable – it bears an uncertain quality in both herself and the ideal partner she seeks:

I want to find someone that has a sort of feminine nature but not necessarily is a princess, super-feminine person. I guess that's an insecurity, because maybe I won't feel as feminine if I've got some stick thin pretty little thing in frills.

Shane (20s/GQ), on the other hand, acknowledged her biological 'female' status, but conveyed no real sense of 'being' one gender or the other in her head. She explained that 'I never have had a perception of my own gender in my head – I never really saw myself as male or female'. Part of this she attributes to a feminist-informed upbringing in a gender-neutral home environment. Shane 'happily identifies' as genderqueer/bisexual-queer,

embracing fluidities of boyishness, femininity, and gender-neutrality. Her lack of any internalised gender finds expression in creative fictional writing:

I started writing when I was 12 about all these characters; a lot of them ended up queer. As I said, I didn't really have a concept of gender, so the concept of heterosexuality or homosexuality was never really an issue, it never really occurred to me. I kept thinking that I had never written a gay couple. When I look back I realised I actually had. I had just never labelled them "gay", because it was not something that occurred to me – it was not something that was there, it was not necessary – as I never thought about myself in those terms either because it was not important.

Similarly, Natasha (30s/F), designated 'female' at birth, resists attaching normative gender expectations to her biological body. Identifying as bisexual, she recounted her sense of self as: 'a tomboy at heart, I'm a geek, I love science and maths' and recoils from stereotypical expressions of femininity (in both herself and others), such as 'pretty dresses and gossiping'. Like Shane, she was not raised as a 'girly girl', and conceptualises her gendered self as a border region cross-cut by corporeal, psychological and political realities:

I see myself as parts of female and male. I don't think I fit neatly into society's expectations of female, despite my female body. On the gender continuum, I believe I sit in the middle, not fully female and not fully male. I don't tend to express this in appearance, but I think I express it in behaviour. I dress to look good, but I don't dress "girly". I don't do make-up (unless absolutely called for), false nails, pink or bling, though I do wear corsets, skirts, jewellery, lingerie etc. I tend to bristle when someone refers to me as "feminine", and that might be more political than identity, because I bristle the same way when someone calls me a "lady". As someone so succinctly put it, I am a human who happens to be female. I can choose to act feminine

one day and masculine the next and nothing at all the third. That has no real bearing on anything I inherently am.

In rejecting dominant Western constructions of the gender order, these narratives establish lines of flight from 'emphasised' femininity (Connell 1987) to fashion participants' own hybrid-becomings of molecular gender. The creation of such gender molecularities emerge in dialogue with normative and disciplinary fields of femininity and masculinity. Natasha for example deterritorialised her own subjectivity, decrying the feminine as abject and neurotic, yet traces of the molar constructions of feminine and masculine stereotypes linger in her discourse. While this may appear initially to reinstate dominant binary constructions of gender expression, as Shildrick (2002:1) argues, the monstrous hybrid is not oppositional but is a being in all of us; it is never wholly outside or other. Such teratologies thus expose the multiplicities of difference *within* subjectivity rather than inscribing a reductive difference *from* others.

Autopoiesis: Inventions of Self

Teratologies of sex, gender and sexual border regions continue more dramatically in the stories of Cherie (30s/CD), Ewan (50s/GQ), Jordan (40s/GQ) and Charlie (30s/GQ). For these participants, experimentation with borderline figurations of masculine/feminine embodiment exposes a queer underside that is not predicated by an alteration from one gender to another, but resides somewhere in-between. Their 'technologies of the self' (Foucault 1988) employ queer as a multiplex modality, which, in the spirit of a minor language, becomes or signifies something different for each person. Teratologies are thus revelatory and subversive through actuating a malleability of body, sexuality and idiom that traverse overlapping fields of engagement: social, biological, cultural, and discursive. As will be elaborated upon in the following two chapters, such corporeal flows speak to an ethico-political project of the self. Here, the queer body is a desiring affect in the assemblages of their border lives and rhizomatic practices – it is something produced that metamorphoses at each juncture, a vitalistic element of their becomings, which innovates beyond any gesture towards

unification of the self. Expressions of femininity and masculinity are not universal correlates of sexed corporealities, but are connective thresholds – entangled skeins of becoming-sexual subjects. Such queer manifestations present radical alterities that redraw the abnormal monstrous 'other' as autopoietic – a creativeness of self-production. Autopoiesis is explained here by Felix Guattari (1995:7):

The important thing here is not only a confrontation with a new material of expression, but the constitution of complexes of subjectivation: multiple exchanges between individual-group-machine. These complexes actually offer people diverse possibilities for recomposing their existential corporeality, to get out of their repetitive impasses, and in a certain way, resingularise themselves... a creation, which itself indicates an aesthetic paradigm. One creates new modalities of subjectivity in the same way that an artist creates new forms from a palette.

As cultural theorist Ian Buchanan (1997:86) comments, the idea of self-invention that is expressed by autopoiesis, is central to Deleuze and Guattari's writings, particularly their concept of becomings. Cherie's story is *par exemplar* of the autopoietic venture – what s/he 'becomes' is literally an aesthetic project of the erotically-desiring self. Self-describing as a queer trannie, Cherie lives and presents for the most part as a male/man. However, weekend clubbing and swinger's parties provide the forum to metamorphose into a 'woman'. This *en femme* transformation entails a highly involved process in order to achieve an aesthetic rendition of 'femininity'. Cherie's regimen includes: gothic dress style; wig; full make-up (applied economically to avoid a 'drag queen' image); painted fingernails and toenails; full-body waxing and/or shaving; and 'tucking' the penis to flatten and conceal the tell-tale genital 'male' bulge. In addition, Cherie pays attention to 'feminine' affectations: walking with small steps one foot in front of the other; sitting with crossed legs; drinking beverages through a straw rather than directly from a bottle; and avoiding, in her words, 'deep masculine growls'.

While on one level the process of 'becoming-Cherie' is filtered through a molar version of femininity, which aligns to socially normative performance and expression of the 'female' body, Cherie actualises a queerly embodied configuration – something that is both familiar and unfamiliar – what Freud (1919) termed the uncanny. It is the dissonance of the uncanny, which perplexes and suggests a monstrous form, challenging onlookers to peer within their own subjectivities. When in public with her (female) partner, Cherie commented that 'people sort of tend to look at you and you can just see that they're just processing – something does not compute'. Cherie does not become molar woman but rearranges its constituent parts into something-other – a composite body, which, moreover, enables exploration beyond the limits of conventional sexuality. Cherie explained the sexual vicissitudes of this queer embodiment:

I enjoy new sexual possibilities, and I don't have any clear boundaries between men and women. I'm quite happy to sleep with women as a man, with men as Cherie, with other trannies as a man or Cherie, and so on. But I think it's one of those things where the language falls down a little bit. Realistically, if you are a guy dressing up as a girl and you're getting picked up by a guy who wants to believe you are a girl what does that make you? I mean technically bisexual is an adequate term but I don't think it quite captures the full diversity of possibilities. Some people think that bisexuality is a compromise between two paths, being gay or straight. For me, it isn't. It's more like wandering aimlessly around a field which has corners marked 'gay', 'straight', 'transgendered', and 'today, I don't really care'.

Over time, Cherie has cultivated multiple teratological border regions of living that accord with the aesthetic need for inventive embodiment and sexual experimentation. Having travelled through the majoritarian formations of heterosexual relationships and marriage, where 'gay' liaisons were hidden from view, Cherie is now partnered to a supportive bisexual woman, who similarly embraces a queer lifestyle.

Other participants' genderqueer stories – Ewan (50s/GQ), Jordan (40s/GQ) and Charlie (30s/GQ) – similarly revealed autopoietic subjectivities rather than attempts to authentically replicate 'being' woman. Although each has been or is currently married, their borderline narratives do not attach to dominant polarities of sex/gender and sexuality but nomadically weave in-between. Ewan's story underscores such interstitial movement; it is a richly layered rhizome that off-shoots in numerous directions. Manifestly evident in Ewan's narrative is the notion of indeterminacy and incongruence – a nebulous sense of self, which he repeatedly describes as 'weird' and 'freakish'. 'My peripatetic life continues peripatetically' he wrote to me following our interview. It is this distinctive nomadism of mind, corpora and biography – a Deleuzian sensibility – which disallows Ewan from solidifying into a range of molar identities that his body has variously assumed: husband, father, pilot, gay lover, cross-dresser, transwoman. Married four times, and father of two children, Ewan has toggled between significant relationships with women and casual 'gay' experiences, in which a pendulous motion between repression and expression of 'femininity' relentlessly persists. The metamorphic planes of gendered and sexual existence for Ewan are intimately entwined. Ewan recounted his life story as a non-linear series of events or becomings, which comprised: intermittent oestrogen hormone therapy; cross-dressing in women's clothes; desiring to 'mother' his children; cohabiting in a 'lesbian relationship' with a bisexual woman (during a period when he 'transformed' to Justine); and cruising public toilets for 'gay' sex. This complex narrative juxtaposes with his professional career in aviation. At the time of our interview, Ewan was in a state of flux – unsure of how to satisfy both his feminine needs and sexual desire for men within his marital relationship:

In my case I'm not really sure if I'm transgender or not. I seem to float between. To look at me, I'm a physical male, but I don't live like a male. I dress up and do the whole thing [...] I am on hormones at the moment. I lived as a female for eight months, as Justine, but I didn't feel comfortable in my skin. I felt like a freak. So I gave up being Justine and I've compromised at the moment, on

hormones, and trying to stay soft [...] Throughout my life I've had periodic extreme attractions to men. When I took hormones most recently my libido disappeared. But when I stopped taking them, my libido came back, but it came back gay, stronger than before and it's still that way. Maybe this feminine thing is just another aspect of sexuality: I'm not sure whether that's transgendered or gay. It's such a fluid idea. [...] I've got a wonderful relationship with my [current] spouse – it seems incongruous calling her my wife. I said to her, "did you ever think you'd be married to a weirdo?"

Qualifying his 'weirdo' status as 'not pejorative', Ewan invokes the enabling potency of monstrous ambiguity. Such anomaly and ambiguity has steered Ewan towards a new hybrid-becoming. Some time after our interview Ewan informed me, that after much contemplation and counselling, he has decided against pursuing complete gender transition (surgical reassignment and living full-time as a woman). Ewan reflected that part of his struggle was the social imperative to 'be' one gender or the other, and to settle on one sexual orientation. That he did not 'fit' the putative dominant expectations of 'being' male, female, gay or straight presented a seemingly intractable dilemma. He has since realised that the locus of his undecidability is that which permits a flexibility of gender and sexuality (describing himself now as genderqueer-bisexual). Ewan's autopoietic venture has thus constructed a border-zone habitus in which he moves between 'male mode' and '*en femme*', between his wife and male lovers as the occasion allows. Pondering his emergent subjectivity, Ewan mused: 'So, if I'm not a woman but really a man, then what kind of man am I? In a word: complicated'.

Jordan and Charlie's genderqueer stories similarly revealed entangled flows of multi-gender attractions and 'female/feminine' feelings that inhabit their 'male' bodies. Both born to British parents of European/South Asian blended backgrounds, their lives have negotiated multiple border regions of cultural, sexual and corporeal hybridity. Jordan's narrative conveyed a persistent swinging to and from majoritarian social forces that seek to contain him as a heteronormative 'male'. Like Ewan, his inner female

sensibility has been an ever-present struggle. He commented that: 'although I live as a guy and look like a guy, I've always felt female as long as I can remember. If I'm filling out a form, I go oh, shit, I'm not really on that form, but I end up ticking male'. London's 1980s music scene, where gender and sexual ambiguity were *de rigueur*, provided an escape route from the conservatism of Jordan's Sri Lankan cultural heritage, Christian home-life and English county environ. The incongruent proximities of the exotic and domestic facilitated a vacillating movement between repression and expression of inchoate bisexuality and transgressive gender. For Jordan, this was synchronously troubling and transformative:

My sexuality probably was confusing and problematic because of my upbringing and being a quite straight environment – certainly in a suburban county [in England] it's still seen as a weird thing. So it was a bit of a struggle. How did I deal with it? To be honest I probably used drugs and alcohol at that time in my teenage years – a lot of that was to do with not understanding, and the feeling that I couldn't express myself. So I came at it in a negative way and generally struggling with the whole idea that you had to be straight or gay – and wanting to fit in but struggling. In my teens, playing around in the band scene in London, luckily, it was very trendy to be bisexual – you almost had to be whether you were or not. I think it was more to do with the time – the end of the punk era – people like Boy George and Marilyn. A trendy scene, and being in a band it was really cool to wear a frock into a club and kiss boys; it was a good thing to do. It allowed me to express myself a bit more – like wearing make-up and going out in a frock; it was liberating.

Similar to Ewan, Jordan is a husband and father, who has had significant relationships with women, but only 'one night stands' with men – usually in clubs or gay beats. Married and living in a conservative rural township, which both curtail the full range of his bodily desires, suggests that Jordan has capitulated to majority rule – ostensibly appearing as a straight man in a heterosexual relationship. But as full-time carer of his child, this allows

border region possibilities to be entertained: 'I love being a 'Mummy-Daddy', which is what I'm called by my son'. Moreover, Jordan's sense of being psychologically 'female' deterritorialises any molar sedimentation of 'gayness' in his encounters with men or 'straightness' that may be imputed to his marital status. Rather than imitating a molar stereotype of feminine gender, Jordan's re-imagined corpora in the sexual act instantiates a monstrous-becoming of psychological castration – an autopoiesis of remaking and re-signifying 'woman' as Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) becoming-woman:

At the first point of a sexual interaction my sense of being female is as strong as ever. I am essentially a female having a sexual interaction be it with male or female. My biology as male presents an urge to penetrate and ejaculate. I honestly find my male "bits" somewhat annoying or disappointing at this time. If I am with a man as myself, that is female, I would rather pretend my male genitalia were not there. When having sexual interaction with a male, I would rather not be touched in this area, or, somehow have the area bypassed and be touched as if I had a vagina. Ejaculation through genital stimulation is not important in terms of orgasm as this has been achieved anyway without direct penile stimulation for me; it's a "head thing". Sexual interaction with a woman again is very similar. My relationship with my now long-term partner does certainly feel like a same-sex relationship, or a spiritual relationship free from the bonds of gender appropriation, discrimination and indoctrination.

A father and twice-married, Charlie is similarly partnered in an apparent 'heterosexual' relationship that sits alongside his desiring-borderlines of both sexuality and gender. He struggled to articulate any tangible sense of gender, seeing it as an ongoing process of queer embodiment:

I'm not completely presenting as a woman because I never shave myself, so my goatee is always there. I have a different persona – that's part of what I grew to develop and understand about myself,

that I'm not going to be presenting as a 'woman'. Cross-dressing is not about that or being a drag queen – it's feeling comfortable with whom Charlie is, and what that means, which for me is the blurring of the lines. Because, I could be presenting as a female form and then I might have all these other feelings of being a man that I can't express because I'm a woman. Having a strong sense of aesthetic, cross-dressing for me is a personality, that's how it fits my being.

Charlie recounted a brief physical (but not financial) interaction with a pre-operative male-to-female transgender prostitute, and expressed the desire to explore this option more fully. He feels this trans-embodied attraction is tied into notions of being able to empathise with transgender experiences: 'A gay man is still a man and a lesbian is still a woman and here's this thing that's somewhere in between, which is where I sort of feel I fit'. On this basis, not all his relationships with women have been conventionally 'straight'. Charlie's second marriage to a lesbian-identifying woman invites a teratological reading through queering heteronormative gender assumptions that invest a male-female partnership:

Even though she has strong physical attractions to women, ultimately she would like to have a child with a man. When I say a man, she knows it's not going to be someone who's a 'straight' heterosexual male; it's going to have to be a man who's a bit queer, which is why when we ended up together – I satisfied all her components as much as she was satisfying mine.

These stories deterritorialise any play to a coherent subjectivity of transgender or transsexual, which as Lucas Crawford (2008:129) observes, is increasingly predicated by procedures that necessitate medical, sub-cultural and financial resources. Consonant with my argument that bisexuality is an affect through asignifying, asubjectifying practices, Crawford contends that a Deleuzian account opens up transgender significations to a greater diversity of sex/gender embodiment or expression through 'refiguring the relationship between affect and signification'. As

evidenced through the narratives thus far presented, such openings expose alternative avenues of becoming-bodies, becoming-sexual that critically canvas the operation of 'lack' in sexual relationships. Rather than positioning this within the Oedipal territory of castration, Charlie and others' accounts in this study subvert and disturb the negative field within which the psychoanalytic concept of lack operates (female lacks phallus and is disempowered). Several sex/gender-diverse participants (David 20s/FTM, Lesley 30s/MTF, Lisa 40s/MTF, Matthew 20s/FTM and those discussed in this chapter), are non-operative. For these participants, and partners of those in trans-relationships (Cass 30s/F, James 20s/M, Joanne 30s/F and Kate 30s/F), genitalia does not 'match' the medically circumscribed body of male or female. But even surgically-reassigned participants complicate the correlation of body parts to gender and, hence, attributing a 'sexuality'. Twenty years post-surgery, Karen (50s/MTF) for instance maintains:

I don't see myself as a male or a female. I realised you have to be male or female to be bisexual, but I don't have a strong enough gender to hook it on. I guess I have "a sexuality", but if you don't believe that two genders exist, or believe gender doesn't exist, there aren't two ways of being sexual there are myriad ways of being sexual. I've improvised as I've gone along.

In such instances, the notion of lack assumes disturbing, yet, productive and innovative qualities. Matthew's elaboration of how queer sexual practices work in his long-term committed relationship with a lesbian-identifying woman situates him in a teratological zone of perceived deviance or otherness beyond 'vanilla' territory:

In many people's eyes your sexual behaviour is deviant, other, edgy. If you're comfortable sitting in that sort of space, then it's no great leap to start experimenting with other stuff that is a non-vanilla or outside of the mainstream. The mechanics – for want of a better word – of having queer sex often means that we need/get to be a bit creative about what we put where or how we have sex; so again, not

such a leap to introducing all sorts of toys or activities. Heterosexual sex can come with a pre-packaged expectation that "this is how you do it, you put this in here" [...] When those preconceived notions of how things work don't exist to start with, well then, everything is up for grabs, isn't it?

A Butlerian theme insistently pulsates through such accounts of embodied creativity. Butler (1993) notably proposed that the materiality of sex – the 'matter' of bodies – materialises through the reiteration of regulatory norms. Here, the performativity of bodily acts is repetitive – it occurs over time, synchronously consolidating a 'natural' affect of sex while allowing for the possibility of gaps to open up wherein practices escape or exceed the norms. The possibility of gaps – or more accurately here, yawning chasms – are evident in the creatively queer incarnations of my participants. Such performances, therefore, articulate a 'potentially productive crisis' (Butler 1993:19). In this sense, Butler, who recants any claim to being 'Deleuzian' (Butler 2004:198), nevertheless effects a certain Deleuzian tenor. Although their ontology of desire is conceptually different – according to Butler desire is negative, premised on psychoanalytic lack, whereas for Deleuze and Guattari it is productive, hence positive (Hickey-Moody & Rasmussen 2009) – their respective ideas betray a certain frisson when read alongside each other. For Butler this is 'doing' and 'undoing' gender/sexuality norms, while for Deleuze and Guattari it is what a body 'does' in its encounters – dismantling, disorganising and subverting dominant regimes of encoding. Arguably then, in both cases bodies are the protagonists of desire, activating entire surrounds of sex/gender and sexuality. Anna Hickey-Moody & Mary Lou Rasmussen (2009:41-2) thus proclaim the benefit of examining the generative qualities of lack, to 'trace the trajectories in thought that lack effects', such that it is possible to 'love your lack'.

Viewed as such, the imaginative corporeal ingenuities employed by my participants reorient lack as a desiring and substantive *presence* rather than a mournful *absence*. Of particular utility for my study, therefore, is Hickey-Moody and Rasmussen's (2009) contention that Butler's concept of the

'lesbian phallus' finds some agreement with Deleuze and Guattari's notion of schizoanalysis, both of which subvert the hegemony of psychoanalytic models of subject formation. In her essay *The Lesbian Phallus and the Morphological Imaginary*, Butler (1993:72) takes psychoanalysis' master signifier, the phallus, and re-invents it, 'rewriting the morphological imaginary'. The Lacanian phallus is hereby disaggregated from its totalising regime of masculine and heterosexist identification in which lesbianism is construed as at once a poor mimesis and impossibility of heterosexuality. Butler disorders the signifying chain of the phallus as normative heterosexuality and re-signifies it within an array of body-parts: arm, tongue, thigh, mouth, and hence, queers the lesbian body in a manner suggestive of Deleuze and Guattari's schizoanalytic method.

For Deleuze and Guattari (1983), schizoanalysis focuses on the productive flows emanating from ruptures, division, disorganisation – 'forces that escape coding, scramble codes, and flee in all directions' (Seem 1983:xxi). This idea is vividly apprehended by Deleuze and Guattari's (1987:30) figuration of the Body without Organs such that 'whenever someone makes love, really makes love, that person constitutes a body without organs, alone and with the other person or people'. It is in this desiring-encounter that the BwO shatters and dismantles the organism and its organisation. As witnessed in the stories of Charlie, Ewan (as Justine), Dana, Matthew, Morgan and particularly Jordan (who re-imagined his 'male' genitalia as female), the lesbian body materialises through an array of corporeal inventions of the BwO. These narratives accordingly underscore the central argument of this chapter, which foregrounds the epistemic problem posed by the metamorphosing affects of monstrous bi/trans/queer/intersex hybrid-becomings – corporeal assemblages that disassemble and rearrange the building blocks of binary sex, gender and sexuality.

Conclusion

If the monster is a queer category, as Halberstam (1995) intimates, it is an intensively Deleuzian body in its capacity to capture the imaginative possibilities that slide between dominant regimes of categorical thinking.

Because Deleuze recomposes and shifts the ground of sexed and gendered subjectivities (Braidotti 2002:90), the teratological landscape is one that releases sexually-desiring bodies from their 'natural' organisation of the human species into discrete male/female signifying regimes. The elusive corporeality that resides here, accordingly underlines the thorny problem of how to conceptualise the 'body' and the value of employing a Deleuzian analysis for my study. What becomes clear in this chapter is the need to address a theoretical lacuna present in the 'messiness of bodies' and how 'sexual desire and erotic charges change, wane, and are piqued by variation, newness in response to repetition or sameness' (Hall 2003:101-4). Historically, such 'messiness' has been pejoratively imputed to bisexuality in its disordering of neat categories and incitement of anxiety and suspicion; the monster looms threateningly. But it is precisely this constituent messiness of bisexuality that demands we think inventively about sexual bodies. Conceptual inventiveness is the tool of trade for Deleuze and Guattari – an intervention of thought and practice that is strikingly heterodox. Deleuze colourfully describes his approach to Western canons of philosophy as 'a sort of buggery' in which he envisaged 'taking an author from behind and giving him a child that would be his own offspring, yet monstrous' (Deleuze 1995:6). The grotesque progeny spawned from Deleuze's philosophical perversion evinces a teratological provocation to the grand dualisms of sexual difference – one that flows through figurations of 'strange, fluid, unusual terms' (Deleuze 1995:11).

As demonstrated in this chapter, a Deleuzian body in its 'microscopic transsexuality' (Deleuze & Guattari 1983:295) tentatively anticipates its empirical becoming through a teratological landscape – one in which the remaking of sex and gender operates symbiotically with the remaking of (bi)sexuality. Unleashing the monster as it were, may present sociologists with considerable angst regarding its capacity to disrupt dominant paradigms and assumed coherence of, and linearity between, the master categories of sex, gender and sexuality. The unsettling dimension of becomings that do not align with conventional embodiment, finds expression in Deleuze and Guattari's (1986, 1987) frequent reference to

Franz Kafka's works. In particular, the verminous half-beetle/half-human form that the central character Gregor becomes in *Metamorphosis* (1961) provides a poignant counterpoint to the fascinating horror of monstrous hybridity. The tragic demise into corporeal degradation and attendant rejection of Gregor's place in 'humanity' that Kafka portrays is a painful commentary on modernity's speciesism, which upholds the moral supremacy of the integral 'human' above all other forms. However, the teratological sentiments of Deleuze's writings impart a strangeness that invites us, in Cohen's (1996:20) words, to re-evaluate our cultural assumptions of difference. My participants' narratives summon such a re-evaluation of difference in the ways in which coherent categories, subjects and identities are befuddled and re-created – as autopoietic inventions of self. Indeterminacy grapples with notions of monstrous deviance and otherness that social structures of difference and power construct, yet it synchronously refigures and portends productive spaces of not only corporeality, but sociality and epistemology.

As will be explored in the following two chapters, such spaces of becoming herald the possibility of a revolutionary politics and ethics of desire that relinquishes the morally-circumscribed subject in favour of the productive adventurous body. The following chapter, therefore, continues exploring the analytical motif of polyvocal teratologies through the Deleuzian concept of contagion. The trope of contagion in major language use refers to threat and disease, which is the homeland of the monstrous. Here, notions of risk, vulnerability, and social opprobrium are themes that resound loudly in participants' experiences of their borderland desires and practices. But rather than constrain understanding purely in terms of hierarchical structures of victimhood and oppression, I explore the productive dimensions that Deleuze and Guattari (1987:241) suggest dwell within contagion: proliferation, potentiality, micro-possibilities, and multiplication, which leach through the boundaries of 'otherness'. As Braidotti (2000:172) opines: '[w]e need to learn to think of the anomalous, the monstrously different not as a sign of pejoration but as the unfolding of virtual possibilities that point to positive alternatives for us all'.

7

Contagion

I am infection. The fear, the liminal panic, inspired by the edge identity is a fear of the borderless, infectious. There is no clarity; in fact this idea of a fixed edge is a lie, as much as the notion of fixed identity is a lie: we seep beyond, always.

Rosanne Bersten (2004:25)

The rhizomatic cartographies of participants' stories mapped thus far have illuminated emergent, transformative and hybrid spaces of corporeal movement. This chapter develops a deeper understanding of bodily movement through exploring a prominent theme that emerged from my data, that of sexual adventuring. A common feature of respondents' narratives related to participating in swinging, beat sex, and sex-for-pleasure venues. These activities are vulnerable to negative representations in the majoritarian imaginary as abject practices that threaten moral, sexual and social health. However, I demonstrate that sexual adventuring, as recounted by participants, is an affective field of *positive* corporeal production that contests the disease model of bisexuality.

In order to elaborate this perspective, I turn to Deleuze and Guattari's concept of contagion. As explicated by Deleuze and Guattari (1987), contagion refers to the generative capacity of desire, which is mobilised through contact, influence and communication between bodily encounters. Deployed as such, this theoretical initiative subverts dominant understandings that associate contagion with viral infection and the spread of disease. I argue that the idiom of contagion inheres a micro-revolutionary potential that opens up desire to new socio-cultural possibilities. My data reveals multiplicities of bodily enactments, which challenge hegemonic regimes of morally-inscribed normative sexual and

gendered practices. The Deleuzian notion of contagion thus re-visions sexual adventuring as a viral process of movement that not only refigures embodied socio-sexual relations but also cultivates responsive and responsible modes of conduct.

The chapter begins by exploring negative stereotypes of bisexuality, and the effect of these on both participants' sense of sexual self and their social interactions. Here, it is shown that such stereotyping is largely constructed through discourses of risk, infidelity, and promiscuity, which, moreover, are particularly gendered. On this transcendental field, bisexuality is construed as danger and threat, rendering the body vulnerable to instability, decay and degradation. Normative constructions of gender, particularly hegemonic masculinity, inform a one-dimensional view of bisexuality in the public imagination. As discussed in Chapter 2, empirical research positions bisexual men less favourably than women, and hence, perpetuates the stereotype of men as vectors of sexual disease. Although commonly a source of heterosexual male fantasy, bisexuality in women is often represented less harshly, particularly where it is perceived as a natural extension of femininity. I then present participants' accounts of their sexual adventuring experiences, which underscore how the lexicon of contagion is diversely and paradoxically constituted – a semiotic mosaic of significations that metamorphose at each shift in ever-changing assemblage of bodies (social, biological, cultural, political, human and non-human).

Consonant with the central argument in this thesis, bisexual contagion is re-signified as an affective rhizome. As such, contagion operates through Deleuze and Guattari's (1986, 1987) notion of minor language usage, passing *between* the hegemonic lines that demarcate structural power relations. It is this affective movement of thought and practice that, for my participants, liberates desire as it flows in, through and between the structural binds of dominant social categories – man/woman, male/female, gay/straight. Respondents' stories thus weave together moments and movements propelled by contagion – a process of desire and affect that unravels in multiple directions. This Deleuzian-informed analysis further

emphasises the key paradigmatic shift that my thesis advances. For contagion brings into view what bodies are *doing* and *producing* in connection with other bodies. The core Deleuzian ideas of proliferation, mutation and connectivity innervate the sociological imagination to expose a micro-politics of desire that recasts bisexuality as an antagonist to dominant socio-structural paradigms of sex/gender/sexuality. Such antagonism, I maintain, functions not to demarcate transgression as improper or deviant (and hence maintain social order as in classic structural functionalism), but rather to mobilise and *construct* new social forms – in Deleuze's words, desire functions as constructivism (Deleuze & Guattari 1987:473; Deleuze & Parnet 1996, 2006:71). Moreover, while bisexuality variously entreats caution, fear, misapprehension or derision, my participants' narratives show that it synchronously demands a space to enlighten, educate and carve out ethical modes of living. This chapter, therefore, argues that such affective spaces of production generate and innovate an ethics of corporeality and sociality. Reorienting respondents' experiences through the Deleuzian lens of contagion accordingly gestures towards what I refer to as generative ethical bodies, an idea that will be developed more fully in the following chapter.

Rehabilitating 'Contagion'

Understood as viral infection, contagion has broadened in conceptualisation from preoccupation with disease to include technological imagery and globally-mediated phenomena (Parrika 2007). But more recently, cultural and queer scholars (for example, Gregg & Seigworth 2010; Nigianni & Storr 2009) have reconsidered contagion as a transformative vehicle that travels from body to body, expanding how the economy of desire is comprehended. The idea is by no means new to philosophical understandings of human ontology. Both David Hume and Baruch Spinoza comment upon human propensity for contagious emotions (Lemmens 2005:58). Spinoza's (1955[1883]:148) proposition that when we conceive a thing to be affected with an emotion 'we are ourselves affected with a like emotion' is prefigured by Hume (1985[1739]:655) who wrote that '[t]he passions are so contagious, that they pass from one person to another with

the greatest facility and produce correspondent movements in all human breasts'. Given the considerable influence of both Humean empiricism and Spinozan ethics on Deleuze's thinking, it is not surprising that the schema of contagion 'infects' his canon as a quietly potent force. Unlike other more pronounced and repeated vocabulary (such as rhizome and becomings), contagion surfaces as a provocative kernel of insight, which once enunciated, thereafter shimmers almost imperceptibly throughout Deleuze and Guattari's writing. Like the high-tensile micro-fluidity of spider's silk, contagion interweaves through and connects the intricate web of Deleuzian concepts.

The language of viral proliferation permeates Deleuze and Guattari's anti-genealogical premise of the rhizome. A sense of linear logic dissipates in the face of the virus that 'scrambles' genealogy by transferring genetic material from human to animal or cross-species (Deleuze & Guattari 1987:10-11). For Deleuze and Guattari, the hegemonic structuring codes of hereditary lineage are abandoned for the notion of 'transformational multiplicities' that propagate by proliferation. As outlined in the previous chapter, the prevailing belief in a two-sexed model is befuddled by the existential reality of multiple expressions of sexed bodies. What then is male, female, heterosexual, homosexual, or bisexual? Relating back to my discussion of emergent subjectivities in Chapter 5 and autopoietic inventions of self in Chapter 6, the answer lies in conceiving of each 'construct' as its 'becoming-world, carried out in such a way that it becomes imperceptible itself, asignifying, makes its rupture, its own line of flight, follows its "aparallel evolution" through to the end' (Deleuze & Guattari 1987:11). Such proliferation is activated through contagious affect – a desiring-production of one body coming into contact with another, which thus operates via heterogeneity and molecularity. Human beings, animals, bacteria, viruses, molecules, micro-organisms are hence:

a far cry from filiative production or hereditary reproduction, in which the only differences retained are a simple duality between sexes within the same species, and small modifications across generations. For us, on the other hand, there are as many sexes as

there are terms in symbiosis, as many differences as elements contributing to a process of contagion. We know that many beings pass between a man and a woman; they come from different worlds, are borne on the wind, form rhizomes around roots; they cannot be understood in terms of production, only in terms of becoming (Deleuze & Guattari 1987:242).

For bisexual bodies, which move in-between the borders of sexual categories, a contagious affect issues from that which is in excess of hegemonic systems of power. 'A molecular rupture, an imperceptible bifurcation', as Guattari (1995:19-20) writes, is 'capable of overthrowing the framework of dominant redundancies, the organisation of the "already classified", or if one prefers, the classical order'. This intervening process, which, to restate, is asignifying, produces 'virulent, partial fragments' that operate as 'shifters' of subjectivity (Guattari 1995:20). Bisexual subjectivities are thus self-creating, self-producing – overflowing, rather than scripted and conscripted by dominant discourses. Lesley (30s/MTF) eloquently encapsulates this idea in her self-described bi-gendered, transgender polysexuality. Identifying as both man and woman, Lesley adopts feminine pronouns in order to create a Deleuzian stammer that ruptures assumptions about coherent gender. She explained:

I identify simultaneously as being both male and female, I was male assigned at birth, but overall I identify more female than male but still recognise myself as being partly male [...] I actually feel myself to be, my actual sense of self, regardless of any stereotypical behaviour I have associated with a given gender, is both male and female at the same time.

Partnered (in separate domiciles) to two women, one of whom has children from a previous relationship, such a multi-sexual, multi-gendered structure of relations comprises partialities that multiply subjectivities – Lesley is a de facto juxtaposition of husband + wife + step-father + step-mother + masculine + feminine + man + woman.

The concept of contagion, therefore, relieves the need for persistent recourse to a particular Foucauldian style of thought that discursively delimits transgressive sexuality within negative inscriptions and operations of power. To this end, Foucauldian-informed discussion of bisexuality (for example, Ault 1996) and sexuality more generally, betray a tendency towards (post)structuralist analyses that render the body immured within matrices of power/knowledge/discourse. Though revelatory, these arguably fail to acknowledge diverse sexual stories spanning marginalisation to empowerment (Plummer 1995, 2007) and the plurality of competing discourses operating on the body (Turner 2008). However, Foucault is not so clear cut in this respect and closer reading reveals that his ideas pave the way for Deleuzian interrogation. For Foucault (1988), the meeting between technologies of the self and technologies of power is an active space of production of both self-governance and governance by others. Of particular relevance to my study, technologies of the self are elaborated as those:

which permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and ways of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection or immortality (Foucault 1988:18).

Governmentality is accordingly the 'contact between the technologies of domination of others and those of the self' (Foucault 1988:19). This space of contact, when examined through a Deleuzian lens, is the progenitor of contagion – it is not simply an articulation of power relations but a movement of desiring-production that toggles between the strata (the technologies of power) and the molecular (the dismantling of subjectification and subjection of self). In fact, Foucault (1988:19) conceded that perhaps he placed too much emphasis on technologies of domination and power (citing for example, his study of madness), commenting: 'I am more interested in the interaction between oneself and others and in the technologies of individual domination, the history of how an individual acts upon himself [*sic*]'. Congruent with this apparent shift in

thinking about the self is Foucault's (1989:382) view of sexuality as individually creative – that 'through our desires, go new forms of relationships, new forms of love, new forms of creation'. It is this aspect of bisexuality in particular that bothers both gay and straight communities, and thus cultivates stereotypes and discriminatory attitudes and behaviours. Three decades ago Foucault contemplated the fear engendered by 'gay' lifestyles, a fear of uncertainty, which is now transposed onto other little-understood domains of sexual/gendered behaviour. Reflecting on homosexuality, Foucault (1989:332) posed that:

what most bothers those who are not gay about gayness is the gay lifestyle, not the sex acts themselves... the common fear that gays will develop relationships that are intense and satisfying even though they do not at all conform to the ideas of relationships held by others. It is the prospect that gays will create as yet unforeseen kinds of relationships that many people cannot tolerate.

The notion of creating such *unforeseen* relationships takes on a critical salience in my participants' stories, and provides the concluding thematic focus in the next chapter. Crucial here, is an uncertainty of unknown and indeterminate possibilities that bisexuality might present and endorse. This was a recurring touchstone in participants' reflections. As Charlotte (30s/F) commented:

I think bisexuality is the new gay. For the most part, people accept whether you are straight or gay, but there's that in-between and people don't necessarily know how to cope with that.

The locus of in-between thus *produces* an affect, which illuminates 'capacities to act and be acted upon' and 'resides as accumulative beside-ness' (Seigworth & Gregg 2010:1-2). It is in these affective spaces where the anomalous is spawned – 'a phenomenon of bordering' that wields contagious and dangerous power through relations of alliance and affinity (Deleuze & Guattari 1987:246-7). The power of dominant groups –

whether gay or straight – are challenged by the affective power of contagion. Contagion thus articulates and animates 'mutant flows' (Deleuze & Guattari 1987:219-221) of productive relations between and across the structuring categories that seek to corral unruly, monstrous desires of border region existence. Power is, therefore, deterritorialised and accordingly materialises as becomings of:

minoritarian groups, or groups that are oppressed, prohibited, in revolt, or always on the fringe of recognized institutions, groups all the more secret for being extrinsic, in other words, anomic (Deleuze & Guattari 1987:247).

Deleuze and Guattari's use of 'anomic' is intriguing here, as it implicitly critiques the functionalist origins of Durkheim's sociology. Whereas for Durkheim (1985[1893]), *anomie* referred to a pathological state of society – such that a breakdown in social norms and regulation alienates individuals and, hence, disrupts social equilibrium – for Deleuze, 'anomic' denotes a social location of being 'outside' dominant institutions. Deleuze describes his philosophy as functionalist (1995:21) and constructivist (Deleuze & Parnet 2006:71) but not in the Durkheimian sense of 'great structured wholes'. Rather, Deleuze is interested in how elements of the socius (which are always partial and multiple) function or work – that is, what is produced or constructed in the relations between elements. From this perspective, for example, gay liberation is constructed as a social force that is produced from the margins of dominant society. Although this is a position of alienation, it is not disruptive in a pathological sense. Conversely, its disruptive capacity is revolutionary and, hence, generative. Such contagious movement proceeds via the becoming-minoritarian of other groups agitating for recognition. In this manner, the acronym of LGBT is one of continual revision and proliferation (for example, LGBTIQQA). Significantly, Deleuze and Guattari argue that if such becomings take the form of the monstrous, it is because these are concomitant with ruptures of central institutions such as the family, religion, and State. Rather than existing on the fringes of hegemonic gay and lesbian culture as the impoverished

relation found wanting, fluidic expressions of sex, sexuality and gender are activated through mutant flows of contagious desire. Such flows are not simply acted upon by domains of power *per se* but are entwined within a complex dialogue between macro and micro socio-relations.

Fear and Loathing

The value of contagion as a critical mode of inquiry is acutely realised in my participants' stories. One of the dominant themes in bisexual literature (as noted in Chapter 2) is the grounding of fear, derision and discrimination based on negative stereotypes. At the heart of such stereotyping is the ethico-moral construction of bodies and their desiring relations. The lexicon of fear and threat permeated interview conversations – fear of disease, corporeal anomaly, and relationship formations that do not conform to dominant expectations or cultural convention. Astrid (40s/MTF) encapsulated this sentiment:

The word "bisexual" creates fear in people, straight people, particularly because that might mean that they can't have a comfortable relationship with their partner. If they were in a relationship with a person who was bisexual, then that person might be going off looking for something they couldn't give – and I do believe that's an insecurity.

Negative affects erupted in the encounter between sexuality and constructions of 'appropriate' masculinity/femininity or maleness/femaleness. Dean (40s/M), Cass (30s/F) and Lesley (30s/MTF) revealed how dominant constructs of sexuality are tightly bound to normative gender expression. In other words, particular stereotypes of gender infected perceptions of transgressive sexuality. For Dean, notions of his bisexuality implicitly contaminated expected conventions of male behaviour. He explained that relationships with 'straight' women were problematic:

There's always been a bit of a difficulty [with straight women], whereas, when I've had relationships with bisexual women it's not

been an issue. I had a girlfriend once and I got up in the morning and went to the loo, and I sat down to pee. She came into the bathroom and said [with incredulity] "do you always sit down to pee?!" I think that really encapsulated it for me. She found the idea of a man sitting down to pee a real problem.

Cass, on the other hand, was viewed in the public imaginary as a stereotypical lesbian based on her girlfriend's 'blokey' appearance and short hair (which was often mistaken for a man). This contravened gender expectations of appropriate femininity, and, hence, encoded the iconic 'butch' lesbian. The contagious affect not only transposed gender transgression into sexual transgression but also incited public discrimination. As Cass remarked,

We experienced discrimination in my local area in regards to people hurling abuse, kids calling out "lemon". One woman, her kids were screaming out abuse to us "You lesbians! Go home and get your dildos!" We copped a lot of nastiness.

In these accounts, contravention of dominant gender-coding generated a ripple affect that seeped into negative perceptions of sexuality. Transgression of boundaries thus elicits a cross-contamination by which mutations of one socially-scripted convention seemingly infect another. Lesley (30s/MTF) further exemplified this premise. Presenting as male during school years, Lesley's gender was nonetheless read with some perplexity. Failing to conform to social expectations of masculinity leached into pejorative perceptions of sexuality:

I had the labels poof, faggot and everything thrown at me. I wasn't sufficiently strong and masculine. Therefore, by definition I was either not male or not heterosexual. If you don't meet the male standards then by definition it's either one or the other isn't it? If you're not sufficiently male you must be homosexual. So I certainly had those labels thrown at me but I knew they were intended as an

insult. But I didn't think there was anything wrong with being non-heterosexual. I didn't say "well no, no I'm not". I couldn't say I definitely wouldn't have sex with men, so I thought to myself, in a sense it is true.

While dominant readings of gender and sexuality were a source of putative vilification for Lesley, the (negative) contagion of anomaly urged her to reflexively rethink her sexed, gendered and sexual status in more expansive terms of becoming-woman and sexual-becomings beyond the dominant heterosexual-homosexual paradigm. In other words, such encounters within a conservative regional school environment, in which the gender order was rigidly enforced, led Lesley to question the assumptions that connected transgressive gender to non-heterosexuality. In other words, the negative underbelly of contagion synchronously propelled a positive movement in her thinking. Lesley's journey took her beyond the majoritarian attitudes of a rural environ to the metropolis where at university her foray into Women's Studies further broadened her own self-conception of gender. Notably, the nomadic thought evinced in Lesley's words deterritorialises the hegemonic domain of masculinity:

Because notions of masculinity are so tightly defined, it's very easy to wander out of being a real male into the territory of being female [...] It might be innate but I couldn't rule out that sense of masculinity being so narrowly defined; I can't say for sure that it definitely hasn't had an influence on me, that notion that I have to be a certain way.

James' (20s/M) narrative also revealed a contagious affect in the encounter between majoritarian constructs of male/man/masculinity and what he described as a complex preference for ambiguity (particularly transgender) and bisexuals. James considered himself as 'comfortably male but somewhat feminine' and was often derided at high school:

I did get bunches of them who would call me faggot. It took me a while to associate the word faggot with the meaning being gay; I just didn't have the connection. But that protected me from frustration that I might have felt otherwise [...] Most ambiguous individuals are slotted into the female category by people who feel they need a binary, a dumping ground for everything that doesn't conform to being male.

Traversing through and exceeding the boundaries of the 'great binary aggregates', which 'cross over into molecular assemblages' (Deleuze & Guattari 1987:213), these micro-realities express a desiring-movement that wanders in-between stratified social spaces, proliferating and opening outwards towards becoming a Body without Organs. The BwO is the desiring-affect of such contagion that simultaneously negotiates and combats the hegemonic view of infection as negative. My data, alongside other empirical research (as discussed in Chapter 2), demonstrates that cultural anxiety emanates from attempts to make sense of the muddled gender topography of bisexuality, wrestling the unruly rhizomatic lines of desire and behaviour into some semblance of order. This is clearly evident in mainstream ideation that differentially constructs bisexuality according to a binary gender system¹. Courtesy of both the erotico-aesthetic appeal to sexual fantasy, and identification with woman as nurturer, female bisexuality is accorded a degree of social permission that oscillates between images of the sexualised body and the affective body (Atkins 2002; Sheff 2005; Watson 2008). Conversely, male bisexuality is variously consigned to constructions of the abject body – deceitful, polluted, and emasculated (Ault 1996; Couch & Pitts 2006; O'Byrne 2010; Steinman 2011; Yoshino 2000). Such colouring of the bisexual palette was a common source of concern for participants, some having personally experienced such stereotyping:

¹ This is acutely evident in cultural and media representations of bisexuality (Bryant 1997; Garber 2000; Rust 2000b; Udis-Kessler 1996; Watson 2007, 2008)

Male bisexuality is perceived to be more invasive and based around anal sex. Even though women can have anal sex there's just a perception of men not being attractive and women being softer (Lara/40s/F).

It seems to be more acceptable for women to be bisexual than for men because women have always had that intimate connection with each other. They are very affectionate with each other, kiss on the cheek, whereas men shake hands. It's all around how society has brought us up. I was allowed to be in a bath with a young girl, but my brother never had baths with his friends (Samantha/20s/F).

My experience is that lesbianism and lesbians are the number one male fantasy whereas reactions I've seen to male homosexuality almost borders on physical illness (Dana/50s/I/F).

Straight men don't want to think about two men together. There's some sort of internalised homophobia: "if that guy who I think is straight is attracted to me then what does that make me?" (Penny/30s/F).

I think I've had people afraid of me because I'm not exclusively gay. There's some that don't want to talk to me, whether they're not comfortable with me, or just don't like me. Maybe it's a form of discrimination from them – yuck, you go away (James/20s/M).

Despite recent changes men are still expected to be the provider. If a man's emotions and affections are directed elsewhere then that role is threatened in a way that women on the whole still are not. It's quite sexist and I think there is a lot of sexism directed at men; I feel it's unfair (Cliff/60s/M).

What these comments underline is that molar constructions of gender roles pervade and infect the cultural imaginary of bisexuality. Where the disease

model assumes a more insidious profile is in the association of bisexuality with risk and sexual disease. The prevailing assumption is that men bear the weight of such moral and social vilification through both abject and covert sexual behaviour. Indeed, as many respondents made apparent, this continues to dominate mainstream (both gay and straight) thinking:

Bisexual men in particular have been targeted as being the nasty people through spreading HIV/AIDS to the general community [...] I think that straight women see bisexual men as being a bit icky in the sense that you may never be able to trust them. The old stereotypes: because you think that they're your loyal boyfriend and they could be having sex with men on the side; or that they're generally promiscuous, because they'll have sex with anyone (Dean/40s/M).

I'm seeing quite a lot of paranoia in women's magazines about married men who have sex with men on the side and don't disclose to their wives, bringing AIDS back into the straight community (Penny/30s/F).

People see bisexuals as married men who cheat on their wives or have sex at beats. In women's magazines there's often talk about, it's okay to explore your same-sex side within the parameters of safe play, but not necessarily being a lesbian. But in the same magazines you'll have stories about finding out your male partner is bisexual, therefore, you should get rid of him because he's a disease (Joanne/30s/F).

That stereotype of seeing it like gay married men weaving a double life, lying or creeping around or it's dirty. And the whole merging of male bisexuality or homosexuality with paedophilia: if it doesn't happen explicitly then it happens by inference (Kate/30s/F).

Dan (40s/M) for example, personally experienced public insinuations of paedophilia. Such denunciation claimed that his bisexuality held potential risk to the male youth with whom he worked. Consequently, Dan lost his job and all possible employment prospects disappeared. In the transcendent field of the public imagination, the tropes of promiscuity, infidelity, covert sexual liaisons and paedophilia clearly hold court in constructing male bisexuality as a defiled body. Yet, the experiential realities recounted by other participants demonstrate a viral proliferation of negative contagion that spill over from the diseased male body onto other gendered bodies. Female bisexuality may be aesthetically permissible in the realm of the voyeuristic, but as evidenced in the following comments, everyday encounters of the female body are similarly beset by circulations of moral contagion:

With straight women, I often feel I have to explain that "No, I'm not attracted to you, I just like you as a person" – it's an assumption of promiscuity and hypersexuality. I find myself actually telling them that "I'm not attracted to you" or "yes, I think you are a very attractive person but I'm not hitting on you" [...] it's often difficult because there's prejudice against bisexual women from the lesbian community – like they've had bad experiences with women and their boyfriends wanting to join in, or running off, going back to a man. One lesbian friend of mine said she just couldn't be with a woman who is also interested in men, because she just didn't like bi-female energy (Penny/30s/F).

When I was in the four-year relationship with a woman I didn't feel as safe and comfortable with her, ultimately because she was somewhat threatened by how I identified as bisexual. She made assumptions about that and had insecure moments thinking I would leave her for a man, run off, get married and have kids. It didn't matter how often I said I wouldn't and couldn't and wasn't interested in that, it became a standard kind of response. I felt judged about it.

There were times when she was half-joking, half-serious and she'd call me a "dirty straight girl", which hurt heaps (Kate/30s/F).

When I was working in one particular job with young people, they questioned my ethics concerning a young person who had gotten quite close to me. Knowing I was queer, they wondered whether I was grooming her in a sexual way. There were suggestions that I had an inappropriate relationship, a paedophiliac inclination towards that young person. The threat was made that if I didn't go quietly, they'd report me to the Children's Commission and damage my career (Joanne/30s/F).

Such moral censure is redoubled when the female body becomes confused by perceptions of gender indeterminacy:

Someone once said "I would never leave a child with Astrid because she's transgendered". There is that link to the paedophile Mr Baldy², which has created a false understanding of what a paedophile is in the public's eye. So I'm very aware of the effect that media has had on the public and how people with different sexual needs are impacted by that in society. We're seen as a danger often – so that's always there – I'm always conscious of how I conduct myself around people's children in case I'm judged or implicated for something that they may perceive in something that I don't even think or feel (Astrid/40s/MTF).

Mutant Flows: Imperceptible Bodies

Despite the bleak landscape painted by circulating stereotypes, it is imprudent to simply reduce discriminatory discourse to signifying regimes of power that attempt to foreclose minority experiences within an oppressor/victim, dominant/marginal paradigm. Rather, such molar

² Brian Keith Jones (real name Brendan John Megson), dubbed 'Mr Baldy', was convicted for several sex offences. These occurred during the 1980s in Victoria, Australia. The offences perpetrated by 'Mr Baldy' involved kidnapping and sexually molesting young boys, dressing them in girl's clothes and makeup, and shaving their heads (<<http://www.mako.org.au/tempmrbaldy.html>>).

representations are an active or creative element in assemblages of contagion – a semiotic component that forms part of immanent fields of social relations. The contact or influence activated by contagious encounters with these signifying forces forges pathways through which to negotiate and re-form 'negative' significations as productive flows between desiring bodies. The stereotypes of bisexuality, which abound both in the cultural imaginary and as touchstones in the lived realities of my respondents, often arise from spaces of the unknown, ambiguous and misrepresented. Border region desires and experiences that sit somewhere other than socially-sanctioned relations of monogamy and monosexuality provide the fecund ground from which condemnatory imagery and moral vilification grows. Consequently, this frequently casts bisexuality as hidden, covert, and invisible through prevailing stereotypes of promiscuity, cheating and double lives. However, my participants' narratives dismantle prevailing assumptions held within this molar register. Viewed from the vantage point of borderline realities, their stories reinvent contagion through unexpected and viral movements along the rhizome – the lines of lived experience that duck and weave, in, through, around and beyond the dominant social structures of mainstream imaginings.

These are the mutant flows, which in Deleuzian thought pass through 'molar realms of representation' (Deleuze & Guattari 1987:219-221) – an erosive force of movement that gnaws at the seemingly rigid fortresses of signification. The coherence or solidity of sovereign categories becomes frayed and abraded around the edges. But mutation and rigidity are not binary oppositions, for as Deleuze and Guattari explain, mutant flows and 'mass' entities exist one within the other. Rigid systems of over-coding (molar, segments, class, binaries, macro-history) co-exist simultaneously with connective or supple movements of decoding (molecular, micro-history, accelerations, production). Paramount here is that the rigid system does not halt the mutant – mutations continue within the totalising lines of molarity. Accordingly, the contagious affect generated between rigid and supple lines is one of exchange or dialogue – a productive conversation from which something new arises. Hence, stereotyping forms part of moving and

desiring assemblages – encounters between the discursive, social, and corporeal – out of which becoming-others emerge. As will be elaborated shortly, sexual adventuring, which is morally freighted by risk and disease, is reframed through notions of creating an ethics of desiring-practice. Mapping interconnections in this manner invigorates sociological dialogue concerning relations of structure and agency. Zones of representation, whether signifying self or stratum, are not static or stationary. Rather than examine *differences between* reifications of the individual and social, a Deleuzian sociology exposes the operation of desiring forces that *flow in-between* macro and micro fields of thought and practice, and thereby elude precise coding or signification.

These ideas propel analysis into a more productive realm through the Deleuzian concept of suppleness. For suppleness – the leaky, malleable boundaries of sex, gender and sexuality that allow bisexuality to proliferate – portends the paradoxical promise of both danger *and* hope. From this perspective the positive underbelly of contagion is gleaned – the potentiality of creative affects through micro-transformations, micro-revolution. To elucidate this complex notion, I will demonstrate the affective potency that is cultivated within 'hidden' and 'secretive' events from my data. An event for Deleuze and Guattari is not simply an account of a discrete happening but in their philosophical language is referred to as an 'haecceity': relations of movement and connection animated by affect rather than subjective power (Deleuze & Guattari 1987:261, 266). An haecceity, therefore, is generated through the contagious contact between moving elements in the event assemblage. Hence, an haecceity has no discernible end but is always in the middle: somewhat like a wave, it transmits via an undulating disturbance of energy, never able to be affixed to one point nor grasped (Deleuze & Guattari 1987:263).

Events then, have a dimension of imperceptibility, which will be brought to light in the following vignettes. These disturb and reframe what are conventionally considered undesirable aspects of bisexuality by introducing the germinal seeds of micro-revolutionary possibility enacted through the

contagious affects of desiring bodies. As discussed earlier, the prevailing view of bisexual men is that sexual acts are conducted covertly in venues fraught by health and moral risk. Charlotte's (30s/F) experience in her role as relationship coach found a high degree of curiosity from ostensibly 'straight' men wishing to explore male-to-male sexuality:

In my profession I get huge numbers of guys in particular saying "I've never told anybody this, but I have fantasies about playing with other guys, and does that make me odd, weird, is there something wrong with me?" I think it's because they're not told it's ok. I find there's a degree of homophobia in those who think or are worried if they play with guys then that makes them gay [...] For men there's no encouragement, not the same sort of feeling in general around seeing two guys together. The education these guys are getting growing up, if they're anything other than the norm, then they're really struggling with that mentally.

Another two participants recounted similar stories from their work in sexuality-based support services. Each spoke of high proportions of non-gay identifying men inquiring about their attraction towards men and how to negotiate this in environments that inhibited male-to-male sexual openness (for example, living in heterosexual relationships). Most of the phone calls Cass (30s/F) received to the bisexual support group in which she was involved were from men:

Most are bi guys – middle-aged to old – who don't know how to use the Internet and want to meet other men, not necessarily for sex. Some of the older guys just want to meet other bi men so they don't feel so isolated and talk. Some of them are still married or aren't willing to be out. So helping them to meet up with other men is really problematic. There's a lot of fear. There's a helluva a lot of them. Another bunch of men ring me thinking they might be gay, but not sure and just want me to tell them where they can go to have sex. I tell them where the beats are, to be careful, it's not always safe.

Jenna's (30s/F) insights derived from work associated with the AIDS Council and coming out programs:

Being around men who have sex with men, I find men who don't necessarily identify as gay; they might be in predominantly heterosexual marriages with kids. It's rife, there's a really high proportion who do that. That's one of the things that's so covered up. There's a lot of beats here. People know that beats exist. But it's something that's a bit secretive, a bit sleazy and it's not like you kind of announce it at a dinner party.

However, there is more to the story than simply that of sleaze and secretive male-to-male sex acts. Deleuze and Guattari (1987:286-8) critique the sociological salience of the 'secret'. Secretive behaviour is given a form (such as 'beat sex'); it is replaced by an 'envelope or box' in which the empirical content is hidden and preceded by paranoid judgement, such as moral transgression, guilt and shame. This, then, is the locus of negative contagion that circumscribes aberrant bodies. But Deleuze-Guattarian thinking moves outside this sociological box – the secret secretes – 'the content is too big for its form', hence, 'something must ooze from the box'. Thus, the secret is not static but has a becoming.

My research exposes the becomings of such paranoiac secrets via a complexity of embodied practices that refigures, and operates to broaden, the idea of contagion beyond notions of fear, revulsion, internalised homophobia, risk, and gender-stereotyping. Indeed, a more expansive view of contagion, which challenges gendered assumptions imputed to this hidden-from-view domain of recreational sex, becomes apparent. In particular, beat sex³ is a covert phenomenon assumed to lie wholly within the preserve of 'men'. But this widely-held belief is somewhat complicated in my study by participants who engaged in beat sex, such as Ewan

³ For instance, Derek Dalton (2008:100) defines beats in Australia as referring to public spaces (usually toilet blocks) 'where men gather to seek out or arrange casual sexual encounters with other men, irrespective of the sexual identity of the participants [and] afford men a degree of privacy conducive to sexual intimacy'.

(50s/GQ), Jordan (40s/GQ) and Matthew (20s/FTM), whose various trans or genderqueer identities befuddle social expectations of what constitutes a 'man'. In addition, my data reveals that other 'secreted' sexual adventuring activities – swinger's parties, sex clubs, saunas, prostitution and casual sex encounters – are not simply phallocentric domains, the dominant representation of which perpetuates images of masculine hypersexuality and objectified feminine sexuality. Rather, respondents of varying sex/genders actively participated in these sites of erotic pleasure, and constructed the relational dynamics on their own terms.

I begin with Billy (30s/M), who is single and has had long term relationships with men and women, but quite simply enjoys the physical encounter with men because in his words 'I love getting fucked, to be honest – the way guys fuck'. He enthusiastically recounted his experiences in beats and 'orgy' parties as vehicles of desiring-pleasure, removed from the moral injunctions of mainstream purview. The element of risk and STD threat is acknowledged and respected, but it is not accorded an over-riding judicial voice that passes sentence on particular acts. Rather, risk is one aspect of a sub-cultural terrain – a deterritorialised sphere that has established a particular line of flight from the moral ordinance of heteronormativity, monogamy and monosexuality. Billy described his sexual encounters in a minor language that disturbed any play to totalising images of beat sex. After repeated negative experiences in the 'gay scene' – tainted by what he considered as body-image, bitchiness, nastiness and misogyny – Billy opted to frequent beats and occasionally sex parties comprising mostly bisexual men. But Billy does not typify any arguable claim to an archetype of a beat devotee. While Billy's sexual needs are predominantly satisfied by men, his emotional relationships are more comfortably fulfilled with women. This relational awareness emerged at a time when Billy and his then live-in girlfriend occasionally solicited a male 'third', usually from clubs. It was in these erotic three-some events that he discovered his sexual appetite for men. Billy explained the allure of beats:

I like beats, because a lot of bi boys go, married boys. They're much more my flavour. I think if they've got a wife and kids at home, they've got life going on, bit more balance; its not all geared up to body-image. Some days you just need to come so you can get on with your day. I go pretty much as often as I can [...] I literally do what I have to do and then get back to reality.

Billy draws a portrait of beat sex that resonates with Gary Dowsett's (1996, 2002) empirical research of desiring-practices in homosexuality. For the men in Dowsett's study, recreational sex is more than the immediacy of the sex act at any given moment. It is also an art: a choreography of sexual adventuring and skill in the 'perpetual seduction and pleasuring of men and by men' where beats signify the unlimited promise to pursue the elsewhere unattainable, unavailable and fantastic (Dowsett 1996:143,147). This sexual choreography is made explicit in Ewan's (50s/GQ) account of serendipitously discovering beats in his early 40s while walking to satisfy his need to wear women's lycra bike shorts:

I was on one of those walks. I went into a [public] loo; someone came into the adjoining cubicle. I didn't know people scouted these places, watched for someone to enter, then followed five minutes later. I know now. I was finishing and there was water on the floor, and in the reflection I could see the other person – I looked and there was someone looking back at me. When I left he did. Nothing happened but that was the first time I actively sought it. One day, I had to go into town. On the way I drive passed the 'cottage' as they're called. I pulled in, heart pounding, and there's this guy parked. I knew by then that people scoped out these places, so in I went. So I had my first sexual experience. I was just so nervous. Talk about a mind-fuck.

Ewan's story portrays not only an exploration of sexual adventuring but that he entered a foreign social context as a 'learner' and eventually became more proficient in the protocols and language of beats. Indeed, Dowsett

(1996:147) found in his study that such casual sex is not only a sex act, but also a learned set of sexual relations – it takes practice, intuition, experience and skill to operate on a beat effectively. Jordan's experience in beats was similarly an embodied practice inflected by the need to express both sexual and gendered desires in ways not possible elsewhere. Like Ewan, his genderqueer inclinations bring to light realities that are kept far from mainstream purview:

I only enjoyed these encounters as my female self. I sought them out to fulfill the fantasy of being "female" with a man. I would imagine myself as female in the situation, like performing oral sex. Playing the female role in these situations was more soul-nourishing than sexually fulfilling. If I think back, it was more about an expression of inner female feelings, almost like an explosion from the frustration of having to present and act male – which in essence to me, is like having to lie to the world. I hate this sense of deception, which to this day, I seem to have to perpetrate within my social context and community. The encounters that I specifically do remember were at beats with "heterosexual" or bisexual men (Jordan/40s/GQ).

While Ewan and Jordan described themselves as genderqueer, possessing 'male' anatomy alongside a strong predilection for feminine/female modes of expression, Matthew's (20s/FTM) trans status brought added complexity to sexual adventuring. As a trans man, whose anatomical figuration contradicts the conventional view of male embodiment (retaining 'female' reproductive organs and genitalia), he was daunted by the prospect of pursuing his curiosity about beat sex. The irony Matthew observed of 'usually being read as a gay man' is complicated by navigating the phallic emphasis beat sex evinces. Venturing into this arena eventuated via a drunken escapade to a sauna, which successfully satisfied Matthew's interest. Ewan's, Jordan's and Matthew's experiences thus expand the conceptualisation of beat sex beyond the bounds of normative male embodiment or gender expression. Moreover, these secretive stories portray

a movement of bodies in libidinal contact with other bodies out of which nascent forms of sexuality are born. Their secrets betray a seepage of corporeal content beyond that of 'gay male sex', with inventions of feminine-becomings that explode dominant models of male or female forms – a viral proliferation of partial subjectivities.

In his analysis of such desiring-practices, Dowsett (2002:409-10) proposed that sexuality comes into being in 'moments of creation' where 'bodies-in-sex' operate not only sexually but relationally in a 'discursive silence'. Dowsett argues that beat culture entails the development of a particular form of sociality, in which desiring relations engender a creative production of sexuality. In the cases of Ewan, Jordan and Matthew, such sexual innovation was variously generated through walking in lycra, invoking a fantasy of female corpora, or inventing queer male sexual activity beyond the phallic economy. As Dowsett (2002:420) urges, we need to look beyond crude sex, gender and sexuality categories (man, woman, transgender, male, female, transsexual, homosexual, heterosexual, bisexual) that 'overlay sexuality with a paradigm of inevitable power'. Such rethinking, which exposes the positive affects of contagion beyond strictures of moral propriety, is eloquently captured in Dowsett's (2002:420) words:

We must no longer refuse the sedition of ordinary human bodies-in-sex. Were we to follow this path, we might find a new sexuality exists not simply in gay men's lives but in others'. We may see elsewhere, sexuality in modes of sociality that confound conventional structural categories. We may even... stop seeking to clean up sexuality in some liberal pluralist project of purification, and instead begin to enjoy a little more of the creative potential in its sweat, bump, and grind.

Dowsett's analysis signals three key theoretical imperatives: firstly, to move beyond sociological paradigms of sexuality informed primarily by repressive regimes of power; secondly, to bring the body into theoretical focus; and thirdly, to shift thinking from the socially-inscribed body to the

creatively-producing body. The value of reframing a sociology of sexuality in this manner places desire – and as I argue throughout, a Deleuzian view of desire – centre-stage. This enables productive elements of sexual practice to be scrutinised. The purified moral body is thereby disassembled and reassembled through desiring-production that, moreover, accords agency to the body-in-assemblage.

As many stories from my interviews attested, such assemblages, which are enacted in the environs of sex-for-pleasure sites, exceed any reductionist view of these as exclusive male-oriented practices. In my study, casual or non-monogamous sexual practices were reported from across the sex/gender spectrum. Both Anthony and Paul indicated a more expansive gendered cartography:

I'm interested in exploring things like sex clubs because they offer mixed-sex experiences with both men and women (Anthony/30s/M).

Wet on Wellington is a sex-on-site sauna mainly for gay men, but they also have bisexual nights sometimes. I went there with a woman who is a friend from the poly group and had sex with her. There was another guy who was a friend from the poly group so we ended up having a male three-some (Paul/40s/M).

Sex-for-pleasure activity – such as swinging, sex parties, sex-on-site venues, or other casual liaisons – commonly featured in the recreational erotic accounts of many participants. Mainstream discourse associates such practice with risk of infection that threatens and pollutes moral and sexual health. From a majoritarian standpoint, therefore, casual, non-monogamous or group sexual encounters are negatively constructed as sites of contagion and potential harm or risk. The analytical task here is not to endorse, judge or condemn participants' lifestyle choices, but to render the veracity of their experiences through their own stories. Contrary to the majority view, my participants discussed and approached such practices from a sex-positive perspective rather than as furtive, illicit or culpable behaviour. Their stories

exceed the secret boxes that seek to police such moral contagion; rather, these 'sneak, insert or introduce' their presence into 'an arena of public forms', prodding and lobbying⁴ (Deleuze & Guattari 1987:287). For instance, Charlotte (30s/F), Cherie (30s/CD), Leigh (30s/M) and Lesley (30s/MTF) were passionate advocates of swinging. Several participants (comprising a diversity of sex/genders and ages), recounted a common theme of meeting casual sex partners and 'fuck buddies' through clubs, social networking and Internet sites. Four participants, Anna (30s/F), Billy (30s/M), Dean (40s/M) and Jay (19/FTM), related their involvement in sex-work as sexual adventure or lifestyle choice, while others expressed interest in exploring this domain of experience. Kate's (30s/F) openness to sex-work (as professional or client) was explained thus:

I think when sex with men became just a functional short term, just a "get my rocks off" thing, it was like I should be getting paid to do this. I don't really have any issue with the concept of sex-work. There've been other times when I've wanted a particular sexual activity. I've thought about buying it rather than trying to find it or being disappointed by casual partners that don't do it well – more BDSM than straight sex.

Offering sex-positive arguments for this profession, Cameron and Morgan made these observations:

I've got a couple of friends who are sex-workers. All the sex workers I've met have all been in control of their sexuality; they are getting paid for it and they enjoy their work (Cameron/20s/M).

I have lots of friends who are sex-workers. I think it's a very diverse industry, some people are definitely victims and some people are

⁴ An example of this is the 'Australian Sex Party'. This is a minority political party whose declared mission is: 'a political response to the sexual needs of Australia in the twenty-first century. It is an attempt to restore the balance between sexual privacy and sexual publicity that has been severely distorted by morals campaigners and prudish politicians' (<<http://www.sexparty.org.au/>>).

very much engaged in it because that's what they want to do, they're in control and good luck to them (Morgan/50s/GQ).

Dean's (40s/M) brief experience as a prostitute was not motivated by money as he had a full-time profession, but rather to indulge a curiosity and 'find out what it was like'. In his words, he found it 'interesting' and remembers the few occasions well. Billy (30s/M), who pursued an intermittent career of sex-work over three years, recounted:

I literally just couldn't get enough [sex], and I was thinking, I'm giving it away. I really wanted to do it: the thrill of the kill, not the cash.

Anna willingly chose sex-work as her preferred occupation for four years, but as she explained, societal stigma surrounding the lie of her 'secret' eventually took its toll:

You can be willing to do it yourself, we're not all abused and pushed into it, and have our money taken away and starved. Some of us have fun doing it, we get paid really well [...] But, I did reach a breaking point. I think a lot of it was from lying. I was making bucket loads of money. I couldn't buy anything I wanted – a house, a good car – because the parents would say, "well you're a waitress where are you getting this money from?" And I met a guy; I couldn't do it. It's very hard to have a relationship, while you are doing that. I think for a single girl it's a perfect job but for someone in a relationship it's two worlds colliding (Anna/30s/F).

While Jay (19/FTM) worked for a short period as a transgender escort in Japan, enjoying the fun of 'lavishing attention on somebody', Charlie's (30s/GQ) encounter with transgender sex-work was motivated by curiosity. Living near one of New Zealand's red light districts, where transgender prostitutes commonly solicited, Charlie was keen to learn about this lifestyle in order to try and answer questions about his own gender ambiguity:

I often walked around there. I was curious just to have conversations because they were transgender and it was something that was part of my thoughts. I thought "how am I going to have this conversation?" So I decided to present as a woman and went down on the streets and met some of the other girls. It was like "what's your name, oh, you are new, what are you doing etc?" It was quite scary. There was just talking and trying to find out a little bit to try and see the world from their level. There were two things: one is being a prostitute and the other is being transgender. I wanted to find out why there were so many transgender prostitutes, and why they weren't integrating in other parts of society. Is this the only option? Is it just a well paid option to just facilitate the transition process? They told me they got good money and that's why they wanted to do it. Part of it too is straight men wishing to have sex or erotic encounters with transgender people. That's something I realised from spending some time on the street in that capacity. I didn't feel comfortable enough to get picked up myself. I was really there to just imagine myself in that space and try and learn something from it.

The vocabulary of promiscuity that adheres to the mythos of sexual adventuring assumes and promulgates new meanings within the contexts of my participants' narratives. It deterritorialises rigid systems of thought that are circumscribed within moral frameworks of the abject, aberrant, and reprehensible, and instead, reframes it as a positive and agentic desiring-process. Refiguring such lexicon thus makes the dominant language work in a minoritarian manner. Cherie (30s/CD) explicitly exemplified this in articulating a code of ethics to promote 'responsible promiscuity'. Ethical sexuality for Cherie was predicated by safe-sex vigilance (mandatory HIV testing and using appropriate prophylactics) and open and honest communication with all partners:

Terms such as "tart" and "slut" have become disreputable. I identify as a tart in the sense that I am promiscuous and sexually aggressive;

this does not necessarily mean that I want to sleep with anyone specifically. I love group sex, when in a relationship, and am quite happy to play with groups, in the presence of others also playing, or in front of an audience. I negotiate a set of allowed activities with my partner. Some people in the community, religious leaders, and conservative politicians consider my lifestyle to be immoral. Personally, I consider being a complete tart to be far less immoral than, say, locking up children in mandatory detention, encouraging an Australian citizen to be imprisoned without trial overseas, or discouraging condom use in countries with high rates of HIV.

As Dowsett (1996, 2002) likewise discovered in his research, recreational sex is more than the carnal act itself – it also concerns building sociality and interconnections. Underlining an aspect of sexual adventuring overlooked in dominant representations is the idea that desire creatively produces particular fields of social relations. Participants' experiences illustrate what Dowsett (2002:418) refers to as 'desiring collectivities':

There's so many stereotypes about swingers – it's emotionless soulless sex, people just using each other's bodies. It particularly ticks me off because people say 'don't use stereotypes about bisexuals' but they'll have stereotypes about swinging. My experience of the swing scene was that there are friendships and a lot of people that you have sex regularly with as friends, so they are friends that you just happen to have sex with. You build up relationships. So one of my long term partners, the partner I've been with the longest over 6 years I met at an orgy night (Lesley/30s/MTF).

Through Internet sites we've found swinging clubs. We always meet people. Like we met a couple at *Saints and Sinners*⁵ and we decided

⁵ *Saints and Sinners* is an erotically themed Adult party event, held each year in Melbourne, Australia (<<http://www.saintsandsinnersball.com.au/about-faq.php>>).

to meet up again with them and they had some of their friends over, so they're now our friends as well (Leigh/30s/M).

Although I'm going [to a sex party] for a specific purpose, if something happens with someone then I'll hook up with them, just us. I've done that before, like gone out for coffee or dinner [...] I'm looking for a connection regardless of the situation (Billy/30s/M).

Towards a Generative Ethics

Such sexual-oriented socialising is also educative via consciousness-raising. This is the positive affect of contagion – the generation and proliferation of ethical ways of living, which from a sociological standpoint, is transformational. Ethical promiscuity, as defined by Cherie earlier, entails not only sexual health awareness but also constructing frameworks of appropriate behaviour. Ethical bodies – the responsible manner in which connections are enacted with other bodies – are accordingly generative in the Deleuzian sense. Moral codes are not imposed by some transcendent authority (religion and psychoanalysis being Deleuze and Guattari's prime targets of criticism throughout their corpus) but emerge from within micro-fields of libidinal planes of experience. There is more to the ethical landscape than the commonly circulated and disparaging depiction of swinging described by Joanne (30s/F) as 'bisexual women who have sex with another woman in front of their male partner to seduce or please their partner'. In particular, Charlotte (30s/F) illuminates how a swinging lifestyle enmeshes with the ordinary realities of family life, thus proffering an ethical view of sexual adventuring other than commonly imagined. Against the backdrop of a Catholic upbringing and Italian parents-in-law, Charlotte initially followed a conventional marital script: married at 22 with a child and mortgage. Shortly after marrying, she slipped into the 'good wife' role, forsaking her own identity and adopting her partner's friends and hobbies as her own. Charlotte bore the burden of domestic housework and recalled continual arguments in this regard. In retrospect she reflected that:

I think in the process of that I completely lost who I was. I became who I thought he wanted. We had the marriage, the house, the child. I didn't think too much about why I was doing it or even if I really wanted to. I was blinded by the fact that I had a nice big wedding.

The seeds of possible alternatives germinated one night when clubbing with her husband and friends. Indulging in 'dirty dancing' with her girlfriends later led to erotic play. While on one level, this seems to feed a common stereotype of nightclub lesbianism to satisfy the male gaze, Charlotte commented that, although benign, 'it was thrilling, exciting; I loved it, I wanted to do more'. Her reality exceeded any recourse to such stereotyping, but rather opened up possibilities of sexuality and gender not bound to rigid marital prescriptions. However, the exciting possibility of non-conventional sexual play within the marriage setting did not align with her husband's jealousy, possessiveness and unwillingness to explore this territory further. Concomitant with growing tensions on the domestic front, Charlotte's marriage eventually ended. Charlotte's self-reflection revealed a journey to recover her Body without Organs – a becoming-woman of the body that was stolen in her first marriage and organised according to inflexible gender-normative roles. This process required divesting herself of the prior signification 'wife':

I just wanted to find me, be on my own and do stuff for me, which I hadn't done in quite some time. So it was a hard time. I went from being a good little housewife and staying at home to buying knee-high lace-up boots, discovering vodka and hitting the clubs. That's how I met my current husband.

In her second marriage, Charlotte was resolute from the outset not to relinquish her newly forming BwO:

When my second husband, Jason, and I first got together I was adamant about not changing my life. He was involved in sport and gym, and I was going to the gym and dancing. It was important for

us to still pursue these interests. I was fiercely independent, determined not to repeat the same things, have the same fights over and over again. I wasn't going to settle for someone not prepared to do some of the work at home. When I got together with Jason, he didn't really know how to cook. I said "that's not really going to work, I'll teach you; you are going to learn". Funnily enough, now I do a lot of business stuff and he does most of the cooking; it's a bit of a role reversal. Also, early on, I said "I'm flirtatious. If you can't deal with that we are not going any further because I want to be able to be me". He said he had a similar experience where his previous girlfriend was jealous and he is also flirtatious by nature. So it was both of us giving each other the freedom to be ourselves that brought us closer together in that respect and still does.

As each boundary was approached and negotiated, a contagious affect liberated becoming-figurations of desire. Part of this freedom led Charlotte and her husband to pursue the swing scene as a recreational and social past-time. Swinging in this particular narrative involved sexual play with men, women and couples, either met privately through Internet sites or via attending swinging clubs or sex parties. Occasionally, such activity has led to a second partner joining their relationship. Inverting the prevailing stereotype of (straight) men's erotic fantasy involving three-somes with two bisexual women, Charlotte's preferred sexual triad is with two men. The success of this lifestyle choice has been based around building an ethics of honesty, open communication, respect for each other's needs, mindfulness towards continued relationship strength and vitality, and adherence to safe-sex practices that includes regular STD testing. It is an ethics of both affective and corporeal dimensions that overflows onto a non-judgemental value-system, detached from conservative morality, which she encourages in her daughter:

My daughter is at an age now where she's learnt about sex education at school. I've sat down and had a conversation with her and asked, "do you know what gay means?" She told me and I was quite

impressed that she knew. I asked if she knew what bisexual is and she didn't, so I explained that. I'm in a position now where I can be myself and I want her to have the same choice. If she chooses to be in a traditional relationship, then that's great. I'm happy for her, because she's chosen it, rather than because she thinks that's what's right and that's what she should do. What I'm teaching is very sex-positive and very accepting.

Conclusion

Charlotte's case eloquently brings together all the elements of contagion that reverberate through other participants' stories. Her story is one of becomings – girlfriend, woman, mother, wife, equal partner, bisexual, relationship coach, swinger. These becomings move imperceptibly towards forming a BwO – a transformational body that has necessarily moved through, connected with, and mutated elements of the binary machines and majoritarian structures of sociality. The viral process of the rhizome activates contagion – contaminating certainty, questioning stability, and threatening security and surety of monolithic identity and behaviour. The bisexual body, in all its multiple incarnations, is the vehicle of contagion, moving and transmuting through the meridians of sex, gender and sexuality. Such mutant flows of desire are micro-revolutionary, and thus, subtly reconfigure the molar scripts of sexual bodies and the relations into which each body enters. Bisexuality is, therefore, entangled in multi-layers of interactions and events in which sexuality is constantly rearranged or reassembled in response to both the majoritarian and minoritarian affects of contagion.

This chapter has mobilised the Deleuzian concept of contagion in order to read beyond circumscriptions of bodily and sexual practices that have hitherto been imprisoned by negative stereotyping. By focusing on the 'hidden' experiences of sexual adventuring, the data presented here demonstrates how contagion liberates desire, allowing it to breathe and flourish as a creative force in bisexual social relations. My analysis shows how this transformational process releases bisexuality from molar registers

that have sedimented in the public psyche as risk, disease, and fetishism, particularly in terms of gendered stereotypes. Hence, a Deleuzian schema reorients the disease model of bisexuality. It does this by re-visioning the sick body from one that is morally reprobate or aberrant monstrosity requiring cure or domestication to an aspiring body that exceeds the secrets which seek to contain and repress it.

As Philip Goodchild (1996:2) contends, Deleuze and Guattari's social theory is a liberation of thought that 'is less a liberation *from* social expectations than a liberation to *enter into* social relations' [my emphasis]. The viral process of rewriting the body is accordingly a continual operation of negotiating and challenging the strictures that seek to bind the bisexual subject into ordered transcendent signifiers. Revolution is not about 'tearing up the script', but rather amending or adding to the script (Goodchild 1996:2). Participants' stories thus revealed how desiring-assemblages are built and, hence, produce new affects and relationships. Doing so, I have explored the ways in which corporeal flows of desire might generate an ethics of body and practice that contests the punitive moral view of the majority. The following chapter develops the notion of a generative ethics of corporeality more fully through examining the spectrum of relationship formations and erotic practices – monogamous, non-monogamous, polyamorous and sub-cultural – and how these intersect with, inform and expand gendered understandings of the socio-political world.

8

Nuptials

When we look forward we can envision bisexuality as an engine in the paradigmatic shift toward a future of sexual fluidity and amorous inclusiveness where the energies of love and life are revered.

Serena Anderlini-D'Onofrio (2011:467)

As signposted in Chapter 7, living beyond the heteronormative paradigm casts the spotlight on alternative and ethical ways of organising desiring connections. This chapter explores the 'new erotic economy' (Weeks 2010:88) of my participants' stories, wherein creative configurations of intimate partnerships accommodate multi-sexual desires or erotic practices. I firstly examine the diversity of relationship types that emerged in my data, which span a range of conventional and non-conventional arrangements. The stories related here include experiences of: monogamy, non-monogamy, open relationships, polyamory, and sexual sub-cultural communities. These narratives reveal that sex/genders are expressed and negotiated in complex ways that subvert dominant constructions of the gender binary, particularly in terms of the negotiation of power. The remainder of the chapter scrutinises the nexus between creative relational modes and expressions of masculinity and femininity, and demonstrates that participants' practices disorder normative compliance to gendered spaces of production. As such, I argue that diverse relationship figurations, which a bisexual lens brings into focus, produces an autopoietic affect: a liberatory, reflexive and ethical enterprise of multiple becomings whereby gender is variously rewritten, revalued and broadened. I suggest that such amplification of gender is an ethico-political affect of complex socio-sexual and discursive assemblages, which is illuminated through encounters between corporeality, social fields, and dominant discourses of masculinity and femininity.

Accordingly, this chapter further develops and elaborates the notion of a generative ethics of corporeality and sociality. In order to examine how respondents organised their intimate partner relations both pragmatically and ethically, I turn to the Deleuzian notion of nuptials. The ideas of asignification, teratologies and contagion, which have informed previous chapters, steer the analytical trajectory of this thesis into the terrain of nuptials. In Western parlance nuptials denote the joining together in matrimony and reproductive coupling or mating. But for Deleuze and Guattari (1987), nuptials destabilise and are in excess of this dominant signification, and look to desiring connections between bodies, and more specifically, how these enact symbiotic alliances through relations of proximity. Deleuze declares that nuptials 'are always against a nature', and moreover, are 'without couples or conjugality' (Deleuze & Parnet 2006:2, 7). In the Deleuzian sense, nuptials are 'unnatural' in their capacity to be understood as non-procreative encounters, alliances, proximities, or zones of becomings. Nuptial encounters are synchronously 'outside' and 'between', moving in what Deleuze refers to as 'a-parallel evolution' that collaborates against the dominant order or organisation (Deleuze & Parnet 2006:5, 7). The positionality evinced here is thus not hierarchical, but alongside, or beside, which continues a key thematic motif in this thesis. Evident in participants' stories, such zones of affinity challenge normative moral decrees of monosexual, monogamous, procreative, and anthropocentric relationships.

The theoretical benefit of this Deleuzian intervention is three-fold. Firstly, it allows a more nuanced understanding of monogamy and non-monogamy, which, as described by my participants, are not necessarily mutually exclusive terms. Secondly, Deleuze and Guattari recast sociality and relationality as symbiotic figurations between human *and* non-human entities. This garners a more complex reading of sexual and gendered practices as processes of becomings, which may incorporate non-human elements, such as: surgical modification, medication, cosmetic accessories, costuming, sex toys, erotic paraphernalia, and animal affinities. Thirdly, the Deleuzian trope of nuptials detaches the body from moral ordinations of

procreation, the value of which is to relinquish an assumed correlation between genitalia, sex/gender and the 'naming' of intimate connections (for example, same-sex relationship). I argue that this perspective brings a richer understanding of relational and gendered zones through re-conceptualising these as spaces of production, creation and invention. Central to this theoretical analysis, then, is the productive role of desire that operates in the Deleuzian realm of becomings (introduced in Chapter 3, and developed throughout this thesis in various modalities, such as becoming-woman, becoming-minoritarian). Here, I mobilise Deleuzian figurations of molecular-becomings and becoming-animal, as well as becoming-woman, to explore nuptial alliances that further disrupt the coherence of the sex/gendered subject and thereby complicate binary constructions of sexual difference and sexuality. I deploy these concepts in order to reveal how lived realities in the border regions of sex/gender and sexuality are processual spaces of multiple becomings that generate ethical modes of living.

'Unnatural' Alliances: Bountiful Possibilities

A repeated refrain in respondents' narratives is that of negotiation. For my participants, the negotiation process enacts a desiring-force that generates liberatory and ethical modes of relating to self and others. Here, bodies navigate a non-linear trajectory in which the categories of sexuality and gender continually encounter one another, opening up the limits of each to interruption, reconsideration and reformulation. Discussion of non/monogamy figured centrally in this arena of respondent dialogue. Morgan's (50s/GQ) comments betrayed a Gordian knot that seemingly entwines desire and ethical sensibility in an intractable dilemma:

Idealistically, obviously [non-monogamy] is the best way for people because monogamy is impossible for almost everybody. But the way we've been culturally conditioned we find the idea of our partner being with someone else too threatening and hurtful for us to cope with.

But my data shows that when the stratified boundaries of monosexual categories (gay/lesbian/straight) are interrupted and made supple by the introduction of bi/poly/multi-sexual lines, such suppleness also permeates moral circumscriptions of monogamy. Similar to McLean's (2004) findings in her sociological study of bisexuality, of the 47 interviews I conducted more than half the cohort advocated (either in past/present experience, or future ideals) a diversity of non-monogamous or multi-partner arrangements. Only eight interviewees categorically described their partnerships (past/current/future ideal) as exclusively monogamous. Others, who stated a preference for exclusive partnerships or considered their current situations to be monogamous, presented a more elastic understanding of monogamy. An ethics of monogamy was often qualified in terms of individuated gendered desire and how this might be satisfied within the parameters of fidelity to one's primary spouse. For example, while Rachel (30s/F) and Lara (30s/F) described their committed long-term relationships (with males) as monogamous, both are 'permitted' to have female sexual partners within the spousal context. Such understandings were reached via partner negotiation and consensus. Rachel explained that the monogamous relationship with her partner is maintained by engaging sexually with another woman as a couple. For Lara, monogamy entails mutually agreed upon 'boundaries of any encounters with women', and is only breached by attractions to 'other men'.

Ewan (50s/GQ) also described himself as monogamous, but his behaviour and current marital circumstance challenge conventional understandings of monogamy. Amidst the struggle to resolve long-term gender confusion, Ewan's intermittent use of estrogen hormones dramatically augmented his sexual desire for men while extinguishing any libidinal attraction for women. The affect produced in and through Ewan's desiring-assemblage (hormones + genderqueering + wife + 'gay' libido) resulted in a reciprocal arrangement that permits him and his wife to have male lovers. Ewan explained that his conceptualisation of monogamy is constructed around emotional fidelity to his wife:

I'm trying hard to keep our relationship viable even though we're not physically able to. In every department it works except the sexual-gender thing. She understands that; she doesn't want to lose it either.

These narratives thus disturb the established order of monogamy, reassembling the concept in novel ways that open up transformative potentialities. For Sarah (20s/F), the transformative journey has emerged incrementally through a narrative fraught with paradox, contradiction and moral struggle around questions of monogamy and bisexuality. Prefaced by a bisexual involvement with a male-female couple at the age of 17, Sarah's story (discussed in Chapter 5) has largely been one of serial long-term heterosexual monogamy. On the basis of recently experienced strong feelings for a woman, however, Sarah ended her engagement to a male partner. The situation has thrown both her perceived sense of stable sexual self and future vision of heterosexual marriage and children into upheaval. The impress of dominant moral frameworks presented great difficulty for Sarah. With past male partners, any attractions to women were dismissed because she considered this 'cheating'. Although Sarah's declared impulse is to organise relationships as monogamous, she wavered in thinking about the possibilities of open or polyamorous lifestyles. Asked if she would contemplate a multi-gendered/multi-partnered relationship in the future, Sarah responded: 'Yes I would. I have considered it in the past'. Yet, a stated contradiction between her academic life as a critical feminist theorist and conservative upbringing posed unresolved questions around prospective partners and parenting:

I'd like children [...] reproduction in a straight relationship is hard enough. It just seems to become a whole lot more complicated, particularly as I'm attracted to both men and this woman [...] I do have two female friends in a same-sex relationship who have children and it seems fine. Although somewhere like here [Australian metropolis] would be quite alright, I travel quite a lot and I'll probably end up working in different places in the future; that might be a bit tricky.

Deleuze comments that nuptials are becomings, and as such, do not conform to a model: 'there are no longer binary machines: question-answer, masculine-feminine, man-animal' (Deleuze & Parnet 2006:2). As Sarah examined her state of flux, such nascent becomings were inextricably entwined with ethical questions of self, family, gender roles and society: whether open relationships are workable, how children may figure into same-sex or other-sex partnerships, how family and friends both here and abroad might respond. Such questions defied any definitive answer or resolution (*I ought* to do or be 'this' or 'that'). Rather, these generated more questions that flowed through the in-between spaces of moral un/certainty.

Transformative assemblages accordingly create lines of flight from dominant moral codifications that police intimate lives according to a heteronormative template. Negotiating in-between spaces of nomadic sexuality opens up new possibilities of relational dialogue. Several respondents deterritorialised the molar norm of monogamy via the inclusion of other intimates in their partnership formations. For Anthony (30s/M), geographical distance from his male partner was the catalyst for proposing flexible negotiable rules concerning other casual partners. Ben's (40s/M) impetus to rethink relationships arose after his ten-year marriage ended. Notions of experimentation and 'considering other possibilities' required Ben to create a new ethical framework that takes account of his sexual 'fluidity' via 'open conversation' and 'respect and regard' for both the needs of other persons and himself. Indeed, change in marital dynamics often provided scope to consider alternative relationship styles. As recounted in Chapter 7, the ethos of Charlotte's (30s/F) second marriage was constructed around a swinging lifestyle. While each story is not mimetic of another, Anthony, Ben and Charlotte all signal the importance of openness, negotiation, communication and agreement on rules, which, though specific to each situation, are paramount to successful articulation of such 'unnatural nuptials'.

A recurring theme throughout participants' narratives is that ethical modes of living are generated from within each relationship dynamic. Significantly,

this finding supports Heaphy, Donovan and Weeks' (2004:168-9) study of non-heterosexual patterns of intimacy, which found that 'dialogical openness' is crucial to a 'relational ethics' built on commitment, trust, reflexivity and freedom. Moreover, Heaphy, Donovan and Weeks' (2004:168) research participants revealed a significant level of experimental creativity in 'constructing their relationships from scratch', which is further borne out in my data. Relational assemblages that navigate beyond the normative boundaries of monogamy and/or monosexuality are thus distinctively self-creative or autopoietic. A generative ethics, which is evident in participants' multiplex nuptials, requires the enunciation of revolutionary formations. As Deleuze (2007:177) writes:

In assemblages you find states of things, bodies, various combinations of bodies, hodgepodges; but you also find utterances, modes of expression, and whole regimes of signs. The relations between the two are pretty complex. For example, a society is designed not by productive forces and ideology, but by "hodgepodges" and "verdicts". Hodgepodges are combinations of interpenetrating bodies. These combinations are well-known and accepted (incest for example is a forbidden combination). Verdicts are collective utterances, that is, instantaneous and incorporeal transformations which have currency in a society (for example, "from now on, you are no longer a child").

Verdicts in the Deleuzian sense accordingly function from both a moral and judicial standpoint. The marriage act is an explicit example: "I now pronounce you husband and wife". To step outside or distort this utterance by introducing new elements into the marital assemblage (other sex/gendered figurations, partners or lovers) shakes the State-sanctioned molar organisation of matrimony. The plight of the same-sex marriage lobby in Australia is a current instance of such a challenge to the majoritarian order that emphatically adheres to the definition of marriage as the union between a man and a woman. What my research highlights is the complex sociological connection between the hodgepodges of participants'

lives – their interpenetrating bodies – and the verdicts that prescribe and proscribe how intimacies *ought* to be formulated (*vis-à-vis* moral imperatives dictated by State, family, church etc.). As Bogue (2007:12) cogently argues, Deleuze articulates that 'the ethical imperative in bodily experimentation is not that of an increase in power over a world, but an increase in powers of affecting and being affected, a responsiveness to a selected world and an openness to interaction'. Cass (30s/F), a long-time bisexual activist in queer politics, lamented the ethical conundrums posed by bisexuality and its attendant association with multi-partnering, which undermines such openness:

You know how to terrify some gay activists? Talk about recognition for polyamorous relationships and they'll RUN A MILE!! It's just too scary because they know how politicians will baulk at that; they're frightened it would stop politicians from considering *any* queer rights.

Exploring beyond the conventional limits of coupled relationships consequently occurs at a micro-level of experiential reality. As a molecular process it creates individuated verdicts of living based around responsible, caring and consensual practice. For polyamorous participants in this study, their partner arrangements entailed an ethical revision of relational dynamics. A Deleuzian ethics is, therefore, cultivated through practice-based, transformative relationships (Gilson 2011). Of further note, is that polyamory permitted multi-gendered spaces of intimate relations. Michael (30s/M) for example, lived monogamously with his wife until separating in his late 20s. Subsequent exploration of his bisexuality led to a polyamorous lifestyle such that Michael is now re-united with his wife and children, while also living (part-time) with a male lover. Natasha (30s/F) and Paul (40s/M) both began married life from a monogamous standpoint but are now happily polyamorous. Legally married to one male partner, Natasha cohabits in the same domicile with another male partner, and has a further female partner, who lives elsewhere. Natasha described polyamorous becomings that culminated in a fluid style of multi-partnering. Ongoing

discovery and experimentation have gradually rearranged the terms and conditions of all levels of marital functioning – desire, sexuality, and domestic organisation. The genesis of such becomings occurred in response to her husband's newly disclosed bisexual desire and consequent negotiation concerning how this might be satisfied in terms of safe and acceptable practice. Initial agreement allowed each to pursue only same-sex/gender relationships – often referred to as 'gender monogamy' in bisexual couples (Gustavson 2009:418). As trust and security increased over time, this arrangement gradually relaxed beyond gendered 'rules'. Natasha explained the complexities of her polyamorous situation, in which all her partners are considered equally; no relational connection is accorded greater significance than any other:

My husband has his male partner over every other weekend. Week nights I tend to swap between my husband, boyfriend, and girlfriend. So: husband, boyfriend, girlfriend, husband, boyfriend, and then a weekend with one of them.

Similarly, Paul (40s/M) divides his time between two primary female life partners (in separate households), which he terms a 'V' figuration. He also has other occasional lovers, both female and male. His story further underscores the productive element of desire that animates nuptial alliances. Paul's relationship narrative maps an assemblage of affects: from the milieu of a Christian youth group that involved benign physical affection (cuddling and massage) with both male and female friends – through to forsaking the conventions of marriage and institutional Christianity for the greater freedom offered by polyamory. The seeds of such a radical shift germinated when, mid-way through his ten-year marriage, Paul fell in love with one of his current polyamorous partners. After struggling and failing to reconcile this with his Christian belief system he separated from both his wife and the Church. Through exploring polyamory Paul met his second current primary partner. However, as Paul explained, this configuration remains fluid and open to future possibilities: 'I wouldn't rule out a future male life partner because I've learnt that you don't rule things out'. But the vestiges of

Christian morality haunt Paul's conduct. While he is comfortable openly discussing his polyamorous situation he is less inclined to publicly disclose his male lover. The invention of Paul's polyamorous and 'bi-sensual' BwO – that is, the process of retrieving the body stolen and organised by State and Church – is one of ongoing embattlement:

There's this feeling that bisexuality is like playing around, sexual perversion for the sake of it, the whole vice thing. It doesn't give me a buzz to think that I'm engaged in vice. It's like you're queer in a bad sense. There's probably some Christian hangover stuff because I was pretty much a full on Christian from 14 to mid-30s (Paul/40s/M).

Paul's moral sensibility is synchronously informed by a belief system he has fled and subsequently reconfigured through an experiential self-fashioned ethics. This paradoxical position of in-betweenness – which intervenes in, and ruptures, the hierarchical paradigm of surrender/resistance – is more fruitfully examined as relations of proximity that produce an ethico-political affect. Alongside his emergent nuptial configurations, Paul has reflected deeply upon the authority of dominant Western discourses that uphold monogamous coupling as a universal moral standard. This reflexive process is not only transformative existentially but also re-imagines, from a molecular standpoint, what a relationship might become and how this questions transcendent moral templates of social organisation.

Pivotal to the idea of nuptials, then, is the Deleuzian notion of minor language, which *produces* rather than *authors*, finds, experiments and encounters rather than conjugates, regulates and judges (Deleuze & Parnet 2006:7). The discussion between Deleuze and Parnet (2006) – *A Conversation: What is it? What is it For?* – considers beyond the dualisms set in train and created by dominant language:

We must pass through dualisms because they are in language, it's not a question of getting rid of them, but we must fight against language, invent stammering, not in order to get back to a prelinguistic pseudo-

reality, but to trace a vocal or written line which will make language flow between these dualisms, and which will define a minority usage of language, an inherent variation... (Deleuze & Parnet 2006:26)

As demonstrated in participants' accounts thus far, monogamy and non-monogamy are not binarily opposed. Rather flows of ideas, thoughts and practices occupy in-between spaces that offer expansive ways of conceptualising intimacies across gender and partnering connections. Such conceptual innovation resists slotting narratives into a one-template-fits-all schema or suggesting that non-normative relationships are a utopian panacea of fulfilment, satisfaction or harmony, which answer failures in the dominant societal paradigm of institutionalised monogamy. Rather, these are zones of creativity and experimentation to elicit what may or may not work. Some, such as Natasha (30s/F) and Paul (40s/F) recounted grappling with feelings of jealousy and insecurity in their multi-partnered relationships, but gradually overcame these issues. Others, such as Cass (30s/F), Dean (40s/M), Julia (60s/F), Penny (30s/F) and Sarah (20s/F), have experienced non-conventional relationships with few problems, but currently express a preference for, or are living in, mono-partnerships. Conversely, David's (20s/FTM) experience of polyamory was 'painful' and 'messy'. He explained that he has been with his current male partner for seven years – 'half as a girl [prior transition] and half as a guy'. During that time David also had six-month 'significant' relationship with another trans guy, but his partner did not happily adjust to this situation. Nonetheless, David remains open to the idea of polyamory.

It is problematic, therefore, to attempt to weld a particular signification to an identity or relationship that traverses multi-border regions, or indeed, is resting momentarily in one locale. Julia (60s/F), who had always been attracted to females, but 'didn't know the word "lesbian" when growing up', gives voice to the nomadic and transformative qualities of self and relationships that take precedence over the need for external labels:

We moved into a mutually agreed upon open marriage that lasted ten years. I was not looking for anybody but fell in love with a man and a woman; it was all very honest. When my marriage ended I was a single mum, but in an open relationship with this other man and I developed a relationship with another woman. I have just read a book about polyamory – that's pretty much what you'd call it.

Julia moved through varying relationship dynamics: marriage, open bisexual relationships, a ten-year monogamous 'lesbian' relationship, and is currently un-partnered. Her journey has entailed a reflexive mode of ethical and relational dimensions in which bisexuality is not defined by gender attraction but operates symbiotically through processes of becomings in ever-changing nuptials. The ease with which Julia embraced open relationships, flowed from the fact that 'it was good to be open to life, people and to explore possibilities'. Julia's comment undoes the moral sovereignty of monogamy and monosexuality, which speaks to the ethical question for Deleuze, which asks not 'what must we do', but rather, 'what can we do?' (Bogue 2007:12). The shift in emphasis from 'must' to 'can' thus renounces moral obedience in favour of an openness of ethical conduct. While acknowledging that all types of relationships have their own problems, Julia considered monogamy to be narrowing and constricting.

The notion of reworking constricted lines of conjugality into more flexible and supple renditions of nuptial alliance was commonly discussed by respondents. For example, Jenna (30s/F), now divorced, reflected upon the narrow limits of her heterosexual marriage, which juxtaposed with, and frustrated, her growing attraction towards women:

I did try to negotiate with my husband about exploring stuff. I said to him "look, I'm attracted to this woman, I actually would like to explore this with her, how do you feel about that?" He wasn't open to that. Six months later when we had separated, he said "in hindsight I think I should have really let you explore that".

Describing her current same-sex relationship as monogamous, Jenna does not feel limited by her present situation because the boundaries are not rigidly delineated unlike those previously experienced in her marriage. Rather, attraction to others is openly canvassed in terms of what might be feasible without detracting from the 'exclusive specialness' Jenna experiences with her partner. Like several others in my study, Jenna placed a high premium on 'emotional monogamy' (Heaphy, Donovan & Weeks 2004:173), explaining that:

I might want to explore something *sexual* with someone else; I can accommodate that in my way of thinking – the idea that people have primary partners and fuck-buddies or whatever.

Beyond 'Human' Aggregates: BDSM¹, Furies, Becoming-Animal

Jenna's woman-centred social field (as discussed in Chapter 5) comprises diversely constituted 'lesbian' subjectivities, which not only problematised 'lesbian' as a universal signifier for Jenna, but also introduced novel elements that urged continual revision and broadening of her ideas of relationality and identity. Notably, some of her 'crew' expressed keen interest in BDSM, which Jenna also found appealing. Indeed, the willingness to explore non-conventional fields of sex-play, such as BDSM, was a dominant motif for this cohort. Participants related wide-ranging levels of interaction and interest. Some had peripheral contact through friends and partners, such as Paul (40s/M), who commented that:

It's not something that immediately gives me a loin stirring response, [rather] how can I make my lover's experience more pleasurable?

Others' experiences varied from light play to deeper involvements. Charlie (30s/GQ) and Charlotte (30s/F) viewed it as an aesthetic, the means to 'dress-up' and express different aspects of their personalities. For Charlie, the sub-cultural environment dovetailed with his desire to blur traditional gender boundaries and create an individuated assemblage of makeup and

¹ See Glossary for a definition of BDSM.

feminine clothes while retaining his goatee. Lesley (30s/MTF) and Ewan (50s/GQ) approached it in a more erotico-playful manner involving light spanking and bondage, whereas Billy (30s/M) recounted a more serious association with a 'leather master', donning a 'collar' as part of the dominant-submissive dynamic.

Such activities expand beyond normative boundaries of 'coupling'. The recurring refrain of nuptials as 'unnatural' alliances (Deleuze & Guattari 1987:238-41, 273) is to release the body from attempts to totalise it, both in itself and in libidinal partnerships with others (husband, wife, spouse, defacto, consort, concubine). Deleuze states that nuptials oppose the act of 'plagiarizing, copying, imitating or doing like' (Deleuze & Parnet 2006:5). In other words, the relations my respondents entered into are more profoundly contoured by terms other than the reigning signifiers that attempt to rule and bind multiplicities of subjectivity into an obedient unified subject. Deleuze's radical rewriting of the relational body is strikingly evidenced in participants' narratives, which explode gender signifiers, sending shards of stereotypes shooting off into all directions, before settling into new combinations and permutations of self. It is on this precipitous terrain that BDSM incites feverish debate, particularly from feminist critiques that position these practices as replaying patriarchal structures of gendered power. Karen (50s/MTF) attributed her own lack of enthusiasm for BDSM to an internalised 'hetero-phobia' of unequal power relations, which in her view invests heterosexuality. She acknowledged that: 'I can see intellectually that you can do BDSM; either partner can be dominant at a particular time. But, because to me it's about power, I'm just a bit scared of that'. Similarly, Paul's (40s/M) self-professed anti-authoritarianism presented a hurdle to his willing participation. But in-depth reading on the subject has since tempered his position, commenting: 'I'm still challenged with more extreme expressions of it, but things I would have rejected as being sick a year ago, I understand where they are coming from now'.

Feminist arguments that attempt to co-opt BDSM within a paradigm of male dominance/female oppression are challenged by those advocating an ethics of sex positivism and sex radicalism. Pat Califia (2000), for example, provides a comprehensive overview of lesbian-feminist arguments that colour this fraught terrain, elucidating how the dogma of hard-line feminism in fact marginalises vast micro-realities of lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered people who derive consensual pleasure from pornography and BDSM. Morgan (50s/GQ), a passionate genderqueer feminist, who has attended, but not participated in, a women's only BDSM group, highlighted this zone of contention:

I have lots of friends in the BDSM scene and I'm very supportive of them, because they get a really bad rap in our communities. Especially in female communities it's seen as perversion of power. We've got ourselves out from under the yolk of coercive power – why would you willingly put yourself back in there again?

The key factor identified by interviewees that differentiates BDSM from other forms of oppressive power systems is its contractual status. It is the 'exchange of power', in Jenna's (30s/F) words, which many find compelling – a power dynamic that is consented to, and negotiated between, willing parties. Matthew (20s/FTM), who experienced his early sexual years before transition as a politically-active feminist lesbian, rebutted notions of BDSM as a repetition of patriarchal power structures and coercion:

Those views are put forward by people who have no idea about BDSM and have certainly never participated in it. The patriarchy thing assumes that a masculine person is going to be dominant in BDSM. I love the idea that, whilst I'm physically stronger, in a BDSM space I'll give over to my female partner and she'll have all the power and push me to my physical/psychological limits.

The attraction held by abdicating power also surfaced in Lisa's (40s/MTF) and Helen's (30s/MTF) interviews, which made observations that,

anecdotally, BDSM finds favour in trans communities. Lisa conjectured that 'maybe it's because we've had to drive ourselves so hard in our journeys to become transsexual, we like to relinquish some control'. But as Matthew further commented, the dominant/submissive, top/bottom interaction is not about unequal power, as is the common misperception. Rather, it is about equity; for either party can say no. The submissive partner holds as much power through bestowing permission:

In the real world, the oppressed person/party has no ability to control what happens to them – they never consented to being disempowered. Consent is the key difference [...] There's a little bit of danger in giving up control, and it requires a whole lot of trust (Matthew/20s/FTM).

Despite past interest and experiences in BDSM, Astrid (40s/MTF) ultimately feared the pitfalls of entrusting herself to another in absolute erotic submission. Conversely, Jenna (30s/F) emphasised her sense of security, commenting 'I feel really safe with my girlfriend, so she's very sexy when she gets bossy'. Libidinal pleasure, therefore, entwines a peril that is counter-weighted against the complete trust procured within contractual and consensual agreement. The power dynamics of such dangerous phantasm are illuminated in Deleuze's (1991) critical essay on masochism, *Coldness and Cruelty*, in which he argues that a contract of mutual interdependence must first exist. Power inscribed by the dominant social template of the majoritarian gender order is accordingly re-signified by the parties generating an erotic agreement. Thus, power is transferred from the juridical location of institutional (transcendent) authority onto the contract (Deleuze 1991:77). The very act of masochistic submission is 'de-sexualized' (de-gendered) via privileging the sign of the contract as a mode of resistance (Deleuze 1995:142, 1991:12).

Importantly, then, the contractual element emerged in participant discourse as a *productive* ethical practice arising between two sexual bodies – it is an affect that rewrites the patriarchal gender script of male (dominant)/female

(subordinate), rather than demanding adherence to a universal law. Notions of consensus, contract, agreement, negotiation and trust were all key determinants for participants inclined towards BDSM. Here, power is accordingly reconfigured and located within an immanent plane of desiring-assemblages. An autopoiesis of ethics – that is, a generative ethics of corporeality and relationality – thus emerges from flows of desire between nuptial alliances that 'exchange actions and passions' or in 'composing a more powerful body' (Deleuze & Guattari 1987:257). Matthew's story of excommunication from his home, family and church on the basis of sexual and sex/gender transgression is not simply an ascription of punitive or juridical morality, but elucidates a *creative* exercise. His narrative deterritorialises dominant morality, thereby *producing* a code of ethics, which symbiotically reconstructs, empowers and expands the self as a BwO:

After being unceremoniously booted out of my religion I had to decide how to construct my own moral-ethical framework of right and wrong. When you're making that up yourself and basing it on some basic premises like "do no harm", then your horizons are considerably extended (Matthew/20s/FTM).

As Erinn Gilson (2011:71) argues, nuptials are generative processes that privilege *production* rather than *reproduction*. Such production detaches bodily subjection from moral prescriptions, which are bound to the procreative imperative of sexual relationships. As described previously in Chapter 5, the wasp-orchid nuptial is the Deleuzian *par exemplar* of such generative power in which a 'double capture' animates a wasp-becoming of the orchid and an orchid-becoming of the wasp (Deleuze & Parnet 2006:2). Rather than one term becoming the other, the encounter is one of symbiosis between heterogeneous elements: 'the wasp becomes part of the orchid's reproductive apparatus at the same time as the orchid becomes the sexual organ of the wasp' (Deleuze & Parnet 2006:2). The co-mingling or proximal 'union' does not procreate a wasp-orchid progeny but *creates* an affect – a corporeal becoming that refuses to be tethered to a genealogical framework. This unnatural landscape, therefore, allows an enlarged understanding of bisexually-desiring bodies beyond molar 'human' and

looks also to the molecular operation of non-human elements. Molecularity, as Astrida Neimanis (2007:289) argues, connects 'radically different' entities that:

constantly extend and disrupt the discrete bounds of our stratified bodies in all sorts of ways: we enter visceral becomings in mouth-becoming-apple or lung-becoming-smog; we entertain affective becomings in a mood-becoming-Prozac and perceptual becomings in eye-becoming-light; we live out motor becomings such as foot-becoming-gas pedal. Our molecularity is what allows stratified bodily assemblages to enter into new and surprising relationships, and to be transformed and reconfigured by these nuptials.

This molecular view is crucial to understanding a Deleuzian-informed ethics based on 'processual creativity', which, rather than objectifying or reifying subjects, generates 'new fields of reference' (Guattari 1996:198). Consequently, human bodies become more than our biology, incorporating other elements into the molecular assemblages of sexual relations: whip, chains, collars, leather, polyvinyl, costumes, masks. The boundaries that circumscribe normative couplings are not only impermanent, via opening out towards multi-configurations, but also porous. As discussed in Chapters 6 and 7, teratologies of sex/gender invoke an inventiveness of sexual practice – a contagious overflow from the relaxation of one boundary that seeps into and precipitates others. Thus, non-conventions of sexed, gendered and sexual bodies intermingle in unforeseen nuptials that threaten, contest and subvert the dominant heterosexual or monosexual template. For example, Matthew's (20s/FTM) non-compliant 'male' embodiment entails creative introduction of 'all sorts of toys and activities' with his female partner. Desiring-practices, such as genital-becoming-dildo, disorganise and reorganise the human sexual body, which transcendent Western morality affixes to procreative genitality.

Thresholds of edginess accordingly augment and transmute human elements of sexual and sex/gendered forms. Re-imagining corporeality as

assemblages of organic and non-organic components is made explicit in James' (20s/M) novel encounters. Involved in a long-distance non-monogamous relationship, he discussed his socio-sexual connections with the Furry community – a sub-cultural milieu comprising animal role-play and/or costuming². James described his appeal for the erotico-sensual, tactile intimacy that 'Furries' afforded:

I hadn't been with my partner for a long time due to our [geographical] separation. I hadn't had physical contact, intimacy, and I was hungry for it. Skin hungry is a term I've built to describe that. It's not just sexual, it's hungry for contact and for intimacy. The Furry community caters to a large part of that. They tend to be a lot more physically interactive, casual touch.

The Deleuzian realm of becoming-animal, therefore, provides an intriguing plateau to conceptualise how the human/animal interface reaches outwards beyond 'natural' limits. Located on the cusp of queer-bisexual-trans-partnered nuptials, James also revealed he has Asperger syndrome. In the Furry community, where many may be fully masked by costumes, the problem of reading or interpreting facial emotions (a trait assigned to the autistic spectrum) is removed. A different form of sociality thus ensues that caters to those who inhabit spaces non-aligned to social norms. Here, Deleuze's notion of faciality is enlightening, for faces are the medium through which signifiers conform to a dominant version of reality. Racism and phrenology are extreme cases in point where particular facial forms adhere to a stereotype. The face of 'White Man' is the reference point against which those, who do not conform to this facialised construct, are deviantised, racialised, rejected and rendered suspect (Deleuze & Guattari 1987:178-9). Thus, faciality is, therefore, a surface upon which

² Common elements of Furry communities include: identification with Furry Fandom (interest in anthropomorphic representations such as cartoon characters, soft toys, artwork); identification with non-human animal species such as felines, canines, and hybrid entities, for example 'folf' (fox/wolf); wearing 'fursuit' animal costumes; and an affinity with bisexual and homosexual identities or behaviour (Gerbasi et al. 2008).

subjectivities are captured by dominant signifiers of socio-cultural 'identities':

A child, woman, mother, man, father, boss, teacher, police officer, does not speak a general language but one whose signifying traits are indexed to specific faciality traits. Faces are not basically individual; they define zones of frequency or probability, delimit a field that neutralizes in advance any expressions or connections unamenable to the appropriate significations. Similarly, the form of subjectivity, whether consciousness or passion, would remain absolutely empty if faces did not form loci of resonance that select the sensed or mental reality and make it conform in advance to a dominant reality (Deleuze & Guattari 1987:168).

Hence, we 'read' the sex of a person through the prevailing register of facialised characteristics – a square chin, angular jaw, dominant brow and facial hair are perceived as 'male'. The organisation of sexed faciality is, therefore, connected to a dominant field of understanding – the sexual dimorphism of humans. Deleuze and Guattari (1987:173) argue that such signification and subjectification construct a pedagogical 'face-landscape'. But in the Furry community, the facial frames of reference are rearranged – the boundaries of human sex, gender and social interaction are no longer policed or enforced by majoritarian dictates. Bodies are accordingly de-facialised by which faciality traits are liberated to form a 'rhizomatic realm of possibility effecting the potentialization of the possible' (Deleuze & Guattari 1987:190). Furry masks and costumes filter out the human and approach affinities of non-human becomings that creates 'strange new becomings, new polyvocalities' (Deleuze & Guattari 1987:191). James' sensual attraction to Furies realises an altogether different encounter between bodies where the conventional idiom of human gender and sex is rendered impotent.

Human-animal affinities recur in other narratives. Matthew (20s/FTM) described himself as 'a bit of a Bear, hairy and reasonably masculine', while

Billy's (30s/M) account of the leather scene observed the popularity of Wolf parties. An entire sub-cultural vista of becoming-animal surfaces here, wherein Bears connote a particular masculine vernacular of queerness. An array of terms, including Grizzly Bear, Polar Bear, Cub, Otter and Wolf (La Fountain-Stokes 2007:195), are centrally concerned with body hair, shape, temperament and age (Suresha 2005; Wright 1997a). Thus, a Cub is a young Bear, a Polar Bear older and grey, silvery or white, an Otter slimmer and less hairy, and a Wolf more aggressive. Les Wright (1997a:21) contends Bears defy a definitive identity beyond that of a range of cultural associations, which suggest a large hairy 'lumbering' body, 'epicurean' appetite, and 'imperturbable' attitude. Moreover, Wright's analysis conveys a Deleuzian tenor in asserting that Bear identity is an ongoing narrative construction of self (desiring-production), which moves from mimesis (molar identity) to an authentically undetermined identity (becomings). That such construction 'serves as a map through life, [which] is a diversified, nonregimented sexual attraction, a rhizomal rather than a pyramidal power structure' (Wright 1997b:6), thus evokes a cartography of becoming-Bear.

Body hair surfaced in Graham's (40s/M) reflections about his sexual desire for men. Graham spoke of erotic sensory attraction for men that includes but is in excess of genitalia – touch, feel, smell, taste: 'the feel of a rough face, a strong muscular hairy chest'. This evident sensuality appears to contradict signifiers of hegemonic masculinity that cultural notions of Bears evince. But as Peter Hennen (2005) discovered in his ethnographic study of Bear lifestyle, Bear masculinities are created in spaces of contestation. While asserting masculine forms that repudiate iconic gay effeminate imagery, the affective sphere of nuzzling and sensuality decentres sexual practice away from the phallus and re-signifies hegemonic masculinity. Bear culture thus propagates emergent and queer masculinities (Suresha 2002). Challenging prevailing assumptions that Bears are a gay male phenomenon, Ron Suresha's (2005:3-4) research found that Bears include bisexual-identified men, non-gay/non-bi identified men-who-have sex-with-men, as well as female, transgender, and intersex Bears, Bear-lovers and allies.

The proximal relation between self and animal, be it James and Furies, Billy and Wolves, Matthew and Bears, is not to suggest that one imitates an animal but rather entails an alliance – 'domains of symbioses that bring into play beings of totally different scales' (Deleuze & Guattari 1987:238). Becoming-animal involves 'a band, a population, a peopling, in short, a multiplicity' (Deleuze & Guattari 1987:239). A pack of Wolves, a sloth of Bears, a fandom of Furies are not defined by a particular set of characteristics but by affects. An affect of 'wolfing' rather than wolf characteristics is not a personal characteristic but an 'effectuation of a power of the pack that throws the self into upheaval and makes it reel' (Deleuze & Guattari 1987:240). Wolves, Bears, and Furies, therefore, enact a form of power via stripping down molar identities into molecular components that morph, transmute, expand, and proliferate sexual/gendered bodies. Such power is ignited and augmented in teratological spaces of movement where corporeality traverses anomalous borderlines of ever-changing multiplicities (Deleuze & Guattari 1987:244-5). Consequently, the plane of human-becoming-animal is defined not by coherent organisation of a universal signifier but by composition.

A montage of elements may figure into becoming-assemblages that necessitate liberating human segments to enter into new relations. Hence, 'the boots of the woman-master function to annul the leg as a human organ, to make elements of the leg enter a relation to the overall [equine] assemblage' (Deleuze & Guattari 1987:260). Similarly, Billy's adoption of a collar in his master/slave BDSM relationship does not suggest that he is in fact 'playing' the obedient dog. Rather the neck-collar-leash desiring-assemblage occupies an anomalous zone in which:

Becomings-animal are basically of another power, since their reality resides not in an animal one imitates or to which one corresponds but in themselves, in that which suddenly sweeps us up and makes us become – a *proximity*, an *indiscernibility* that extracts a shared element from the animal far more effectively than any domestication, utilization, or imitation could... (Deleuze & Guattari 1987:279).

A certain de-sexualisation thereby occurs in participants' accounts through dispersing the human form and reassembling components of it with other non-human entities. My study thus underscores that desiring-assemblages radically revise the ethical realm of sexuality in terms of the human/non-human synthesis. The Deleuzian sociology of (bi)sexuality I advance in this thesis is re-imagined in Deleuze and Guattari's (1983:294) words:

Sexuality and the desiring-machine³ are one and the same inasmuch as these machines are present and operating in the social machines, in their field, their formation, their functioning. Desiring-machines are the non-human sex, the molecular machinic elements, their arrangements and their syntheses, without which there would be neither a human sex specifically determined in the large aggregates, nor a human sexuality capable of investing these aggregates.

The meeting of human and non-human insinuates an encounter between Deleuzian thinking and Donna Haraway's (1991) feminist cyborg manifesto. For Haraway, corporeality becomes-cyborg in myriad leaky boundaries between physical/non-physical where the progeny of majoritarian systems (militarism, patriarchal-capitalism, State socialism) flee the nest to forge a post-gender world 'embodied in non-oedipal narratives' (Haraway 1991:150). Indeed, Foucault (1983) argues that Deleuze and Guattari's (1983) firm rejection of totalising categories of the 'Negative' (Oedipal law, lack, castration etc.) is an ethical guide to everyday life, in which desire connects to reality as a revolutionary force of multiplication. As recounted by my participants, diversely assembled fields of desiring-syntheses produce polyvocalities of sexuality and gender, and as such, re-vision both intimate relationship styles and social formations. The machinic complexion of desire and sexuality therefore intermingles organic/non-organic micro-elements of assemblages with other 'big' machines – social and technological (Deleuze 2004:219, 243). Hence, corporeality is in excess of its humanity and sociality. Deleuze (2007:179) comments, therefore, that

³ Desiring-machines are referred to as assemblages in Deleuze and Guattari's later writings (Deleuze 2007:177).

the 'nature-culture distinction no longer matters'. What matters, however, is the manner in which ethical processes emanate from the fluid hodgepodes of bisexual bodies, and how these constantly rearrange the moral verdicts that seek to aggregate components of sex, gender and sexuality into ordered and servile subjects.

Expanding Textures of Gender

Inter-Trans-Crossings

As demonstrated, the negotiable and flexible terrain of relationship lifestyles issues a subversive challenge to the molar narrative of gender-(hetero)normative conjugality. Participants' comments thus far demonstrate that the tropes of 'masculine' and 'feminine' contour the way in which their perceptions of gender and sexuality are conceptualised, perceived and enacted. But the conventional idiom of gender is not deployed without interrogation, which simultaneously recognises and appropriates dominant meanings and assumptions, while affecting a recalibration – a conceptual reworking that exposes their molecular elements. This molecular view, as witnessed in respondents' stories, makes visible relationship-becomings, dominatrix-becomings, animal-becomings, technology-becomings that reprise significations, articulations, and power dynamics of sexual difference. As evidenced by participants' experiences of non-conventional relationships and sub-cultural erotic practices, an ethics of multiple becomings suspends the tyranny of hierarchical dualisms and exposes 'hidden possible worlds' (Bogue 2007:13). While such challenge to gender norms explicitly manifests in non-conventional sexual practice, even at the demotic level of domestic reality, border region sexualities infect and affect the way in which gender is enacted, embodied and understood beyond monolithic molarities of 'man' and 'woman'. Robin Bauer (2010:151) refers to this affective phenomenon as the 'the domino-effect of perversion' where:

once you have crossed a certain line and start to question society's norms around gender and sexuality, you may proceed further to question the validity of other norms, becoming more open-minded to new options and less dependent on culturally available scripts.

Bauer's concept resonates with my respondents' stories, which reveal that ethical processes of living are produced through rewriting and inventing their own scripts. While moral systems seek to rule and judge, ethical modes are enacted through sets of relations that challenge normative constructs. Hence, participants generate an 'ethics of responsiveness' through 'openness to interferences' (Bogue 2007:12, 14) in how they conceptualise their relationships. Recurring motifs of partiality, balance, ambiguity and fluidity that frequently surfaced in respondents' discourse thus operate to create interruptions and disjunctions to sex/gender totalities and hierarchies.

I return again to Dana (50s/I/F), whose intersexuality delivers an ontological, epistemic and ethical intervention – a virulent cartography that throws into relief how *all* sex/gender narratives in my study might be reconsidered. While Dana's intersex status positions her outside the 'biological norm' of male-female dimorphism, it was the traumatic childhood of sexual abuse that rendered her immune to the concept of gender. Dana spoke of desiring no sexual contact and hence: 'lived androgynously, just as myself, without wanting to attach myself one way or the other because it wasn't something I was interested in, it wasn't important to me'. As discussed in Chapter 5, despite surgical 'correction' to 'male' at birth, Dana's genetic profile and androgynous embodiment became further complicated when, following medical treatment for a metabolic disorder mid-life, her prior androgyny became more evidently 'female'. Dana's outward appearance thus aligned to her chromosomal XX 'female' morphology. For practical purposes (for example, obtaining a passport), Dana changed her name and birth certificate to reflect this physical change. In a partial and external sense, Dana conceded to majoritarian edicts that corporeality and 'gender' should be congruent, via appropriating feminine pronouns, name, dress code, and attaching 'lesbian' to her apparent same-sex relationship. But this concession is partial because Dana publicly embraces her intersex status to dispel false notions that sex is a clear-cut matter of being *simply* male *or* female. Her love of opera, literature and writing poetry juxtaposes with a professional background in engineering. Yet, she steadfastly rejected these

qualities as being attributable to 'feminine' or 'masculine' traits. Dana's biography affords a unique vantage point from which to view the cultural impress of gender norms:

I was brought up expected to behave and know things [academically] like a male. I have no natural sense of direction but I learnt how to navigate and find my way around a road map. I learnt all those skills [and] how to fix up my own motor cars because it was expected of me. It is my really strong view that the reason most women don't do those sorts of things is because it's not expected of them (Dana/50s/I/F).

Similarly, Lisa (40s/MTF) encountered the regulatory function of transcendent morality encoded by the binary significations of sex, gender and sexuality. As a self-declared 'non-operative-bisexual-polyamorous-transgender woman', these molar constructs affect her border dwelling status in very real ways. From a sexual standpoint, Lisa's bodily morphology is inflected by teratological doubt and uncertainty. Finding affinity with other border region communities, however, provided relief from this sense of ontological insecurity:

I'm a bit unsure about the body in general, particularly in the sexual sense. Being transsexual there's that stigma that "oh, you don't fit". You could say that there is internalised transphobia about "you're a freak". It wasn't until I connected well with the bi and poly communities that I felt confident about that side.

Lisa's sentiments accord with Christina Richards' (2010) research of non-monogamies that found polyamory enables greater expression of gender presentations for trans people. Evident here is a field of immanent ethics, which, 'expressed at every moment, is a mode of existence or a style of life' (Goodchild 1997:40). The acceptance fostered within other interstitial spaces of desire released Lisa from the corporeal straightjacket of moral overcoding. This ethos was commonly reported throughout interviews. For instance: Paul's (40s/M) move towards polyamory connected him to

bisexual groups; Ewan's (50s/GQ) genderqueer peregrinations opened up an unexplored world of bisexual adventuring; Glenda's (30s/MTF) foray into ballroom dancing (as a newly-transitioned woman) afforded affective nuptials with men that she had previously rejected; Rachel's (30s/F) movement in queer/LGBT circles and friendship networks broadened her previous monosexual and monogamous horizons of desire to explore and negotiate multi-gendered attractions with her de facto male partner. A common theme that surfaced in the stories of Carol (50s/MTF), Jenna (30s/F), Julia (60s/F), Lesley (30s/MTF), Morgan (50s/GQ), Sarah (20s/F) and William (60s/M) is the impress of feminism and/or Women's Studies, in which their various involvements propelled their biographies on divergent plateaus of socio-sexual experiences beyond the dominant heterosexual paradigm. Seemingly impenetrable brick walls, which attempt to foreclose subjectivity along rigid lines of gender-normative sexual relationships, betray structural weaknesses, which once located and disturbed, offer micro-windows of vision that open rhizomatically onto a proliferation of other possibilities. Such suppleness of corporeal crossings – trans-bi-poly-queer – sees a 'heterogenesis' (Guattari 1996:194) of productive connectivities that innervate an ethics of multiplicity. This permitted these participants to step outside dominant morality and think more generously about multi-gendered forms of sexual interaction and other modalities of partnership styles.

But the process of exposing and exploiting structural weaknesses in order to locate supple points of exit poses a risk – an inherent danger of loss and security. For the 'binary machines' that organise molar identities, such as man/woman, bestow a 'well-defined status, the resonances we enter into, the system of overcoding that dominates us' (Deleuze & Guattari 1987:227). The peril of fleeing molar certitude is a fear of loss of coherence and definition of being. Consequently, although the liberatory process of deterritorialisation annuls molar systems of moral dictum, molecular movements may resettle and fabricate marginal reterritorisations with their own internal micro-fascist logic. Suppleness, argue Deleuze and Guattari (1987:228) 'runs the risk of reproducing in miniature the affections, the affectations, of the rigid: the family is replaced by a community [and]

worse, micro-Oedipuses crop up, microfascisms lay down the law'. The tension between the ethical project of vanquishing 'all varieties of fascism' that 'surround and crush us' (Foucault 1983:xiv), and a need to retain some degree of attachment to molar thinking became apparent in some interviews. For Jenna (30s/F), the transgender question confused her liberal and fluid conception of 'lesbian' identity:

There was a trans boy that was interested in joining our [BDSM] group and we were comfortable with him coming along. Trans boys were okay but not women that still had dicks. It was the dick thing that we were going "no" [to]. There's a real discrepancy for me there. But on any other level where it didn't involve sexual stuff I'm fine with that. I haven't quite sorted that out.

Jenna recognised that judgements based on physical sexed characteristics contradicted the ethos of diversity that constituted her local women's group. The welcome inclusion of genderqueer women and trans boys disassembled unified gender on the one hand. But the exclusion of those whose anatomical morphology does not adhere to the dominant signifier of 'woman' or 'female' presented an ontological and ethical dilemma for Jenna. Similarly, Cliff (60s/M) experienced much 'heartburn' as facilitator of a bisexual men's group in negotiating how to 'deal with' cross-dressers. He concluded that as it was a group for 'blokes', cross-dressers were welcome only if using a male or gender-neutral name. As a transgender woman, Karen (50s/MTF) had experienced this exclusionary attitude within lesbian-feminist gatherings. Rather than view this as a discriminatory practice, Karen's reflections highlighted how an empathic understanding might reposition separatism and inclusion *alongside* each other, rather than in an hierarchical power struggle:

I think that trans people who want to go to those sorts of things are being inappropriate, because these women have often got really difficult things to cope with and do need to have people who are in a very similar situation. I made the most progress about my trans stuff

by talking to other trans women. There are aspects where we can work together and aspects where we need to work alone.

Perceptions of fitting/not fitting were frequently noted by participants. Part of the struggle between molar sexual identity and becoming-minoritarian pivoted to a large extent on attaching/detaching sexed bodies to/from 'masculine' and 'feminine' precepts. As discussed in Chapter 7, non-adherence to dominant gender coding contaminates the sexual symbolic via a moral contagion of association (particularly as we have seen for bisexual men). Signifiers of masculinity and femininity accordingly provided social co-ordinates around which participants navigated. These are not immovably anchored, but are meridians of supple perambulation, negotiation and reformation: transient locations in which gendered embodiment and relations are partially redrawn at each approaching horizon. Such partiality effects an ethics of 'subjective pluralism', which is not about tolerance of otherness, but a *desire* for otherness and difference (Guattari 1996:216). As evident in Cass's (30s/F) story, an appreciation of gender pluralism emerged after moving out of heterosexual marriage into what she considered her two closest relationships: one with a lesbian-turned-transman, and latterly, a transgender woman. Her gravitation to trans partners further conveys a passage through the strata that exposes a detachment from gender coherence towards gender-balancing. In doing so, Cass' words work within, yet attempt to exceed, the confines of dominant language constructs:

Because they've had the experience of living as both there's some more balance and understanding around their gender. My partner is just very girly. She tried very hard to be a blokey bloke when living as a man: bodybuilding, trying to convince herself and everybody else that she was male. She gets what it is to be a bloke and understands men. But at the same time she's a woman, she understands where women are coming from and some of their experience as well. So there's this kind of balancing.

The stories of James (20s/M), Jay (19/FTM), and Matthew (20s/FTM) further illustrate how the movement towards gender pluralism is an ethical

process of remaking the self. James reflected upon his struggle with not fitting the binary dictates of heteronormative culture. Concurrently partnered to a trans man and female 'fuck-buddy', in addition to past experience with a male-female trans-couple, his narrative forges a clear distance from archetypal masculinity and normative gender roles:

I have a number of friends now who are biologically male or female but identify as ambiguous. I could fit into that very easily. I disregard the norms of gender roles a lot: I cook, clean, I'm learning to sew. I don't participate in sports; I've never really liked to. I like appearing a little androgynous, like having a ponytail [...] I don't get on well with the strongly masculine guys. My older brother is one of them, but we don't have a lot of common understanding – footy, cars, drink, beer; there is a large grouping of personalities around that culture that I can't easily empathise or interact with.

Embodied masculinity is thus created as an affect arising from an assemblage of subversive elements: social, sexual and aesthetic. Jay rejected phalloplastic surgery (penile construction), explaining that:

The results aren't too good and I'm kind of really proud of what I have. I like the choice I have of fucking or being fucked. It's quite nice to be able to play with gender in the bed, and if it's the genitals that facilitate that, then I don't think I should give that up.

In rejecting the phallus as emblematic of valorised masculinity, Jay's first female partner was supportive and perceived him as simply 'a male with a very small dick'. Likewise, Matthew's long-term committed lesbian partner supported his transition, which entailed 'top' surgery (double mastectomy) and testosterone therapy. Matthew described his gender as encompassing 'different textures': butch, camp, hairy, masculine Bear. His partner's initial concerns resided not in his transition but his burgeoning desire for casual male lovers. Communication and negotiation around an agreed upon ethics of responsive and responsible non-monogamy resolved these issues. But, it is on a more public level that their queer relationship, which began as

'lesbian', incited moral opprobrium from certain separatist sectors of their feminist-lesbian circles. As witnessed earlier in Bear culture, the molar script of masculinity incites contradiction and contestation in queer landscapes. Matthew's newly created masculinity was circumscribed by some of his former lesbian friends within a patriarchal narrative of gender oppression. Conversely, Jay encountered a paradoxical resistance from trans men on Internet-based chat forums who, he observed, try to 'act stereotypically male':

I think we should stop judging each other on how masculine and stereotypical we are appearing to be, because it's senseless. Here are a bunch of people who don't conform to norms and want to turn around and make everyone conform to norms.

Discourses of masculinities and femininities accordingly become entwined within moral frameworks of appropriate inclusion/exclusion. Rather than positioning this as a linear top-down (arborescent) response to wider structural forces that compel gender-normative compliance, a rhizomatic approach telescopes subtle plays of nuance at each juncture. When rethought as desiring-assemblages, gender becomes a dynamic process that retains segments of molarity at the same time as establishing a means of escape from these. It is on these lines of flight that the creation of ethical selves and relations are located. Charlie's (40s/GQ) desire for self-stylised genderqueerness is rhizomatically negotiated and given permission to flourish in particular social assemblages. With the exception of his second marriage to a lesbian-identifying woman, his partners have been 'straight' women devoid of any queer cultural contact. Charlie lamented the loss of gender freedom that thrived during his four-year lesbian nuptial:

It's probably the period of time where I've been able to express myself the most and really feel more comfortable with my identity and my gender, how I present myself. It opened up all sorts of opportunities. Where I am right now, that relationship, those friendships, connections are lost. I'm a step back again where predominantly my friends are all heterosexual. There are not the

opportunities to present myself in that way, which I had been nurturing, developing, feeling more comfortable with.

Nonetheless, Charlie contemplated strategies to regenerate and reform the BwO of his lost queerness:

My new partner is quite comfortable with it. I have presented as female with her, but the relationship is quite recent. There's an element of unknown, but willingness to find out more. But also I feel a block within me, a reluctance. I sense there isn't a deeper understanding of people that might be a little bit more different, who aren't thinking with just a heterosexual perspective and outlook.

Consequently, Charlie's BwO is a relentless ethical production that navigates the rigid and supple lines of morally-inscribed social engagement: halting temporarily at each blockage, recalibrating and establishing where lines of flight might make a deterritorialisation from an expected molar status (heterosexual 'bloke') possible. Residues of his developing 'becomings' are carried along with each reformation (reterritorialisation), inflecting and revising the arrangements of his BwO. The twin pillars of restraint/liberation are encountered as corporeal co-existence: alongside, beside, side-by-side. This planar relation of 'besideness' accordingly uproots the masculine/feminine assemblage from its hierarchical genealogy and supplants it as a nuptial, a symbiotic encounter that produces a conceptualisation of gender, which is different from feminist orthodoxies of sexual difference. Such nuptial alliances, therefore, foster a gender-becoming that strips back the dominant overcoding of man/woman.

Modulations

Charlie's vacillations of gender expression highlights a persistent theme in my data: that transmutations of self arise from within sets of socio-sexual relations where the adjustment of one's gender in relational accordance to another's pivots on expressing greater or lesser degrees of masculinity or femininity. This telescopes an area yet to be fully explored in bisexuality research regarding critical gender studies (Steinman 2011). Indeed, Erich

Steinman (2011:407) advocates that benefit of sociological inquiry here to bring a more nuanced view of everyday interactions, particularly ways in which bisexual individuals may experience 'distinct ways of understanding, thinking about and experiencing themselves as masculine or feminine (or some mix thereof) in relation to different partners'. Lisa (40s/MTF), for example, explained how she deploys different aspects of her gender depending upon relational context:

I sometimes have to behave differently when dealing with more masculine people. My tendency is to be more conciliatory and diplomatic, which if you have to put it in a damn box that's probably feminine. But where that hasn't helped in a situation, I make a decision to be more masculine, a bit more authoritative, and it works.

Lisa self-consciously reprised the vestiges of her prior gender status bringing it into a new plateau of embodied becoming. Her 'feminine' preference for conciliation melded with a knowing appropriation of hegemonic masculinity (authority). However, the affect of this nuptial is not to instantiate 'molar' man into Lisa's gendered field. Rather, as Guattari (1996:201, 216) maintains, becoming effects a praxis of ontological pluralism, where identities explode in a double movement of opening and closing that expose 'fragments of partial enunciation which work to 'shift' subjectivation'. Such ontological explosion is motivated by 'an ethical choice in favour of the richness of possibilities' (Guattari 1995:29). The idea of choosing to adjust gender expression aligns with Sue Kentlyn's (2006) contention that we modulate (dial up or down) aspects of gender similar to adjusting the bass or treble on audio technology. Based upon empirical research of same-sex relationships, Kentlyn (2006:18) concluded that:

each person adjusts the degree of masculinity or femininity they do in particular contexts and in relation to other people. This process has been masked in heterosexual households because one member is made primarily responsible for the performance of masculinity and

one for femininity; in same-sex households, the continuously shifting and negotiated nature of this performance is made apparent.

However, as demonstrated throughout this thesis, my cohort's multifaceted nomadic realities of both self and relationships often befuddle same-sex/opposite-sex dichotomies; their narratives exceed such statistical aggregates. Consequently, my participants continually reinvented gender, however subtly, across ever-changing and complexly constituted fields of social, cultural, political and domestic interaction. While it is beyond the scope of this chapter to recount the rich diversity of respondents' experiences here in full, I will conclude by elaborating upon a theme that has recurred in each chapter: that discussion of gender revealed an ever-present dialogue with hegemonic masculinity. More specifically, it became clear that gender expression was respectively constrained or enabled in relation to the presence or absence of perceived hegemonic masculinity.

Many respondents recounted instances in which the masculine/feminine play of heteronormative imperatives emerged in relation to ostensibly 'straight' partners. Comments from male respondents, such as Ben (40s/M), Brett (20s/M), Dean (40s/M), Michael (30s/M) and Tim (30s/M), referred to playing the role of father, supporter, or authority figure, summed up by Ben's words of 'producing the goods'. Charlie's story, as discussed earlier, encapsulates the notion of gender modulation. Of note, he remarked that his current female partner 'lives in a share-house with three very straight men all vying for alpha male status. When I'm there, it's "Charlie the bloke"'. Female (or prior female) respondents, such as Adele (20s/F), Charlotte (30s/F), Jenna (30s/F), Joanne (30s/F), Morgan (50s/GQ), Samantha (20s/F) and Sarah (20s/F), observed a tendency towards stereotypical expressions of femininity, which were variously described as 'soft', 'ditzy', 'girly', 'passive', 'good wife' and included more regular wearing of dresses, high heels, and makeup. Adele, for example, noted traits that were 'expected' such as 'maternal, needy, self effacing, and caring'. But when relationships moved into queer domains, a freer play of gender was permitted to flourish. Several observed greater performance of butch-femme dynamics, including

aggressive activity (boxing), cross-dressing, switching dominant/submissive sex roles, and increased self-confidence in attitude and comportment. As Morgan noted:

Women do their gender in a squillion different ways so every single relationship was different – I'm not always butch and they're not always femme or whatever, every relationship has its own dynamic.

However, such expansion and modulation of gender is not simply confined to women in my study. This cohort overwhelmingly conveyed acute critical cognisance of hegemonic masculinity and, thus, strove towards the relaxation and deterritorialisation of gender norms. For example, Paul pondered the prospect of a future relationship with a man, reflecting that:

It would be hard to imagine that being a very full on *sexual* relationship because I don't currently feel attracted enough to men. But in terms of other *emotional* intimacy I could imagine a relationship where a man was integrally a part of my life, with some sexual element but with deep emotional intimacy.

Paul's comments subvert a dominant stereotype that bisexual men seek out men purely for sexual contact. As evident in Paul and others' stories, a strong cross-over exists between bisexuality and polyamory. In these circles, Paul met bisexual men who did not conform to any rigid notions of hegemonic masculinity. The forming of differently contoured friendships with these men allowed for greater expression of physical affection (stroking, cuddling, kissing) and emotional intimacy than permitted in everyday mainstream interaction. Within the sanctum of non-normative environs, Paul's self-stated 'bi-sensuality' proliferated. Dean (40s/M), currently single, rejected the external imposition of hegemonic masculinity, noting how this impacts in his professional legal field where it is a key signifier: 'the idea that the man should have a wife, children and work full-time, it often comes up for me in regards to work. I can't talk about what I did with my wife on the weekend'. Tim (30s/M) also observed that:

I'm never going to be the hyper-masculine macho male that a lot of guys put out there to the world. Girlfriends I've had know that pretty much from day dot [...] What I like about being with a man in a relationship is that they're a bit more masculine and I suppose I like being a house-husband.

The notion of 'straightness' accordingly delivers a morally-informed discourse that cuts across sexuality and infects gender expectation. Paul's (40s/M) observation that he 'can pass for straight, whatever that is, but it's nice to be with someone where there's no gender expectations', is poignantly reflected in Jordan's (40s/GQ) story. Though ostensibly conforming to the dominant marital template (married with a young child), the collision between his own genderqueerness and the hegemonic scripts that hold sway in his rural/regional locale are a source of gender oscillation. This swinging between molar expectation and molecular desire is profoundly evident in Jordan's self-reflections:

I'd like to think my behaviour is pretty genderless. I try to achieve what I feel is the totality of my, or the human condition, both "male" and "female", yin and yang. It depends a bit on the social interaction. Down the local pub full of mill workers and tradies, I will try and appear more "masculine", move differently in a "male/macho" way, more as a protective instinct than anything. If I am with people I am really comfortable with my body movements do change, in a sense to a more "female" way of moving; it is a liberating feeling!

The fraught ground of sexual difference is accordingly re-visioned by respondents' reflective and reflexive accounts as an affective field of motion that comprises a complex interplay of corporeal, discursive and social elements. Viewed through a Deleuzian lens, such motion realises a paradigmatic shift in thinking from ontology (being) to ethology (affect), or in Braidotti's (2005/2006: para. 31) words, from 'the metaphysics to the ethics of sexual difference'. Each participant has arguably moved through the processual zone of 'becoming-woman' that issues a challenge to the transcendent authority of hegemonic masculinity. The corporeal spaces of

modulation evidenced here are made available through negotiating and reconfiguring the majoritarian dualisms of sex, gender, and sexuality on their own terms. Such heterogeneous becomings thus produce and embody an ethico-political process of desiring-production that contests the moral ordinance of monosexual and heteronormative gendered prescriptions. A Deleuzian ethics, therefore, is not a question of 'imposing limits from without, but exploring potential growth from within' (Bogue 2007:12).

Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated the efficacy of analysing the diverse array of relationship arrangements and erotic practices evident in my study through the Deleuzian concept of nuptials. As witnessed in my participants' stories, nuptial alliances establish lines of flight from the majoritarian standards of heterosexual, monogamous and monosexual coupling, which affixes fidelity to a two-sexed model predicated by the heteronormative imperative of reproduction. The narratives related here liberate the 'subject' from dominant stories and myths that inform a Western view of appropriate sex/gendered and sexual practices. In particular, micro-practices of my respondents navigate and contest the molar fascism of hegemonic cultural systems legitimated through the structuring authority of male/masculine signifying regimes. These practices expose an entangled ontology of sexed/gendered/sexual interfaces in which, as Guattari (1996) writes, liberation from the polarised edicts of masculine/feminine, heterosexual/homosexual is enabled through becoming-feminine, or in Deleuze-Guattarian language, becoming-woman.

The benefit of this analytical move, is that rather than focusing on top-down models of differential power, which locate bisexuality, transgender, intersex and non-monogamy on the outer most margins of grand social structures (of sex, gender and sexuality), a Deleuzian perspective probes below the surface of structuralism to reveal heterogeneities. Such heterogeneities, as revealed in my study, abrade, and expose structural weaknesses along, boundaries that dualist thinking constructs. Here, participants' nuptials unravel the binary codes that glue sexual bodies to procreative and genital impulses.

The sexual economy foregrounded in this chapter accordingly invests desire beyond, not only regimes of phallic overcoding but also, the sovereignty of the 'human' subject. Thus, participants' nuptials are anti-genealogical – proximal, alongside, affective – rather than reproductive or filiative. As evidenced from my data, material encounters between bodies, human and non-human, realise 'thresholds of changeability' (Neimanis 2007:283). Significantly, what such relations of proximity have made visible, is that respondents' intimate partner configurations are creative spaces of production that undo the moral codifications, which congeal under the master significations of sex, gender and sexuality. Participants' stories have demonstrated that such inventiveness of practice is a desiring-production that overflows as an affect from the border regions of (bi)sexuality, hence, making available multiplicities of sex/gender embodiment and expression.

To this end, these processes of intersecting and overlapping multiple becomings enact and generate an ethics of choice and possibility, which informs responsible, responsive and reflexive ways of living. Mapping the generative ethical planes in my data via Deleuze and Guattari's radical rethinking of relationality as 'unnatural alliances', has instantiated a theoretical provocation to the sociology of bisexuality. Such provocation further builds on the Deleuzian constructivist approach taken in this thesis. Accordingly, this chapter has demonstrated how ethical practices of self, relationality and social formation are constructive endeavours (affective becomings) rather than reproductive and imitative (the unified and regulated subject) or fragmented (the postmodern subject). The Deleuzian concept of nuptials has thus enabled a re-visioning of bisexuality through telescoping the ethical spaces of corporeal production that flow through, complicate, rework, and re-signify the sovereign dualisms of male/female, man/woman, masculine/feminine, heterosexual/homosexual, and monogamy/non-monogamy – a proliferating cartography of 'a thousand tiny sexes' (Deleuze & Guattari 1987:213).

Conclusion

Approaching New Horizons

[A] society, a social field does not contradict, it leaks out on all sides. The first thing it does is escape in all directions.

Gilles Deleuze (2007:127)

The world today is passing through a number of dramatic transformations, not least those arising from the increased technological mediation of interpersonal relations, the blurring of boundaries between human subjects and impersonal objects, and the proliferation of new global social and cultural forms. These developments demand a new sociological imagination and perhaps, in turn, a new conceptual vocabulary, one better equipped to negotiate the daunting complexity of the contemporary world than the classical one that is still commonplace today.

Nicholas Gane (2004:1)

This thesis began by introducing the idea of bisexuality as the means to question the grand structural classifications of sex, gender and sexuality and open these up to new ways of considering their constructions, interconnections and disconnections. In order to do this, my study proposed a flexible mode of inquiry that conceptualised bisexuality beyond 'identity'. In this endeavour, I turned to the philosophical ideas of Deleuze and Guattari to develop an innovative sociological method that re-visioned bisexuality through mobile sets of assembled relations and elements. I demonstrated that adopting a compositional and relational view of sex/gender and sexuality has enabled a fresh perspective to be brought to bear in sociological examinations of bisexuality. This has allowed analysis to scrutinise the productive and creative capacity of bisexuality through mapping the movement of bodies within and across micro and macro fields

of experience – socio-cultural, biological, technological and discursive. Rather than positioning bisexuality as a sexual category that sits separate from other queer identities, howsoever named, my thesis thus focused on overlap, contradiction, movement, relationality and fluidity within, between and across identity categories. Accordingly, I investigated diverse practices and embodied expressions of sex/gender and sexual subjectivities that complicate and rupture dominant modes of binaristic thinking. The novel approach articulated in my study, I contend, has allowed a broader sociological analysis of the nexus between sex/gender and sexuality, which accommodates the diversities, multiplicities and ambiguities of lived realities. As evidenced by my empirical data, such realities flow through the interstices of conventional social scientific categories that have come to define 'human' socio-sexual subjects: man/woman, male/female, masculine/feminine, heterosexual/homosexual, gay/straight.

I conclude by placing the findings of my research within the wider sociological context of contemporary relationships, which are aptly described by Gane (2004:1) as 'networks and exchanges so fluid and complex that they are characterised by a blizzard of connections rather than by fixed, clearly delineated social structures'. Gane underlines exciting approaches, for example Donna Haraway's (1991) cyborgs, Jean-François Lyotard's (1991) inhuman, and Francis Fukuyama's posthuman (2002), which are challenging mainstream sociologists to move out of their theoretical and methodological comfort zones and reframe social theory through reflexivity and risk (Beck, Giddens & Lash 1994) and globalisation (Robertson 1992). For, as John Law (2004:4-5) argues, adherence to the orthodoxies of structuralist thinking tends to establish a hegemony or normativity of prescribed methodological rules and procedures that filter out indefinite, complex, diffuse and messy realities.

Indeed, the world of immediacy and connectivity in which we now live, sees the dialogue of micro/macro, nature/culture, object/subject, human/non-human as not determined by polar opposition but, as I have argued throughout this thesis, through relations of proximity. These are actualised

in movement, synthesis and symbiosis – modes of transversality prefaced by *trans*, *multi*, *poly* – which demand more than dialectical method offers. My thesis is thus timely in addressing the need for intellectual dynamism and invention. This requires conceptual creativity so as to step beyond orthodoxies, which place the 'human' subject centre-stage and confined to delineations and hierarchies of social and discursive forces, processes and structures. As demonstrated in this study, the sociological imagination is then ably positioned to approach new horizons via heterodoxies of thought that meet the resident fluidities and complexities of socio-sexual life.

The novel approach taken in this research was, therefore, premised on the demonstrated need to methodologically, empirically and theoretically expand the conceptual landscape of bisexuality. As argued in Chapters 1 and 2, a new language and mode of inquiry is necessary in order to broaden sociological horizons in the first instance, beyond the hegemony of the heterosexual/homosexual divide, which has dominated not only bisexual scholarship, but discussion of minority sexualities overall. As the literature review makes clear, bisexuality is under-researched in Australia. Here, the weight of empirical data derives largely from the health sciences, which accord emphasis to mental and sexual health. Such data, while important, ultimately situates bisexuality within risk discourse, leaving examination of the *diversity* of lived embodied experiences, and sociological implications of these, as a yawning gap in the literature. Although taken separately, transgender and non-monogamy studies are emerging bodies of social scientific inquiry, bisexuality research has yet to comprehensively take account of diversities of sex/gender and relationship configurations. While on theoretical level, notions of fluidity, partiality and multiplicity entreat much scholarly discussion across the humanities and social science disciplines, the conventions of empirical method commonly find amorphous corporeality difficult to comprehensively include in research design and analysis. Those who stray outside dominant constructs of sex/gender/sexuality are frequently left dangling as untidy loose ends that demand to be trimmed, tied back or discarded to maintain an orderly view. Thus, the overwhelming picture presented by sex surveys, LGBTI, and

bisexual literature is one of corralling the diversity of human sexual ontology into neat epistemic boxes: gay men, lesbian women, bisexual men, bisexual women, and transgender.

The central question of this thesis, therefore, concerned how and in what ways diverse and/or fluid articulations of both sex/gender *and* sexuality might inform, shape and reshape each other. More specifically, what alternative modalities of self, intimate relations and gendered sociality are produced through bisexuality's in-between habitus of anomaly, uncertainty, instability, and its desiring capacity and/or potential? The importance of these questions is of consequence not simply for sexuality and gender studies. I contend that it ranges into deeper philosophical interrogations of the twenty-first century social landscape which, however it is sociologically defined or described (late modernity, postmodernity, local/global, intersectional, transnational, cosmopolitan), issues a constant and pressing challenge to the hegemony of structural stasis, rigid categorical thinking, and univocity of identity. Foucault's (1986, 2002) idea of heterotopias now, more than ever, captures both the spirit of, and concern engendered by, that which escapes 'the order of things'. For heterotopias, Foucault writes, are:

disturbing, probably because they secretly undermine language, because they make it impossible to name this and that, because they shatter or tangle common names, because they destroy 'syntax' in advance, and not only the syntax with which we construct sentences but also less apparent syntax which causes words and things (next to and also opposite one another) to 'hold together' (2002:xix)

The salience of heterotopic thinking for sociology cannot be overstated. Indeed, C. Wright Mills' (1959:74) exposition of the sociological imagination explicitly warns against fetishising 'the Concept' as it risks becoming 'stuck way up on a very high level of generalization, usually of a syntactical nature'. Advocates of embodiment theory, both in sociology (Connell & Messerschmidt 2005; Shilling 2008; Turner 2008) and feminist studies (Braidotti 1994a; Gatens 2000; Grosz 1994; McNay 2000) alike,

variously argue for the need to foreground the concrete processes and practices of lived bodies as permeable and productive. For sociology to keep pace with multiple permutations of mobile bodies demands that the sociological imagination take account of human potentiality and moves beyond structuralism and social constructionism (Turner 2008). Notions of creativity, interconnectedness, technological reconstruction (Shilling 2008), temporality, body-in-motion, embodied agency (Turner 2008) and social embodiment (Connell & Messerschmidt 2005) are pregnant with sociological potential. As made evident in Chapters 1 to 4, despite this promise, the mercurial transfigurations of sex/gender/sexuality assemblages are yet to be comprehensively enfolded in social scientific research.

It was from the coalescence of these foregoing ideas that the exciting possibilities offered by a Deleuzian-informed sociology germinated. As laid out in Chapter 3, I proposed that Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy principally suits an empirical study of bisexuality through provoking a rethinking of dominant language and its attendant epistemes and concepts. The elaboration of a Deleuzian sociology was guided in part by the feminist turn to corporeality and the importance of embodiment, particularly in terms of re-visioning feminism's preoccupation with hierarchical schemas of power relations and sexual difference. Embodied subjects have become experiential sites of difference and complexity (Braidotti 1993), and locations of multiple struggles that de-structure fixed categories and subjectivities, bringing a wide gamut of forces into play (Grosz 1994:181). However, such analysis remains lodged in philosophical discourse, in which, for example, Braidotti's (1994) nomadic subjectivity, Shildrick's (2002) monstrous embodiment, Grosz's (1994) volatile corporeality, and Haraway's (1991) cyborg, leave the material slipperiness of bi/multi/poly/pan-sexual, transgendered, genderqueer or otherwise fluidic bodies empirically wanting.

Of particular benefit to the scrutiny of a sexual location that resides in-between the borders of dominant categories, is Deleuze's innovation of concepts as mobile figurations of assemblages, which are in a constant state of machinic movement: assembling, disassembling and reassembling. The

cartographic method of exploring and examining machinic assemblages, maps rhizomatic lines (rather than hierarchical linearity) that connect, disconnect, enter, depart, and traverse across multiple fields of encounter and engagement. This enabled method design and analysis to 'break apart' dominant constructions of bisexuality and reconstruct the fluidity and multiplicity of the concept through the diverse expressions, embodiments and relational connections of my participants. In Deleuze and Guattari's terms, concepts are 'becomings' – tools that engage with the complexities of the empirical world in order to 'open our theoretical imagination to possibilities' (Gane 2009:87).

Accordingly, I approached this project by discarding any preset assumptions about bisexual 'identity' as logically *different from* other sexual 'identities'. The 'minor method' explicated in Chapter 4 springs from the Deleuzian idea of minor writing – that to write for, with, and on behalf of a minority demands subverting the hegemonies of dominant language by working from within, to make oneself a foreigner in one's own language. Accordingly, the minor method I envisioned de-familiarises the idiom of the margins within which minority sexualities are largely constructed, to one that illuminated the *interstitial* spaces of multiple borderlands of sociality and corporeality – male/female/intersex, man/woman/trans, hetero/homo/bi, gay/straight/queer. While denoted as 'bisexuality research', I opened up the field of inquiry beyond conventional dualisms to include *all* sex and genders whose sexual histories spanned relationships or intimate encounters with more than one sex/gender, irrespective of identity labelling preference. The 47 interviews I conducted reflected the multiple, contingent, fluid and emergent topography of contemporary (bi)sexuality and its diverse constitutions of sex and gender. Indeed, the manifold ways that sex and gender were self-described by participants rendered the three broad recruitment 'categories' of 'men', 'women', and 'sex/gender-diverse' as porous, heterogeneous and overlapping, rather than fixed, homogenous and discrete. The significance of such a methodology lay in moving beyond assumptions of *difference* that underpins most bisexual scholarship, particularly in its tendency to divide sample cohorts into bisexual men and bisexual women.

The Deleuzian argument that my thesis has drawn upon principally, is that fields of representation, whether the 'subject' or social structure, are not static, rigid or firmly rooted in the ground. Rather than consider power relations based on *differences between* reifications of individual and majority groups, a Deleuzian sociology scrutinises the operation of desiring forces that *flow in-between* macro and micro fields of thought and practice, which, moreover, elude precise codification or taxonomy. From this innovative perspective, data analysis discussion in Chapters 5 to 8 illuminated how the narratives of my participants disorder and interrupt, not only the 'syntax' of bisexuality as a coherent structural form, but the dominant terms of reference that attempt to 'hold together' sex/gender and sexuality as logically ordered and aggregate unities. The Deleuzian concepts that provided the analytical apparatus for each chapter – asignification, teratologies, contagion and nuptials – exposed the rupturing affects of such syntactical explosion. In other words, analysis foregrounded what is *produced* by corporeal movements that refuse to be tethered to master signifiers of sexuality. Chapter 5 revealed that the nomadic realities of participants' narratives negotiated and contested reified significations that attempt to shackle polymorphous expressions of love, intimacy, eroticism, and sexual relations. Rather, my data underscored that queer, bisexual and complexly conceived sexualities are entangled in multiplex assemblages – sexual becomings that interweave social, discursive, biological, institutional, psychical and emotive planes of immanent engagement. I accordingly argued that affective and desiring processes of bodies and signifying practices arrange and rearrange conceptual boundaries through constant motion.

Chapter 6 investigated the 'monstrous' and elusive spaces of anomaly, ambiguity, and indeterminacy that further disturb the neat ordering and putative linearity of sexual categories. Participants' stories demonstrated that borderline figurations of monstrosity and teratologies disrupt and perplex a coherent sense of male/female sexed bodies and their assumed gender counterparts as man/woman, masculine/feminine. This chapter focused on notions of autopoiesis – inventions of self that move through the

in-between spaces of embodiment, self-expression and sexuality. Through narratives of genderqueer, transgender, intersex, and gender-neutrality, I argued that monstrous border regions bring to light multiplicities of difference *within* sexual subjectivities rather than *difference* from others. A teratological cartography, which navigates convergent thresholds of sexualities and transmutations of sex/gender, accordingly elucidated heterodoxies of thought and practice that exposed the sexed/gendered/sexual body as permeable, productive and enlightening.

Deploying the concept of monstrosity in this manner, hence, signalled new ways of rethinking behaviours that feed into tropes of bisexual stereotyping such as: risk, disease, infidelity, promiscuity, and covert practices, which are particularly gendered. Chapter 7 reprised this negative field of circulating representations through the Deleuzian concept of contagion. Rather than perpetuating the disease model of bisexuality, respondents' accounts of practices that commonly entreat moral opprobrium (such as beat sex and swinging) subverted dominant perceptions of sexual adventuring. Contagion, as envisioned by Deleuze and Guattari, allowed my analysis to rewrite contamination as a productive force. Participants' experiences, therefore, refocused attention away from the sexualised (bisexual female) or abject (bisexual male) subject to encounters that mobilised and constructed new socio-sexual and gendered landscapes. As such, the Deleuzian lens of contagion rendered visible the proliferating and mutating contours of desire as transformative. Here, the sexual body became unbounded from moral prescriptions of the gender order. The chapter argued that this process thus generated ethical ways of living as an affect of venturing into forbidden erotic territories.

Chapter 8 advanced an examination of generative ethics into the diverse realities of relationship formations. Data revealed a dialogue between monogamy and non-monogamy that expanded the horizons of relationship modes beyond the limits of heteronormative and gender-normative prescriptions. The central theme that informed analysis was the *inventiveness* of relationship configurations within and beyond conventional

understandings of non/monogamy. In addition, respondents recounted the creativity with which sexed, gendered, and sexual bodies disassembled the heteronormative imperative of procreative coupling. Complexly constituted sexual relations were accordingly released from genitality – of penetrating and being penetrated. Here, trans, intersex and genderqueer narratives provided the launching point for a more capacious gender analysis that troubled the terrain of conceiving sexual relationships as simply same-sex, opposite-sex or both-sex couplings, and in turn, opened up the categories of man/woman, masculine/feminine as mobile figurations of becomings. Deleuze and Guattari's concept of 'nuptials' allowed analysis to scrutinise the production of ethical spaces engendered by inventive relationship styles and agreements. I argued that this generative process of corporeal ethics interrogated both the moral ground of monogamy and compliance to dominant gender narratives. Respondents' stories rewrote and creatively produced ethical codes of relationality according to the specificities of desiring bodies and practices. This final chapter brought together and illuminated some of Deleuze and Guattari's most complex thinking. In particular, participants' experiences illustrated the utility of somewhat difficult concepts – becoming-animal and becoming-woman – elucidated through participation in BDSM and sub-cultural communities, such as Bears and Furies. This chapter, hence, argued that bisexuality opens the human sexual/gendered subject to ongoing interrogation – complicating and entangling binary differences through mapping the interstitial pathways between human/non-human, male/female, man/woman, masculine/feminine and heterosexual/homosexual.

The key contribution of this thesis comes from the voices of my participants, who variously established their own lines of flight from the rigid boundaries of sexed, gendered, sexual and relational categories. Respondents' narratives reflected a relentless dialogue between macro and micro – the strata (State, judiciary, medical institutions, religion etc.) and the becoming-minoritarian of heterogeneous realities that are embodied and travel differently to molar aggregates of sexual and sex/gendered norms. When Deleuze and Guattari write of becoming-woman, it is precisely this

divestment from the standard reference point of 'molar man' that is evinced in a range of encounters, whether overtly or more subtly produced. In this sense, everyone navigates 'microscopic transsexualities' (Deleuze & Guattari 1983:295) irrespective of embodiments as men, women, trans, genderqueer, intersex. Inhabiting border regions of sexuality vividly conveyed a repertoire of sex/gendered complexities, contradictions and paradoxes that disturbed the binaries of man/woman, masculine/feminine binaries and the uptake of these in relational dynamics.

A significant outcome of my research is that it has refigured corporeality in terms of not what bodies *are*, but what bodies *do* in their relational assemblages. This is a repeated refrain throughout the thesis, which is important to restate. For, in Deleuze's words, a refrain accelerates understanding (Deleuze & Parnet 2006:40). What this thesis has brought to the foreground through interrogating the mobile assemblages of bisexuality is that circulations of desire are productive, activating rippling waves of contagion and viral proliferation, which in Probyn's (1995:7) words, 'puts desire to work'. Desire functions not through Oedipal crisis but is manifest in these movements and encounters of bodies to continually provoke transformation, transmutation and inventions of self, relationality and sociality.

My participants' stories, as I have demonstrated in this thesis, exceed the conventional bounds of sex, gender and sexuality categories, and hence, open outwards, gesturing towards alternative figurations. Such autopoietic endeavours execute inter-subjectively or inter-corporeally, spreading by the communicative affects of contagion, reverberating throughout entire surrounds of familial, social and political plateaus of existence. Another original contribution of this study, therefore, is my argument that bisexuality is an affect of the productive role of desire, through which corporeal dynamism generates an ethics of living. Participants' ongoing negotiations of self, sexuality, sex/gender, and choice of intimate partner relations are recast as ethical processes that examine, contest and rewrite perceived hierarchies of moral legitimization. What has become evident throughout this

thesis is that as respondents expand their relational boundaries, other plateaus of interpersonal interactions are rendered available for contemplation, evaluation, experimentation and ethical consideration.

Through the wide-ranging philosophy of Deleuze and Guattari, I have sought to innervate and energise the sociological imagination of bisexuality. Consequently, I have endeavoured to make the dominant language work differently – invoking the concepts of contagion, monstrosity and 'unnatural alliances' as analytical tools to expose the productive workings of bodies that move within and beyond the border regions of corporeal ambiguity and anomaly. This methodology has enabled the participants of this study to reveal the complexities of their lives in ways that traverse and co-mingle the mundane and adventurous planes of existence. In doing so, my role as a researcher has been a nomadic one. In this journey, I have travelled alongside the stories told to me, unravelling and stitching together the complex and widely variant textures, fabrics, hues and threads of participants' lives. Patterns have unfolded, spreading from the moment of entry into divergent directions, patching together irregularities and regularities as in the production of a quilt. Indeed, as discussed in Chapter 4, quilt-making or patch-working is an apt Deleuzian descriptor of method. An amorphous non-formal production, which historically derives from collective fabrication (as originated in the colonial American women's quilting bee), quilting is a 'collection of juxtaposed pieces that can be joined together in an infinite number of ways' (Deleuze & Guattari 1987:476-7). Quilt-making, therefore, conforms only to the creative intent of the quilt-makers not to a pre-existing template or formal structure. As such, the research project has been a collaborative and collective endeavour between myself and my participants that has grown, unfolded, and sewn together through trajectories of rhizomatic spaces. This endeavour speaks of, and to, the Deleuzian philosophy that has propelled this thesis – not to an end, but to future becomings of inquiry, to new horizons.

The horizon is an appropriate visage to conclude this thesis, for it is a borderline, a meeting or juncture between radically different landscapes, the

form of which is mercurial – it escapes precise measurement, changing with different perspectives, light, shade and viewfinders; the horizon is visible, yet beyond determinate reach. And so the data presented and analysed in this thesis fulfils the principal aim: to explore bisexuality beyond fixed relations of difference *from* others, in order to foreground differences *within* subjectivities that elude categorical delineation. While participants ranged across a suite of self-identity descriptors including bisexual, gay, lesbian, queer and more inventive compounded terms, such as queer-bi and poly-poly, the findings have not sought to devalue how people self-identify or self-describe their sexualities and genders, nor to sabotage political issues, such as the same-sex marriage equality lobby, which is currently topical in Australia. A Deleuzian approach has enabled a more nuanced sociology of bisexuality. My research cohort recounted experiences that draw neither dystopian portraits (of marginality, victimhood, or negative gender stereotype), nor convey a utopian promise of sexual and gendered freedom. Rather, respondents' realities complicate these poles, breaking apart and remaking the structural grammars of their intimate and social lives into spaces of heterogeneity and heterotopias. Their narratives are at once individual, unique and personal, while addressing and engaging with the socio-cultural and ethico-political fields that their lives encounter. Such encounters navigate the great binary aggregates of sex, gender and sexuality, not as passive obedient subjects, but as mobile bodies that with each movement, recalibrate, if only minutely, the structures of the social landscape. The problem of liberation, as voiced by my participants, was not one of advancing bisexuality as a panacea for socio-sexual disharmony, but one of rupturing the seemingly intractable molarities and hierarchies of sex/gender and sexuality. As Guattari (1996:204) maintains, this is more accurately conceived as a liberation of desire.

The importance of this thesis is to offer a provocation to the way in which sociologists construct knowledge of our 'subjects'. If fluidity, diversity and multiplicity are problematic empirical concepts, then these need to constitute the epistemic landscape from which questions are open to possibilities and becomings of the bisexual subject, rather constrained by

conceptual definitions. The efficacy of Deleuzian thinking is to steer research questions and methodologies towards the rhizome – to bring the elusive, in-between, borderline zones to the foreground. Thus, we can more readily *include* those who are erased or overlooked from social, juridical and institutional view (be it State, health, education, religion etc.). *Par exemplar* is Maria Pallotta-Chiarolli's (2010) ground-breaking research of border sexualities and border families in Australian schools, which specifically addresses such categorical occlusion. It is, therefore, paramount to also build interdisciplinary bridges. For, as evident through my project, the subject matter does not reside purely within sociology, but engages across the humanities and social sciences. I conclude with a quotation from Del LaGrace Volcano (2005), performance artist and self-declared gender abolitionist, the sentiment of which speaks to both the worth of my contribution as a sociologist in this project and the contribution of each of my participants:

I believe in crossing the line as many times as it takes to build a bridge we can all walk across.

Appendix

Participant Profiles

The following summaries offer a brief profile of each participant by age group, sex/gender, sexuality, ethnicity and/or nationality, relationship and family status, education, occupation, religion/spirituality, and geographical location. In order to protect the identities of participants, details are provided in broad terms only. Descriptors of sex/gender, sexual and cultural identities are given in the language employed by participants.

Adele: early 20s, female/woman, queer, Northern European, single, international tertiary student, no religion, metropolitan residence.

Anna: early 30s, female/woman, pansexual, Australian¹, single, tertiary student, atheist, metropolitan residence.

Anthony: late 30s, male/man, queer/predominantly male-attracted, Australian, male partner, tertiary qualifications, media profession, Christian, metropolitan residence.

Astrid: early 40s, trans woman, lesbian, Australian, single, vocational qualifications, human services provider, spiritual beliefs (Methodist upbringing), regional residence.

Ben: early 40s, male/man, no sexual identity label (attracted to the spirit or essence of a person), Australian, divorced, single, teenage children, tertiary qualifications, health sector profession, no religion (Christian background), metropolitan residence.

Billy: mid 30s, male/man, sexually open – multi-sex/gender attracted, Australian, single, trade/technical qualifications, construction worker, no religion (Catholic upbringing), metropolitan residence.

¹Australian denotes a person who is a resident and/or citizen of Australia and has no other ethnic, cultural or national genealogy.

Brett: early 20s, male/man, queer-both-sex-attracted, Australian, single, tertiary student, agnostic (Christian upbringing), regional residence.

Cameron: early 20s, male/man, bisexual or queer, Australian, single, tertiary qualifications, unemployed, no religion, regional background and current residence.

Carol: mid 50s, trans woman, lesbian, New Zealand born, defacto same-sex relationship, adult children (from previous marriage), tertiary qualifications, information science profession, atheist, metropolitan residence.

Cass: late 30s, female/woman, bisexual, Australian, defacto trans woman partner, dependent foster child, vocational qualifications, health sector provider, no religion (Christian upbringing), metropolitan residence.

Charlie: late 30s, genderqueer (biological male), queer, England born, Indian/European parents, married/separated, defacto female partner, teenage child (from previous marriage), tertiary qualifications, hospitality profession, no religion, metropolitan residence.

Charlotte: early 30s, female/woman, bisexual, Australian, married, dependent children (from previous marriage), vocational qualifications, human services provider, spiritual beliefs (Catholic upbringing), metropolitan residence.

Cherie: mid 30s, male/cross-dresser, queer, Australian, defacto female partner, tertiary qualifications, administrative profession, atheist, metropolitan residence.

Cliff: late 60s, male/man, bisexual, Australian, divorced, adult children, grandchildren, male partner, tertiary qualifications, retired teacher, agnostic (Christian upbringing), rural background, metropolitan residence.

Dan: early 40s, male/man, bisexual, Australian, divorced, single, ex-military, various vocational trade qualifications and allied occupations, not religious (Catholic upbringing), rural background, metropolitan residence.

Dana: mid 50s, intersex female, lesbian, Australian, female partner, adult children, tertiary qualifications, engineer (retired), no religion, regional background, metropolitan residence,

David: late 20s, trans man, queer-bisexual, Australian, defacto male partner, doctoral student, no religion, regional background, metropolitan residence.

Dean: late 30s, male/man, bisexual, Australian, single, post-graduate qualifications, legal profession, atheist, metropolitan residence.

Ewan: early 50s, genderqueer (biological male), bisexual, England born, married, dependent children (from previous marriage), tertiary qualifications, aviation profession, spiritual beliefs (Baptist upbringing), regional residence.

Glenda: late 30s, trans woman, bisexual, England born, divorced, male partner, dependent children (from previous marriage), tertiary qualifications, information management profession, no religion, regional residence.

Graham: mid 40s, male/man, gay, Australian, defacto male partner, teenage children (from previous marriage), technical qualifications, atheist (Christian upbringing), regional background, metropolitan residence.

Helen: late 30s, trans woman, queer-bi, Australian, single, post-graduate qualifications, engineering profession, no religion (Christian upbringing), metropolitan residence.

James: mid 20s, male/man, complex sexuality – attracted to ambiguity, Australian, tran male partner and casual female partner, tertiary student, Anglican, regional background, metropolitan residence.

Jay: adult teenager, trans man, bisexual, Australian, multiple casual partners (male and female), secondary education, unemployed, atheist, metropolitan residence.

Jenna: mid 30s, female/woman, lesbian, Australian, divorced, female partner, dependent child (from previous marriage), tertiary student and community sector provider, no religion, metropolitan residence.

Joanne: mid 30s, female/woman, bisexual, Australian, defacto female partner, tertiary qualifications, human services provider, Pagan (Catholic upbringing), metropolitan residence.

Jordan: early 40s, genderqueer (biological male), fluid sexuality, England born, Sri Lankan/English parents, married, dependent child, tertiary student and primary carer, no religion (Christian upbringing), lived in various English and Australian urban areas, currently resides in a regional locale.

Julia: late 60s, female/woman, primarily lesbian, Australian, divorced, single, adult children, tertiary qualifications, academic (retired), no religion, metropolitan residence.

Karen: late 50s, trans woman, polymorphous, Australian, single, tertiary qualifications, technical management (media) and doctoral student, atheist (Catholic upbringing), rural background, metropolitan residence.

Kate: mid 30s, female/woman, queer, Australian, trans man partner, tertiary qualifications, administrative profession, atheist (Catholic upbringing), metropolitan residence.

Lara: early 40s, female/woman, bisexual, Australian, married, post-graduate qualifications, health practitioner, spiritual beliefs (Church of England upbringing), rural background, metropolitan residence.

Leigh: early 30s, male/man, bisexual, Australian, married, dependent step-children, tertiary qualifications, administrative profession, no religion, metropolitan residence.

Lesley: mid 30s, bi-gendered trans male-to-female, polysexual, Australian, multi-partnered (polyamorous), tertiary qualifications, unemployed, Pagan (Christian upbringing), regional background, metropolitan residence.

Lisa: early 40s, trans woman, bisexual-multi-sex/gender attracted, Australian, single, technical qualifications, administrative occupation, Pagan (Jewish background), metropolitan residence.

Lucy: early 20s, female/woman, bisexual, Australian, single, tertiary student, no religion, regional background and current residence.

Matthew: mid 20s, trans man, queer/gay, Australian, defacto female partner, post-graduate qualifications, administrative profession, agnostic, metropolitan residence.

Michael: early 30s, male/man, bisexual, Australian, married/multi-partnered (polyamorous), dependent children, tertiary qualifications, technical profession, Buddhist (Christian upbringing), regional background, metropolitan residence.

Morgan: early 50s, genderqueer (biological female), mostly female-bodied attracted, Australian, divorced, single, adult children, grandchild, tertiary qualifications, community sector provider, spiritual/Pagan (fundamentalist Christian during early adult and marital period), metropolitan residence.

Natasha: mid 30s, biological female but psychologically both male and female, bisexual, Australian, married/multi-partnered (polyamorous), tertiary qualifications, administrative profession, no religion (Catholic upbringing), regional background, metropolitan residence.

Paul: late 40s, male/man, bi-sensual/not quite straight, Australian, divorced, multi-partnered (polyamorous), adult children (from previous marriage), tertiary qualifications, information management, agnostic (Christian upbringing), regional residence.

Penny: mid 30s, female/woman, bisexual, Australian, married, post-graduate qualifications, health practitioner, atheist, metropolitan residence.

Rachel: mid 30s, female/woman, queer, England born, defacto male partner, post-graduate qualifications, health practitioner, atheist, metropolitan residence.

Samantha: mid 20s, female/woman, fluid sexuality, Australian, single, tertiary qualifications, modelling and acting employment, no religion (Catholic upbringing), metropolitan residence.

Sarah: late 20s, female/woman, mostly heterosexual, Eastern Asia born, single, doctoral student/sessional academic, no religion, metropolitan residence.

Shane: mid 20s, genderqueer (biological female), bisexual-queer-fluid, Australian, single, tertiary student, Pagan (Christian upbringing), metropolitan residence.

Tim: early 30s, male/man, queer, Australian, single, secondary education, administrative profession, Anglican, regional background and current residence.

William: early 60s, male/man, gay/both-sex attracted, Australian, married, adult children, tertiary qualifications, dramatic arts profession (retired), Buddhist (Jewish family background), regional background, metropolitan residence.

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